

A Fairy Tale

She had been living happily ever before,
waltzing through imagined ballrooms in the arms
of a handsome young prince. Then, one day, they kiss
for the first time, he takes back the word love

and suddenly bloats to an idle, wounded beast
that stoops above her in its thickening hide.
She trembles before his laboured breath and white, strange eyes.
Each night from her solitary bed, she overhears the echoes

of unimaginable rages which transform their castle
to a ruin of shadowy rooms with a cursed and sleeping heart.
At last she understands him poorly enough to be terrified
and run a gauntlet of scattering wolves to the arms of her sick father

who greets her with a tearful goodbye. They subsist
forever after on a diet of simple gruel and vague desire.
When passers-by ask her about her life, she waltzes the laundry
to her heart and answers with a distant smile: *Once upon a time.*

from GRAIN
by JOHN GLENBAY
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