

# The Bridge

*by* Tamara Pratt

Her long grey arms stretch out across the bay; an attempt at bridging the divide between her peninsula and her foreshore. Like a mother dispelling a dispute between her two children, Hornibrook Bridge has always been the conduit that connects my two homes, both of which have always vied for my attention — the home where I grew up, and the one in which I grow older.

As I cross the bridge from Sandgate to Clontarf, I look beyond the steel guard that runs the length of her side; the water an unfamiliar rusty colour, disgruntled, and making the fisherman's pursuit all that more laboured. Their boats bob without purpose, while metres away, the concrete pillars above them host an artery of traffic.

It's such a contrast in promise — what once was, and what could be now.

I grew up in the quiet seaside suburb built on the red cliffs, a place untouched by the handprints of development. In my mind, I always see my peninsula home — as it was years ago — scattered post war houses along the esplanade, roaming backyards, and lazy Sundays. Walking to the jetty, thinking these humble waters never really met the ocean, that I was living in a place undiscovered.

Now, as we traverse the bridge and reach the other side, her arms release me into a strange version of what I once knew.

And the urban sprawl doesn't hesitate. All around me, I taste the aftermath of bricks, dust and dirt, freshly laid concrete slabs; I see the horizon strewn with cranes and scaffolding. It's as if my old home races to play to tag with the foreshore on the other side. The pursuit of progress so much more important than the stall of time.

To anyone else, it might appear to be a facelift in an otherwise sleepy suburb, but as I travel through my childhood playground, and the bridge peters out behind me, I see my home, as it once was, demolished.

All that remains constant is the bridge.

