



On Earth As It Is

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A Prayer for Lack of You

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on earth as it is

prayer as story, story as prayer

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A Prayer for Lack of You

Kyle Minor

Our Father Who Art in Heaven,

We're at the end of this, aren't we? Why do I keep talking to You now that to me there is no You? Why do I keep capitalizing You?

When I was a child I feared all the Old Testament curses—dogs, frogs, being struck down by forked lightning? Which were Old Testament curses and which were the talk of the traveling preachers in their white suits and black slickback hair? Either way, it doesn't matter. One was You and the other was You. You let anyone who wants to speak for You speak for You, so what is left for the children of the world to do but see You in the ones who speak for You? If You are You, shame on You, for sparing those who speak for You the dogs, the frogs, the forked lightning.

Today I dance in the rainstorm and wait for the lightning. Today I dance in all the predictable ways. Motherfucker, I say. Jesus Christ. God damn did I masturbate to an image of the Mother Mary. Like a child, I up the ante, I push and push, I wait for the spanking or the yelling or the quiet please which would indicate love or care or stewardship. Parenthood of some kind today I seek. But all I hear is quiet. All I hear is nothing.

Perhaps You are like my earthly mother, who pretends not to hear my provocations, who has learned not to respond, knowing that silence will wound in ways that curses can't, that hitting can't. Perhaps You are like my earthly father, who is ashamed for how I do not believe in You, and so asks that we no longer speak of You, because between us nothing good can come of speaking of You.

Every day I think of You. Every evening at dinnertime I almost bow my head to pray to You. Sometimes secretly I seek some chapel to recreate some memory of You. Every day I think the words of the

absolute I used to use to speak of You. I know that I know there is no You. I know beyond a shadow of a doubt there is no You.

Every day I wish I had never heard of You. The greatest loss in my life is the loss of You. Without You there is no Kingdom, no Power, no Glory, no Forever. Without You the final Amen is the final Amen.

I am learning to keep my prayers ever open, for who can bear the knowledge of the final Amen?

Kyle Minor is the author of *In the Devil's Territory*, a collection of short fiction. Recent work appears in *The Southern Review*, *Gulf Coast*, and *Best American Mystery Stories 2008*.

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