

Isobel Dixon

At the Back of Preston Street Pub

We saw the woman who works in the corner shop kiss
Miss Steele, our year nine history teacher. She never
corrected the lads yelling dyke across her classroom,
always taught a lesson on Eleanor Roosevelt, not Teddy,
and had a portrait of Anne Lister as her laptop background.
She taught us about women who pretended to be men
in World War Two so they could join the battle, fight the cause,
stop popping beer bottle tops and boiling pork chops, mopping
floors and little else. Women built bombs in headscarves and boiler
suits. An abandonment of dresses on clothes lines and bodies.

I remember your presentation on Rosie the Riveter posters,
and how I liked her curling bicep reflecting in your eyes
from the projector, how your fingers were flecked with ink
from writing out your notes. How I couldn't hold a word
you said inside my brain because you didn't wear tights
that day, so I saw the bottom of your thighs. You had a bruise
on one of them I wanted to kiss better. I wanted to kiss your fingers
and absorb all your knowledge, to save your lips from telling me,
so I could kiss them too. If you'd let me. If you wanted me to.
Miss Steele's history class, World War Two lessons, me, you. History.