Eagle on Butterfly

For Kee thuan Chye

Still, you sit on the cool of the marble floor where butterflies hardly belong.
Black, and small as the nail of my thumb,
but rising from the frozen surf of the floor, like the dorsal fin of a shark,
as if your real menace or beauty of movement were somewhere beneath the marble or surf—white at midday, grey at twilight—a hidden grace.
Your wings are frayed to the teeth of a black comb;
and so, instead of floating or weaving like a dark nib writing its will upon the air,
you are shocked to stillness by those wings, defeated from the effort of flight or by elemental combat.
And yet, still, emblazoned like heroism upon your wings, a white symbol:
the outstretched expanse of an eagle tilted in flight,
captured on the tiny canvas of your wings, clasped like the hands of a child in prayer,
as if you knew that you are more than what you seem.

DAIZAL R. SAMAD