

Love, Story

by Michelle Elvy

I don't read fiction he said dismissively and it was such a profoundly ridiculous denial of something so essential like saying I don't breathe air or I don't make love or I don't like music for fuck's sake that all I could think to say in response was I don't use commas.

I was determined of course not to like him but he swept me off my feet anyway with his long locks salty skin and an impossibly perfect pizza crust which he'd learned not from a Neapolitan *grandmama* but from a deliberate study of yeast and flour.

And for a while it worked. A shared love of pasta and seafood and cheap wine kept our minds off our differences. So too the other usual things: movies plays sex showers. But he didn't like King Missile and I didn't like Abba even though I consented to seeing *Mamma Mia* with him one cold November night (the things you do in those early fuck-happy days).

We argued over religion and science and politics and it was fun.

Later we argued over religion and science and politics and went to bed sour and silent.

After I broke it off he used to call me. *Come on babe. Take a chance on me.*

I sent him a copy of *Last Chance to See* (it's non-fiction after all) and compared our love to the nearly extinct Kakapo but as soon as I mailed it I regretted not sending him *Tristram Shandy* or *Gravity's Rainbow* as a more apt means of torture.

He was persistent I'll give him that. Sent me flowers and chocolate.

I responded by photocopying for him the script of Anthony Minghella's *Cigarettes and Chocolate* that my fringe theater friend got her hands on — and I threatened to stop speaking to him.

He replied with an email: *What happened to our love? It used to be so good.*

I wrote: It was fiction.

And then I gave him a taste of his own medicine: *If you see the wonder of a fairy tale You can take the future even if you fail.*

How could it have come to this? I'm living with insufficient punctuation and quoting Benny and Björn to a man who doesn't believe in fiction but models his lovelife on bubble gum pop. * * *
I'm in a new relationship now. We breathe air, make love, and play music loud. We argue over religion and science and politics by day and go to bed with Ondaatje and Heym and Kingsolver and LeGuin. And, I realize, life is good.

