



# Night Sky with Exit Wounds

*Ocean Vuong*

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**Praise for Ocean Vuong:**

"[A] masterpiece that captures, with elegance, the raw sorrows and joys of human existence." --**Buzzfeed Books**

"An important new voice in American poetry." --**Beloit Poetry Journal**

"What a treasure [Ocean Vuong] is to us. What a perfume he's crushed and rendered of his heart and soul. What a gift this book is." --**Li-Young Lee**

"[Vuong] takes from Pound the ability to eternalize a moment." --**POETRY**

"Even as Vuong leads you through every pleasure a body deserves and all the ensuing grief, these poems restore you with hope, that godforsaken thing--alive, singing along to the radio, suddenly sufficient." --**Traci Brimhall**

"What this poet sees on the street, in a blizzard, or even while studying an apple reminds me of those dreams we have in common: dreams in which we are falling but never touch the ground, dreams in which we are naked in the presence of men suited for our ruin." --**Jericho Brown**

In his haunting and fearless debut, Ocean Vuong walks a tightrope of historic and personal violences, creating an interrogation of the American body as a borderless space of both failure and triumph. At once vulnerable and redemptive, dreamlike and visceral, compassionate and unforgiving, these poems seek a myriad existence without forgetting the prerequisite of self-preservation in a world bent on extinguishing its othered voices. Vuong's poems show, through breath, cadence, and unrepentant enthrallment, that a gentle palm on a chest can calm the most necessary of hungers.

## **Torso of Air**

*Suppose you do change your life.  
& the body is more than*

*a portion of night--sealed  
with bruises. Suppose you woke*

*& found your shadow replaced  
by a black wolf. The boy, beautiful*

*& gone. So you take the knife to the wall  
instead. You carve & carve*

*until a coin of light appears  
& you get to look in, at last,*

*on happiness. The eye  
staring back from the other side--*

*waiting.*

**Ocean Vuong** is the author of *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* (Copper Canyon Press, 2016). His poems appear in *Kenyon Review*, *The Nation*, *New Republic*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Poetry*, and *The American Poetry Review*, which awarded him the Stanley Kunitz Prize for Younger Poets. Born in Saigon, Vietnam, he lives in New York City.

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#### **Kristen Self:**

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