

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.