

Youth Poetry Collection

By

SSF Youth

South San Francisco
Youth Poetry Collection
Chapbook Series
2023

Youth Poetry Collection
Selected by Elizabeth Wong, 2023

South San Francisco
Youth Poetry Collection
Chapbook Series

South San Francisco Public Library
901 Civic Campus Way
South San Francisco, California 94080

Design and layout by Melisa Mendoza

Chapbook Series is supported by
South San Francisco Friends of the Library

Contents

Introduction	Page 04
Poems by Saoirse P.	Page 05
Poems by Beatrix R.	Page 10
Poems by Joie L.	Page 15
Poems by Elyssa A.	Page 19
Poems by Ysabella T.	Page 27
Poems by Natalie N.	Page 33
Poems by Sierra N.	Page 37
About Elizabeth Wong	Page 47

Introduction

This chapbook contains poems written by South San Francisco youth submitted during SSF Library's Open Call for poetry in the summer of 2023. Poems were reviewed and selected to be a part of the Youth Poetry Collection chapbook by Elizabeth Wong during her term as SSF's Youth Poet-in-Residence.

The Dilation of Diversity (2023)

Diversity, the dilation of our small compact
community
It can discriminately separate us, yet astonishingly
bring us together
With giving us the opportunity the see and hear
from contrasting viewpoints
Diversity is necessary in such communities
Diversity can be just like paint, filled with variety
and options
People may come upon the sense of risk when
tempting to mix
But once all is done
The beautiful paints will all become one
Resulting in an assorting masterpiece
Diversity shall never be trivialized or diminished
within communities
Our sacred cultures and traditions is our way of
reflecting on this world
Culture expresses who we are and what we value
We are a country of contrast
We are a county of contrast
We are a city of contrast
We are a community of contrast
coming together is the way we strive as a
community
We were all created to be different
But we were not created to be separated.

The Concealed Shadow (2023)

Shadows, they follow you around
Yet never get in your way
They hide below on the ground and
will stay with you even during a bound
But will disappear on a foggy day
Waiting for a ray of light,
your shadow will then reappear
Throughout the dark days
Your shadow will always be near
Your shadow will always be rear
Following behind when on a stroll
Always by your side and there to console
As you stride
A reflection reminding you of who you are,
from your head to you toes
Shadows will come and go
Standing short and tall
Wherever they hide, nobody knows
They may make you ponder
Upon frequent actions made
Or even leave you to wonder
As your shadow begins to fade
Providing shade when in path of shining rays
Blocking out light from a certain place
A silhouette is formed of your very own shape
Creating a shadow to follow your every foot trace.

The Unknown (2023)

Sauntering through a foggy hazy forest, before the
dim daylight fades
Passing enormous trees as getting swept into the
bitterly cold breeze
Observing the mischievous and unknown noises,
which are slowly creeping towards
Trees full of darkness and mirth, mind full of
caution and unease
Strong gusts of wind abruptly appear, leaving you
to freeze
Daunting wind resulting in a seize
Dead silent yet intensely loud, as sudden sounds or
movements are made
Crunching on leaves as creeping further through,
looking back to a dark eerie view
The dense mist trapping the forest, as if it were the
heavy London fog
Insisting to reach the end, you continue walking
further through
The sky gets darker, while the forest gets denser as
if it grew
With what is beyond remains an obscure clue.

Teenagers (2023)

Told to be quiet, yet encouraged to speak up
Expected to behave as adults, but treated like children
Expected to succeed and make it seem like a breeze
Nothing shall be given, as everything must be earned,
And the reaction from a teen would be “Geez”
Never ending stereotypes and standards against young teens
Appearing quite questionable, to a developing mind
Only slowly learning it’s way to navigate through life
Yet the worse expected from a group of teens
From the blank eye perceived as sneaky fiends
When entering a store, tense eyes are drawn
Once a child appears to no longer be pure
What does society think of us?
A generation of greedy cons?
Told to take our backpacks off while in a store
Due to malicious activities awaited
This feels like a misunderstood war
When we were just the ones being constantly adored
Only a few years ago,
Until we suddenly became ignored
Putting trust into a teen is considered risky
As we all appear to be untrustworthy
Unfair treatment towards growing teens
I hope these standards will change by all means
On the day I turn an age that does not end with teen.

The Fantasy of Life (2023)

As the heavy rain pours, my dense fatigue starts to
bore
While the hazy clouds veil the sky, dark fog fills my
mind
As the tiny water droplets roll off the leaves, a
single tear falls off my cheek
Wind blowing the trees around, like the way I feel
lost in this town
Hail hitting the floor, the way my migraine pounds
against my head
I never knew how much dread would come
The further I move ahead
Voices create the vibration of a drum
Constantly pounding and waiting to see my final
outcome
The brisky icy breeze creates numbness within
Although my life is just yet to begin
The line is fine and thin
Everyone wishing to make it over
To fulfill and live that dream life
Of being happy and wealthy
Yet the path to get there is a major con
It feels sharp yet dull like the blade of a knife
How badly I want to succeed
To live that prime life
I hope to cross that fine line one day
To bring that impeccable fantasy to reality
For me to experience right in front of me.

Poems by Beatrix R.

Poem 1

i checked the weather today
and it was another gloomy day,
despite the sun being out.
someone asked
“why so gloomy when it’s such a good day?”
i said,
“without them,
all days are gloomy.
speak of them
and even the rainiest days
will shine the brightest.

Poem 2

roots are the base of life
for every plant
for every math equation
and for every human.
roots are the foundation

of the person we are today.
they create colors within us,
showcasing the many different specialties
each one of us have to bring.
who are we without our roots?
the traditional cuisines
the melodical languages
the stories our grandparents tell us
they uplift our lives
and give us
something to showcase
proudly to the world.
these roots let us shout to the world,
“this is who i am!”
“this is my blood!”
“this is me!”
without our roots,
we become one.
not united,
but indifferent.
we become monotone.
all the color that was within us
would be gone.
the world would be sad being
black
white
grey.
our roots give our life color.
cut off our roots
to give us monotone lives.
cut off our roots
and we may as well cease to live.

Poem 3

when was it
when i last had myself
when was it
when i started to lose myself
when was it
when that path
turned into a twisted maze
filled with thorns and haze
without a thought
i kept going
with a blindfold on
because i didn't want this journey
to become forgone
maybe i should've
because in the process
i hurt myself
and was distressed
to the point i became numb
but with the pain
there was beauty
where i gained compassion
attention
and love
in the end
i became a new me
one that is always changing
one that won't flee
but will face it all
it hurts and will always hurt
but that's the best part
because i will learn

and grow in my heart
in my mind
and in my soul
it will all become stronger
so if you ask me
“was it worth it?”
i’ll nod my head
with a painful smile
and say
“if you’re willing to endure pain
so you can change,
then yes.”

Poem 4

the rain brings comfort.
the pattering of the rain
always soothes the pain.

Poem 5

loving you
burned my heart.
the first time we met
i felt fireworks.
we talked
and talked
we laughed
and we cried.
we sang songs
and we wrote poems.
i had shoved it off
as a dumb crush

but that spark only grew stronger.
i took that
as a sign to offer the flame
and bring the spark closer to your heart,
so that perhaps
a picture of us
could become a reality.
giving you the flame of my love,
you blew it out
one time
i told myself it's alright
and gave it again.
you blew it out
two times
again.
you blew it out
three times
again.
you blew it out
ten times.
the spark was now
a mere flame
trying to stay afire.
i tried offering one last time
but i decided against it
you'd only burn it out again
and leave my poor heart
to burn out completely.

Liked me

He liked me. Right? I mean he says he never did, but we all know it's a lie. Isn't it? Well maybe he never did, and it was all just a game I never knew I was playing. Was I that blind? That dumb? That stupid? To the point where I believed his lies? Maybe they weren't lies?

So many questions, an extensive debate. So many questions, an extensive debate. A debate with myself. Just fancy words for internal conflict. A contradiction within me, a personal argument, the most personal form. I'll really never know the answers to my questions. That's what makes this war in my head never-ending.

Maybe he used me.

Maybe he used me. Used me for my money, my body, my love, my care, my affection, my time, my smarts, my attention. My everything. I thought I was nothing, who are we kidding, I still think that. But maybe to him, I was something. Not what I wanted to be but at least I was something. A wallet, a toy, a lover that he never loved, a caretaker, a waste of time, homework answers, or just a girl. I don't know what I meant to him. At least I know what I mean to myself. Except, I don't.

Spinning

It's happening again. The room is spinning. Not in a good way. Yes, there's a good way, a better one than this. My chest contracted into a ball of tangled yarn, tighter than the grip that my mind has on me. I'm tired. I'm tired of this feeling, I'm tired of losing control of my thoughts, to myself. A push and pull between the light and the dark, a never-ending battle that goes on within me each and every second of each and every day.

This fight continues to go on until I lose my breath.
This fight continues to go on until I lose my breath.
I can't breathe. The one thing I've known to do since I was born. I'm not even capable of breathing. Let the air flow in through my nose, breathe they say, breathe. As if it's that easy. The reckless argument I have with myself continues, but stable. Who knew one little question could turn my whole mind into chaos, the entire war in my head thrown upside down by three simple words. "Are you okay?"

The pools in the muddy center of my swampy brown eyes overflowing. But with what? I don't feel anything. My body is completely numb. I don't feel emotion, I don't feel pain. Not sadness, anger, or pinching or poking. What is this feeling? I've felt this before, the air is so similar, I've breathed it before. Oh, of course, it's the spinning.

Walking contradiction

I have many lovers, but I don't know how to love

I talk so much, but I never know what I'm talking about

I think I'm beautiful, but I hate my appearance

I know how to be hated, but not how to be loved I
know how to be hated, but not how to be loved

I know how to be sad, but don't know why I feel
like that

I know how to act happy, but forgot what it really
feels like

I'm always right, but I'm always wrong

I love myself, but I hate myself

I'm me, but I don't know who I am

My definition

What is the definition of you? This could be an easy answer or maybe a hard one, depending on what kind of person you tend to be. For me, this is a fairly easy question. Joie: a loud girl, small in stature who has Thalassemia. When searching through a dictionary, other words in the definitions are bolded. The only bolded thing about me is a disorder.

The feeling that I was born in a lab haunts me every day. A mutation? That sounds gross. What am I? Just a walking mutation. I can't function on my own, or live a long life on my own. What's the point of staying alive...?

The confidence that follows the great announcement of my disorder is misleading. As though I'm proud of it and still am my own person. The confidence you hear in my voice is a lie. In all honesty, I feel that this mutation is living inside my body controlling me every day. This disorder defines me. The blood in my veins, the medicine in my body, is all my definition. I could be cool and say there's something else interesting about me that defines who I am, but then I would be lying again.

Poem 5

Lives shaped differently
Diversity in the clouds
Equal in the sky

Poems by Elyssa A.

Culture's Flow

In a quaint coastal town, where sea meets the shore
Dwelt folks from different cultures, diverse to the
core.

Donning varied attires and speaking tongues
unique,
Yet coexisting in harmony, like a rose at its peak.

One fine day, an outsider set foot on this land
With an unfamiliar air and an unknown brand.
Speaking a tongue so foreign, none could
comprehend,
Leaving the townsfolk to wonder what would
transpire and end.

At first they shuddered and trembled in fear
At the thought of a stranger's presence, so near,
But one soul, courageous and bold
Stepped forth to welcome with arms open and
uncontrolled.

Slowly, the traveler began to reveal
His customs, language, and thoughts surreal.
Now the townspeople yearned to learn and
comprehend
The stranger's culture and the life they extend.

Sharing food, stories, and music, too,

The townsfolk realized they're different, it's true.
Yet their similarities are greater than they thought,
Cementing a bond that could never be bought.

Then one day the stranger bid farewell to the locals
Leaving them with morals, so high and focal,
And though he departed, his influence remained
In the hearts of those who never abstained.

Thus, in the town by the sea,
People now thrive in a world so free
Knowing that in their differences
Lies the beauty of cultural significance.

Take My Hand

In the dead of the night when shadows loom
And fear and doubt bring a sense of doom.
When the path ahead is vague and unknown
And the weight of the world seems to bear on its
own.

In these moments of despair, when all hope seems
lost
And the future ahead is covered in frost,
There is a light that shines so bright,
A beacon of hope in the midst of night.

Take my hand and together we'll walk
Through the trials and tribulations that life does

dock.

We'll face the challenges and the obstacles too,
And we'll emerge victorious in all that we do.

For when we walk together, there is nothing we
won't reach.

We'll climb the mountains and cross the seas
And we'll find the treasures we seek with ease.

Take my hand and let me guide you through
The challenges of life that may come to you.
For in my hand, you'll find the strength
To face the battles, no matter the length.

And together we'll walk, hand in hand
Through the ups and downs of this life so grand.
We'll find the joy and the love that abounds,
We'll conquer with all the strength we have found.

So take my hand and let us begin
The journey ahead that will never dim.
For with your hand in mine, and mine in yours,
We'll walk through life with open doors.

The Voice Unveiled

Deep beneath the soil I lay concealed,
A dormant seed with dreams unfulfilled.
Afraid to sprout and reveal myself
To a world that could judge and condemn with

stealth.

But as the seasons turned, the sun shone bright
And the rain fell down with all its might,
I felt a stirring deep within my soul,
A yearning to grow and reach my goal.

So I pushed and strained and broke through the
earth
My stem was weak and my leaves had dearth,
Yet I persisted and still reached for the sky
With a steadfast heart and a steadfast eye.

For I had come out from my hidden shell,
And faced the world with a story to tell.
A story of hope, and of bravery too,
A story of courage, and of being true.

For in coming out, I found my voice.
A voice that could speak, without any noise,
A voice that could sing, with all its might,
A voice that could shine, like a beacon of light.

And though the journey was long and hard
With trials and obstacles that seemed to discard,
I knew I was strong, and I was brave,
And that nothing could stop the light I gave.

So if you too, are a seed in the ground
Afraid to sprout and to make a sound,
Just remember you are meant to grow

And to bloom with all your colors aglow

Because the world needs your light and your beauty
too,

And the love that you bring in all that you do.

So come out and be true

To who you are

And shine bright like a blooming star.

The Memory of Light

When your world feels dark and heavy

And your struggles seem too much to bear.

When the weight upon your shoulders

Makes you feel you can't go anywhere.

When the pain inside is suffocating

And it feels there's no escape,

Please remember the memory of light

And the hope it brings to shape.

For even in the darkest moments,

When all seems lost and bleak,

There's still a glimmer of hope,

A light that we can seek.

It's the memory of love and laughter,

Of moments filled with joy.

It's the beauty of the world around us

That we can still enjoy.

So when your body, your heart, and your mind

Begin to choke you with despair,

Hold on to the memory of light

And know hope is always there.

I Dare You (Spoken Word)

I dare you to believe the sky is limitless

I dare you to believe the ground will bend at your
fingertips

I dare you to dream that your life is more than what
you think it is

I dare you.

I dare you to believe that you are not an idiot

And that the definition of “impossible” really is
ridiculous

I dare you to walk around a world of chaos as if you
know what order is

I dare you.

I dare you to have the audacity to dream of
something greater

To discover that you have a greater capacity than
the words I wrote down with this pen and paper

To walk in the face of condonation as if it were
nothing more than a word used in a statement

To take each step as if success was blatant

Or to erase the word complaisant and replace it
with unable to be stationary

I dare you to trust the word “extraordinary” to
make impediments your adversary

And greatness as the walls of your sanctuary

I dare you.

I dare you to define your body as a temple

To show that your eyes shine bright with brilliance
greater than any crystal

That your mind is so profoundly complex that it's
quizzical

That your voice spew out words etched into history
and it's lyrical

That your passion scream out of your work and it's
spiritual

That all the pigments in your skin shine bright with
life and it's wonderful

That you are a crayon in an infinite box of crayons
and it's colorful

I dare you.

I dare you to imagine something different than
what was painted out in front of you.

To pick up the chisel and create a new sculpture
unable to be blunted

That represents the greatness that's up under you

To pick up where I ended with a period and write a
new sentence

To be the evidence that there is no prime to your
existence

So I dare you.

I dare you to put one foot in front of the other

Don't jog, but run

Set your goal greater than the distance from the
earth to the sun

And run fast

I dare you to run faster until you can't

Keep up with the speed and you begin to pant

Until your breathing becomes an unrhythmic chant

Now that you think that you can't keep up with
your legs

And you no longer know where your oxygen is
coming from,

Run faster.

I dare you.

Not Your Fault (2023)

"As your mother folds you into your blanket...

She says, "I want you to marry the luckiest man you can find."

You were so innocent, so young
that you couldn't fully comprehend what she meant.

As you grew older and wiser...

You realized that you were in love with idea of
success...

To the core that you spent endless nights studying...

But that wasn't the destiny your mother ought for
you.

You spent more time desiring buildings of your
own...

But not desiring building a family of your own.

You spent more time desiring your own epiphany...

But not the traditional desirability that was meant
for you.

So scared to let those firing words come out...

You were like a caged bird longing for oblivion.

You were like a soldier in a never ending
battlefield.

As you got vastly older...

And you were old enough to wear bright red
lipstick...

The universe and your mother started testing you.

“Darling, when are you getting married?”

Click, click, click.

Your brain was clicking so much that you couldn't
even think.

From the top of your lungs you wanted to scream
“No! ...”

But that was all in your chaotic head...

While the rest of your existing state was
unresponsive.

You started reconsidering what your life would be
like with a happy husband and his loving wife...

A shaggy dog with a big picket fence full of life...

A cottage home with children who help you
energize.

Boom, boom, boom.

Your heart attacks you viscously...

Even more viscous than your brain.

Was this what you really wanted?

The smiling Romeo and the frowning Juliet?

It's not your fault that you are dying alone.

It's not your fault your love isn't as ripe as a rose.

It's not your fault you weren't so pink to love as a
bow.

Living alone isn't equivalent to being lonely...

because you are just an art museum living happily.

And you will be happy once you win this
battlefield...

This battlefield against tradition."

A Hopeless, Hopeless Society (2023)

"Upon a gore and dreadful reality, no morality...

A lunatic cultivates as a healthy life perishes...

The mascara clumps want you to beware, life falls
in despair...

The garish rims of womanhood becomes remotely
bearish...

Pride pesters around the poor as prejudice yearns
the brownish -

as humans choke the sheriff.

Wandering around broad starkness and thinking
about darkness...

Marching around looking brainless and wanting to
seem "coolish..."

Passing around wolves with no piety need
sobriety...

Watching obsessional ghoulish people turning like
tarnish...

And euphoria preying on the young to seem more
foolish...

For help to soon demolish!"

Darkness (2023)

"Darkness is black.

It sounds like a thunderous bullet wounds from a waterloo.

It tastes like dull licorice with bitterness taunting you.

It smells like cigarettes as your lungs are killing you.

Darkness feels like the misfortune of despair and unwantedness."

I Have a Dream (2023)

"I have a dream that there will be morality within society.

Homes with children finding their sobriety.

And students will start coping with the positive variety.

Violence is not the key to one's path.

Every student should feel safe learning math.

Daily laziness will result to a rock soon to demolish.

Respect a student's background to not make them feel like a scum.

Every student will learn how to discipline themselves to not end up like their mum.

My dream is for us to start acting like Martin Luther King."

I Despise Consuming Calories (2023)

"I despise consuming calories.

Out of all of the 300,000 foods that exist in this western hemisphere...

one major component is calories.

Calories haunt me every single time my stomach growls.

It determines whether I lost or gained a pound.

I know it sounds realistically absurd to condemn a word that allows us humans to physically function... but calories took a part of my childhood no other word can.

I used to eat about 2,000 calories a day...

but now I can barely eat the same amount as a toddler.

Calories taunt me everywhere I go... almost like a human psychopath.

I can't go on throughout my day without being reminded that while my friends were able to eat whatever they desired...

I ate a single strawberry and still felt like I gained an enormous mass of body fat."

Poems by Natalie N.

The Moon

The Moon A mysterious, mystical thing

The moon shines radiantly in the night sky,

Its warm silver glow comforting me as I look out
the window

The moon looks at me kindly, knowingly

And I can't help but want to comfort her too.

She shares her light with others,

But no one shares theirs with her.

Warming people's heart with her sweet gaze

But hiding her pain behind a smile.

We have her,

But she has no one.

She'll always be alone,

But we'll always have each other.

History Always Repeats Itself

History always repeats itself,
Isn't that what they say?
Blood, sweat, and tears,
It's always this way.

A young boy,
Only eighteen,
Leaving home in pain,
Off to fight,
for Mother Ukraine.

Off to war,
He fights valiantly,
But what for?
He faces reality,
Hasn't this happened before?

In 1932
Ukraine's war began,
Fighting for her life,
And dying of hunger
At the hands of her hangman

In 2022,
Another war began,
Ukraine invaded,
Being raided,
But never faded

Ukraine,
Crying in pain,
Drained of blood,

And drenched in tears

But Ukraine,
Standing tall,
Fighting through it all,
Will NOT fall

Sometimes

Sometimes,
I feel like I'm underwater.
Not floating or swimming,
But drowning.
I fall through the murky cold waters,
And sink to the bottom,
Where no one will find me.

I feel myself being pulled down,
And I struggle
Against the strong grip of ocean,
But to no avail.
Just as I reach the surface,
The unforgiving waters,
Unrelenting,
Pull me under once more.

I can't breathe,
And my lungs burn.
Taking in gulps of water at a time,
I feel myself,
plunging deeper into the dark depths.

I look below,
And I see myself.
I see myself in heavy metal chains,
Bound to the ocean floor.

The burdens and the guilt,
The memories,
They weigh me down.
I couldn't forget them,
Even if I tried.

Poems by Sierra N.

there's no hope for a shooting star

why do meteors gravitate to earth?

they must know how lonely it feels to see a glimpse
of the planet from afar,

burning everything they have with their entire
being,

all before, the hopes and dreams of a shooting star
turn into nothing but powder.

eyes gazing up to take in the sight of a shooting star
among the hazy glow of the night, the burning ball
of warmth contrasting with the darkened sky.

some shut their eyes and clasp their hands together,
wishing for good fortune in their lives.

two hands intertwined in one another, bodies lying
on a checkered blanket in the grass as they stared in
unison.

smiles formed on faces as eyes admired the hopeful
burst of energy radiating its glow.

shooting stars may blaze through the night, but
once their flame is put out, there is nothing left of
them.

their bright kindred spirits quickly burn out all their
energy until it disintegrates, never to be seen again.

although some meteors see the surface of earth,
embraced by the comfort of the dirt,

there's no hope for a shooting star.

the shooting star must surely know that all its
efforts are futile,

wouldn't it have already given up knowing that it
will never reach the comfort of another?

despite all odds, shooting stars keep persisting,

hoping that one day they will reach earth and
finally become one with it.

the shooting star's only purpose is to shine
momentarily in the night sky before being reduced
to ashes.

fated for nothing, yet it persists because the
shooting star knows that it's the only thing they can
do.

empty promises of the touch of another keep it
motivated to keep fulfilling their dream,

even if they are hurt in the process. the shooting
star has tried again and again, clinging to the
faintest of possibilities.

a kiss from earth is all the shooting star wants,

yet it will have to accept that it will never see a
glimpse of life on earth,

so as long as it is alive.

eyes take their gazes off the shooting star once it is
no longer in view, the cold mournful night
overtaking the aura the glow once left.

some open their eyes and unclasp their hands,
hoping with a simple smile that their wish was
heard. legs and arms intertwined into each other as
they lay in each other's embrace, forgetting about
the beautiful sight of the falling flame and taking in
the new sight of each other.

smiles quickly turned into neutral expressions after
the once-burning star left their vision. there's no
hope for a shooting star,

because no matter what it does, it is fated to die
before the earth can say "i love you" to it.

a shooting star will always remain a fleeting burst
of energy,

only destined to turn into dust and nothing more.

Two Kites

We were both two kites lying among the fresh bed
of white, blanketing the grass underneath.
You always drowned out my bitter clouds with your
sunshine,
And I'd always be there for you, even throughout
the changing seasons.
Under the sleet, we'd exchange our hopes and
dreams.
Though there's one thing I've never told you.
I have always wanted to fly.
For a child to take hold of my line, and allow me to
soar through the air, the sun shining on us both.
To look below me, see smiles, and hear laughter
from the bright green scenery below.

Eventually, the grass brightened, the white melted,
and the sounds of laughter could be heard nearby.
It was my chance to find just one child to notice me
as I soared into the sky.
The pounding of footsteps increasingly became
louder until the shadows of the youth surrounded us
two.
Though anticipating seeing the bright smiles from
around me, they only saw you.
I shifted my gaze to your prismatic array of colors,
rainbow blushing across majestic butterfly wings
dancing in the breeze.
Looking down at my own bland figure, I fixated on
the monochrome of my ordinary diamond shape.

My eyes found themselves on one particular child,

his champagne hair and lopsided grin setting my heart ablaze.

He quickly dismissed any remaining clouds remaining in my heart and replaced them with strong rays of sunshine.

I pleaded for him to admire me, to take my line and fly me high,

For this small ray of light would be enough in comparison to the dozens you already have.

He reluctantly agreed, shakily picking up my handle and gradually unwinding my unstable line.

Soaring through the air, I felt the sunshine through my dull color, transforming me into a dreamy cloud hue.

Hopeful to meet his eyes, my gaze shifts downwards, his sapphire eyes intently staring at your variety of gorgeous iridescent colors.

He met my eyes, but not in the way I had hoped.

The blue of his eyes froze up when my muted grey shade was in sight.

I knew he'd rather see the warmth of lively butterfly wings flapping toward the sun and away from the rain.

Yanking my line, his pale hands maliciously dragged me back into the muddy dirt.

I didn't want to come back down, but my efforts to stay were futile.

Shadows promptly surrounded me until the sky was out of my sight.

I had broken my cross spar and laid alone in the leaves, desperately waiting for anyone to come and

repair me.

Nobody ever came, leaving me to sink in the piles
of amber and crimson.

I could only watch as he eagerly ran to you, gently
taking you in his hands and delightedly unraveling
your stable line.

You naturally catch the wind with your beautiful
wings, going higher than the sun,
Higher than my foolish dream ever could.

The same grin I fell for started to form on his
freckled face because of your beauty.

I can feel the sunshine in my heart dissipate,
My eyes welling up with tears.

The fulfillment of my dream reduced to a fleeting
moment in time.

My dullness just simply cannot compete with your
holographic beauty.

You and I were both created in factories; our colors
and shapes already predetermined at birth.

That's exactly why I cannot confess.

Because you will never understand how painful the
downpour feels.

Surrounded in sunshine your whole life, you will
never have to imagine the feeling of being
colorless.

I could not bare to tell you as I promised to be there
for you, even through the seasons.

You are never without the sun, and I am always
with the rain; that will never change.

I lay alone the frigid and pale grass.

Even through the suffocating snow flurry, I will
continue to look up and watch your kaleidoscopic
elegance dance under the sunshine that follows only
you.

To look back down and see the tons of children
chasing after your light like flies.

And to accept that I will forever be broken.

Carousel

Vivid shades of crimson and gold pop look into my
eyes, and I am left entranced by the carnival ride.

I made my way to the metal gate, the words ENTER
displayed in a blinding scarlet.

The person at the booth sighs and opens the gate for
me, granting access to the merry-go-round ahead.

Stepping onto the gray platform, my eyes darted
around from horse to horse to find the one I would
ride.

Opting to sit on a white horse, I climbed onto the
green saddle until I was perfectly stabilized.

The conductor flashes me a simple smile before
operating the carousel.

Perhaps that was the first warning sign.

Drums, trumpets, and cymbals began to orchestrate

a nostalgic tune to which my horse started to dance,

Impaled by its withers, the pole moved up and down, also allowing me to dance along.

Was the second warning sign the violent spells of agony that began to crawl all over my body?

Or was it when I looked into the mirrors, my reflection inconspicuous and tinted with a rose hue.

Despite my brain begging me to get off, my heart told me to persist and stay no matter what.

After all, I chose to be here in the first place.

Turning to look outside, my surroundings all morph into one fuzzy splash of color.

A third warning sign was the horse's elegant snowy coat melting off to reveal a sickening hue of swampy green skin underneath.

Now getting faster and faster, the speed became overwhelmingly fast,

Hands desperately gripping onto the horse's now tainted neck to stay on.

Time seemed to slow down as I tumbled off the saddle of the once-elegant white horse,

And violently slammed into the mirrored center of the carousel.

Slowly opening my eyes, I look up from the shards of glass and into the now-broken mirror, the rose-colored film peeling off the reveal the truth.

I am finally able to see my own reflection for the first time since the warning signs appeared.

Tears flowed down my cheek, which now oozed crimson out of multiple openings, strands of ebony hair were disheveled around my bloodied face.

Hostile shouting was starting to get closer and closer, a voice that drowned the band's organ sounds from the speakers.

“This is all your fault, you broke the ride.”

With trembling shoulders, I open my mouth to respond.

“You should’ve told me this carousel was not working.”

His hand suddenly met my cheek, a stinging sensation remaining as proof of my punishment.

“It’s your fault for staying on, I shouldn’t have to tell you anything.”

The carousel operator walked back to his booth, and I took the opportunity to retreat.

Getting up and beginning to limp away, a familiar

voice but an unfamiliar tone is heard from behind me.

“Look, nothing happened here. Just get back on, and I’ll give you this cotton candy, okay?”

A smile breaks out across my face in spite of the pain, and he lends me his shoulder so I can mount my horse again, the green hue replaced by its once milky coat.

Glancing in the mirror once more, all I am able to see is an uncracked mirror and a grin adorned on my face, the blood and tears no more.

Looking behind me, I see the ride operator holding out a bag of pink and blue swirled cotton candy in my direction.

I gladly accept it with a “thank you,” tearing the plastic and grabbing the dessert with my clean fingers.

Various instruments’ familiar tunes are able to be heard, and my horse starts to dance again.

Tensions dissolve into thin air, and there is nothing but tranquility.

I continue to go round and round on this infinite carousel, blissfully unaware of the minacious cycle.

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 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.



South San Francisco
Youth Poetry Collection
Chapbook Series
2023