A group of men in a variety store in Harbin, China candidly discuss a foreigner with a camera amongst them, assuming she doesn't understand Chinese and forgetting her camera is recording. Later in Kaifeng, miles to the south, the woman noses her camera into people's homes to find the remnants of the city's 1000-year-old Jewish settlement while her guide attempts to render her questions polite in translation.

The woman is Jacqueline Levitin, filmmaker and professor in Film and in Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. Her parents and grandparents immigrated to America from Harbin, Manchuria, and she returned to China to seek the traces of her family's past. In Manchuria, out of reach of the Tsar's pogroms, the Harbin Russian Jewish community thrived. A cultured, European-leaning community, these 20th century Jews were unaware of another vibrant Chinese Jewish community that long preceded them – the 1,000-year-old community of Kaifeng in the heart of ancient imperial China.

"The spontaneity of Levitin’s camerawork draws the viewer headlong into the world of the film, revealing the mind set of a people normally inscrutable to Westerners. Mahjong & Chicken Feet weaves memories of lives then and now, leaving viewers feeling that they have really been somewhere, seeing and hearing remarkable human stories." (Caroline Leaf, Academy Award nominated film maker)