



VGNP 2025 Poetry Contest **Valerie M. Griggs's first-prize poem,** **"Where Else?"**

Where Else?

In a house like this, in a time like that,
a dream time, childhood sun time –
Death came, silenced the future,
tore up everything. Anything can be
found in kitchen drawers: recipes, extra
keys. Anything can hang on walls – portraits,
old calendars, prints. In my arms, I carry
as much as I can to the attic, step by step,
regrets in my throat. Memories come to life
confusing the present, and I feel off kilter,
as in dreams when cars turn into dolphins.
I'm holding all the pieces to store in the
time mirrors that reflect faces, scenes of life
in this house. The illusion is separation.

In the earth – where else can grief go?
What else can receive the deepest
emptiness? Where else are resurrection
stories so grounded? Kneeling here, my
hands in the earth, clearing a space,
pulling out weeds and small stones,
my body so near your grave, I tend time,
thinking of bulbs and new roots, trying
not to be impatient. It'll be too many days
until the craftsman finishes the stone
and marks your place, punctuates the story.
Where else can I go to keep going?