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Year Of Fire Dragons: An American Woman's Story Of Coming Of Age In Hong Kong



Synopsis

In 2010, bookish 22-year-old Shannon follows her Eurasian boyfriend to Hong Kong, eager to forge a new love story in his hometown. But when work sends him to London a month later, Shannon embarks on a wide-eyed newcomer's journey through Hong Kong alone. She teaches in a local school as the only foreigner, explores Asia with other young expats and discovers family history in Hong Kong, all while trying to hold on to her thwarted romance. The city enchants her, forcing her to question her plans. Soon, she must make a choice between her new life and the love that first brought her to Asia.

Book Information

File Size: 815 KB

Print Length: 249 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 9881376416

Publisher: Blacksmith Books (June 15, 2015)

Publication Date: June 15, 2015

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00ZSBYR8C

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #800,738 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #43

inÂ Books > History > Asia > Hong Kong #207 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Travel > Asia > China #379 inÂ Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia > China

Customer Reviews

I had heard of those book through some blogs I follow, but I was initially reluctant to read it. Would it be the same old story I'd heard (hell, that I've even lived) dozens of times before? Would a writer in her mid-20's really have good enough material to write her own memoir AND write it well? I decided to read the first two chapters of the book on the publisher's website and I was immediately hooked. The first chapter is absolutely beautifully written and took me back to the time and place when

Shannon first came to Hong Kong. It also brought me back to a time when I was 22, first living in China. In many ways, Shannon's story parallels my own and maybe that's why it grabbed me so much. But I think there is something here to enjoy for anyone interested in living or traveling overseas or for those interested in Asia. Shannon really brought Hong Kong to life. Although I've never been there, her descriptions made me feel like I was there experiencing it with her. I especially liked her descriptions of the transformation of the police station across the street from her apartment. It served as a metaphor of her own life, I suppose, but I can very much appreciate watching a city transform and even sometimes mourning how it develops. Her long-distance relationship with her boyfriend, Ben, added an interesting perspective to the story. I admire her courage to sticking it out in Hong Kong and doing what made sense for her while still trying her best to keep the relationship alive. No spoilers, so I won't say anything else about that! Overall, a great read and I hope Shannon continues writing. I'd love to read another book by her!

I have been waiting for this book to be published for a long time. And it did not disappoint in the least. Shannon Young moved to Hong Kong to follow her long-term, long-distance boyfriend, who grew up there and was working there. She found a prestigious teaching job and moved to Hong Kong sight unseen. But a month after she flies to Hong Kong, her boyfriend is transferred to London. For several reasons Shannon has to stay in Hong Kong, even though she knows few people and is still getting used to her new home. What follows is a beautiful love letter to the city she proudly calls home. I enjoyed reading how she is accepted by her coworkers after they invite her to one of their lunch outings. Her observations of the Mid-Autumn Festival, from where the title comes, are rich and vivid. I also enjoyed reading about the different areas she traveled to in Hong Kong and Macau, as well as her trip to South Korea to visit her sister. But what I loved most about this book was how she shared letters her grandmother had written from Hong Kong decades earlier when Shannon's father was very young. Although Shannon hadn't visited Hong Kong before she moved there, her dad's side had lived there fifty years earlier. The letters were such a nice touch and an unexpected surprise. *Year of Fire Dragons* has it all. It's a travelogue and love story with a fair amount of suspense and tension that keep the reader turning the pages in just one or two sittings before reaching the end of the story. I've given away more than half a dozen copies of this book and people have just loved it!

Living in Hong Kong I have a particular interest in reading books set in this little pocket of Asia and it's an extra special treat to read a book that reminds me what a vibrant and exciting city this is.

Hong Kong is multifaceted and each morning Shannon Young leaves "behind one world and enter[s] an entirely different, more Chinese one." "The time was right for an international long distance relationship," writes Young about her relationship with Ben, managing to stay in daily contact via Skype, phone, email and instant messaging. This is in stark contrast to the annual letters Young's grandmother sent back to the U.S. She had also moved abroad to teach, met her husband, got married and started a family. In the 1950s they were stationed in Hong Kong. Including fragments of these letters evokes not only the feeling of a different world, but draws comparisons with the physical changes in Hong Kong. Living abroad isn't always easy. "Friendship is fast, cheap, and interchangeable in the expat world." Young's writing is full of such insights as she delves further into the Chinese culture, language, her teaching position as the only Native English Teacher and whether she wants to stay in Hong Kong without Ben, or move to yet another foreign place to be with him. Shannon Young's writing is as full of life as this city and I would highly recommend this to anyone interested in travel, living abroad, teaching or a good old-fashioned love story.

This delightful book can be enjoyed as pure entertainment, but it also deals with the important question: Who am I, when removed from everything I know and love? How would I cope in a completely different culture, alone, unable to communicate beyond the basics? Shannon Young describes her first year in Hong Kong in a straight forward, easy to read manner, but full of colours, flavours, sounds, and smells. This is more than a regular travelogue, and it steers away from the typical ex-pat attitude. Young starts studying Cantonese, and keeps an enquiring, open mind towards the customs and traditions of her adoptive country. She has a full-time job where she is the only Western person, and portrays her pupils and co-workers with compassion and warm humour. The fact that her tone is never condescending towards the locals, despite cultural differences, is one of the major strengths of this book. I love books that take me places I've never been before. After reading Shannon Young's novel "The Art of Escalator Jumping" I spent hours looking at images and videos from the Hong Kong Central "Mid-Levels escalator system, wondering what it's like living there. "Year of Fire Dragons" made me curious about the surrounding areas and islands too. I might not move to Hong Kong, but I would love to visit!

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