

MYKA TUCKER-ABRAMSON

## Three Poems from "The Bridge Builders"

These poems are excerpted from a cycle written about the building of a Halifax bridge. The first two talk about Jean Marie Belanger, killed during the construction.—ed.

1. May 1954

Before trains, there were legends,  
bridges built from canoes and broken boats  
strung across the harbour, a thief who carried  
a Micmac chief's lover half way across  
the pontoon, before he broke the bridge  
into an escape:

That night he learned that the weight  
of a bridge is a risk that he would no longer  
take. His famous curse:

*Three times shall fall,  
Like a dying breath  
In storm—In silence—and  
Last in death*

This is the third bridge. Don't think we don't  
know every time we climb up  
laughing at stories of sailors who slipped  
from the beds of Dartmouth  
girls, across the catwalks  
to return before the role call of dawn.

The betting pools of bodies, quick  
crosses when no one's looking. Is it still  
a risk when it's not superstition, but a train  
hurtling towards its destination  
one rung at a time?

## 2. July 1954

Every catwalker will tell you their secret: not to look down, to trust your feet, one man kept a bird's wing in his pocket to remind him how to fly. Here's mine: trust nothing, but the ground.

(He couldn't have known, that day, strung up like Christmas lights across the city, a sudden gale that flung the catwalk, a ribbon, his tightrope body an angel cast out.

*He tried to throw himself back; but something huge and merciless struck him on the head and dragged him down on his back.*

*"Lord forgive me Everything")*

## 3. Barrington

In a coffee shop on Barrington, I press my back against glass. She flies through the door to him, her hair burning a red meteor while he, teeters on a chair. I, falling in love between these pages watch as his clench-drawn face tightens than draws apart, how lips part like bridges to let boats pass, kisses so familiar they could bare been ours, the taste of shampoo and old lovers in my mouth.