

Spit-roast

I step from Kevin's shoulders onto his raised up hand. I'm supported – *one* – over his head; above the constricting circles of our seafront audience by his purity of concentration – *two* – insistence straining past physical limits, rippling the muscles of his bared arm, and making my breathing shudder.

His whole body shimmying – *three* – he holds the crowd's fragile attention. As usual they don't grasp the heights of my skill, the scale of my prolonged battle to sustain this pose – *four* – to ignore rows of faces that blur, as the gale tosses escaping hair across my eyes. I'm so high up I can pitch my focus

way beyond to – *five* – that van; its pink logo, ropes that match, yet can't cordon off the danger zone's stench: in a hot final stretch, the darkening pink shell – *six* – of a pig's carcass. The sickly-sweet smell clouts me with each heckling gust of wind marring our act. I can't be knocked off balance by charring

pork but I'm almost retching, and I try to pull in my stomach, so the air slides past. To be thin as a knife. I refuse to be teased, tempted – *seven* yet I am. Gasping, and stuck up here. Not slender in my lycra like I used to be. Just gaudy – *eight* and all too obvious. "Piggin' Roastin" on the spit.

Hope they're oblivious, dull as another East Coast resort. How I must reek; I detest my body odour but his distracts me. His hamstrings shake and our skin – *nine* – our very bones tremble as North Sea winds rip through us, build to the perfect internal storm only he and I feel – *ten* – Kev crumples. I jump down.

Hilary J Murray

