



Fifth Chinese Daughter

Jade Snow Wong

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Originally published in 1945 and now reissued with a new introduction by the author, Jade Snow Wong's story is one of struggle and achievements. These memoirs of the author's first twenty-four years are thoughtful, informative, and highly entertaining. They not only portray a young woman and her unique family in San Francisco's Chinatown, but they are rich in the details that light up a world within the world of America. The third-person singular style is rooted in Chinese literary form, reflecting cultural disregard for the individual, yet Jade Snow Wong's story also is typically American.

We first meet Jade Snow Wong the child, narrowly confined by the family and factory life, bound to respect and obey her elders while shouldering responsibility for younger brothers and sisters - a solemn child well versed in the proper order of things, who knew that punishment was sure for any infraction of etiquette. Then the schoolgirl caught in confusion between the rigid teaching of her ancestors and the strange ways of her foreign classmates. After that the college student feeling her way toward personal identity in the face of parental indifference or outright opposition. And finally the artist whose early triumphs were doubled by the knowledge that she had at long last won recognition from her family.

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