



# Grace



medium voice and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

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Tenderly

Elizabeth Alexander

D G/D D G/D A/C#

6

It's how I hold my head up af - ter I \_\_\_ have  
peo - ple keep their love a - live\_ through

G/B G% Am/C B7

10

missed the mark. It's how I know I'm loved when things are dark. \_\_\_ It's how I stand when I am  
thick and thin. It's how a bro - ken peo - ple sing a - gain. \_\_\_ It's how the wound-ed set a -

Em7 A7(sus4) A7 D Dmaj7

13

feel - ing small, how I stand a - gain \_\_\_ af - ter a fall, \_\_\_ it's how I'm e - ven stand - ing here at all: \_\_\_  
side their blame, how the down - and - out \_\_\_ cast off their shame, it's how I know that ho - ly is my name: \_\_\_

G% D/F# Em7

16

— some peo - ple call it Grace. — Fall - ing down, — like rain on  
— we're all the same to Grace. —

A7(sus4) D G/D D G<sup>6/9</sup> A7(sus4)

20

ev - 'ry - one, so warm — like greet - ings from the sun, like a gen - tle snow\_ it's mak -

D Bm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>6/9</sup> A7(sus4) D G<sup>6/9</sup> A

24

- ing ev - 'ry sur - face glow. And I know I did - n't earn it:

Bm<sup>7</sup>(add9) Em<sup>7</sup>

Ped.

28

That's how I know it's Grace. — It's how two

A7(sus4) D G/D D G/D

33

2.

And I did - n't have to earn it. No, I did - n't have to earn it.

Em7 A(sus4)

37

I did - n't have to earn it through a word or through a deed or through a

F#7/A# Bm Bm/A

40

tri - al or a creed or by de - ny - ing what I need. I on - ly had to reach out my

Gmaj7 F#m/A F#/A# Bm

43

hand and it was there. But

Bm/A Gmaj7

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 serum 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 serum 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**

62

— like rain on ev - 'ry - one, so warm — like greet-ings from the sun, like a gen-

G<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7</sup>(sus4) D Bm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7</sup>(sus4) D

66

- tle snow\_ it's mak - ing ev - 'ry sur - face glow. And I

G<sup>6</sup> A Bm<sup>7</sup>(add9)

Ped.

70

know I did - n't earn it, No, I did - n't have to earn it, I did - n't have to

Em<sup>7</sup> D/F# G<sup>6</sup> D/A

74

earn it: \_\_\_\_\_ that's how I know it's Grace. \_\_\_\_\_

G<sup>6</sup>/B A<sup>7</sup>(sus4)

## Grace

It's how I hold my head up after I have missed the mark,  
It's how I know I'm loved when things are dark,  
It's how I stand when I am feeling small,  
How I stand again after a fall,  
It's how I'm even standing here at all –  
Some people call it grace.

Falling down like rain on everyone,  
So warm, like greetings from the sun,  
Like a gentle snow it's making every surface glow.  
And I know I didn't earn it:  
That's how I know it's grace.

It's how two people keep their love alive through thick and thin,  
It's how a broken people sing again,  
It's how the wounded set aside their blame,  
How the down-and-out cast off their shame,  
It's how I know that holy is my name –  
We're all the same to grace.

Falling down like rain on everyone,  
So warm, like greetings from the sun,  
Like a gentle snow it's making every surface glow.  
And I didn't have to earn it.  
No, I didn't have to earn it:

I didn't have to earn it through a word or through a deed,  
Or through a trial or through a creed,  
Or by denying what I need.  
I only had to reach out my hand, and it was there.  
But still it cannot take away the truths I have to face.  
Oh no, that's not how it works with grace.

Falling down like rain on everyone,  
So warm, like greetings from the sun,  
Like a gentle snow it's making every surface glow.  
And I know I didn't earn it.  
No, I didn't have to earn it.  
I didn't have to earn it:  
That's how I know it's grace.

**Composer Note:** It took me five years to write *Grace*. Every few months I returned to the song and eked out another couple of lines, but something essential was always missing. Grace felt infinitely immense and infinitely intimate at the same time, making it impossible for me to get my hands around this powerful concept.

The very word “grace” came with cultural baggage. Springing from the same Latin root which brought us words like “gratitude,” “gratis” and “gratuity,” grace is all about generosity freely bestowed, irrespective of whether that bounty has been earned. But in our time, grace has become so closely associated with Christian doctrine that many people define the word narrowly – as something bestowed only by God, and granted only to those who hold certain beliefs. I wanted my song to express how universal grace is, a gift and blessing far too precious to be limited to a chosen few.

However, my biggest challenge was that my lyrics kept making grace sound like a one-size-fits-all solution to every problem, a magical cure for disappointment and loss. I couldn't manage to balance the essential beauty of grace with the essential suffering of life. But in the aching days after the sudden and unexpected death of a young family friend, my unfinished song called to me again. This time, I wove a thread of heartbreak into the song – and I finally found a way to sing about grace in a way that was both awestruck and real. - E.A.

# Vocal Music by Elizabeth Alexander

**A Garret of Old Playthings** (Carl Sandburg)  
high voice, piano

**A Love Like That** (Hafiz/Ladinsky)  
low voice / medium voice / high voice, piano

**Conversation on a Train** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
*Duet:* low voice & medium voice, piano

**Die Gedanken Sind Frei** (German protest song, arr. Alexander)  
*Duet:* low voice & high voice / 2 medium voices, piano

**Grace** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
low voice / medium voice / high voice, piano

**I Write This Poem Out of Darkness** (George Ella Lyon)  
*Trio:* low, medium & high voices, flute, violin, piano

**I'll Tell You a Story, then...** (Nancy White)  
low voice / medium voice / high voice, piano

**Infant Holy, Infant Lowly** (Polish carol, arr. Alexander)  
*Trio:* low, medium & high voices *a cappella*

**Jo!** (The Edict of Torda)  
*Trio:* low, medium & high voices *a cappella*

**My Aunt Gives Me a Clarinet Lesson** (Gregory Djanikian)  
soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion

**No One Gets a Program** (Dutch proverb, Elizabeth Alexander)  
*Duet:* low voice & medium voice, piano

**No Ordinary Song** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
medium voice, piano

**Oath Taking** (Opal Palmer Adisa)  
high voice, piano

**On the Edge of the Water** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
low voice, piano

**Sleep Song** (Ann Silsbee)  
low voice / medium voice / high voice, piano

**The Eternal One** (Ralph Waldo Emerson)  
low voice / medium voice / high voice, piano

**The Gospel Isn't Written in the Bible Alone** (Elizabeth Alexander)  
low voice / medium- high voice, piano

**Trouble in a Minnesota Town** (Neal Bowers)  
medium voice / high voice, piano

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