

Carolyn Oliver: Three Poems from *Night Ocean*

Night Ocean

Seven months after his funeral
I leave a party simmering
at two in the morning without telling
my friends I am a little drunk and
therefore surprised to find St. Mary's
Street dark as the night ocean
little lights like plankton tipsy
in the diver's flash and I realize
halfway to Beacon I'm going the wrong
way so I pass their building again
how upset my sweet friends if they knew
my knuckles not spiny with keys
phone sunk in my bag no
feel for the cold or my heels slamming
the sidewalk already I'm past the bridge
slack across the Charles like a useless rope
but don't worry dear friends don't worry
grief makes me invincible I am
the sleekest fucking shark in this ocean
eyes open asleep teeth ready I mean
there is nothing anyone could get from me
worth taking

Essay on Erosion

Every morning a woman
licks the same rock until
rain comes for its cold cup

Prayer for a Haunting

O grant me that barnacle spirit—

Please note:

“Night Ocean” first appeared in *Nimrod*

“Prayer for a Haunting” first appeared in *Psaltery & Lyre*