

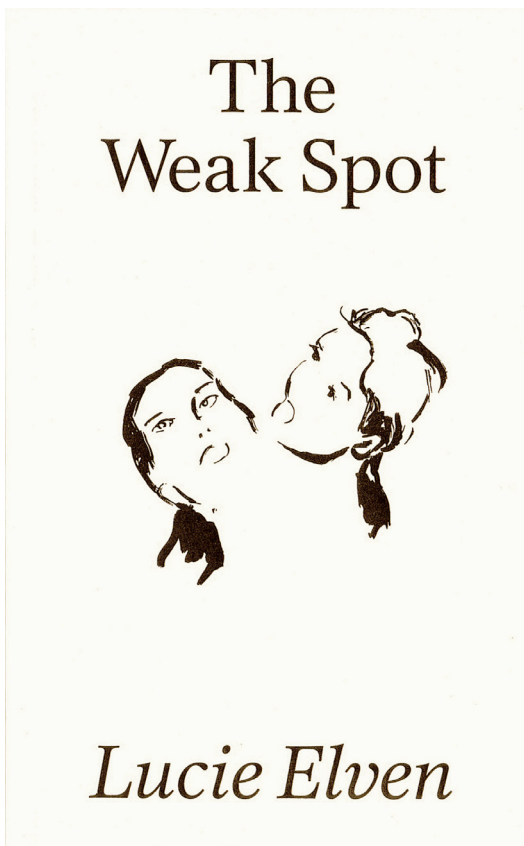
# THE WEAK SPOT

## by Lucie Elven

*'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**

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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.

### ABOUT LUCIE ELVEN

**Lucie Elven** has written for publications including *NOON*, the *London Review of Books*, *Granta*, and the *New York Times*. She has worked at the *Paris Review*, the *White Review*, the *Believer*, the *Baffler* and, currently, *Le Monde diplomatique*. Her first novel *The Weak Spot* is published by Soft Skull in the US, and by Prototype in the UK.



## FURTHER PRAISE FOR *THE WEAK SPOT*

‘Sentences brittle as twigs snapping under your feet ... delightful’  
– **The Telegraph**

‘Hallucinatory’  
– **Vanity Fair**

‘Hypnotic’  
– **Buzzfeed**

‘As debuts go, *The Weak Spot* is so refreshingly elusive, it demands to be read a second time to fully unravel the intricate commentary Elven is making on the many moving parts of our modern world.’  
– **The Arts Desk**

‘[In] Elven’s remarkable novel ... there is always the feeling that everything could suddenly change, the boundaries of the fiction completely redrawn, or the central players of the novel suddenly unrecognisable.’  
– **The London Magazine**

‘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**

‘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**

## 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 free-form contemporary literature.

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