



On Earth As It Is

---

2010

# In Front of the Black Sea

Matthew Batt

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/onearth>

 Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Batt, Matthew, "In Front of the Black Sea" (2010). *On Earth As It Is*. 4.  
<http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/onearth/4>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in On Earth As It Is by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact [omacisaa@butler.edu](mailto:omacisaa@butler.edu).

# on earth as it is

*prayer as story, story as prayer*

HOME

ABOUT

AUTHORS

CONTACT



*found photo from jeffrey simmons*

## *In Front of the Black Sea*

*Matthew Batt*

Dear God,

Ali and Sema have a daughter!  
It's raining in St. Paul but  
there was a spot right in front  
of the Black Sea and I wasn't going  
to go—it was already almost three  
and I thought I could just plow through  
till dinner but then I saw the sign—  
the sign! in the window! Ali and Sema  
have a daughter!

Her little premi face beamed  
from the glass door on the restaurant  
and I backed up and parked in front  
of the Hardware Hank and thought  
what a miraculous thing—what a glorious  
and ecstatic thing—as only can happen

to a Turkish immigrant couple  
in Minnesota, which is to say,  
I suppose, to anyone. To everyone.

We brought our son here when he was  
just one, when Sema wasn't even dreaming  
anymore of getting pregnant (she and Ali  
are both every bit of forty-five, fifty) but  
every time she or Ali would pass our table  
they messed up Emory's hair or swept their hands  
under his chin and made him giggle as can  
only strangers who don't care if you care  
if they touch your child.

They're really beautiful people. They call,  
both of them, everybody—me, you—  
buddy.

It doesn't hurt that their prices  
are low and the falafel a revelation  
and the space—the space!—it's crowded  
and eclectic as an Istanbul bizarre and  
at last count, on the wall, there was one gun—  
a flintlock pistol—three scimitars of various  
length and polish, and at least seven vests  
made of velvet and gold rope, little round mirrors  
instead of buttons, as well as a sign  
that says We Don't Accept Any  
Plastic Cards. Thank You.

As you come in, you pass the counter  
protected by a sneeze guard, and on your side  
is the menu and various reviews of the restaurant.  
On their side, which you can see if you sit  
at the first table facing the kitchen—the one  
with no weapons, only vests—is their baby.  
It's the same picture from the door where she is  
still a little tiny NICU baby with a breathing tube  
taped cruelly, miraculously to her nose—she was two  
months premature—but there she is, so beautiful  
in her knit hat that wouldn't cover my wrist,  
on the door, and there she is, above the garnishes,

and there she is, above the sauces, and there  
she is, right in front of the cutting board where  
they assemble your meal—my meal—a gyro  
with fries—for 4.95—and there they are, working,  
and all they want to know is  
is everything okay  
there buddy?

And you say yes.

And you say thank you.

And you say it is.

Everything is O.K.

Thank you.

Matthew Batt's fiction and nonfiction has recently appeared in *Tin House*, *Mid-American Review* and *Fifth Wednesday*. He has just finished a work of nonfiction detailing the renovation of what may have been a former crack house in Salt Lake City. He lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, and teaches at the University of St. Thomas.

<--Next Previous-->