

**“Soar or Else” written by Kelly Shen, Age 13**

“You were born to soar.”

“You were made to fly,” they said

And they were right.

If you can't fly, you'll be eaten.

But someone's got to become the prey, right?

Someone's got to feed the predators.

“Don't let it be you,” they said.

There are some whose wings are clipped while

Others never leave the ground

And regardless

Whether or not you have a full set of wings

Your time is spent

Practicing without preparing

Learning without understanding

How to fly free

Before they hurl you out of the nest

Whether or not you're ready

Where to fall is to be eaten.

And suddenly

Just like that

A thousand fledglings in the air

All struggling to spread their wings

There isn't space for everyone.

Some are shot out of the sky

A few glide too close to the sun

Many fly into a window, the last thing they'll see

But if you do survive

Even if you learn to dart through the sky

Even if you spread your wings and soar

Are you truly free?