

STILLP • INT
A MAGAZINE IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

THE OVERWHELMING URGE

ELLA FREARS

Stabbed in the arm with a compass.
Stabbed in the side. Ink
everywhere. Ink in her mouth.
Saint Sebastien of St Ives, holy
on the supermarket roof
throwing moss at passers by.

She's seen *Some Like it Hot* maybe twenty times.
A hard kernel of a soul,
she practises softness.
Pouted baby-mouth in the mirror:
I used to sell kisses for the milk fund!

Stormy, sticky with flies,
nettles brushing her ankles,
she bends,
picks a doc leaf, rubs
until the anklebone is green.

A herd of cows gather to watch.

He wants to show her something
by the metal farm gate.
She, nodding, surveys it from a distance,
mentally files it under:
penis; moonlit.

In the dark, the shapes of cows.

The ground is dirty with dirt. The air, dirty
with smoke; she, clean as a whistle, hops over the stile.

I used to sell kisses for the milk fund!

Below is the town, crammed in
against the yellow beaches
and all around the sea is endless, aching.

While she wrestled him on the hill,
the badgers, the horses, the sheep
worked away, shovelling
their hearts into the landscape.

When he cried, the wind whisked his tears away
and out to sea.

She has the overwhelming urge to jam
her tongue into a plug socket,
swing an axe
at her legs, swim out, out, out,
she's itchy with it.

For now there's nothing to do
but finger one another
uncomfortably at the shoreline.

For now there's nothing
to do but walk
together in the brilliant air, pick up lumps
from a freshly tilled field
and ask – rock or mud?

Ella Frears is a poet and visual artist based in London. She's had work published in the *LRB*, *Ambit*, *Poetry London*, and currently has poems on show at Tate St Ives. Her first collection is *Shine, Darling* (Offord Road Books 2020).

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