



# Paper Daughter: A Memoir

*M. Elaine Mar*

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## **Paper Daughter: A Memoir** M. Elaine Mar

When she was five years old, M. Elaine Mar and her mother emigrated from Hong Kong to Denver to join her father in a community more Chinese than American, more hungry than hopeful.

While working with her family in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant and living in the basement of her aunt's house, Mar quickly masters English and begins to excel in school. But as her home and school life--Chinese tradition and American independence--become two increasingly disparate worlds, Mar tries desperately to navigate between them.

Adolescence and the awakening of her sexuality leave Elaine isolated and confused. She yearns for storebought clothes and falls for a red-haired boy who leads her away from the fretful eyes of her family. In his presence, Elaine is overcome by the strength of her desire--blocking out her family's visions of an arranged marriage in Hong Kong.

From surviving racist harassment in the schoolyard to trying to flip her straight hair like Farrah Fawcett, from hiding her parents' heritage to arriving alone at Harvard University, Mar's story is at once an unforgettable personal journey and an unflinching, brutal look at the realities of the American Dream.

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