**Optimum Weight**

Birthday Boy – the big six-o

and only me to celebrate.

Rosie, bless her,

would have baked a cake,

lit candles.

From the window I can see

down the mountain

to the village below.

Toytown.

Dinky toy cars.

My old shop resurrected

as 99p Land.

Turn in his grave, my Da.

I see us at the counter,

straw hats, striped aprons,

bloody hands.

Ever seen a butcher with slim fingers?

That’s Da again

sharp as our slicing knives.

On market days he’d chew

the ends of his moustache

eyeing a beast, calculating

its weight within a pound or two.

Optimum weight, see.

Not too fat, not too lean.

Taught me all I know

about butchery, my Da.

Job for life, he said. Job for life.

Bloody supermarkets.

Retired before my time, me.

Still, there’s perks to be had.

Hedgehogs and rabbits in my snares.

Once a dead new-born lamb.

Got there just before the crows.

Keeps my hand in.

Still got the wooden block,

the knives, the steel.

The freezer’s full now.

Eat anything, me.

Just like my Da.

Not too keen on veg though.

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Birthday joint roasting, delicious

smell drifting from the kitchen.

Not a cake man, me,

but my Rosie, bless her,

give her cake every time.

Sick of meat, she told me, turned

up her nose at road kill,

crow pie.

Silly woman.

Pity she put on those pounds.

Optimum weight, see.

Butchery is in my blood.

Lovely legs, my Rosie, bless her.

Not too fat, not too lean.

Marjoram, a bay leaf,

black pepper.