



# Grace



high voice and piano



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# Elizabeth Alexander

*Seafarer Press*

In memory of Henry

# Grace

high voice and piano

Elizabeth Alexander

**Tenderly**  
E

A/E

E

A/E

B/D#

6 A/E

A6

Bm/D

C#7

It's how I hold my head up af - ter I have  
peo - ple stay to - ge - ther through the

10 F#m7

B7(sus4)

B7

E

Emaj7

missed the mark, it's how I know I'm loved when things are dark, it's how I stand when I am  
man - y years, it's how a bro - ken peo - ple sing a - gain, it's how a man can o - ver -

13 A6

E/G#

F#m7

feel - ing small, how I stand a - gain af - ter a fall, it's how I'm e - ven stand - ing here at all:  
come his shame, how a wom - an moves be - yond her fears, it's how I know that ho - ly is my name:

16 **B7(sus4)** **E** **A/E** **E** **A%** **B7(sus4)**

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

20 **E** **C#m7** **A%** **B7(sus4)** **E** **A%** **B**

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

24 **C#m7(add9)** **1.** **F#m7**

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

*Red.*

28 **B7(sus4)** **E** **A/E** **E** **A/E**

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

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46 **C#m<sup>9</sup>** **C#m/B** **F#/A#** **F#** *meno mosso*

still it can-not take a-way the truths I have\_ to face,\_\_\_ Oh\_\_\_ no,

*meno mosso*

50 **F#m<sup>7</sup>** *freely* **B<sup>7</sup>(sus4)** **B<sup>7</sup>**

That's not how it works with Grace.---

*rit.* *a tempo*

54 **A<sup>6</sup>** **B<sup>7</sup>(sus4)** **E** **C#m<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>6</sup>** **B<sup>7</sup>(sus4)** **E**

58 **A<sup>6</sup>** **B<sup>7</sup>(sus4)** **C#m<sup>7</sup>(add9)** *rit.* *a tempo*

Fall-ing down,

*rit.* *a tempo*

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62 **A6%** **B7(sus4)** **E** **C#m7** **A6%** **B7(sus4)** **E**

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

66 **A6%** **B** **C#m7(add9)**

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

*Ped.*

70 **F#m7** **E/G#** **A6%** **E/B**

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

74 **A6%/C#** **B7(sus4)**

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

## 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,  
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.

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## 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 all problems or a magical cure for all losses. I couldn't manage to balance the essential beauty of grace with the brutal heartbreaks of life. But in my grieving days after the sudden death of a young family friend, I returned a final time to my draft. And I finally found a way to sing about grace in a way that was both awestruck and real.

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**Elizabeth Alexander** inherited her love of music, language and challenging questions from her parents, a piano teacher/accountant and a minister/prison warden. These passions are reflected in her catalogue of over 100 songs and choral works, and a style which moves with ease between concert stage, choir loft and jam session.



For more information, visit [www.elizabethalexander.com](http://www.elizabethalexander.com)

# Songs of Elizabeth Alexander

* The Eternal One (Ralph Waldo Emerson, adapted) . . . . .	SEA-093-00
Die Gedanken Sind Frei (16 <sup>th</sup> c. German protest song, arr.) [ <i>duet</i> ] alto, baritone, piano . . . .	SEA-087-01
A Garret of Old Playthings (Carl Sandburg) soprano and piano . . . . .	SEA-028-00
I Write This Poem Out of Darkness (George Ella Lyon) SSA trio, flute, violin, piano . . . . .	SEA-024-01
* A Love Like That (Hafiz, translated/adapted by Daniel Ladinsky) . . . . .	SEA-094-00
* I'll Tell You a Story, then... (Nancy White) . . . . .	SEA-069-00
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My Aunt Gives Me a Clarinet Lesson (Gregory Djanikian) soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano, percussion . . . . .	SEA-053-00
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So Many Corners (Rose Ausländer) soprano, chamber orchestra . . . . .	SEA-040-01
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*\* Titles without specific voice type exist in multiple voicings (low, medium and high).*

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