



On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous

Ocean Vuong

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Poet Ocean Vuong's debut novel is a shattering portrait of a family, a first love, and the redemptive power of storytelling

On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous is a letter from a son to a mother who cannot read. Written when the speaker, Little Dog, is in his late twenties, the letter unearths a family's history that began before he was born -- a history whose epicenter is rooted in Vietnam -- and serves as a doorway into parts of his life his mother has never known, all of it leading to an unforgettable revelation. At once a witness to the fraught yet undeniable love between a single mother and her son, it is also a brutally honest exploration of race, class, and masculinity. Asking questions central to our American moment, immersed as we are in addiction, violence, and trauma, but undergirded by compassion and tenderness, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* is as much about the power of telling one's own story as it is about the obliterating silence of not being heard.

With stunning urgency and grace, Ocean Vuong writes of people caught between disparate worlds, and asks how we heal and rescue one another without forsaking who we are. The question of how to survive, and how to make of it a kind of joy, powers the most important debut novel of many years.

On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous Details

Date : Expected publication: June 4th 2019 by Penguin Press

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Author : Ocean Vuong

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From Reader Review On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous for online ebook

Joanie says

I have been so unbelievably excited for this ever since I saw his update about an upcoming novel. the title is absolutely perfect and yes I already have a few VERY highly anticipated books for 2019 (aka stuff I'd delete plans for and just read read read in between food and sleep: Marlon James, Colson Whitehead, off the top of my head) but this one might be #1. even this update is late bc I should've added this book to my shelves the MOMENT I heard. & advanced copies are already going out so I'm terribly envious. aching to read this. absolutely desperate.

Tory says

I'm sorry, Ocean. I'm not your target audience. Stream-of-consciousness makes me itchy and confused; I thrive on plots and my capacity for poetry is finite. There was a sharp, biting, anxious love story here that entranced me -- made my heart and bones ache -- but it was buried in so many layers of ramblings and literary gibberish and phrases that *seemed* super deep and meaningful until you read them again and they're nonsense: "They say nothing lasts forever but I'm writing you in the voice of an endangered species." "Is that what art is? To be touched thinking what we feel is ours when, in the end, it was someone else, in longing, who finds us?"

Like, WHAT?

So yeah, if you're like me, give this one a pass. I KNOW others will love this and it's their right to, absolutely, but to me, this book was only briefly gorgeous and mostly tedious.

William says

There is so much to marvel over in this astonishing fiction debut from Ocean Vuong, who is able to navigate seamlessly between themes as large as the convention of naming, cycles of violence, displacement, American identity, and what love is. At the heart of this novel is a meditation on what it means to be as fragile and tenuous a thing as a human being. Ocean Vuong reaches for that truth with every page in this book that is equal parts open letter, elegy, and myth.

Josh Hereth says

I know, I know, it's incredibly overdue, but trust me, you want to savor every single word of this book. Literally the best kick off for 2019. All parts beauty and a work on identity. Much like Alexander Chee, ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS portrays incredible amounts of terrible, haunting images and paints them with beauty, love, and sexuality. It's art at its finest, and writing like none other.

xTx xTx says

i know.

i know i discovered Ocean Vuong's poetry in 2010 because i reviewed his book, *Ocean's Burning*. I knew he was a magical then and he has remained magical.

this book has a loveliness and a tenderness. He uses language in a way that i covet. This book is a beautiful love letter.

I am proud I recognized beauty so early. I feel like he was Justin Bieber at age 7 on a youtube video and i was the producer guy who watched him and just knew.

anna (readingpeaches) says

i want to tattoo *on earth we're briefly gorgeous* on my ribs but it's cool i'm cool abt this book

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Paris (parisperusing) says

DNF, for now, because it's almost too pretentious for my liking.

Will pick up again before the official drop.

Nora says

This book is a poem wrapped into a novel with care and hurt so intimate, they feel impossible to articulate. Yet Vuong has shaped the muddied violence of a life into an offering so filled with tenderness, it will leave you aching. From pain, anger, and longing, Vuong uproots us, plants us in this vessel, and gives us the sky.

Jeff Zentner says

Thank you to Penguin for an advance copy of this book.

Sometimes you think you know well the geography of the land of words and language. Then, a book takes you by the hand and says look. And it shows you soaring mountains, crystalline waterfalls, and golden

meadows you'd never before seen. You see your world in a whole new way.

This is that book.

This book packs an unfathomable amount of terrible, haunting beauty; wisdom; love; sensuality; and living and dying into its urgent 242 pages. But make no mistake: it is not a quick read. You will find yourself dwelling on single lines, running your fingers along them in wonder of their craft.

On every page, Ocean Vuong turns you inside out to show you how your heart is stitched together; turns the fabric of humankind inside out to show you how it's stitched together.

Reading some books feels like staring into the sun, robbing you of your vocabulary to describe them, the way the sun temporarily steals your sight.

And so you have left only the simplest and most stalwart words to describe what you've seen:

Masterpiece.

Gretchen says

I'm wrecked from this book. I stayed up til 1am to finish it, I couldn't set it aside. It's one of the best books I have read in the last decade, if not the best. It's such an intense, unflinching, careful, loving, pitiless, above all beautifully written book, a spiraling letter from a son to his Vietnamese immigrant mother, meditating upon the abuse and joy they have each felt in their lives, the moments where their connections burned bright and flared out, the timid hopeful, secretive first love he found with a boy, the intergenerational trauma and PTSD of a family borne through the effects of war and colonization. Intimate, beautiful, absolutely gutting, rarely have I seen such a clear evocation of a life. All the warnings, including for child abuse, animal abuse, racial abuse, homophobia, sexual abuse, war trauma. An incredible feat of a novel if you think you can face the brutal truth of it. Also, one of the best (awkward, terrifying reality and incredible wonder of it at once) first time gay sex scenes I've ever read.

Jillian Doherty says

I wish there was 10 stars to give ~

I wanted to write this review as soon as I finished, to hold on to it a little longer. To be able to share the brutally kind emotional saturation it bestows upon you. To remember the feel of his story telling to properly share an accurate review - but, amazingly it's power fully robs you.

I just had to sit here for a minute, decompress. I don't remember the last time I read something that made my eyes prickle on the edge of weeping, or how each time I'd take in a few chapters I'd have to take breaks as to not overflow with too much emotion.

His writing is liquid illustration; he's insatiably quotable, and I am still humming/numb all at once.

Jackie says

i am....so deeply moved and changed and full. i close my eyes and all i see rust red pick up trucks and the night sky and buffaloes and bowls of rice with jasmine tea and hands on skin and the smell of acetone. no one writes as evocatively and tenderly!!!!

as whitney houston would say, "i get so emotional baby/every time i think of you" but it's me, at ocean vuong. which is funny because i listened to this song a lot while reading this, and she's actually in the acknowledgements!!

this book is a gift. a painful and beautiful gift that is brimming with hope and love and nuance and SO MUCH!!!!

Miles says

Abandoned at 50%. This is some of the most dreadfully pretentious, masturbatory auto-fiction I think you'll find this year... featuring all sorts of stunner sentences like "It was not until the blood ran from his mother's nose, turning her white shirt the color of Elmo on Sesame Street (??? lol wut), that he started to scream. That his grandmother rushed in, grabbed him, and ran past her reddening daughter..." Give me a break, bruh. (Out in June 2019 if you care)

Celeste Ng says

ON EARTH WE'RE BRIEFLY GORGEOUS will be described--rightly--as luminous, shattering, urgent, necessary. But the word I keep circling back to is raw: that's how powerful the emotions here are, and how you'll feel after reading it--scoured down to bone. With a poet's precision, Ocean Vuong examines whether putting words to one's experience can bridge wounds that span generations, and whether it's ever possible to be truly heard by those we love most.

Virginia says

A beautifully written book that I couldn't believe was a debut novel!

The story is written in first person as a cathartic letter to his mother who will never read its contents. The narrator uses this more as a method to come to terms with his identity by reflecting on his family's history and his own past. He talks about stories he heard from his grandma during the Vietnam War all the way to six months ago when his family gathers together to bury her. His identity spans beyond his family history and covers issues with race, sexuality, violence, and the loss of innocence.

Vuong's writing is intense in the best ways to allow the reader to full immerse themselves in the emotions he tries to convey throughout the text. The chapters split between various points of time, but he writes so fluidly that you won't get lost between each time jump. He also has a way of finding the beauty in even the darkest of corners.

I would recommend this to anyone who loves literary fiction and questions their place within the norms of society.

****Read in an ARC thanks to Riverhead****
