

A Love Like That

Songs of Unconditional Love

medium voice and piano



Elizabeth Alexander

Seafarer Press

A Love Like That: Songs of Unconditional Love

Elizabeth Alexander

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Composer Note

I never set out to write a body of songs about unconditional love. It's not like I'm particularly good at that type of love. I'm almost certainly no better at it than you.

Despite this, it's the only kind of love I've ever wanted to write music about. When I was in high school I wrote a whole slew of reckless, sincere songs inspired by great pop writers: Billy Joel, Carole King, The Beatles. While some of them were certainly about pop music's *thème de rigueur* – infatuation and romantic love – those songs always felt shallow and forced. The love I wanted to write about was more complicated. It involved struggle, grit, friendship, belonging, and forgiveness: all the things we have to grapple with constantly to get even remotely close to unconditional love.

Each of these songs was written for a different reason: an anniversary gift for my parents, a memorial for a dear mentor, a response to the death of a young family friend. All of them are attempts to love what the world offers, despite everything.

These songs are not arranged in any particular performance order. They may be performed on their own or together, in whatever order allows singers to tell their own authentic love story.

* * * * *

Sleep Song

What I love is to slip late at night
 into David's room gaze secretly
 down at the soft mask of sleep twitching
 with no flush of rage no pout no glee
 just the passing in and out of breath
 delicately stirring his body
 into a hint of motion by which
 I know David is living within
 safe to love with my whole watching self

Ann Silsbee



"Sweet Sleep"
 by Janet Lavidia
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© 2002 by Ann L. Silsbee. From "Naming the Disappeared." Published by Vista Periodista (Ithaca, NY)
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Learn about Elizabeth's friendship with poet Ann Silsbee:

www.elizabethalexander.com/works/sleep-song

The Eternal One

It comes to the lowly,
 It comes to the simple,
 It comes to whomever will put off what is foreign or proud.
 It comes as insight,
 It comes as serenity,
 It comes as grandeur.
 Within us the soul of the whole,
 Within us the wise silence,
 Within us the universal beauty
 To which every part and particle is equally related:
 The Eternal ONE.

When it breathes through our intellect, it is genius.
 When it breathes through our will, it is virtue.
 When it flows through our affection, it is love.

Forever and ever, forever and ever,
 There is no ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens.
 Within us the soul of the whole,
 Within us the wise silence,
 Within us the universal beauty:
 The Eternal ONE.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Lyric distilled from Emerson's essay "The Over-soul."
 Adapted lyric © 2010 by Elizabeth Alexander*



"Tree of Life"
 Metalwork design by
 Van Read (Van Metal Arts)
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Learn about Elizabeth's misadventures setting Ralph Waldo Emerson's words to music:

www.elizabethalexander.com/works/the-eternal-one

The Sun Never Says

Even
After
All this time
The sun never says to the earth,

“You owe
Me.”

Look
What happens
With a love like that,
It lights the
Whole
Sky.

Hafiz, translated and adapted by Daniel Ladinsky

*“The Gift: Poems by Hafiz,” Penguin Publications. © 1999 by Daniel Ladinsky.
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“Ancient Sun”
by Margaret Storer Roche
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Learn about *A Love Like That*,

Elizabeth’s gift for her parents on their 50th wedding anniversary:

www.elizabethalexander.com/works/a-love-like-that-song

The Gospel isn't Written in the Bible Alone

"God writes the gospel not in the Bible alone, but on trees, and flowers, and clouds, and stars." - Anonymous

The Gospel is written in the trees and flowers, it's written in the wind and the rain,
Recorded in the rock and sediment and sand.
It's written in the glory of the far-off sun, and also in the very near,
Inscribed upon the palm of every open hand.
You can hear it in the thunder, you can read it in the stars,
You can find it under every leaf and stone.
On a page wide as a prairie there's a message large as life:
The Gospel isn't written in the Bible alone.

The Gospel is painted onto fins and scales, it's ruffled into feathers and fur,
It's spun into the seashell's deep and sacred scroll.
Behold it in the voices of the birds at dawn, composers of the Song of Songs,
Discern it in the Acts of every living soul.
Every pebble holds a Proverb, every spider spins a Psalm,
Every seed's a Resurrection of its own.
On a page wide as a prairie there's a message large as life:
The Gospel isn't written in the Bible alone.

Imagine now, if you were God
Setting forth the Gospel for all you're worth,
Why would you settle for a single book
When you could write the Gospel on the whole wide Earth?

The Gospel is moving over darkened seas, it's working in the change and the flow,
It's written in a tongue we long to understand.
We marvel at the beauty of the poetry encoded in the chromosome,
And braided through the length of every twisted strand.
It is molded into muscle, it is whispered into breath,
It is carved into the curve of every bone.
On a page wide as a prairie there's a message large as life:
The Gospel may be written in the Bible —
But it surely isn't written in the Bible alone.

Elizabeth Alexander

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"Zen Landscape"

by Valerie Kelley

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Learn about the "anonymous" epigraph that inspired Elizabeth's lyric:

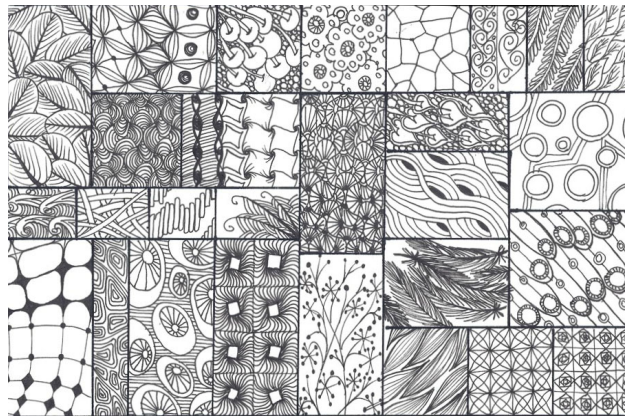
www.elizabethalexander.com/works/the-gospel-isnt-written-in-the-bible-alone

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

© 1992 by Nancy White.
From "Sun, Moon, Salt,"
published by *The Word Works*
Reprinted by permission of the poet



"Zentangle"

by Caroline Nott, aka Carolion
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Learn about Nancy White, whose poetry

Elizabeth learned about when they were MacDowell Artist Colony fellows:

www.elizabethalexander.com/works/ill-tell-you-a-story-then

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 stay together through the many years,
 It's how a broken people sing again,
 It's how a man can overcome his shame,
 How a woman moves beyond her fears —
 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, kkk
 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.



Elizabeth Alexander © 2014 by Elizabeth Alexander



Learn about Henry Mackaman, whose vibrant life helped Elizabeth understand grace:

www.elizabethalexander.com/works/grace

Sleep Song

for medium voice and piano

Ann Silsbee

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 76-84) Gently rocking

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is a vocal line in G major (one flat) and 6/8 time, starting with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, all under a slur. The lower staff is a piano accompaniment in 6/8 time, starting with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, and C4, also under a slur. The piano part includes a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking under the first measure. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is placed above the first measure of the piano part.

The second system begins at measure 5. The vocal line has a whole rest for the first three measures, followed by a half note G4 in the fourth measure, with the lyrics "What I" underneath. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the first system. A dynamic marking of *p* is placed above the fourth measure of the piano part.

The third system begins at measure 9. The vocal line has a whole rest for the first two measures, followed by a half note G4 in the third measure, with the lyrics "love," underneath. The piano accompaniment continues. A dynamic marking of *p* is placed above the third measure of the piano part.

The fourth system begins at measure 13. The vocal line has a whole rest for the first measure, followed by a half note G4 in the second measure, and a half note A4 in the third measure, with the lyrics "What I love," underneath. The piano accompaniment continues. Dynamic markings of *p* are placed above the second and third measures of the piano part.

17

What I

Ped.

21

love is to slip late at night in - to

Ped. Ped. mp

25

Da - vid's room,

mp playfully

29

senza misura

p warmly, sung all to yourself

What I love

Ped.

32 **a tempo**

is to

p

gaze se - cret - ly down, se - cret - ly, se - cret - ly

Ped.

down,

murmuring

down at the

Ped.

47

soft mask of sleep

gently

Ped.

51

twitch - ing with no flush of

Ped.

55

mp

rage, twitch - ing with

mp

Ped.

59

no pout, no

Ped.

63 *mf*

glee,

mf

Red.

67 *mp wholeheartedly*

just the

mp

71

pass - ing in and

75

out of breath, just the

Red.

79

pass - ing in _____ and

mf

83

out of breath, _____

mf

Ped.

87

de - li - cate - ly stir - ring, _____

p

91

stir - ring, _____

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**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

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117

I know Da - vid is liv - ing, _____ liv - ing with -

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 117 through 122. The vocal line begins with a whole rest in measure 117, followed by a melodic phrase starting in measure 118. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Pedal markings are present at the start of measures 118, 119, 120, 121, and 122.

123

in. _____ Safe _____ to love _____

Ped. Ped. Ped.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 123 through 128. The vocal line continues the melody from the previous system. The piano accompaniment maintains the same rhythmic pattern. Pedal markings are present at the start of measures 124, 125, and 126.

129

with my whole _____ watch - - ing

Detailed description: This system contains measures 129 through 133. The vocal line features a long, sweeping melodic line that spans across the system. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with sustained chords and a moving bass line.

134

self _____

8^{va} _____

pp

Ped.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 134 through 138. The vocal line concludes with a long note in measure 134. An 8va line is shown above the vocal staff. The piano accompaniment ends with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. A pedal marking is present at the start of measure 134.

The Eternal One

for medium voice and piano

Ralph Waldo Emerson,
Adapted from "The Oversoul"

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 60-63) With love

p **3**

It comes to the

bell-like

p

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

5

low - ly, It comes to the sim - ple, It comes to whom - ev - er will put off_ what is

3

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

8

poco rit. *a tempo*

for - eign or proud. It comes as in - sight, It comes as ser -

magical

3

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

10 *mf* *p*

- en - i - ty, It comes as gran - deur, With - in us the

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

13

soul of the whole, With - in us the wise, wise

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

16 *mp*

si - lence, With - in us the u - ni - ver - sal beau - ty to which

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

19 *with ecstasy*

ev'-ry part and par - ti - cle is e - qual - ly re - la - ted: the E - ter - nal

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped. (m.d.) Ped. Ped.

23

One. *p* When it

p più animato

Led. Led.

25

breathes through our in - tel - lect, it is gen - ius.

mp

Led. Led. Led.

27

When it breathes through our will, it is

Led. Led. Led.

29

vir - tue. When it

mf

Led. Led.

31

flows through our af - fec - tion, it is love, _____ it is

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

33

love, _____ it is love, it is

mp

mp delicately

Ped. Ped.

35

love, _____ for - ev - er and

poco rallentando *mf*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

37

ev - er, for - ev - er and ev - er. There is no

a tempo *mf*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

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**...and some of it
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For my parents, after all this time

A Love Like That

for medium voice and piano

Hafiz, rendered by Daniel Ladinsky

Elizabeth Alexander

Tenderly, somewhere around ♩ = 108-116

1

These measures may be repeated for vocal or instrumental improvisation, or if singer is making an entrance.

5

p warmly

9

E-ven af-ter all this time, e-ven af-ter all this time, e-ven af-ter

13

all this time.

17

E-ven af-ter all this time, the sun nev-er says to the earth,

D/F# G D/A G/B

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

21

the sun nev-er

D/C

Ped.

25

says to the earth, "You

28

owe me,"

D

Ped. Ped.

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47

sun nev-er says to the earth, "You

D/C

Ped.

51

owe me,"

D

Ped.

55

pp

E - ven af - ter all this time,

pp

Ped.

59

poco a poco accelerando

Ped.

Brightly, faster

63 *mf*

Look what hap - pens with a love like that,

Asus⁴ *G⁷*

p subito *mf rockin'!*

** Ped. (Really hold down this pedal!)*

67

Look what hap - pens with a love like that,

Asus⁴ *G⁷*

p subito *Ped.*

70 *ecstatically*

Look what hap - pens with a love like

Asus⁴ *p subito* *Ped.*

73 *f*

that,

G#11 *f ecstatic* *7* *5* *6* *5* *6* *5*

Ped.

Senza Misura - very freely*Here you are beyond any thought of keeping score.**Free your mind of all counting or accounting.. (If you are able to do this, good for you!)*

75 *expansively*

It lights the whole sky,

Piano repeats this and subsequent ascending scales an indefinite number of times.
(*Colla voce*)

76

It lights the whole sky,

77

It lights the whole sky,

Play higher octave on repeats

Repeat each passage as many times as you wish

78

79 *mp* freely, as if speaking to audience ,
E - ven af - ter all this time, a love like that lights the

80 *p*
whole sky.

8^{va}

79 *mp* freely, as if speaking to audience ,
E - ven af - ter all this time, a love like that lights the

80 *p*
whole sky.

D slowly, thoughtfully

Em⁷ A⁷sus⁴

Red. Red.

80 *D* slowly, thoughtfully
whole sky.

8^{va}

Red.

The Gospel Isn't Written in the Bible Alone

for medium/high voice and piano

Elizabeth Alexander

(♩ = 69-72) With awe

Chords: E^b , A^b/E^b , D^b/E^b , $A^b \text{ sus}^4/E^b$, A^b/E^b

5

Chords: E^b , A^b/E^b , D^b/E^b , $A^b \text{ sus}^4/E^b$, A^b/E^b

The

9

Chords: E^b , A^b/E^b , D^b/E^b , $A^b \text{ sus}^4/E^b$, A^b/E^b

1. Gos - pel is writ - ten in the trees and flowers, it's writ - ten in the wind and the rain, ___ re -
 2. Gos - pel is paint - ed on - to fins and scales, it's ruf - fled in - to fea - thers and fur, ___ It's
 3. Gos - pel is mov - ing o - ver dark - ened seas, it's work - ing in the change and the flow. ___ It's

13

Chords: E^b , A^b/E^b , G^b69

cord - ed in the rock and sed - i - ment_ and sand. It's
 spun in - to the sea - shell's deep and sa - cred scroll. Be -
 writ - ten in a tongue we long to un - der - stand. We

17

writ-ten in the glo-ry of the far - off sun, and al - so in the ve - ry near, in -
 - hold it in the voic-es of the birds at dawn, com - pos-ers of the Song of Songs. Dis-
 mar-vel at the beau-ty of the po - e - try en - cod-ed in the chro - mo - some, and

E^b/G A^{b69} E^b/B^b A^{b69}/C

21

- scribed up - on the palm of ev' - ry o - pen hand.
 - cern it in the Acts of ev' - ry liv - ing soul.
 braid - ed through the length of ev' - ry twist - ed strand.

E^b/B^b E^b/D^b D^b E^b/D^b D^b E^b/D^b D^b E^b/D^b

26

You can hear it in__ the thun - der, you can read it in__ the stars,__ you can
 Ev' - ry peb - ble holds a Pro - verb, ev' - ry spi - der spins a Psalm,__ ev' - ry
 It is mold - ed in - to mus - cle, it is whis-pered in - to breath,__ it is

A^{b69}/C E^b/B^b A^{b69}/C E^b/B^b

31

find it un - der ev' - ry leaf__ and stone. On a
 seeds a Re - sur - rec - tion of__ its own. On a
 carved in - to__ the curve__ of ev' - ry bone. On a

A^{b9} E^b/G G^{b9} D^{b9}/F

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**...and some of it
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54

2.

- lone.

E^b D^b69 E^b D^b69

58

BM⁷⁹ EM⁷⁹ D⁶⁹

61

C⁶⁹ Im -

65

- a - gine now, if you were_ God._____

Bm⁷⁹

69

Set - ting forth the Gos - pel for all you're_ worth._____

C⁷⁹(#11)

73

Why would you set - tle for a sin - gle book, when

77

you could write the Gos - pel on the whole wide Earth?

81

85

D.S. al Coda

The

90 **CODA**

Gos - pel may be writ - ten in the Bi - ble_____

AbM79 *Ab9(#11)* *Ab9* *Ab9(#11)*

but it sure - ly is - n't writ - ten in the Bi - ble_____ a -

Fm79 *Eb9/G* *Ab69* *Bb79sus4*

- lone._____

Eb *Ab/Eb* *Db/Eb* *Ab7sus4/Eb* *Ab/Eb* *Eb*

105 *Ab/Eb* *Db/Eb* *Ab7sus4/Eb* *Eb* *Db69*

110 *Eb* *DbM7(13)* *Db69(#11)*

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

for medium voice and piano

Nancy White

Elizabeth Alexander

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

Bb7 (#11)

25

su - gar - y, _____ e -

G^b_{6/9}

Red. *Red.*

29

lu - sive, _____ spi - cy, you could call it, _____ and

B^b₇(#11)

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

35

smo - ky _____ in a sad sort of way. _____

G^b_{6/9} *F*^b_{6/9} *E*^b_m_{6/9}

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

41

ad lib.

mm _____

Red. *Red.*

pushing forward slightly

45 *mp*
 Al - so like blos - som bare - ly

Fm⁷
mp
 Ped. Ped. Ped.

49
 born, Pale and half un - done to the

Gb^{6/9}
 Ped. Ped. Ped.

53 *ad lib.*
 wind that still might e - ven be car - ry - ing snow,

Ebm⁹ *Cb^{6/9}*
 Ped. Ped.

57 *ad lib.*
 car - ry - ing snow. O

Db^{#6/9} *Eb^{6/9}*
 Ped. Ped. Ped.

63 **with greater urgency**

This scent I de -

67

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

Gm⁹ **Eb^{6/9}**

72

fol - low. _____

77

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

Bb/Ab

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99 **a tempo meno mosso**

twang.

Fm^{6/9}

pp

Ped.

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

mf

Oth - er

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

*Am*⁷ *F*^{6/9}

mf *sfz* *sfz*

Ped. *Ped.*

112 threads through the air, the

*Am*⁷ *F*^{6/9}

sfz *sfz*

Ped. *Ped.*

116

leaf _____ and rot - ten meat rib - bons of scent,

Gm7 *Bbm7*

sfz *sfz*

Ped. *Ped.*

120

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

Gm7 *Bbm7*

sfz *sfz*

Ped. *Ped.*

125

the liv - ing de - cay _____ of sad - dle soap _____ and

Ab6/9

Ped. *Ped.*

130

hap - pi - ness _____ the lem - on

Fm6/9

f

Ped.

134

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

Ebm7 *Db6/9*

Red. *Red.*

Senza misura, freely

meno mosso

138

f intensely *p* thoughtfully, determined

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

Cm7(11) *Bbm7(11)*

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

Cb79/A *Absus79*

mp murmuring, pulsing

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

144

search - ing bow of my bod - y,

Gbmaj7(9/6) *Fbmaj7(9/6)*

Red. *Red.*

147

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

Ebm7(6/9)

Ped.

150 *senza misura - very freely*

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

Fbmaj7

mf

8va

Ped.

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

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

Ebm7(11/9) *Fbmaj7* *Ebm7(11/9)*

p

Ped.

154

and re - a - lized the smell is me.

Fbmaj7 *Ebm7(11/9)*

Ped.

156 *introspectively, warmly*

mm

Ped.

158

mm

Ped.

160

the smell is me,

, deliciously

Cbmaj7(6/9) Bb7(#11)

mm

Ped.

162

me.

mm

Ped.

Grace

medium voice and piano

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^{6/9} A7(sus4)

20

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

D Bm⁷ G^{6/9} A7(sus4) D G^{6/9} A

24

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

Bm⁷(add9) Em⁷

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

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62

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

G⁶ A⁷(sus4) D Bm⁷ G⁶ A⁷(sus4) D

66

- tle snow_ it's mak - ing ev - 'ry sur - face glow. And I

G⁶ A Bm⁷(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

Em⁷ D/F# G⁶ D/A

74

earn it: _____ that's how I know it's Grace. _____

G⁶/B A⁷(sus4)

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