

Tuesday

By Milada Dzevitski

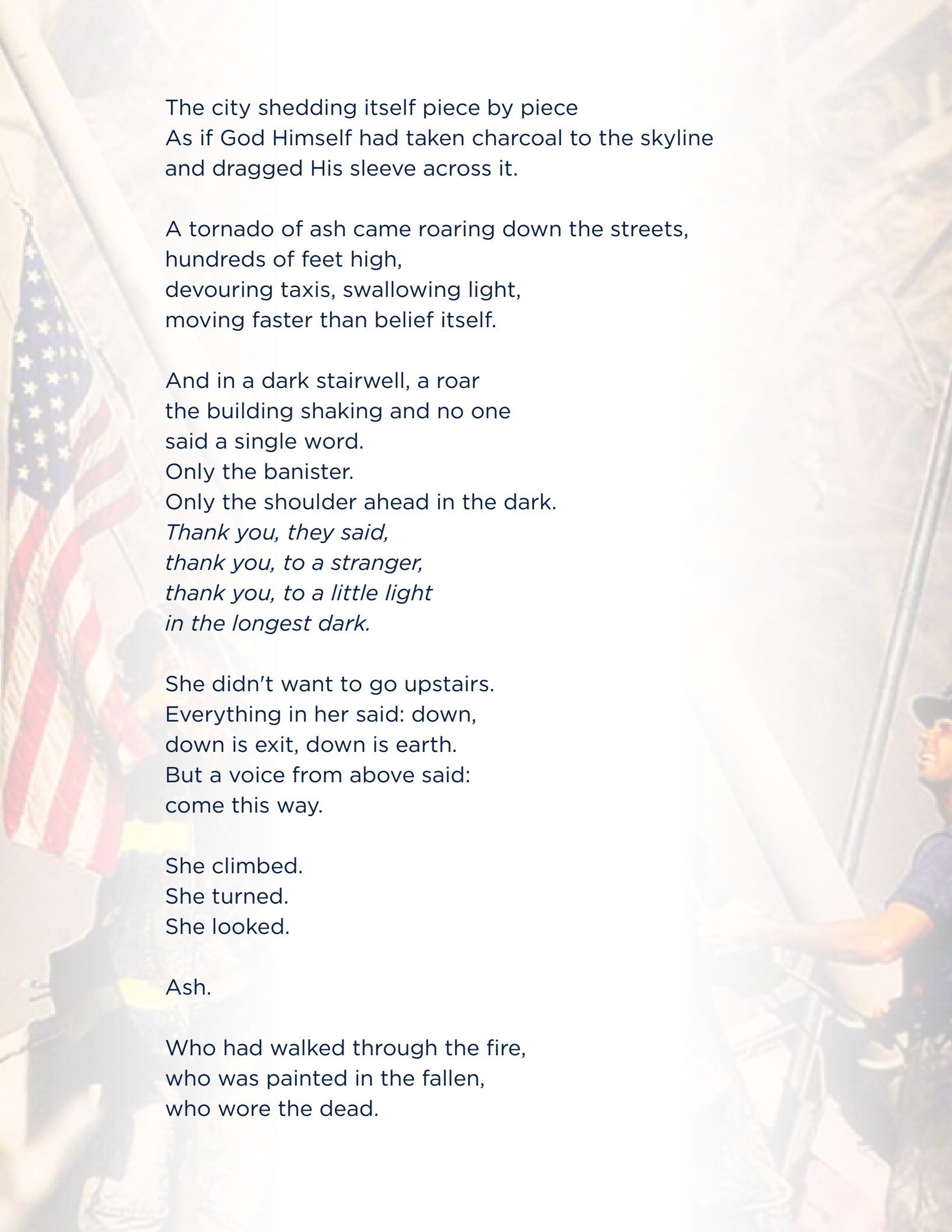
It was a beautiful day,
you have to understand that first.
The sky was that particular blue
they print on postcards,
A sky scrubbed clean as church glass,
the Hudson carrying light in its palms,
windows burning gold over Manhattan
like a thousand little declarations
signed again by morning.

Mid-morning, mid-coffee,
mid the most beautiful day of the year.
Men loosened ties.
Women carried briefcases like folded wings.

Someone laughed in an elevator.
Someone kissed a forehead goodbye
without knowing they had done it for the last time.

The concrete and steel came falling down,
all the decades of it,
white papers turning in the air
like ticker tape for a parade no one remembered planning.

Snow in September.
Photographs.
Memos.
Lives.



The city shedding itself piece by piece
As if God Himself had taken charcoal to the skyline
and dragged His sleeve across it.

A tornado of ash came roaring down the streets,
hundreds of feet high,
devouring taxis, swallowing light,
moving faster than belief itself.

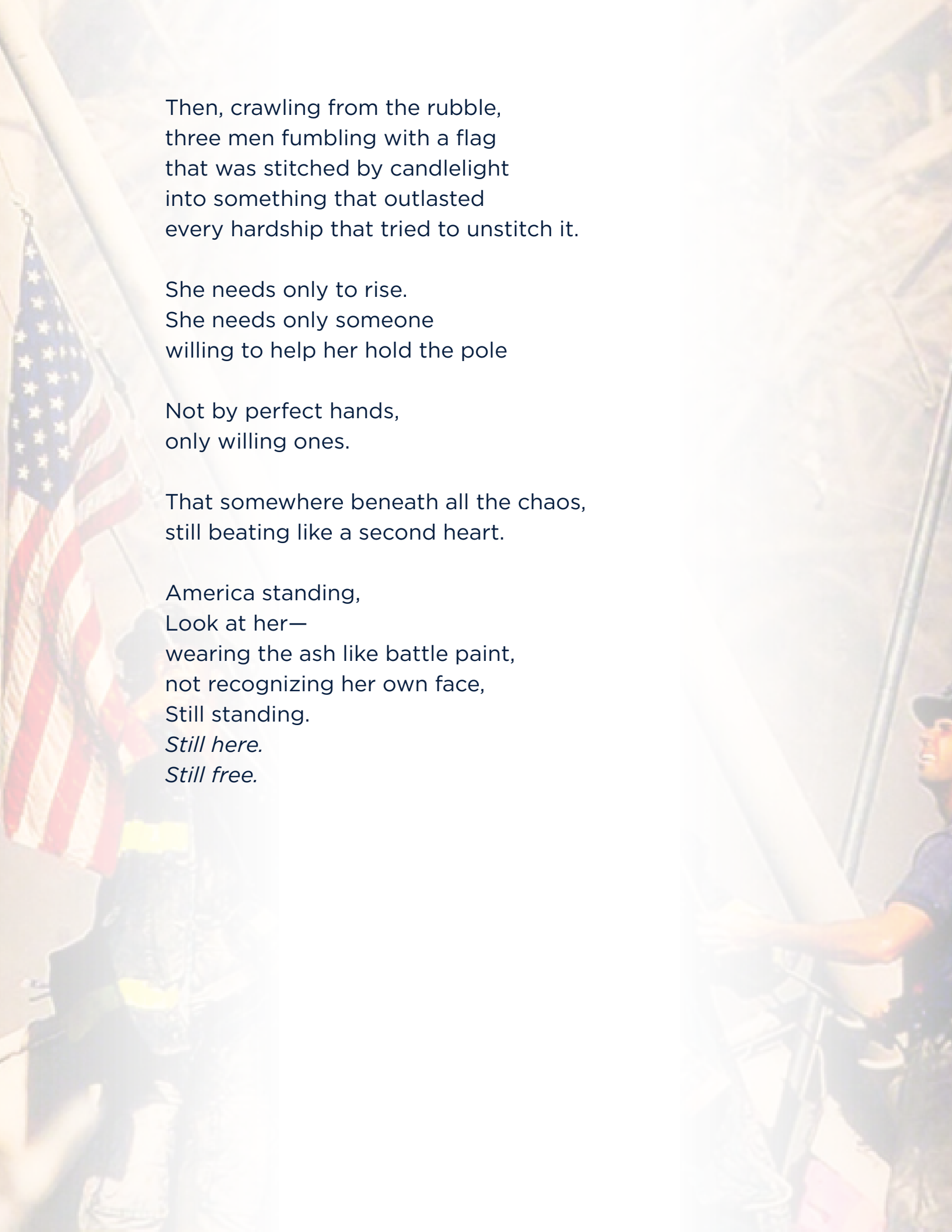
And in a dark stairwell, a roar
the building shaking and no one
said a single word.
Only the banister.
Only the shoulder ahead in the dark.
Thank you, they said,
thank you, to a stranger,
thank you, to a little light
in the longest dark.

She didn't want to go upstairs.
Everything in her said: down,
down is exit, down is earth.
But a voice from above said:
come this way.

She climbed.
She turned.
She looked.

Ash.

Who had walked through the fire,
who was painted in the fallen,
who wore the dead.



Then, crawling from the rubble,
three men fumbling with a flag
that was stitched by candlelight
into something that outlasted
every hardship that tried to unstitch it.

She needs only to rise.
She needs only someone
willing to help her hold the pole

Not by perfect hands,
only willing ones.

That somewhere beneath all the chaos,
still beating like a second heart.

America standing,
Look at her—
wearing the ash like battle paint,
not recognizing her own face,
Still standing.
Still here.
Still free.