Coming to Life

On the most vivid day of my life, the man and his accomplices smuggled their equipment onto the roof. They passed the wire across the void with a bow and arrow. They bridged what was not meant to be bridged.

I was sent to stop them. I worked for the Port Authority. A month before, I’d lost my wife to cancer and I had begun to think that life was simply a march toward death.

By the time I got to the south tower, it was too late to do anything except watch. A crowd had assembled below. I couldn’t see the faces but I imagined they looked like mine, full of wonder.

The man did not walk along the wire; he danced. He smiled and laughed as he bounced up and down a quarter-mile above Manhattan, among the clouds.

Who could blame him for such ecstasy? So close to God.

I read that it took Philippe Petit six years to plan the artistic crime.
Eddie Malone

of the century.

Before he danced between
the twin towers, he was a mime,
street juggler, magician.

After his stunt, I spent weeks
walking, thinking.
I saw his spirit in everything:

The jump shot of a boy
alone on a half-lit court.

Portraits of tourists
sketched by a street artist.

The absent-minded twirl
of a teenage prostitute.

After I saw these things,
I knew I could go on.

Almost thirty years later,
the twin towers collapsed
but it’s not their death
that stays with me.
I don’t remember them
as victims.
Instead they are actors
in a joyous play about life,
saluting a hero who
leads us to the light.