

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO YOUTH POET-IN-RESIDENCE

ELIZABETH WONG



THE PERFECT POT

Homogeneous, together as one A melting pot of our lives To culminate as one flavor Our lives served on a platter

A platter made for your pleasure
To inspect each and every "exotic" ingredient
Whatever you don't like is tossed aside
Picked apart until we are perfect for the pot

If you were to take in all of our flavor
You would surely throw it up
For when our intense love and existence is whole
We are disgusting to you, and must be stripped away in your eyes

You feast upon our lives and flesh
While you wipe your hands clean
Of the blood spilled to bring you this meal
All of our cries and deaths from a land far away, go unheard

Our cultures are a delicacy for you
We are the base of your sickening stew
Boiled down until we are nothing but the best for you
The liquid is murky and dark as you fill our bowls

We choke down on this horrendous concoction
The taste is degrading to us and all who lived before us
You lie and tell us that the soup is wonderful
That its flavor is unmatched and perfect

Salty and over-saturated with tastes
No longer distinguishable from the other
From the beauty of the Cheongsam
To the grace of Folklorico

You expect gratitude and praise from us
As spoons are shoved into our mouths
With your empty smile, you demand our complacency
To be complicit in your crimes and to relish in "our" soup

You have taken away our personal tastes Mixed together in a bastardizing way Stripped of everything we call ours All for the perfect pot

WHAT THE OCEAN BRINGS

The overpowering force of the ocean
With ebbing waves that pull back and forth
Blue that stretches beyond our sights
A new home across its shores gleams in beauty

Your bright eyes look upon the treasures of this new home For the ocean can bring in tremendous splendor and gifts Richness and glamour just within your reach Hands that skim the surface so gracefully

Despite each pull and shove of the waves
You forever stand your ground with great pride
Your shape against the water is carved into beauty and grace
The test of time never dulls you, no matter how hard the ocean tries

Across the sea you feel your home's warmth
No matter the distance, here will never change there
You can claim who you are against lure of the sea
Pulled from the depths, you find yourself

When the abyss returns to claim you in its clutches To drag you back into the water To rip you to pieces beneath its surface You resist with brilliance and strength

In spite of every hardship the ocean has thrown at you
You love the sea
Everything that comes with the salty waters, you accept
All of the hardship and challenge along with its love and brilliance

The waters you stand in are warm
Surrounding you with its treasure and grandeur
The water is at peace
And so are you

But the ocean can also strip you bare
Hollowing you out with billowing waves
A tsunami that will wipe your face down until it is nothing
Your floating husk in the abyss with others just like you

The sea will swallow you whole, absorbing all that you are Swallowing you whole
Until everything has become nothing
Your life now synonymous with everything that the riptides pull in

No matter how hard you search for yourself
There is no glimmering hope waiting for you
The waters are cold and dark
Drowning out anything you were before

The home you reach for is far gone
The deep claims you as its own
A cold and unforgiving keep that will not let you leave
But it will not accept and love you either

AMERICAN FAMILY

I hear his call, his whisper in my ear Beckoning for self-flagellant actions upon my body Forever in their service, their sins become commutative with mine I sputter out remorseful repentance for us like a beggar Pleading for my family's lives in this little American midtown home Our home in this tiny midwest town Perhaps when lightning struck our family's macadamia tree That was the first sign to me The sign of our brokenness had begun, a family no longer whole The father of my children, a shadow of what he once was His shadow then passed down to his children For there were no more romantic loving nights after that But this change was not immediate The change was like a slow burning attrition Where the once beautiful stone statues of our lives Dust and despair that was gruesomely ground up took its place Our family infected with a disease that slowly consumed us Transformed into zombies of our former selves I used to pray to anyone who would listen To take this illness away For it to be spirited into the wind Begging for my pain and suffering to be lifted into the heavens So that one day my children will smile at me once more No longer the same sneers and disgust of their father, but love At one time I would wish to be whisked away as a butterfly To take my children into the air with me and fly far away from here Our wings sprouting with brilliance and wonder beneath the sunlight But now I would rather rip their antennas off, to tear down my own children And for that sin, I would rather cut my hand off
Reduce my sin to a nub on my body and continue pleading for a savior
I pray that this self-medication will work
That I will be cleansed and this family will right its wrongs
Hoping that the whispers from the dark will end
That we will all see the light one day
I hope that everything will be set straight like a dip needle
Pointing to the earth where our bodies will lay

DRAMATURGY

You live a plastic life in a dollhouse Your plastered face to the world around you Actions and movement exactly like stage directions I, the man in the mirror, watch you A perfect mask crafted by their thoughts The ideal you in their heads You perfected an idea of yourself I, the man in the mirror, watch you No one knows the real you No ears listen to your cries No warm embraces ward off the cold I, the man in the mirror, watch you You hide away from the true light A perfect rendition of the stage Forever performing with your mask I, the man in the mirror, hidden by your fear I will forever watch you I give a standing ovation for your performance Until you take your final bow I, the man in the mirror, your only true audience member You deny my existence for the shame it brings Embarrassment runs down your spine The pressure builds until you can handle no more I, the man in the mirror call for you Our existence as one can only lead to our peace So please answer my call and lay down your mask For denial leads down a very stray path I, the man in the mirror beckon to be recognized Reveal your face to the world For no man can make up a single island

Share yourself to the world
I, the man in the mirror present your true self
Accept exactly who you are
Denial of your own love can only last for so long
Until the world swallows you whole
I, the man in the mirror reach out for your authenticity

ABOUT ELIZABETH WONG

Elizabeth Wong is a sophomore at El Camino High School. Through her involvement in art and key club, she's grown in confidence and support to not only hone in her creativity and skills, but to share her work with others. She has a passion for writing and drawing, and combining the two by illustrating her own story ideas and concepts. She enjoys creating homemade gifts for others and looks forward to deeply analyzing and appreciating a range of media. She aims to hone her craft, creating and sharing stories that offer deep, powerful emotions. Elizabeth is excited for what the future holds as South San Francisco's Youth Poet in Residence

ABOUT THE SSF YOUTH POET-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

SSF Youth Poet-in-Residence is a one-year position (May 2023-2024) awarded to a unique individual committed to engaging the public through poetry. The goal of this residency is to celebrate our community's diverse cultures through artistic expression and to encourage dialogue and unity under the leadership of the Youth Poet-in-Residence.

SSF Youth Poet-in-Residence program is generously funded by the South San Francisco Friends of the Library and is a partnership between SSF Youth Commission, Library, and Cultures United program.









