

2025 Elie Wiesel Competition
Special Commendation, Senior Poetry
Kevin Park, 12th Grade
Norfolk Academy, David Kidd

Wings Once Burdened

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Behind my eyes
Lies
A Korean flag,
Waving over American soil.

Monami pens bleed ink onto SAT prep sheets,
And Korean folktales whisper beside American greats;
A Hanbok bookmark flutters,
Lost between forgotten pages.

A familiar aroma fills the air
A heavenly broth, rich with flavor,
Enticed, I head downstairs,
Searching the fridge for leftover rice.
Instead I find pizza,
Cold from yesterday's supper.

All my life, I've been caught between two worlds,
Where do I lie?
Where should I lie?

Korea or America?

It's normal,
I think,
To feel this dilemma.
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Often times I've felt caught,
Like a shadow between two lights.

Or better yet,
An origami crane, hidden in disguise;
But I ask you this,
Don't even paper wings deserve to fly?

Yet still,
Wings are fragile.
They break,
They crumble,
They only grow old.

With flight feeling so heavy,
What's the point in finding gold?

But I look around;
The flag and the soil,
The pens and the textbooks,
The rice and the pizza,
The shadow of my two lights.
I realize,
I am not caught between two worlds,
I am both.

Each fold in my wings holds a story,
Each crease represents a verse,
Each bend preserves a memory,
Each line tells a tale diverse.

So I begin,
I spread my wings,
Ready to take flight;
The music hums,
K-pop harmonizes with rap.
A melody I claim as my own.

The wings soar,
No more lies.

Am I Korean or American?
Once, I guessed, "Neither."
Now, I answer, "Both."