

One late summer evening in the post-industrial town of East Gladness, Connecticut, nineteen-year-old Hai stands on the edge of a bridge in pelting rain, ready to jump, when he hears someone shout across the river. The voice belongs to Grazina, an elderly widow succumbing to dementia, who convinces him to take another path. Bereft and out of options, he quickly becomes her caretaker. Over the course of the year, the unlikely pair develops a life-altering bond, one built on empathy, spiritual reckoning, and heartbreak, with the power to transform Hai's relationship to himself, his family, and a community on the brink.

Following the cycles of history, memory, and time, *The Emperor of Gladness* shows the profound ways in which love, labor, and loneliness form the bedrock of American life. At its heart is a brave epic about what it means to exist on the fringes of society and to reckon with the wounds that haunt our collective soul. Hallmarks of Ocean Vuong's writing—formal innovation, syntactic dexterity, and the ability to twin grit with grace through tenderness—are on full display in this bighearted story of chosen family, unexpected friendship, and how far we would go to possess one of life's most fleeting mercies: a second chance.

Ocean Vuong is the author of the critically acclaimed poetry collections *Night Sky with Exit Wounds* and *Time Is a Mother*, as well as the *New York Times* bestselling novel *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. A recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship and the American Book Award, he used to work as a fast-food server, which inspired *The Emperor of Gladness*. Born in Saigon, Vietnam, he currently splits his time between Northampton, Massachusetts, and New York City.

Read by James Aaron Oh



PENGUIN
AUDIO

Runtime: 14h. 5m. • Unabridged

© 2026 Ocean Vuong. © 2026 Penguin Random House LLC. All rights reserved. Penguin Audio, an imprint of the Penguin Random House Audio Publishing Group, 1745 Broadway, New York, New York 10019. This recording may not be reproduced, in whole or in part, without permission from Penguin Audio. Jacket photograph: Ryan McGinley. www.penguinrandomhouseaudio.com

playaway
PRODUCTS

© 2026 Playaway. Patented.
All rights reserved.
31999 Aurora Road, Solon, OH 44139 USA
Designed in Ohio. Made in China.
www.playaway.com

The Playaway format is recommended for children ages 5 and up.

47689
ISBN 979-8-3317-1731-5



9 798331 717315



AUDIO

OCEAN VUONG
THE EMPEROR OF GLADNESS

Adult



PENGUIN
AUDIO

PLAYAWAY

THE ALL-IN-ONE AUDIOBOOK

