



I AM WE: FREE SAMPLE EDITION

Hi there, my friend! Welcome, and thank you for exploring this sample edition of my new book of poems, *I Am We*.

I Am We is a collection for 68 powerful little poems. They invite you into your many faces, facades and incarnations—the different, sometimes contradicting “sides of yourself” that we experience every day. This book exists to guide you to yoke or unite them into wholeness under the banner of One Soul.

How to Support *I Am We*

If you enjoy what you read in these pages, you can best support the health and longevity of my book (especially by helping others discover it) in the following ways.

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I AM WE: POEMS

Dave Ursillo is a multi-published writer, teacher and yogi from Rhode Island who helps self-starters lead by example through storytelling and self-expression. *I Am We* is his second collection of poetry.

After September 11, 2001, Dave pursued a career as a public servant and aspired to become a presidential speechwriter. His political experiences culminated as an intern at the White House Council on Environmental Quality in 2008 and as an aide to a gubernatorial candidate in 2009. Battling depression and a crisis of identity, Dave abandoned his young and promising career to serve others using his words, eventually becoming an author, creative entrepreneur and yoga teacher.

Today, Dave works with writers, creative self-starters, coaches, entrepreneurs, authors and thought leaders to make their stories shine. He is the founder of *The Literati Writers*, an online writers' group and writing e-course, and travels across the U.S. and Europe to lead yoga and writing workshops.

Dave is a 10-time author and has published over 400 essays on DaveUrsillo.com. He has been seen on CBS News Sunday Morning, Inc.com and Psychology Today, and welcomes notes from readers at hello@daveursillo.com.

I Am We

Poems

DAVE URSILLO JR.

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*I don't want to be demure or respectable.
I was that way, asleep, for years.*

— MARY OLIVER

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About the Author

Excerpt: *God Whispers on the Wind*

Excerpt: *Big Apple, Black Sand and the Midnight Sun*

Preface

Poems are powerful. They refine mystery to digestible certainty. Complexity becomes simple curiosity in a poignant poem. Starlight we see from our backyards, it's traveled a billion miles and for eons. But in poetry that astounding, incomprehensible miracle takes the form of beacons, or nightlights, or souls watching over us. Oceans' tides, those ebb and flow like lovers in the night. How the seasons dance and sway? They remind us that change is everything, everywhere.

Poems can say so much of the artful essence of life that we're always experiencing, but tend to forget. Poetry, I believe, calls our attention to the places where our attention belongs. It then sheds light on mysteries, and evokes simplicity from even the most daunting questions that have no answers. Through poetry's lens, we see life, the world and ourselves with deeper and deeper reverence. That's why I love poetry. Poems may be written with less ink than could cover a scalpel, but can entirely skewer a galactic conundrum down to a morsel for our noshing. A twisted, thorny dilemma loses some of its prickly might when a poem can cut free the rose atop it. With routine washings of good poems' love, the hardened, stiff, unrelenting exteriors we've erected to protect ourselves from harshness may slowly be worn thin, and smoothed—even polished translucent—with poems' love, we might start to feel again.

My relationship to poetry began a few years ago. I was living in New York City at the time and running out of money (as 20-somethings who've adopted the Big Apple as home often seem to). In poems, I found spiritual reprieve from a place I adored but whose energy, noise and bustle was challenging and draining me. I began to drown myself in poems, and the waters cleansed me. Rumi, Hafiz and Rabia were some of the mystics who guided me. In Thoreau and Emerson, I saw a touch of my American self (not to mention my New Englander self) in their unapologetic, reverent spiritual journeys. Then the likes of modern greats like Mary Oliver, whose words I have chosen in a quote to open this book, swept me away, once and for all.

As a writer, it was through poetry that I discovered a truth to my voice that I never had experienced before. But reading poems further ignited my spirit. I began to think in poetry. On snaking walks through boiling streets from the East Village to SoHo, I picked

poetic thoughts like wildflowers sprouting from sidewalks. Poem-writing gave me a renewed sense of artful courage after self-publishing my first failure of a book—and the renewed vigor to start new projects, including an online writers’ group that I founded called *The Literati Writers*. I published *God Whispers on the Wind*, my first book of poems, that hot New York City summer.

I Am We is my second. If you’ve read my first book of poetry, *I Am We* will be reminiscent of sentiments I began to unearth in *God Whispers*: that spirituality exists beyond religiosity; that defining lines, labels and titles separate us more than unite us, and that is tragic; that we are all one; and that through our oneness is our salvation.

Where *God Whispers* centered on an unconventional exploration of modern day spiritualism with a mix of playfulness, emotional vigor and devotion, *I Am We* is centered upon the yoga of everyday life. The yoga of everyday life is the journey of yoking—the goal of uniting body with mind and spirit—that I believe every soul yearns for, whether or not it is consciously engaged upon a path to wholeness. It’s the yoking that we want, I think, when we say we’re in pursuit of happiness, peace, joy, contentment, a better life. It’s worth mentioning that since *God Whispers*, I’ve become a certified yoga teacher and have deeply fallen in love with what, while writing my first poems in New York City, was a simple curiosity with the practice of yoga. Here in the West, the physical or *asana* (posture) based practice of yoga is popular and seems to best suit our chaotic, high-anxiety and pursuit-driven ways of life, but traditionally these yoga poses are meant to simply represent gateways to within. Through body movement and breath, we ease our ways into a soulful experience of true unity, or yoking: the union of body, mind and spirit; the coming together of all the sides of ourselves. *That’s* yoga.

The poems in *I Am We* represent the many faces of our individual selves. How do we find union or yoga between all of the complex, multifaceted and unique facades that make up a soul? In *I Am We*, I invite you to explore the full range of facades that comprise your wholeness. Explore your playful side (“A HAND STRETCHED OUT”) and the undeniably powerful essence of your divinity (“I AM THE STARS”). Drink in devotion in your daily life (“TALKING WITH GOD”) before dipping into a little defiance and blasphemy (“SOME KIND OF SELF-LOVE”). Drink in idealism (“HURLING PRAYERS”) and become truly unapologetic (“THOUGH STONES SHALL CRUMBLE”).

I Am We invites you to excavate the many faces that make up the unique soul called You, and bring them into harmony. The yoga of introspection. The yoga of self-love. The yoga of poetry.

Everything I do in my life—what’s written, what’s created, what’s sought and fought for—is that union. Wholeness. Integration, within. And alignment with everything, everyone, everywhere. That’s the ideal. That’s what I strive for. Divine union and loving affection to the world and the stars and beyond. *I Am We* is just one more of my scalpel-sized soirees into my life’s yoga.

I share these poems with you because I believe they can be your own little scalpels—edges, tools—that you can use to cut through the noise when the noise is not serving you; to break down the hardened shells we wrongly construct out of pain and fear (though we say are for our simple self-preservation). Use these little edges as you will. With this book, I invite you to sink deeper into the yoga of your everyday life—whether your yoga is the wholeness of happiness, the union with inner peace, the yoking of generously giving and serving others, or another. Rumi said, “*There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.*” The dozens of poems in this book, they represent dozens of ways to find your union.

At the very least, I hope these poems read well and are enjoyable to you. That’s the last thing I’ll say of my love of poetry—it’s difficult for good poems to have an agenda. They’re just honest words at play.

I hope you may see yourself in some of them.

Maha (great) love from Little Rhodey,

Dave Ursillo
April 2015

I AM WE

I REMEMBER YOU

I remember you.

That's nature's howling rhythm.

What the surging tide whispers to the moon.

What spring flowers say to the sun.

What heat is lit between lovers' hands when they at last embrace.

I remember you.

IT FEELS LIKE WINTER NOW

It feels like winter now.

Frigid gusts send sun-swept reeds into playful backbends;
gold feathers cascade against a crisp blue sky, glazed with cloud.

We can anticipate the seasons' changing all we wish,
counting days across the calendar.

But in the end, the seasons move by Nature's will.
A transition of months seems to change in a day—changed, before we even notice it.

What of those seasons of our lives?

Anticipated transitions that hang on
and on
and on,

maybe never to turn,

maybe never to be the same
in a sudden flash of change?

AN OCEAN, A FISH BOWL

The ocean would seem a burdensome place
to a fish whose only home was his bowl.

My bowl has shattered.
I'm not sure who nudged it off the table.

But I do know that Two Strange Hands scooped me up
and saved me.

They gave me freedom by tossing me into the waves
that nearly caused me to drown.

That's what I mean when I say we tend to spit at life and curse
this world for their unjust doings.

Some fish just prefer the bowl.

WHAT COULD PEBBLES KNOW?

Whatever could pebbles know?

Fractured from their whole.

Distant. Longing. Punitive. Small.

Kicked about. Stepped on. Crunched. Thrown.

Their Mountain called Home, it must feel so far away now.

Here lay little pieces, once great, once watchful from on high.

Now trampled. Kicked. Pushed with every gust.

Dear One, does the life of a pebble

really sound so unfamiliar?

THE SHELL OF ME

My shell is broken open,
And all my light is slipping out.

Now, I can't stop saying
Thank you
I love you
I honor you
You are beautiful
to every friendly face and stranger.

The shell of me has broken again,
And all my love keeps pouring, pouring, pouring out.

ECHOES OF AN EMPTY CHAMBER

Echoes of an empty chamber have woken you again.

Voices never forgotten and old haunting songs you hear yourself hum from time to time
still bounce between the brick and plastered walls
that neighbor this resting space, your bed, your sanctum.

Echoes of an empty chamber awaken you still, calling your name
from a past you refuse to leave behind.

Every morning through weary eyes, you throw open your door with a weapon in hand,
a bat, a belt, or a club, perhaps,
looking for the boisterous intruders who robbed you of your dreams.

There's no one there.

Nothing but echoes of an empty chamber,
a room full of nothing maintained by a mind afraid to forget;
a heart terrified to move on; a stubborn-worried soul,
desperate to not fill an empty past that is already gone.

Decorate your room carefully, friend.

Fill it with joyous reminders
and beautiful interpretations of your love.

Soon, echoes of an empty chamber will find no room to play.

And you will sleep well again.

I WILL BE YOUR SUN

You carry a whole world with you.
A planet rests upon your shoulders.
You may not see it, but I do.

There is a Universe Within
that you carry wherever you go.

Ecosystems of passion and romance. Warring nations of worry and fear.
A billion living ideas, stories and experiences that make up a whole history
named You.

Wherever you go, I promise to be your sun.

It's not that your life revolves around me.

Think of it like this:

Whenever you come to me,
I will do my best to be quiet and still
and shine nothing but kindness and light upon you.

TALKING WITH GOD

Talking with God
is not meant to be passive.

Engage in that Divine Discussion.

Step outside of your home and pace your feet,
each in front of the other,
for a thousand steps.

Now, a thousand more.

Every tip and tap is a knock upon Brahma's door that says,
"Oh, Wise One, are you home?"

JUST KEEP POURING

Love is like the ether;
unseen, it still fills everything.

Then some crotchety soul who's grown jaded
sneaks up and scoffs, "The cup is empty! Full, yes, of nothing!"

But you know Love is the Universe: ever expanding from nothing and everything
into nothing and everything.

You smile, and reply,
"Is it really so terrifying to think that This Well might never run dry?"

Fill your cup.

See what happens if you
just
keep
pouring.

LOVE-DRUNK

Oh, My Beautiful, do I even risk writing you this poem?

The danger is this: when I think of your touch, your gaze, your smile,
all of my breath is stolen from me!

I become so dizzy that I must desperately remember to breathe!

But then my heart begs me to do it:
to write you,
to dream of you,
to imagine your smiling eyes.

Oh, there goes my breath again!

Last night with your hand holding mine, we became like the earth and moon:
a beautiful union suddenly bound us; Our Gravitational Glue could not be broken.

Two planets floating hand in hand through an endless black sky! What magic!

And although we found ourselves in crowds of drunk and stumbling stars—the night's
revelers who toppled across the streets—we did not even see them.

Everything else disappeared.

I am in love with that feeling,
that Cosmic Union which binds with a touch. Your touch.

Your gaze. Your smile.

Just the thought of you, and my breath is swept from my lungs!

Oh, I wish to write you more poems than you could imagine, all in a single moment. But
I must resign to sleep, for it is challenging to rest when my love-drunk lungs keep
forgetting to breathe.

Without you here,
Sleep is but an obstacle of time—
A pause in our Cosmic Union until I can see you again.

But I am awake still.

I think my Earth is looking for his Moon, desperate and longing
for you to draw into his orbit again, again, again.

I want to be there, where the drunken stars swirl quietly around us,
and nothing matters but our touch.

SWING YOUR DOORS OPEN

Swing your doors open. Do not live with them closed!

Open is how your heart wishes to be.

Open to chance, inviting to friends, accepting of every breeze
that passes through the threshold.

That is peace, friend. It can be yours too.

Swing your doors open, Gentle Soul—
there's no easier way to
kindly invite the whole world in.

DISTANT LOVERS

There are two distances—a great monster—
that tear good lovers apart at their seams.

One distance, miles.
The other, years.

Miles make lovers desperate and longing:
Though united in love, still alone;
Though free to be together, trapped apart.

With enough small steps, miles can be conquered.

No number of steps can conquer the years.

THE POEMS HAVE FOUND ME

Ah, the poems have found me again!

So long were they gone
that I went to the doctor and asked for help.

She did some blood work and pricked my finger,
Tapped my knees and asked me to open wide and say,
“Ahhhhhhh.....”

The bill was pricey and the diagnosis was,

“Good health,
just a poor poet
who seems to’ve lost his rhymes.”

A HAND STRETCHED OUT

I think you were born with your hand stretched out, reaching for the sky.
Was it naïve to reach so high, or some secret wisdom, since forgotten?

Your arms have grown longer since then.

These days, when you reach too far
you tip and tumble off that silly ladder called Pride
and land on your rear.

Oof.

Let's promise one another, you and I,
to give the other a friendly hand up, once we're done laughing.

This way, even when we fall and fall again,
we can smile and keep reaching like wise-daring children,
never minding our sore dreamers' behinds!

I AM THE STARS

I am the stars.

The *Oh* upon the lips of the Universe
when she whispers the name,
“*Omega.*”

The final domino, pushed at last,
from one long line of karmic clashes.

When I fall, I fall alone.
None are there to catch me.
That is my place.

For I am the stars.

The last light in an empty sky that shines a billion years.
The heavy legged Atlas who bears the fallen weight
of all twenty-three stumbling lovers before me.

The bookend. The final chapter. The period upon a last breath.

Say it.

I am the stars.

MY HEART COULD BURST

My heart could burst for my love of you!

But I have a job left to do.

So I will keep it, well, unburst, for a while.

I have stories left to hear, make, feel and tell—

They're all meant to lead you home.

That's just one of my worldly duties.

To use these words to say, over and over again,
something that might make you feel yourself through me.

Because if you can feel yourself through me—

some sappy writer who can't make a poem rhyme—
who's to say that you couldn't sense yourself in any other?

A mother, a brother, a father, a neighbor?

An opponent, an enemy, a stranger, a sinner?

Who's to say you couldn't break your heart wide open,

Without a shred of pain, just strength,
And, looking there within it,

See secret markings and messages

Etched by God's own hand?

THE SACRED CHANNEL

Mind thinks. Heart feels.

And in between rests This Sacred Channel.

The throat space is the dividing line—
what separates thought and emotion.

But what divides also connects.

The throat is the bridge between my thinking and my feeling.

What I speak, what I express, what I say,
Is the holiest human alchemy I know: pure heartmind in unison!

Ah, a thirst for gold, it's why I write poems and, when I'm not feeling quiet,
can't quite seem to shut myself up.

IN LINES AND REASON

I used to think in lines and reason.

The clock strikes twelve, and a new day is born.
The sun crests over the horizon, and so my morning begins.
There are tasks to do today; to accomplish or fail.
I will sleep at day's end, whether champion or failure.

And so it was with love.

Our eyes first meet, and a new day is born.
We kiss and our love begins.
There are tasks to be done, to either accomplish or fail:
 Give gifts. Smile often. Be understanding. Listen well.
Our love will rest at day's end, whether champion or failure.

I used to think in lines and reason.

Now I whirl like a delicate drunkard,
 Churning and dancing in unpredictable circles.

KEEP BURNING

Breathe life into these poems and You will shine through them.

It doesn't matter who wrote them or why.

Brush away the Academic Thinker who begs you
to critique petty particulars like cadence and style.

These poems are tiny mirrors
held to a space beyond face or body
to a corner of your soul, your spirit, a radiant essence
of love and truth that transcends time and space.

Light a candle. Cover it with a glass cup. The light shines through it.

Your light shines through You like a candle in a glass cup,
reflecting off souls and scenes wherever you lay your feet.

What is that feeling of loving another?
Our lights mixing into a new, colorless radiance.

Suffocate your light for too long and your love will extinguish.
(By now your glass cup may have burst from the heat!)

Keep your love burning. Break little holes in your glass cup—
space through which love breathes.

Do it, or life will do it for you.

One way or another,
You have to keep burning.

A GOOD REASON TO SMILE

She asked me,

“Why do you smile when you look at me?”

I said,

“It is because when I look in your eyes,

I see all the stars shining across the night sky.

They are beautiful and bright, and I don't want to look away.

And *that* is a good reason to smile.”

A FOLDED FOREST

A book is like a folded forest in the palm of your hand.

Some take the book and see the intricate stories told by 10,000 trees;
each, beautifully etched by the wind and sun.

“What will This Book-Maker,” he says, “Tell of what She has created here?”

Others see not stories, but lessons to be put to good use:
timber to build a home, or a temple, or an altar to God.

Some lonely soul who’s in need of love might witness that folded forest
and find a handful of tinder to burn, just to keep warm on this frigid night.

Books do that, too.

And yet?

Still some will see naught but a crunched up pile of dull brown sticks,
and step through them blindly.

HURLING PRAYERS

Here I sit upon the shore in this midnight hour
Hurling stones like prayers into the frozen bay

And in this midnight hour, with so few decisions left of me
I can only resort to heaving violent prayers
to make my desperation known.

Every gallomping splash, a nodding syllable, tells me—
The prayer is received.

The biting wind seems to say different.

Oh, how the wind changes with the seasons—
in the summer, she blesses and cleanses and renews me with her airy vigor.

In the winter? Her dark, hollow, empty chill mirrors my doubt.

I feel my shoulders tense and rise
As my mind plays games, listening for passers-by.

There's no one there.

Just then a passing voice, perhaps the wind herself, calls out to me,

“You are the stone.
Toss yourself in.”

MEET YOU THERE

We share this journey.
But we do not need to arrive together,
especially if we intend to arrive at That Same Destination.

The home whose doorstep reads, "Love."

A dance floor for two under an endless night's sky.

I trust your journey will take you exactly where you need to go.

Venture on, Beautiful Traveler.
Someday, I will meet you there.

HOW TO LOVE

You have known how to love before ever hearing the word.

Me? I think I fell from the womb planting lily bulbs,
crawling towards sprouted seedlings to say hello
wherever I could find some dirt.

These days, I go around in search of the most barren soil
to plant a poem, a dollar, a smile.

DRINK IN THE QUIET

Rest your head upon your pillow, love.

Drink in the quiet
that's deeper than the sky. Rich with peace.

Ten million harmonious chords fall weary
like your eyes, now.

They wish to rest with you.

Reach and pull that blanket of star-specked cloud
across your chest. Seal in your warmth.

A little drool won't be a problem.

JOIN THE FUN

There is a playground in my heart.

Love rides the carousel, blissful and free.

God bursts in red fireworks overhead,

Making the children leap about with beaming smiles and dancing arms!

And lovers hold hands under the vibrant moonlight;

a spotlight made for a lover's dance

as two souls mingle as one.

There is a playground in my heart.

Let us be childish and free again

And join in on the fun!

MAKE THIS SPACE YOUR OWN

Pangs of my stomach ring in the blue morning light,
Creeping through thin metal shades
into this empty room, so unfamiliar.

The pangs are less of hunger, but of lonesome.

The light refracts reality. Where am I going? Why am I here?

The empty room greets me coldly as if to say,
You must make your space your own.

So now I tell you what this room tells me:

Keep your feet moving, Weary Traveler.
I know that every maneuver could be met by your doubt and question.

You're not lost.

Start small. Start now. Start by making this space your own.

JUST REMEMBER YOUR HEART (HOW LOST IT'S BEEN)

Take a look at that 'tween on her cell phone.

Watch the evening news, look at that chaos.

Talk with your lover about that friend
who can't stop struggling to fight his same, same, same old battles.

Is everyone lost?

No.

Just remember your heart. How lost it's been—
How lost it seems, more days than not.

If you can remember that everything
is an expression of Desire for Purpose,
judgment dies. Your opinions suddenly don't matter.

Those same observations? Not gossip. No longer.

Thinking with your heart is a holy act, a soulful practice,
In undyingly-compassionate living.

ANOTHER FINCH!

Another finch!

He looked me square in the eye, sitting on this bench next to me.

That's my holy messenger,
The brown little scavenger whom children chase in dandelion fields
Hoping to catch a new little pet:

My Holy Messenger of God!

IF YOU FORGOT IT ALL

What if, today, you forgot it all?

What freedom would you feel?

What newness? What depths of experience might you discover?

Everything?

The air, smell it!

A sky so blue, throw your hands into it.

A face, that stranger, is it your One True Love?

Embrace him!

Kiss her.

Don't just fall in, *leap!*, hurl yourself into that love!

Imagine if, today, you forgot it all.

Would old habits become bold adventures?

Might boring be a guise of mystery?

The mundane, an invitation to wonder?

What if, today, you renounced all that you knew?

NOT TODAY

Not every sunrise can be seen so clearly.

There is a life lesson in there somewhere.

For every rise so crystalline,
there may be ten more clouded dawns to which we wake.

Some clear, some clouded.
It's no different from how we grow.

Sometimes, lessons astound us, befuddle us, or joyfully bring us to our knees—
like beautiful sunrises that *blip* over the horizon, into the sky.

Not every sunrise is like that.
Should we expect Our Dear Teacher to treat us any differently?

For every “Aha” so apparent, ten more lessons come
in clouds and rain.

EIGHT EYES UPON US

I once heard this tale from a native culture that told of a great spider, a humble and quiet king, whose eyes never shut on his kingdom, his lands, gazing forever over the ones he loved. But I have never liked spiders.

So the tale that I tell goes like this:

There are eight eyes upon us always, but we are left to wonder whose.

Those eyes might be made up of four muses;
Or our own squadron of guardian angels:
The mystic, the mother, the vixen, the brawler.

Sometimes I think that those eyes are those of our grandparents—
in final duties to God, or old promises made, perhaps,
looking down with sharplike eyes to guide and protect us.

There. Is not that more pleasant than being watched by a spider?

SOURCES

Those words that you quote, those lessons you cite,
The great thinkers and saints whose teachings you revere...

History has this way of being changed.

Does that make the words any less real?
The lessons any less worthy?
The teachings of great thinkers and saints any less heartfelt,
less human, less soul-stirring, less true?

Of course not.

So don't get seduced by the sources.

The source is still human.

The source is still One.

WHAT'S A CYNIC

What's a cynic but a compromised believer?

An idealist who, from hurt and failed hopes,
now preempts his love with a hardened scowl?

BROKEN OPEN AGAIN

my heart is broken open again

it happened when I realized I loved her but never said it
and only felt its familiar *crink*
when she told me it was over.

what irony. what tragedy.

the callous had finally been worn to nothing; her love, her hair, her eyes
dulled my heart's weary armor to the core,
until that poor believer was crushed again.

but I won't callous this time.

my heart is broken open, and that is how it shall remain.

emptying and filling,
broken and whole,
raw and real.

my heart is broken open again.

from now on, Dear Maker, I pledge to keep it this way.

COOKED

The Great Chef is looking at us through the oven window.
Poking, prodding, peering.

Soon we'll be done
and ready to be served.

YOU ARE

You are God. God is you.
There is no difference.

No distance.

Every essence and fiber of this Universe,
Spirit itself,
Speaks through you.

Does this prospect send a shake of fear down your spine?

I know it does mine.

For it reaffirms this long told belief:

You and I play God,
And create a whole Universe
in Every Cosmic Thought.