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## Essence of Alice

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## ESSENCE OF ALICE

Tall willowy poplar  
Rooted firmly in generations  
Of respectable southern soil  
Nurtured by ethereal thoughts  
Harnessed in permanent ink.

A direct gaze  
Under the arch of one serious eyebrow  
Fuels theoretical questions  
As intense as desert sun  
And threatens the extinction  
Of minds set in concrete.

A balanced diet  
Of bourbon-laced fruitcake  
And vaudevillian humor  
Piped in over the airwaves  
Feeds a serious sense of humor  
Which staves off  
Tiny tremors of trepidation  
Registered by returning adult scholars  
Who lug borrowed backpacks  
Crammed with vintage volumes  
Of naked naiveté.

— *Catherine L. Conway*