

## **Mambo in Chinatown**

**Jean Kwok**

**Reviewed by: Pia Visaria, 13**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity**

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Twenty-two-year-old Charlie Wong, the daughter of a Chinese noodle-maker and ballerina grew up in New York's Chinatown. She has been told that she was clumsy and incapable all her life, but this all changes when she gets what she thinks is "just another job to get fired from" at a dance studio. But little does she know that this job would unleash her hidden talents. With so much chaos at home and her sister's illness, the dance studio becomes Charlie's safe haven. On top of all that, Charlie is faced with the pain of hiding her so-called "western" life from anyone at home due to her family members' suspicion of all things western. Kwok has beautifully intertwined the struggles of integration of Western convention with Eastern culture while simultaneously portraying it all through the lens of twenty-two-year-old Charlie Wong.

Personally, I found this book very unique and interesting. I have to admit that the beginning of the book does seem a bit long and dragged out but when you get to the end you fully understand how each detail makes a difference. Kwok has this way of developing the main character (Charlie Wong) so much throughout the whole story while at the same time keeping the authenticity and background of the character's life well integrated, that I really admire. Kwok has woven together a simple but beautiful tale by just the right balance of action, literary elements, and plot twists. All things considered, Kwok's way of putting together a story and writing style is like no others.

This book does contain heavy sexual elements and minor violent elements to look out for. For that reason, I would recommend this book to anyone 13 or older. Mambo in Chinatown would be a great read for someone who enjoys reading realistic fiction or is seeking out something new and original to read!

### **Recommended Titles:**

- "Girl in Translation" by Jean Kwok
- "Kira-Kira" by Cynthia Kadohata
- "Searching for Sylvie Lee" by Jean Kwok
- "The Mother I Never Knew" by Sudha Murty