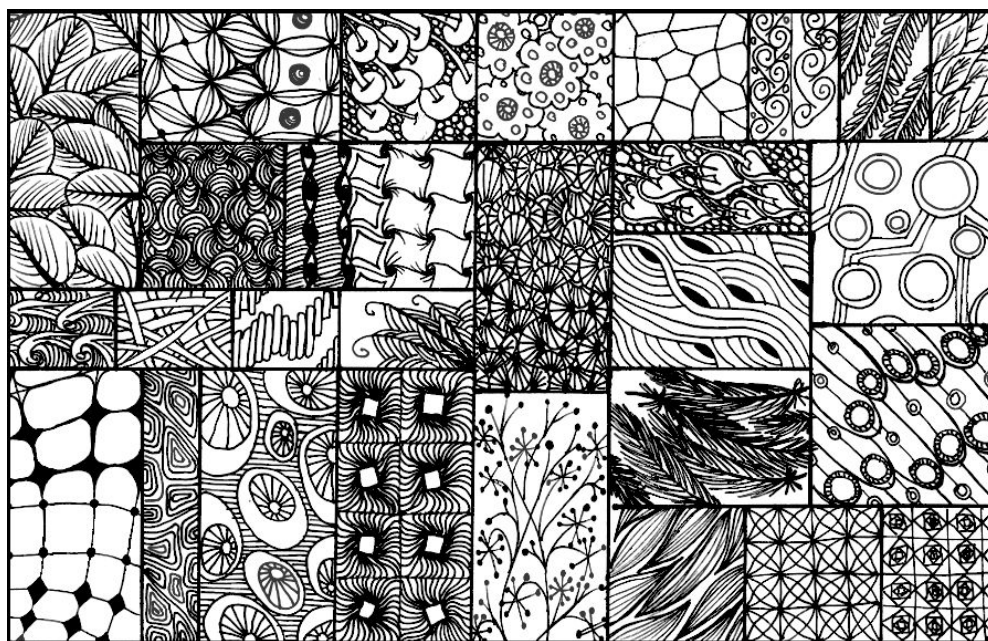


# I'll Tell You a Story, then...

Nancy White

high voice and piano



# Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

# I'll Tell You a Story, then...

for high voice and piano

Nancy White

Elizabeth Alexander

With thoughtfulness, abandon, fluidly (♩. = 72-84)

C7(#11)

*p*

*Ped.*

*legato sempre*

*Ped.*

12

*p*

I'll tell you a sto - ry, — then. — of how I was

*Ped.*

17

walk - ing, — how as I was

C7(#11)/Bb

*Ped.*

*Ped.*

21

walk - ing I smelled some - thing, — some - thing

C7(#11)

*Ped.*

25

su - gar - y, \_\_\_\_\_ e -

*A<sup>b</sup>6/9*

*Ped.* *Ped.*

29

lu - sive, \_\_\_\_\_ spi - cy, you could call it, \_\_\_\_\_ and

*C7(#11)*

*Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

35

smo - ky \_\_\_\_\_ in a sad sort of way. \_\_\_\_\_

*A<sup>b</sup>6/9* *G<sup>b</sup>6/9* *Fm6/9*

*Ped.* *Ped.* *Ped.*

41

*ad lib.*  
mm \_\_\_\_\_

*Ped.* *Ped.*

**pushing forward slightly**

45

*mp*

Al - so like blos - som bare - ly

*Gm*<sup>79</sup>

*mp*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

49

born, Pale and half un - done to the

*A<sup>b</sup>6/9*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

53

wind that still might e - ven be car - ry - ing snow,

*ad lib.*

*Fm*<sup>6/9</sup> *Db*<sup>6/9</sup>

Ped. Ped.

57

car - ry - ing snow. O

*ad lib.*

*E<sup>b</sup>#6/9* *F*<sup>6/9</sup>

Ped. Ped. Ped.

63 **with greater urgency**

This scent I de -

Ped. Ped.

67

ci - ded to fol - low, this scent I de - ci - ded to

Am<sup>9</sup> F<sup>6</sup>

Ped. Ped. Ped.

72

fol - low.

Ped.

77

some - times I stum - bled up - on the path, sil - ver with

C/B<sup>b</sup>

Ped.

Opal Palmer Adisa, poet • Paul Adams, technological hero • Stephen Alexander, lyric consultant • Ginny Allen, Agile coach and friend • The great people at American Composers Forum • Yehuda Amichai, poet • A. R. Ammons, poet • Jennifer Anderson, conductor and composer advocate • Scott Bates, poet • Abbie Betinis, initiator of collaborative endeavors • Beth Norton, conductor and composer advocate • Dennis Blubaugh, more than just a music dealer • Michael deVernon Boblett, poet • Edna Busby, my first piano teacher • Ray Bradbury, writer • Augustin Cadena, translator • Norbert Capek, minister and advocate for religious freedom • Jessica Corbett, editor • David Cummings, poet • Philip Dacey, poet • Catherine Dalton, composer and scrum partner • Emily Dickinson, poet • Evelyn Dudley, poet and caregiver • Rob Eller-Isaacs, minister and composer advocate • Ralph Waldo Emerson, philosopher and poet • Louise Erdrich, writer • David Allan Evans, poet • Sophia Lyon Fahs, writer • Richard M. Fewkes, minister and writer • Pasha Gertler, poet • Jack Gallagher, composer and teacher • Paul Gerike, proofreader • Jocelyn Hagen and Michael Hagan, founders of Graphite Marketplace • Steve Harper, just about everything • Steve Harkins, web designer • Edie Hill, composer and friend • Langston Hughes, poet • Margaret and George Heald, piano technician • Karel Husa, composer and teacher • David Ignatow, poet • Kabir, mystic • Linda Kachelmeier, composer and scrum partner • Ruth Palmer, conductor and composer advocate • Joan Wolf Prefontaine, poet • Paul Rardin, conductor and composer advocate • Kalidasa, poet • Steve Kaul, recording engineer • Søren Kierkegaard, philosopher and poet • Dorothy Knost, piano teacher • Ben Krywosz, artistic director of Nautilus Music-Theater • Denise Levertov, poet • George Ella Lyon, poet • Jonathan Machen, vocalist • Dawna Markova, writer • Anne Matlack, conductor and composer advocate • Nancy Menk, composer advocate • Edna St. Vincent Millay, poet • Jane Ramseyer Miller, conductor, composer, social activist • Joe Mish, conductor and composer advocate • J. David Moore, composer • Gerald Rich, poet • Carl Sandburg, poet • friend • King Sigismund III, religious reformer • Ann Silsbee, composer, poet and friend • Simon Alexander-Adams, sounding board, fellow creative, and awesome son • Steven Stucky, composer and teacher • Rabindranath Tagore, poet • Sister Peronne Marie Thibert, teacher and writer • Oliver Alexander-Adams, unconventional thinker and light of my life • Howard Thurman, civil rights leader and writer • Everyone whose work supports the Association for Unitarian Universalist Music Ministries • Charles Varney, high school choral director • Anna Vonhuben, illustrator and graphic designer • Nancy White, poet • John Greenleaf Whittier, poet • Theodore Chickering Williams, poet • Daniel Winter, pianist and teacher • Nancy Wood, poet • Yehudi Wyner, composer and teacher

**A lot of hard work  
and creativity went  
into bringing this  
music to you...**



**...and some of it  
was even mine.**

**This page has been intentionally omitted.  
(You know why.) A complete perusal score may be  
purchased through any music store or dealer.**

*Elizabeth Alexander*  
**Seafarer Press**  
**The Music of Elizabeth Alexander**  
**www.seafarerpress.com**

99 **a tempo meno mosso**

twang.

Gm<sup>6/9</sup>

*pp*

*Red.*

104 **accel. poco a poco, with more intensity**

*mf*

Oth - er

108

times, I moved fast, snatch - ing at its mul - chy smooth

Bm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>6/9</sup>

*mf* *sfz* *sfz*

*Red.* *Red.*

112

threads through the air, the

Bm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>6/9</sup>

*sfz* *sfz*

*Red.* *Red.*

116

leaf \_\_\_\_\_ and rot - ten meat rib - bons of scent,

*Am*<sup>7</sup> *Cm*<sup>7</sup>

*Ped.* *Ped.*

*sfz* *sfz*

120

rough tongues of ti - gers\_\_ who have re - cent - ly feast - - ed, \_\_\_\_\_

*Am*<sup>7</sup> *Cm*<sup>7</sup>

*Ped.* *Ped.*

*sfz* *sfz*

125

the liv - ing de - cay \_\_\_\_\_ of sad - dle soap \_\_\_\_\_ and

*Bb*<sup>9</sup>

*Ped.* *Ped.*

130

hap - pi - ness \_\_\_\_\_ the lem - on

*Gm*<sup>9</sup>

*f*

*Ped.*

134

ur - gen - cy of sex, hon - ey in the air.

**Fm7** **E<sup>b</sup>6/9**

*Red.* *Red.*

138

**Senza misura, freely** *f intensely* **meno mosso** *p thoughtfully, determined*

Where did it come from? Where did it come from?

**Dm7(11/9)** **Cm7(11/9)**

*f* *p*

*Red.* *Red.*

140

**a tempo** *mp with something close to desperation*

I rose, pant - ing up the slope, mus - cles strung on the

**Db<sup>79</sup>/B** **Bbsus<sup>79</sup>**

*mp murmuring, pulsing*

*Red.* *Red.* *slowly go to tre corda*

*una corda*

144

search - ing bow of my bod - y,

**A<sup>b</sup>maj7(9/9)** **G<sup>b</sup>maj7(9/9)**

*Red.* *Red.*

147

raised the back of my hand to wipe a - way the

*Fm7(6/9)*

Ped.

150 **senza misura - very freely**

*mf* sweat salt - ing my lips, *p warmly* mm

*Gbmaj7*

*8va*

Ped.

151 **Sensuously and freely, maintaining the feeling of 6/8**

and re - a - lized, and re - a - lized,

*Fm7(11/9)* *Gbmaj7* *Fm7(11/9)*

*p*

Ped.

154

and re - a - lized the smell is me.

*Gbmaj7* *Fm7(11/9)*

Ped.

156 *introspectively, warmly*

mm

*Ped.*

158

mm

*Ped.*

160 *deliciously*

the smell is me, mm

*Ped.*

*Ped.*

162

me.

mm

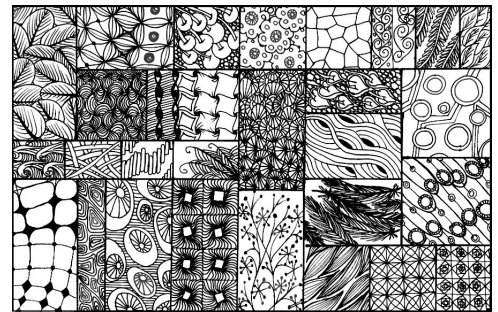
*Ped.*

## Just Once I Want to Write a Gentle Thing

I'll tell you a story, then,  
of how as I was walking, I smelled something sugary,  
elusive, spicy, you could call it,  
and smoky in a sad sort of way. Also  
like blossom barely born, pale and half-undone  
to the wind that still might even be carrying snow.  
this scent I decided to follow.  
Sometimes I stumbled on the path, silver  
with stones worn smooth as kindness,  
or had to stop and rest among pines  
where the smell settled a little, at home  
with their religious and sensuous twang. Other times,  
I moved fast, snatching at its mulchy sweet threads  
through the air, the leaf and rotten-meat ribbons of scent,  
rough tongues of tigers who have recently feasted, the living decay  
of happiness, and saddle soap, the lemon urgency of sex,  
honey of the air — where did it come from?  
I rose panting up the slope, muscles strung on the searching  
bow of my body, raised the back of my hand  
to wipe away the sweat  
salting my lips  
and realized the smell —  
the smell is me.

Nancy White

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**Composer Note:** Nancy White’s warm and earthy poem “Just Once I Want to Write a Gentle Thing” invites the reader to embrace every aspect of one’s being. Following the poet’s lead, I asked myself what each successive smell might *sound like*. This sensory exploration was what helped me find the visceral tenderness in Nancy’s dark, sweet, vulnerable, completely human poem.

*I’ll Tell You a Story, then...* was written and developed for vocalist Ruth MacKenzie. Traces of her passionate, fully embodied style made their way into the song, giving it more sensuality and freedom. I eventually expanded this song into *Nature Creature*, an extended vocal work that revels in the beauty and complexity of being alive.