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Fire Sale

Emily McGiffin

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Emily McGiffin

poetry



Fire Sale

He eyes the middle distance, breakers
pebbledashing the shore, the air whitewashed.
He had taken predictable steps, the house first,
the car. Furniture divided. All life
is dead reckoning, advancing
from the only known location.
Beating against the wind, you trim
as best you can.

Now he drinks afternoon tea
unaccompanied. The fishermen
have not come to the shore today,
but the old widow in the black dress
arrives at the cottage with beach rocks
that she opens with a shucker.
Oysters slither out. One by one.
She eyes him slyly. That evening

he sits alone, eating the oysters
raw with a wedge of lemon, thinking
of his far-away life, its purpose
lying wholly in improvement—
the house, the yard, his daughter's
grades, her skill at the piano, the state
of their finances, city infrastructure
he is tasked with managing, his
professional skills, his aging limbs,
the whole damaged, irredeemable

world. Beyond the slow fold of breakers,
their pale, flailing hands, the en dash
of an ocean liner inches across the blue.
Pastures slide past him into the rocks.
He thinks of the woman who is not
the mother of his child. And suddenly
he sees that he is that child, child of this
most lovely home, broken by disputes,

the appraisal of its contents, everything vital, elemental, stamped and sold off.

During the five years that **EMILY MCGIFFIN** lived in northwest BC, she became proficient in the fine art of firewood splitting. She holds an MSc from the University of London and has worked and studied in Italy, Sierra Leone and the Philippines. Her poetry, essays, reviews and journalistic articles, widely published in magazines across Canada, have most recently appeared in *Arc Poetry Magazine* and *Contemporary Verse 2. Between Dusk and Night*, her first poetry collection, was a finalist for the Raymond Souster Award and the Canadian Authors' Association Poetry Prize. She currently lives in Toronto where she is a PhD student at York University.

To read more of McGiffin's work in *The Goose* go to
http://www.alecc.ca/uploads/goose/The_Goose_Issue_11_Summer_2012.pdf

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