

Out of Time

VIEVEE FRANCIS

The story was about me but I was not able
to find myself in my own woods. Lost. While
the snarls and growls of animals grew louder
and I had no breadcrumbs to help me find my way
back. Oh, you had filled my hands with crumbs
but the birds, damned things, ate them before they hit
the ground. So much like you, impatient.

Once, I set my dreams upon a clock but the clock wound down
and I grew older and forgot the beginning—the story of me
or so I thought. In the story I was running away from something?
Someone? A large cat, like a raging panther, the kind that eats whatever
moves. To save myself I jumped into a dark pool in the dark of the night
lit only by moonlight through the canopy of trees that held
such spiteful things they wouldn't help. And there being no
candy house I ate my own pink tongue. So I guess there is a story
though I was never heard from again, and never found—here I am.

And *there* you are.

About the author

Vieve Francis is the author of four books of poetry: *The Shared World* (Northwestern University Press, 2023); *Forest Primeval* (TriQuarterly Books, 2015), winner of the 2017 Kingsley Tufts Award and the Hurston Wright Legacy Award; *Horse in the Dark* (Northwestern University Press, 2012), winner of the Cave Canem Northwestern University Press Poetry Prize; and *Blue-Tail Fly* (Wayne State University Press, 2006). Her work has appeared in numerous journals, textbooks, and anthologies including *Poetry*, *Harvard Review*, *Yale Review*, *Best American Poetry*, *spin.com*, and *Angles of Ascent: A Norton Anthology of Contemporary African American Poetry*. She is also the recipient of a 2024 Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2021 Aiken Taylor Award for Modern American Poetry. She is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at Dartmouth College.