Fire Sale

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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

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