

PETER SEABOURNE

CALLED BACK

10 SETTINGS OF

EMILY DICKINSON





# Called Back

10 settings of Emily Dickinson

Peter Seabourne

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duration c.19 minutes

The last Night that She lived  
It was a Common Night  
Except the Dying - this to Us  
Made Nature different

We noticed smallest things -  
Things overlooked before  
By this great light upon our Minds  
Italicized - as 'twere.

As We went out and in  
Between Her final Room  
And Rooms where Those to be alive  
Tomorrow were, a Blame

That Others could exist  
While She must finish quite  
A Jealousy for Her arose  
So nearly infinite -

We waited while She passed -  
It was a narrow time -  
Too jostled were Our Souls to speak  
At length the notice came.

She mentioned, and forgot -  
Then lightly as a Reed  
Bent to the Water, struggled scarce -  
Consented, and was dead -

And We - We placed the Hair -  
And drew the Head erect -  
And then an awful leisure was  
Belief to regulate -

\*\*\*

If I should cease to bring a Rose  
Upon a festal day,  
'Twill be because beyond the Rose  
I have been called away -

If I should cease to take the names  
My buds commemorate -  
'Twill be because Death's finger  
Claps my murmuring lip!

\*\*\*

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers - \*  
Untouched by Morning -  
And untouched by Noon -  
Sleep the meek members of the Resurrection,  
Rafter of Satin and Roof of Stone -

Grand go the Years,  
In the Crescent above them -  
Worlds scoop their Arcs -  
And Firmaments - row -  
Diadems - drop -  
And Doges surrender -  
Soundless as Dots,  
On a Disk of Snow.

\*\*\*

How many Flowers fail in Wood -  
Or perish from the Hill -  
Without the privilege to know  
That they are Beautiful -

How many cast a nameless Pod  
Upon the nearest Breeze -  
Unconscious of the Scarlet Freight -  
It bear to Other Eyes -

\*\*\*

'Tis not that Dying hurts us so -  
'Tis Living - hurts us more -  
But Dying - is a different way -  
A Kind behind the Door -

The Southern Custom - of the Bird -  
That ere the Frosts are due -  
Accepts a better Latitude -  
We - are the Birds - that stay,

The Shiverers round Farmers' doors -  
For whose reluctant Crumb -  
We stipulate - till pitying Snows  
Persuade our Feathers Home.

\*\*\*

\* Many Dickinson poems exist in multiple versions. This one has two distinct two-verse forms from 1859 and 1861 which share the bulk of the first but have entirely different second ones. Both are beautiful so, begging her indulgence, I have amalgamated the two, making three stanzas.

The Clouds their Backs together laid  
The North begun to push  
The Forests galloped till they fell  
The Lightning played like mice

The Thunder crumbled like a stuff  
How good to be in Tombs  
Where Nature's Temper cannot reach  
Nor missile ever comes

\*\*\*

I'm ceded - I've stopped being Their's - †  
The name They dropped upon my face  
With water, in the country church  
Is finished using, now,  
And They can put it with my Dolls,  
My childhood, and the string of spools,  
I've finished threading - too -

Baptized, before, without the choice,  
But this time, consciously, of Grace -  
Unto supremest name -  
Called to my Full - The Crescent dropped -  
Existence's whole Arc, filled up,  
With one small Diadem.

My second Rank - too small the first -  
Crowned - Crowing - on my Father's breast -  
A half unconscious Queen -  
But this time - Adequate - Erect,  
With Will to choose, or to reject,  
And I choose, just a Crown -

(† Dickinson's non-standard placing of the apostrophe)

\*\*\*

Sang from the Heart, Sire,  
Dipped my Beak in it,  
If the Tune drip too much  
Have a tint too Red

Pardon the Cochineal -  
Suffer the Vermillion -  
Death is the Wealth  
Of the Poorest Bird.

Bear with the Ballad -  
Awkward-faltering -  
Death twists the strings -  
'Twasn't my blame -

Pause in your Liturgies -  
Wait your Chorals -  
While I repeat your  
Hallowed name -

\*\*\*

Departed - to the Judgment -  
A Mighty Afternoon -  
Great Clouds - like Ushers - learning -  
Creation - looking on -

The Flesh - Surrendered - Cancelled -  
The Bodiless - begun -  
Two Worlds - like Audiences - disperse -  
And leave the Soul - alone -

\*\*\*

So give me back to Death -  
The Death I never feared  
Except that it deprived of thee -  
And now, by Life deprived,  
In my own Grave I breathe  
And estimate its size -  
Its size is all that Hell can guess -  
And all that Heaven was -

\*\*\*

Emily Dickinson's spelling and punctuation are retained without further comment except for two instances where the punctuation is by most standards incorrect - a footnote is added lest this be thought to be a typo. I retain the short dash (/hyphen, more common in UK English) which she uses in her manuscripts rather than the en dash as often transcribed.

There are often multiple versions of both text, capitalisation and punctuation so choices must necessarily be made.

Pedal markings are indicative but in a few marked places should be played as written. Pedal for legato is not shown.

Quintuplets etc should always be played with exactly equal value notes (not e.g. quintuplet as 2+3 etc) and the stress always on the first.

In memory of my dear wife, Marcelle, and of our last hours together

# Called Back

## 1. The last night that she lived

Emily Dickinson

Peter Seabourne  
April 2022

Very still and spacious - simple ♩=44

Piano *pp*

8va

8va

8va

8vb

Ped.

(replayed, not tied)

Detailed description: This block contains the piano introduction for the first system. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The treble clef has a 3/4 time signature. The music is marked 'Piano' and 'pp'. There are three instances of '8va' (octave up) markings above the treble staff. The bass clef has an '8vb' (octave down) marking. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking is at the bottom. A note in the bass clef is marked '(replayed, not tied)'. The tempo is indicated as 'Very still and spacious - simple ♩=44'.

10 *p*

The last night that she lived, It was a com-mon night, ex-cept the dy-ing;-

8va

8va

8vb

Detailed description: This block contains the first line of the song. It includes a vocal line starting at measure 10, marked 'p' (piano). The lyrics are 'The last night that she lived, It was a com-mon night, ex-cept the dy-ing;-'. Below the vocal line is the piano accompaniment. There are two instances of '8va' markings above the treble staff and one '8vb' marking below the bass staff. The piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in the vocal line.

Moving on, calmly, simply, like a folksong ♩=96

16 *mp*

this to us made na-ture dif-fe-rent. We no-ticed smal-lest-

8va

8vb

(replayed, not tied)

*p*

(8)

Detailed description: This block contains the second line of the song. It includes a vocal line starting at measure 16, marked 'mp' (mezzo-piano). The lyrics are 'this to us made na-ture dif-fe-rent. We no-ticed smal-lest-'. Below the vocal line is the piano accompaniment. There are two instances of '8va' markings above the treble staff and one '8vb' marking below the bass staff. The piano part features a triplet of eighth notes in the vocal line. A note in the bass clef is marked '(replayed, not tied)'. The tempo is indicated as 'Moving on, calmly, simply, like a folksong ♩=96'. At the bottom, there is a measure rest marked '(8)'.

23

things, - Things o - ver - looked be - fore, - By this great light up -

30

on our minds I - ta - li - cized, as 'twere. As We went out and

38

in Bet - ween Her fi - nal Room And Rooms where



44

Those to be a-live To - mor - row, were, a Blame That o - thers could ex-

51

ist While she must fi - nish quite, A jea - lou - sy for her a rose.

57

*> pp poco subito*

So near - ly in - fi - nite.

*8va*

*pp poco sub.*

*8vb Ped.*

somewhat more factually again.

64 *mp*

We wait-ed while she passed, It was a nar-row time,

(8) (5)

70

Too jos-tled were our souls to speak,

8va Ped.

76

*pp lontanato*

8va 5 3 5

79 *pp*

At length the no - lice came.

*mp* 5 5 *pp* 3 8vb

84 *p* more plainly

(not lied)

92 *mp*

She men - tioned, and for - got;

*pp* *lontano* *poco* 8va

*Red.*

98 *p* *poco*

then light - ly as a reed

*pp* 5 5 5 5 *poco* *p*

101

Bent to the wa - ter, shi - vered scarce

(just a little emphasis - not "dramatic")

106

Con-sen-ted, and was dead.

Ped.

112

120

*p* (resuming the more factual manner, though numbed)

And we, we placed the hair,

127

Slower  $\text{♩} = 60$   
*pp*

And drew the head e - rect; \_\_\_\_\_ And then \_\_\_\_\_ an aw-ful \_\_\_\_\_

*pp*  
Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

faster again  $\text{♩} = 96$

composure lost for the briefest instant, the words rushed, very slightly bitter

134

\_\_\_\_\_ lei - sure was, \_\_\_\_\_ Our faith \_\_\_\_\_ to re - gu - late. \_\_\_\_\_

*mp*  
*p*  
Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

139

*mp* *p* *p* *pp* rit. \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. If I should cease to bring a Rose

Flowing freely ♩=92

*mp*

If I should cease to bring a

*mp*

this should be quite wet in sound, not like an articulated toccata

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

4

Rose Op - on a fes - tal day,

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_

7

'Twill be be - cause be - yond the Rose I have..

10

— been called a - way -

13

If I should cease to take the

16

names My buds com - me - mo - rate - 'Twill be \_\_\_\_\_ be -

19

cause Death's fin - - - ger Clasps my mur - mu-ring

*mf* *molto* ten. *mf* *molto* Red.

23

lip! \_\_\_\_\_

*p* *poco* *p*



### 3. Safe in their Alabaster Chambers

Still, reverent, monumental  $\text{♩} = 72$

*smudged, distant*  
*ppp*  
*p* *ped.*  
*p* *poco*  
Safe in their A - la - bas - ter

(Even if pedallings are adjusted elsewhere, in this song they should be observed as written. The faster moving line should be very muffled.)

*mp* *mp* *finest separation (voice only)*  
Cham - bers - Un - touched by Mor - ning -

And un - touched by Noon - Sleep the meek

13 *poco*

mem - bers of the Re - sur - rec - tion - Raf - ter of

17 *poco*

sa - lin, and Roof of Stone!

21 *mf*

Light laughs the breeze In her

24

Cas-tle a - bove them - Bab - bles the Bee in a sto - lid Ear,

27

Pipe the Sweet Birds in ig - no - rant

30

*subito meno*

ca - dence - Ah, what sa - ga - ci - ty pe - rished here!

*subito meno*

35 *come prima*  
*p*

Grand go the Years in the

*ppp*

*p*

39

Cres - cent - a - bove them - Worlds scoop their

42

Arcs - And Fir - ma - ments - row -

45

Di - a - dems - drop - and Do - ges sur -

This system contains measures 45, 46, and 47. The vocal line is in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The time signature changes to 7/8 at the end of measure 47.

48

ren - der - Sound - less as dots - on a

This system contains measures 48, 49, and 50. The vocal line starts in 7/8 time and changes to 3/4 time in measure 49. The piano accompaniment continues with triplets and chords. The time signature changes to 3/4 at the end of measure 50.

51

Disc of Snow.

*poco*

This system contains measures 51, 52, and 53. The vocal line is in 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with triplets in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The tempo marking *poco* is present. The time signature changes to 3/4 at the end of measure 53.

55

*ppp* 3

### 4. How Many Flowers

Restless ♩=96

*mf* 3

5

9 *mf* 3

How ma-ny Flow-ers... fail... in Wood -

13

Or pe-rish from the Hill -

17

With-out the pri - vi - lege to know That they are Beau-ti - ful -

*poco rit.*

Red.

21 a tempo

*mp* *mf*

25

How ma-ny cast

29

a num-ber-less Pod Up - on the near - est Breeze -

34

Un - con - csious of the Scar-let Freight - It bear to O - ther

38 *mp*

Eyes -

*mp*

42

*né rit. né dim.*



## 5. 'Tis not that Dying hurts us so -

With gentle movement; rather innocent ♩=60

*mp*

'Tis not that Dy-ing hurts us so - 'Tis Li-ving -

*mp*

Red.

6 *mf*

hurts us more - But Dy-ing - is a dif-fe-rent way -

*mf*

Red.

11 *mf*

A Kind be-hind the Door - The Sou-thern Cus-tom -

*mf*

Red.

16

of the Bird - That ere the Frosts are due - Ac-

20

cepts a bet-ter La-ti-tude - We - are the Birds that stay.

25

*mf*

The Shi-ve-rers round Far - mers!

30

doors - For whose re-luc-tant Crumb - We sli - pu - late - till

34

pi - tying Snows Per-suade our Fea-thers Home.

## 6. The Clouds their Backs together laid

fast, brewing  $\text{♩} = 128$ 

*f*

Ped.

6

11 *f*

The Clouds their Backs to - ge - ther laid The North be -

15

gun to push The

19

For - rests gal - loped till they fell The Light - ning played 3 like

This system contains measures 19 through 22. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 6/8 to 4/4. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' and a bracket. There are 'x' marks above some notes in the vocal line and below some notes in the piano accompaniment.

23

mice *non dim.*

This system contains measures 23 through 26. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 6/8. The word 'mice' is written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment features a 'non dim.' (non-diminuendo) instruction. There are 'x' marks above some notes in the vocal line.

27

*f*

This system contains measures 27 through 30. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 6/8 to 4/4. A forte (*f*) dynamic marking is present at the beginning of the system.

31

The Thun - der crum - bled like a stuff How good to

This system contains measures 31 through 34. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 6/8. The lyrics 'The Thun - der crum - bled like a stuff How good to' are written below the vocal line.

35

be in Tombs Where Na - ture's

38

Tem - - per can - not reach

41

Nor ven - - -

8<sup>vb</sup>

45

Musical score for measures 45-48. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are: "geance e - ver. comes." The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. It features a complex texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, including a double bar line with repeat signs in the middle of the system.

49

Musical score for measures 49-52. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. The piano accompaniment is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. It features a complex texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, including a double bar line with repeat signs in the middle of the system. The instruction *non dim.* is written above the piano part in the second measure.

53

Musical score for measures 53-56. The system includes a piano accompaniment. The piano part is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp and a common time signature. It features a complex texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, including a double bar line with repeat signs in the middle of the system. The instruction *(non rit.)* is written above the piano part in the second measure.

## 7. I'm ceded - I've stopped being Their's \*

Gently moving ♩=48

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics "I'm ce - ded - I've stopped be-ing Their's - The name They dropped up - on my\_". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a pedal point in the bass. The score includes dynamic markings of *mp* and performance instructions such as "3" (triplets) and "5" (quintuplets). A note in the piano part is marked "(E resounded, legato)".

(pedal for legato throughout, but rests should be carefully observed)

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line lyrics are "face With wa - ter, in the coun - try church Is fi - nished u - sing, now, And". The piano accompaniment continues with the same melodic and harmonic structure as the first system, including dynamic markings and performance instructions.

The third system of the musical score concludes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line lyrics are "They can put it with my Dolls, My child hood\_ and the string of spools, I've fi - nished thread - ing". The piano accompaniment continues with the same melodic and harmonic structure, including dynamic markings and performance instructions.

(\* Dickinson's non-standard/misplaced apostrophe is left unchanged.)



12

too\_ Bap - tized, be - fore,

16

wi-thout the choice, But this time, con - scious-ly of Grace - Un-to su-prem-est

20

name Called to my Full The Cres-cent dropped Ex - is - ten-ce's whole

Red. \_\_\_\_\_

24

Arc, <sup>5</sup> filled up With one small Di - a - dem.

*f*

Ped.

28

*mf*

My se-cond Rank

*mf*

32

too small the first Crowned Cro - wing on my Fa - ther's breast A half un-con -

36

- scious Queen But this time Ade-quate E - rect,

40

With\_ Will to choose, or to re - ject, And I choose just\_

44

*f* faster ♩ = 60 a Crown -

47

## 8. Sang from the Heart, Sire,

Breathless, urgent  $\text{♩} = 138$ *mf*

Sang from the Heart,

Ped. \_\_\_\_\_  
 (phrasings just shown in one hand - same for both)

5

Sire, Dipped my Beak in it, \_\_\_\_\_ If the Tune drip too

10

much Have a tint too Red \_\_\_\_\_

15 *mp* *mf*

Par - don the Co - chi - neal - Suf - fer the Ver -

19

mil - li - on - Death is the Wealth Of the Poor - est

24 *mf*

Bird. Bear with the Bal - lad -

29

Aw - kward - fal - te - ring - Death twists the strings

33

*mp*  
Twas-nt\* my blame. Pause in your Li - tur - gies

\* again, Dickinson's (habitual mis-)placing of the apostrophe is retained.

38

Wait your Cho - rals - While I re - peal

42

your Hal - lowed Name -

mp

3

3

3

3

mp

3

46

mp

3

3

3

3

3

## 9. Departed to the Judgment -

Majestic, immense  $\text{♩} = 48$ 

*f* declamatory  $\text{3}$

De-par - ted - to the Judg-ment -

*f* *pp* *molto*

*Red.*

5  $\text{3}$   $\text{3}$  *ff*

A Migh - ty Af-ter - noon

(trumpets!)

*f* *ff*  $\text{3}$

8 *f*  $\text{3}$

Great clouds like u - shers lean - ing, Cre - a - - tion

*f*  $\text{5:6}$   $\text{3}$   $\text{5:6}$



11

look - ing on.

*ff*

5

15:16

5

(omit upper B if small hands)

12

13:16

5

7:8

5

13

*f*

The flesh sur - ren - dered,

14

can - celled                      The bo - di - less                      be - gun;

16

*p*

Two worlds, like au-di-en-cis dis-persé                      And leave the soul a -

*pp*                      *ppp*

19

lone.

## 10. So give me back to Death -

Slow, simple, accepting  $\text{♩} = 46$ *mp*

So give me back to Death - The Death I ne-ver feared

8

Ex - cept that it de prived of thee - And now, by Life de -

13

prived, In my own Grave I breathe And es - ti - mate its size -

19 rit. . . .

Its size is all that Hell can guess - And all that Hea - ven

25 *a tempo* *molto rit.*

was -

*mf* *mp* *8va* 5 3 Ped.