



Unusually Grand Ideas

Poems

JAMES DAVIS MAY

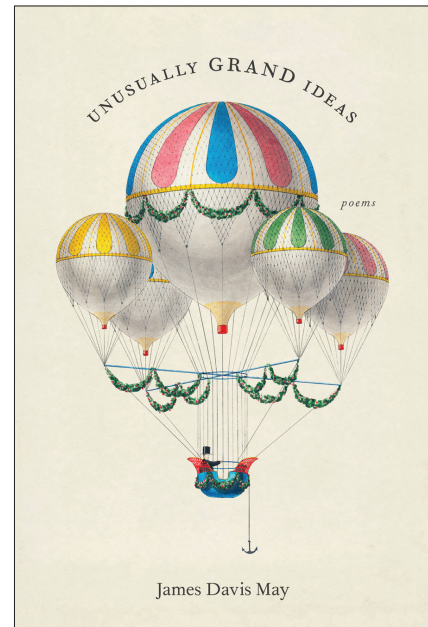
PRAISE FOR *UNUSUALLY GRAND IDEAS*

“James Davis May’s second book begins quietly, chronicling a series of losses, then escalates into a harrowingly exact, artfully rendered portrait of depression: ‘I needed a darkness I’d probably survive / to escape the one I knew I wouldn’t.’ May nails the paralyzing character of his illness and somehow manages, through art and ardor, to negotiate with despair, climbing toward a position that acknowledges darkness but does not deny hope. ‘Forgive me, Love, my difficulties with joy,’ he writes to his young daughter, and to himself and his grateful readers, ‘sometimes the world doesn’t disappoint.’ *Unusually Grand Ideas* is wrenching, genuine, and superb.”—Mark Doty

Titled after one of the side effects of antidepressants, *Unusually Grand Ideas* is a poignant account of clinical depression and the complications it introduces to marriage and fatherhood. James Davis May’s poems describe mental illness with nuance, giving a full account of the darkness but also the flashes of hope, love, and even humor that lead toward healing. In pieces ranging from spare lyrical depictions of pain to discursive meditations that argue for hope, May searches for meaning by asking the difficult but important questions that both trouble and sustain us.

JAMES DAVIS MAY is the author of the poetry collection *Unquiet Things* and a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in creative writing. He lives in Macon, Georgia, where he directs the creative writing program at Mercer University.

You remember
those fears, what it’s like to stand at the doorway
of your room before a forest of hissing shadows
that want to eat you, remember the faith
you have to have in your own terror to sprint
through that dark to the only place you know
will save you when you get there, if you get there,
which you will, you know it, you will, you have to—
—from “Unusually Grand Ideas”



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Poetry



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