

PRESS RELEASE: FICTION

THE WEAK SPOT

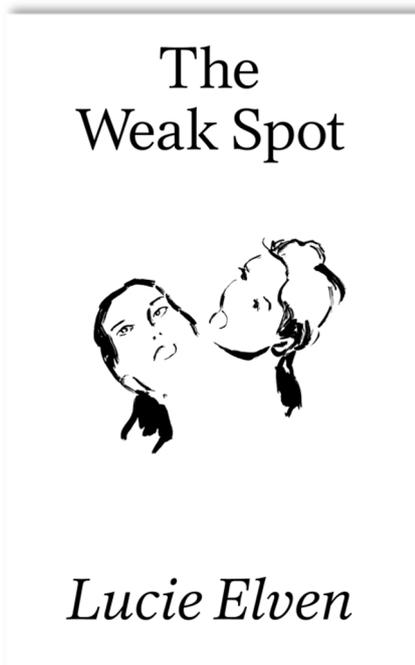
Lucie Elven

Published: 15 September 2021

178 x 111 mm / 134pp.

Price: £12.00 paperback | £5.99 e-book

ISBN: 978-1-913513-16-0 | 978-1-913513-17-7



On a remote mountaintop somewhere in Europe, accessed by an ancient funicular, a small pharmacy sits on a square. As if attending confession, the townspeople carry their ailments and worries through its doors, in search of healing, reassurance and a witness to their bodies and the stories of their lives.

One day, a young woman arrives in the town to apprentice under its charismatic pharmacist, August Malone. An outsider, she is lulled by the stories and secrets shared by both customers and colleagues, and slowly loses herself in this strange, beguiling, isolated community. As her new boss rises to the position of mayor, exploiting his intimate knowledge of those whose trust he gained, she realises that something sinister is going on around her.

Ambiguous, compelling and bewitching, *The Weak Spot* is a fable about our longing for cures, answers and an audience, and the silent manipulations of those who hold power in our world.



Lucie Elven has written for publications including the *London Review of Books*, *Granta* and *NOON*. *The Weak Spot* is her first book. She lives in London.

Praise for *The Weak Spot*

'This eccentric, intensely observed book examines the slippery quality of the self in relation to others and the treacherous terrain of a world governed by manipulative men. Slightly gothic, vaguely old-world, and briskly contemporary, *The Weak Spot* is a singular work from a writer whose fiction I've long admired in the pages of *NOON*.' – **Kathryn Scanlan**

'No word is wasted in Lucie Elven's whipsmart, elegiac debut. Every scene and image is vivid, cutting, and fluid, turning a peculiar mountain town into a wonderland of social insights and frictions. I knew I would be rereading *The Weak Spot* halfway during my first read – and a few pages into my second read. Elven is a master in the making.' – **Stephen Kearse**

'A controlled, acute and anxious fever-dream of a book. The prose prickles and shimmers, as though suspended over a great depth. An atmospheric and thrilling novella.' – **Seán Hewitt**

'Haven't we all had a boss like Mr Malone, and felt as though our public and private lives (not to mention elections) were being manipulated by men like him? In consistently surprising, sculptural prose, Elven crafts a world that is both deeply strange and uncomfortably believable. A novel to savour and admire.' – **Olivia Sudjic**

'Fable-like . . . Hints of trauma begin to flicker through the novel's dreamlike surface, as the narrator attempts to keep her feelings "as still as possible".' – **The New Yorker**

'Recalling the mood of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and the aesthetic of a Dario Argento film, *The Weak Spot* is an evocative and intriguing novel. The thrill is in the prose – vivid, expansive, perfectly controlled. I adore this book.' – **Lauren Aimee Curtis**

'In prose reminiscent of Fleur Jaeggy, *The Weak Spot* is a prismatic fable spiked with dozens of elegant revelations. Lucie Elven is an extremely promising new writer, one in touch with a greater, richer world that exists just below the surface of daily life.' – **Catherine Lacey**

About Prototype

Prototype was founded in 2019 by Jess Chandler, co-founder of the independent publishing houses Test Centre and House Sparrow Press. Established to continue and develop the work begun by Test Centre, Prototype is committed to creating new possibilities in the publishing of fiction and poetry through a flexible, interdisciplinary approach. Through the discovery of high-quality work across genres, Prototype strives to increase audiences for experimental writing.

Recent titles include Caleb Klaces' acclaimed debut novel *Fatherhood* (longlisted for the Republic of Consciousness Prize), Jen Calleja's *I'm Afraid That's All We've Got Time For*, Otis Mensah's *Safe Metamorphosis* and Turner Prize-winning artist Helen Marten's *The Boiled in Between*.

Test Centre's back catalogue includes works by Derek Jarman, Max Porter, Sam Riviere, Sophie Collins, Jack Underwood, Rachael Allen, Wayne Holloway-Smith and Jonathan Meades. Forthcoming are novels by Alan Rossi and poetry collections by Sam Buchan-Watts, Caleb Klaces and Lucy Mercer.

For more information contact Jess Chandler or Claire Maxwell:
jess@prototypepublishing.co.uk | clairesrmaxwell@gmail.com