

Return

Astrid Lorange

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The ridge that I grew up on was composed of small dairy farms that connected slabs of land divided by one or two families and run by a complicated network of cousins, friends, and enemies. Each year, after the calves had been removed to become veal, the cows would cry out through the night, keeping me and my brothers awake. We didn't connect that particular horror with a distaste for the milk that came directly from the dairy – milk still with its heavy cream skin and flecks of the wet shed's interior. Our conviction was that the milk tasted too much like the inside of a cow's body, that enormous network of tubes, shit, drool, and hair. We begged our mother for supermarket milk, for the obtuse promise of homogenisation, for whatever it was that turned the textbook abjection of displaced lactation into a properly hermetic commodity. Later, I learned that the supermarket milk was in fact made from all the dairies near my home, and others like it further away, and that the company that sold it owned the milk even before it was expressed from the cows each morning and night – they owned, in other words, the right to determine how much milk the dairy farmers could keep for their own tea. More than that, as the supermarket duopoly conspired to sell milk at a certain price, milk became an impossible form of subsistence for these small dairies and they shut down, turning sheds into AirBnBs and making way for proprietary crops or power infrastructure.