

# In Search of My Asian Self: A Journey of Identity, Belonging, and Cultural Discovery

My journey to discover my Asian self began with an innocent question from a stranger. "What are you?" they asked, their gaze meeting mine with a mix of curiosity and confusion. In that moment, I realized that I didn't have an easy answer to a seemingly simple question.

As an adopted Korean-American woman raised in a predominantly white community, my sense of identity had always been a complex tapestry woven with threads of both my Korean heritage and my American upbringing. However, it wasn't until that question was posed to me that I truly began to grapple with the intricate complexities of my Asian-American identity.



## Big Little Man: In Search of My Asian Self by Alex Tizon

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English  
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Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 306 pages  
Lending : Enabled



## Unraveling the Threads of My Korean Heritage

My adoption story is unique in that I have both Korean and American birth certificates. This rare circumstance allowed me to trace my biological roots back to the city of Busan, South Korea. As I delved into my family history, I discovered that my birth mother was a single woman who had given me up for adoption in the hopes of providing me with a better life.

While I was grateful for the opportunity to learn about my biological family, I also felt a profound sense of loss. I had no memories of my birth parents, and the culture that they had left behind me was something I had only experienced through second-hand accounts from others.

### **Navigating the Cultural Divide**

Growing up in a small town in the Midwest, I was often the only Asian student in my class. This isolation led me to develop a dualistic sense of self. At home, I was the obedient and respectful daughter to my Korean-American adoptive parents. But outside of the house, I struggled to reconcile my Asian appearance with the expectations of my white peers.

I felt an invisible barrier separating me from the rest of society. I was seen as "different" and "exotic," and I struggled to find my place in a world that seemed to value whiteness above all else. The constant scrutiny and microaggressions I faced left me feeling like an outsider in both my American and Korean communities.

### **Reclaiming My Asian Identity**

As I grew older, I began to resent the way that my Asian identity had been marginalized and exoticized. I realized that I had a responsibility to embrace my heritage and to reclaim my identity on my own terms.

I started by immersing myself in Korean culture. I studied the language, explored Korean history and literature, and connected with other Korean-Americans who shared similar experiences. Through these connections, I began to unravel the complexities of my Korean heritage and to appreciate the beauty and richness of my culture.

## **Celebrating My Asian-American Heritage**

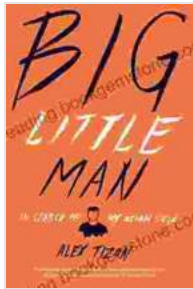
While acknowledging my Korean roots was an important step in my journey, I also recognized that my American identity was an equally integral part of who I am. I grew up speaking English, attending American schools, and participating in American traditions. My experiences in both cultures had shaped me into the person I am today.

I began to reject the idea of a hyphenated identity that narrowly defined me as either Korean or American. Instead, I embraced the term "Asian-American" as a testament to the unique and multifaceted nature of my experience. I am not just Asian or American; I am both, and my identity encompasses the best of both worlds.

My journey to discover my Asian self has been an ongoing and transformative experience. It has involved moments of both joy and sorrow, acceptance and rejection. Through it all, I have come to realize that my identity is not something that can be defined by others or neatly labeled. It is a complex and evolving construct that is constantly shaped by my experiences, my relationships, and my own sense of self.

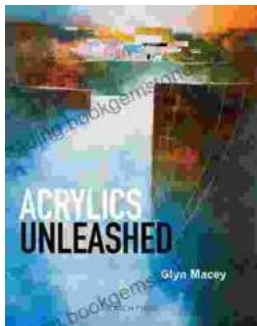
As I continue to navigate the complexities of my Asian-American identity, I am grateful for the opportunity to share my story with others. I hope that by shedding light on my own experiences, I can help others who are struggling

with similar issues to embrace their own unique identities and to recognize the beauty and value of our shared Asian-American heritage.



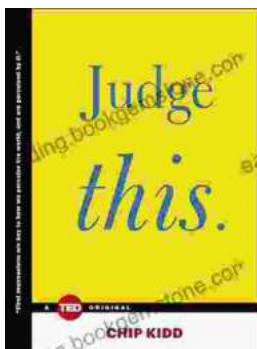
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