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The Big Book Of Exit Strategies



Synopsis

Praise for Jamaal May: "Linguistically acrobatic [and] beautifully crafted. . . . [Jamaal May's] poems, exquisitely balanced by a sharp intelligence mixed with earnestness, makes his debut a marvel."—Publishers Weekly

Following Jamaal May's award-winning debut collection, *Hum* (2013), these new poems explore parallel landscapes of the poet's interior and an insidious American condition. Using dark humor that helps illuminate the pains of maturity and loss of imagination, May uncovers language like a skilled archaeologist—digging up bones of the past to expose what lies beneath the surface of the fragile human condition.

From: "Ask Where I've Been": Ask about the tornado of fists. The blows landed. If you can watch it all—the spit and blood frozen against snow, you can probably tell I am the too-narrow road winding out of a crooked city built of laughter, abandon, feathers and drums. Ask only if you can watch streetlights bow, bridges arc, and power lines sag, and still believe what matters most is not where I bend but where I am growing.

Jamaal May is a poet, editor, and filmmaker from Detroit, Michigan, where he taught poetry in public schools and worked as a freelance audio engineer and touring performer. His poetry won the 2013 Indiana Review Poetry Prize and appears in journals such as *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *the Believer*, *NER*, and *the Kenyon Review*. May has earned an MFA from Warren Wilson College as well as fellowships from Cave Canem and The Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University. He founded the Organic Weapon Arts Chapbook Press.

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Customer Reviews

As someone who thought Hum was one of the best books of contemporary poetry available, I wanted to give this book five stars, and admittedly the first section of the book does make it seem like a worthy enough successor. Soon enough however, I found the tension, restraint, and precision of Jamaal's writing fell off in the second part and throughout the third. Sentimentality and expected imagery began to erode the baseline of the book's power and take away, at times drastically, from the collection this could have been.

I have never felt so much by reading a collection of poetry by any poet, that is, until I read The Big Book of Exit Straggles. I was both surprised and relaxed as I read as it was almost a kind of permission to me as the reader to sit in the wonder of the mundane, painted by the artist himself, Jamaal May. A must read for poets, mothers, brothers..... anyone really who is human!

Jamaal May writes with poems with fire rather than ink. Vulnerable and fierce, this big book brings us another round of May's masterful approach to the world. He will not turn away from what is difficult to see, his own image included. He means to share the burden with us, and when reading poems as beautiful as these, it is easier to agree to share the load. Following his near-perfect debut, this book fulfills the promise of a great poet whose work will never be done. Read it and read it again.

Great book! Jamaal May is an all-star poet. This is a perfect sequel to HUM. Read it.

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