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Lazy yet ambitious

by Jenn Melchor

The world at large yet somehow it's all still stuck in my head.
Flowers flourishing yet just in an abandoned field.
Lively as a bird in a cage.
My own dreams are condemned to hell,
When I'm tied to a bed of my own faults and weaknesses.
I am rage.
I am stuck.
I am hurt.
I am everything I need to be but only in my head
Since I can't find a way to live and be something.
I am ambition,
Yet still somehow frozen in time.
I am great,
Yet unable to make anything great happen.
I am a statue.
I am a thick block of ice,
Left in the middle of nowhere.
Dying with potential.
Burning with desire.
Tortured with my own thoughts.
Left with no dignity.
I am desperately wanting to be her, but I simply can't.
I am too indolent to do it.



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Suffering

by Jenn Melchor

Sometimes suffering has no greater purpose than suffering.
It's not meant to build you up
or tear you down.
It's just meant for you.
Pain meant to be felt by you.
Like a virus spreading from person to person,
generation to generation.
Taking over the soul of the beholder.
Consuming you into darkness
and feeding on your energy.
Like a lion with its prey,
consuming you inside and out,
body and mind,
heart and soul.
This pain, this suffering that you feel
won't bring bad,
but it also won't bring good.
This pain isn't meant to torment.
It's meant to be nourished.
So that the pain can nourish you
in all the ways it knows how to.
This pain, this torment,
it's meant to be released.
So that it can heal you from
this cruel world we live in.
Nurturing you in the dark and
embracing your trauma in the light.

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Marmalade

by Casey Hendrix Dabrowski

Macaroni and cheese, macadamia,
and milk thistle
Your cooking is mystical.
Marmalade your wit is as sharp as a
blade,
an obsidian blade which was
marvelously made,
and oh, so serrated.
A bladed mystical maiden without
you the day is dim.
I'm happy you're on my team, with
you. we always win.
You are the heart of this tribe, this is
why we thrive.
You nurture all of our lives.
You are the queen of this beehive.
To strive for greatness is but a stroll,
you have profound control,
such a sweet soul.
Coconut oil on cats and dogs is sure
to keep away fleas and frogs,
and the occasional meandering hog.
Din, din is always a win-win you're so
good at cooking that it's almost a sin.
Another victorious meal made and
off you grin.

I think your cooking skills are in your
genes.
Good thing I'm your kin.
For when I cook I too grin.
Oh so generous, your giving nature is
not at all tenuous,
rather thick and alive like a whirling
baboon hide.
You do not settle and sit inside you
go out and stride.
Your heart is full, blushing, and alive!
Your loving nature knows no bounds,
you work as hard as any hound.
Your actions are quite profound.
You charge through when you meet
resistance,
no one can defeat your ambition.
You're like an engine's piston
pumping and whistling,
generating energy that has a loving
existence.
You are as tranquil as the Everglades,
Oh, you have so many shades.
All I can say is in so many ways you
make my day,
I love you Marmalade!



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Shindigging

by Casey Hendrix Dabrowski

A hoopty is a hopper
Blood be a dropper
My blade be a chopper
And limbs be loppers
Go roll your bones
Go crisscross those clones
Go take those boxes and build
some homes
Though be cautious of those
crooked cronies
Watch out
For they wiggle when they roam
Frostbitten freezers
Wet shirt teasers
Twinkling Tweezers
And Flipbook Breezers
We carry it all oh so well
I love it oh so much myself
You best do it for your health
And not so much for the wrong
kind of wealth

Beaver pelt
Geezer belch
Bloodstained fingers
And things that linger
The way some talk
You think them a singer
Prime the pincushion
Start the wish swooshing
Caress the buttons
Get to touching
Eat your muton
Be the ball
Show them all
Whether the squall
Matchstick clacking
Backflip stacking
Bake a cake
Make a make
Do a dish
Wish a wish
I think that's enough of this.



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GRANDMOTHER'S PURSE

by Brenda Loy Wilson

‘My Grandmother had this bush,’
my friend exclaimed as we walked
around my yard.

‘Her black Sunday purse
with the short, rounded handle,
gold clasp in the center,
held a lace-trimmed handkerchief,
a soft leather pouch filled
with nickels and pennies.

She gave these to her grandchildren
as the offering plate passed.

Her purse always held a pencil
and thin pad of paper for us
as the preacher’s voice
filled the house of worship.

Grandmother carried a few buds
wrapped in a velvet bag tied with lace.
When she opened her purse
the sweet scent of Carolina Allspice
filled the air around us.’



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REVIVAL

by Brenda Loy Wilson

Announcements went out by word of mouth,
social media, newspapers.

A soloist would sing. The guest preacher
agreed to drive twelve hours to join us.

On the proclaimed day, souls from near and far
crowded into the sanctuary.

Many pondered who would fill the remaining seat.

Would it be a doctor, an addict, a thief?

A hungry human in need of salvation?

The soloist's clear, strong voice floated
over the crowd, like a warm, soft blanket,
a peace beyond compare.

'O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder

Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made...

Then I shall bow, in humble adoration and then proclaim

My God, how great Thou art.'

Eyes closed, bodies swayed, arms reached for Him.

All communed with their Savior.

When eyes opened, the one empty seat
held Jesus.



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Just Beyond the Mountain

by Abigail Jones

*Just beyond the mountain,
Where the sky is always blue,
The river runs forever,
Under the shadow of the moon,
And each starlight in the sky,
Is like a compass to light the way,
To lead us back together,
Two ships lost upon the waves.*

*Just beyond the twilight,
Where the stars like flowers bloom,
A celestial melody,
Each note sweetly played in tune,
And each fountain of new light,
Is like a hope song at break of day,
So, I'll meet you by the lighthouse,
Before the stars all fade away.*

*Just beyond the cosmos,
Where the galaxies are born anew,
See a hundred falling comets,
Make a secret wish to hold onto,
And each dream among the stars tonight,
Is like a crystal of hope shining and fey,
And there's no better dream to know,
Than that our love will never fade.*



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Can You Feel His Love?

by Abigail Jones

Do you hear Him over the waters?

His Voice whispering among the reeds?

Do you see His Fingerprints among each flower petal?

His Touch in every cell within the leaves?

Do you see His Breath upon the oceans?

His Eyes shining among a myriad of stars?

Can you feel His mighty Hand that stirs the ocean currents?

And brings them close or sends them far?

Do you feel His Heartbeat in the cosmos?

His Presence moving through every cell of life?

Do you hear His Voice thundering in dark clouds above?

His Power flashing in every streak of light?

Do you see His Beauty in all of Creation?

His footsteps abounding over every mountain?

Do you feel His everlasting Love flow through your veins?

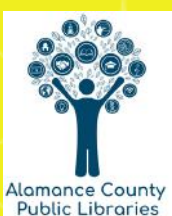
Washing over you like a never-ending fountain?

Do you see His Hand in all of Eternity?

His amazing Miracle of every breath of life?

Do you feel His loving touch woven into your soul?

Can you feel God moving in your life tonight?



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The Last Time **(For Rachel)**

by Elizabeth Solazzo

The last time you sat with me
cuddled close in my lap
I tickled your back.

Tears dried on your rosy cheeks
as I listened to your latest hurt.

You grew into a teenaged beauty
who now flirts and laughs
works and plans
for college and a career.

If only I had known
it was the last time
we would sit that close
I would have squeezed you tighter.



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Where I'm From

by Elizabeth Solazzo

I'm from red clay and dusty dirt roads
small cold houses with woodsmoke
dust coating the beige walls tan.

Hot biscuits and gravy
soup beans and cornbread
with spring onions and ripe tomatoes.

Red headed turkeys running free
young pigs squealing for more slop
cow patties, green grass and wild weeds.

Roosters and hens chasing me down
through the dirt swept yard
a mangy old hound leading the way.

Cotton mill pay keeping us all fed
and big Jack cookies a penny a piece
at the old country store.



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Houseplanters

by Allison Campbell

All of my houseplants are from dead people.
I inherit dirt like gold.

My young friend's pothos
wears a purple ribbon
because purple will always be her favorite.

My grandmother's snake plants bloomed
unexpectedly
when I started studying ancestor magic.

My house is lush in memory
of my mother-in-law
whose clippings continue to take root
in containers of every kind.

I have lived fourteen years with a vine
that is now older than our friendship.

I have learned that snake plant nectar is
sweet and rare.

I have heeded the plant-care advice
from my mother-in-law's tongue:
"Ignore them just the right amount."

I have remembered in moderation.
I have kept them alive.



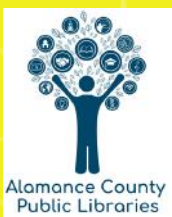
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Food for Thought

by Allison Campbell

I gag on this idea that
since I never took a poetry class
in college
I'm not allowed to write poems
because there must be Rules
about what makes a poem Good
that I don't know about
- like when to break off
lines
and capitalize Things
and use Punctuation effectively - .
I worry that the expression of my spirit
is not enough to warrant the attention
of others if it's not properly packaged
like a condensed soup.
How much labor does a poem require?
How many edits must I make
before it becomes The Real Thing?
Does it get better over time,
like a cheddar or a merlot,
kept ripening in an oak-aged Google Drive folder
until it's perfect for consumption?
Maybe, I think,
I am imagining poetry not as art
or as sustenance for the soul
but as a product, a commodity, a brand.
This, I think,
is why I need to write more poems.

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Counting Grays

by Renee Lynch

It's rude that my hair is turning gray,
When the brightest of colors still fill my
days.

Or is it silver,
and I'm learning to shine?
Embracing my sparkle
with a thickening spine.

Perhaps it is white,
comprising all hues.
Abstaining from pigments
they say I should use.

So why does this color,
cause such a stir
when I'm *feeling* each moment,
relishing the blur.

How silly to think,
such a dangerous thought...
that such things are defining
of this venture I've sought.

It's rude that my hair is turning gray...
Well I don't know,
maybe I like it this way.



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Let the Music Play

by Melissa Graham

Let the music play
And the band march on,
The melody stays
Long after they're gone

All the loving souls
Leave their lyrics behind,
And the harmony stalls
While we struggle with why.

A funk in our hearts
Yet new melodies form
As note by note
We again face life's storms.



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Space

by Melissa Graham

All these spaces
Worry traces
Deeply etched in peoples' faces
As we hide out in our places
Buried detritus of chaos.

Racing against time
With no reason or rhyme
Life is meant to be sublime
As we struggle in our prime
Simply lost in all the grime.

Somebody sees you
Believing in your truths
Skies turn back to blue
The world tilts back into view
As love seeps through you.



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the sea bear and the snowbird

by Gary J. Larson

i am your protector, the fragile one.

i am your slow and tiny color

who burns you pink and red

who cradles you in lavender sheets.

do you see the difference between us?

i will smile at you

from across the table

from across the city

until you see.

if you ever left me

i would play your record every morning

every day the fuzzy crackle of your laugh

narrates my coffee and with a startling sad

slip of the needle i am only alone at my table

dressed for work.

if i ever left you

i would tether myself above you

on a heartstring ten years long

and follow above you every day

until I hear those singing smiles

that I never let go

true, in a way I'd be gone

but aren't you still

holding that halcyon string?

for now we

our tired hands to-gether

wonder are we alone?

don't you see the stars like grains of sand?

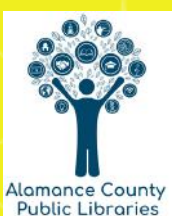
they are burning and shattering and sowing

all around us

while our feet crunch the snow.

i am your protector, the fragile one

my thickest skin is yours, forever



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Snow Filled Day

by Reagan Klooz

On a snow filled day,
I stay outside and play

I soon plan
To make a snowman

I had a thrill
Sledding down a hill

It is a delight
Having a snowball fight

My hands are red
So inside I fled

I sit in my chair
Playing with my hair

I like to read my book
In my little nook

Having on my lamp
I look at my stamps

My hot chocolate brewing
Nothing am I doing

The fire is hot
Like the hot chocolate in the pot



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Forget It by Aubrey Keith Lute

FORGET the slander you have heard.

FORGET the nasty unkind word.

FORGET the quarrel and the cause.

FORGET the whole affair.

BECAUSE FORGETTING IS THE ONLY WAY....

FORGET the storm of yesterday.

FORGET the chap whose sour face,

FORGETS to smile in any place.

Forget you're not a millionaire.

FORGET the grey streaks in your hair.

FORGET the coffee when it's cold,

FORGET to kick,

FORGET to scold.

FORGET the plumbers awful charge.

FORGET the coalman and his ways,

FORGET the winters blustery days.



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Hobbies

by Kristy Mabe

You don't need a lobby

to enjoy a hobby!

You can string together beads,
or plant lots of flowering seeds.

You could spread cheer from good deeds,
or even help people in need.

Perhaps you'll gather with a group who reads,
or even walk adoptable dogs at the park on leads.

Maybe you'll work with an organization that feeds,
or even go to a community garden to weed.

Your knees may get worn and knobby,
and you may meet someone named Bobbi,
but you'll be listening to your needs
and following where your heart leads.

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Growing Together

by Kristy Mabe

When you were small how little I'd known,
I regret so much, including my tone.
Now it seems like we've gotten into the zone,
Yet so many things come up you haven't been shown.
Some days you're like a dog with a bone,
Growling about your need for a phone.
My broken cell is good for a loan,
But still, you protest and bemoan
"I want my own!"
While that's behavior I can't condone,
I can readily tell how much you've grown.
Every now and then I can see seeds I've sown.



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