



On Earth As It Is

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Secret Oxygen

Kim Thomas

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on earth as it is

prayer as story, story as prayer

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photo by matthew simmons

Secret Oxygen

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The firemen access our building invisibly. I thought they would stop coming because you summoned strength against them. I'm sure the firemen have instructions for seizures. Kept in a red tool chest. Explicitly labeled *help*. I'm sure others, like you, ask them to leave. I understand this fear of judgment, yet it is not enough.

Nothing in your home is dirty. All I have to do is keep mopping the floor and we'll be finished with illness. The firemen look at me with distaste when I show them in. Watching where I mop they say, that isn't blood. From the doorframe the most tired fireman says, what do you want of us?

Should I say, know us whole? Know us with flaws, regardless. Know us as awkward descendents of your best intentions. Foxgloves knocked over. The stalled sun in your hand once, outnumbered by other suns, did fall to us.

The firemen have a plastic box of blood pressure cuffs. Please, did you bring secret oxygen? The firemen turn their coats inside out to show me they don't carry help in bulky cans with chargers. We don't think this blood is enough, say the firemen, to justify removal. We don't and please don't yell. The firemen lift your chin off the floor and make prior knowledge as phony as ghosts. The firemen leaning over you leave you as you are. There has to be more blood, they say. The last time I explicitly yelled at them, but I am thinking if I yell again they won't come back. We need the firemen to know us and come back. We need a summoned dove to substitute its blood with nothing.

Kim Thomas lives in Salt Lake City and is pursuing a MS in Speech-Language Pathology at the University of Utah.

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