

# Island I Know

By Sandhya Nankani

Once, twin rising giants scraped these clouds  
Rising far above ground zero.  
Once, shimmering glass windows sent reflections  
of summer sky and Hudson waves  
To eyes like mine,  
Lending me their windows to the world.

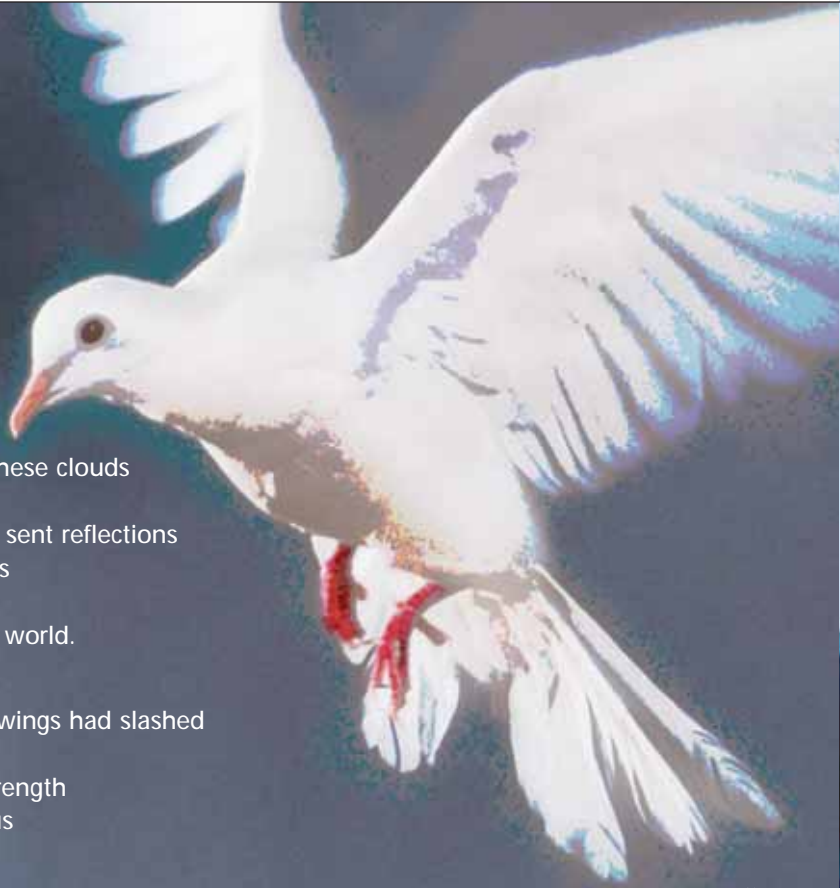
I looked away for a moment  
And came back to find that steel wings had slashed  
the guardians of my island,  
Burying its icon of indomitable strength  
Under cloaks of crumbled plateaus  
Blankets of concrete nothingness  
Layers of still hearts.

Now all I smell is billowing smoke.  
Now all I feel are burnt spirits.  
Now all I see are black skies and bare heels flying  
into the air  
White ash smeared onto pale skin  
Breathing bodies spilling out of windows.

This is not the island I know.

A volcano has erupted, leaving a vacuum behind.  
And while souls fly high to look down on this flatbed  
of their lost breath,  
I can see doves and pigeons flapping their wings  
Planning their escape routes,  
Their screeches vying with the sirens and whirling  
red signals.  
Trying to fill the hollow spaces,  
North they move  
East they move  
Away they move.

This is not the island they know either.



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