



Words to Live

Dan Semenoff

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Words to Live is an aptly named collection of inspiration and life analysis, with a generous seasoning of love and warmth.

In *Words to Live*, Dan Semenoff crafts poetry that's accessible to all audiences without relying heavily on pretenses or formal structures. A transparent, friendly poetic approach ushers in veteran poetry lovers as well as poetry fans in the making.

None of the poems in *Words to Live* feature titles. Instead, the book is presented as an interwoven series of stories—almost a series of epochs—that don't relate a straight narrative but all manage to connect quite well. The result is an experience uninterrupted by clear beginnings and endings that still allows the reader to put down, digest, and pick up the collection later.

Semenoff utilizes repetition that breeds familiarity, sometimes drawing readers back to a passage or phrase that might have shifted in meaning since its first usage. For instance, on page 42, the second line sets the scene with “on a candle lit night.” Semenoff goes on to describe an evening where all the usual attendees (the moon, clouds, and city lights) have shifted for him, and, in turn, for the reader. Unique descriptions of these transformations result in what he calls “not just / another / November / candle lit / light.”

The poems contain a peppering of identical rhymes, slant rhymes, and eye rhymes, such as the usage of “said” and “again” in the poem on page 59. Interesting type alignment and justification offer surprising word placements that keep the reader engaged. This playfulness, paired with a nontraditional font, makes it clear that this isn't a stuffy, closed-off poetry collection. The poems also often feature exceptionally short lines and frequent breaks, instilling plenty of room for pause and reflection. However, defying the tendency of many poems with short lines to be formulaic, Semenoff manages to instill almost narrative-style poetry within brief lines.

Semenoff's love poems avoid overt flowery language and techniques, opting for a simple portrayal on the page. The poems call forth an unnamed male character—a seemingly omniscient presence who is spoken to throughout the work. Who he is can be filled in by the reader, whether it's some form of god, oneself, or another figure that claims a parental-esque role.

Words to Live is an aptly named collection of inspiration, analysis of daily living, and the warmth of love. Readers looking to add more poetry to their lives in an easy manner will find Semenoff's collection to be a great fit, and an uplifting addition to their shelves.

JESSICA MEHTA (December 20, 2016)

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