



Frank de Weerd

Scene 1. Jante, Bas, Manolis, Raoul, Kinga, Frank.

Storyteller: Just like in every story, everything started on an ordinary Monday morning, when nobody expected anything special to happen. Here is how Frank joined the Biophysics group in Amsterdam. The name of this part is 'Great expectations'.

Bas, Jante, Manolis and Raoul are sitting in the coffee-room drinking Monday morning coffee.

Bas: Ach, ja...

Roul: Ach, jeetjes...

Manolis: Yeah, life sucks...

Jante (*doing RSI exercises with sour face*): Exactly!

(*all keep drinking coffee for a while sighing and vegetating*)

Kinga (*cheerfully walks in*): Hello everybody! Isn't this the great day?

Bas: Yeah, right...

Raoul: What is wrong with you, woman? Don't you know that Monday morning cannot be nice by definition? It's the most horrible time of the week! I hate it!

Manolis (*shrugs and says to Raoul*): Women!..

Jante: Well, I am a woman too, Manolis, in case you did not notice, but I hate Mondays!..

Kinga: What's wrong with you, guys? Why are you so sour? I understand, Monday morning and stuff, but this looks like a funeral!

Bas: I was just dumped by my girlfriend. Don't get me wrong, I don't care that we are not together anymore, but how dears she to dump me?! I was supposed to dump her!

Raoul: Well I have similar sort of problem... I don't really want to talk about it.

Jante: (*mumbling silently*): And my boyfriend left for a post-doc in Denmark...

(*Bas, Manolis and Raoul all imitate volume increase on the remote control*)

Jante: (loud) I was saying, my boyfriend left to do a post-doc in Denmark. I am worried that he might be indeed doing some Danish post-doc... Never trust the Danes! Nor Germans!

(*Furiously continues RSI gymnastics*)

Manolis: I met this wonderful Turkish girl the other day, but she ran away after learning that I am Greek, I don't smoke and I am a vegetarian.

Kinga: Well, maybe then I have good news for you! I have heard that we are getting a new colleague! Rienk was on the phone talking about tall Dutch blonde with sea-deep blue eyes, who is supposed to join the group today!

Bas: Oh, Wow! Maybe I can show her my espresso machine!

Raoul: 'My espresso machine...' Man, if this is all you are going to show her, you have no chance. You are never going to be so much in love with a women as you are with your stupid espresso machine. I will ask her out to a wild death party with a lot of sex, drugs and rock'n'roll. She will love it.

Manolis (*comes to Raoul and looks from above*): Ha! If it's a tall Dutch blonde, you better buy some high heel shoes, Raoul.

Frank (*Walks in wearing bikers shorts and wooden shoes*): Hi everybody! My name is Frank, I am a new PhD student. I started my PhD project (*looks at his watch*) seventeen minutes ago. *Kinga and Jante start whispering and giggling.*

Bas: Eeeee... But you are not a woman.

Frank: (*Seriously*) This is totally true. I am not a woman.

Kinga: Why are you wearing bikes shorts? Don't get me wrong, I really like what I see, but it's a little bit unusual...

Frank: Dutch railways are on strike, so I decided to bike here from Utrecht. And tonight I am biking to Rotterdam to visit my parents.

Jante: (*excitedly looking at the shorts*) Gee, I really hope this strike lasts forever!

Raoul (*Still a little embarrassed*): So... Eeee... What will you do here?

Frank: For a start, I became responsible for the coffee-room cleaning list. Who of you is Bas?

Bas: (*Looking scared*): I... I am. Is there a problem?

Frank: This week is your cleaning week. Your duty is to clean the cups in the coffee room and the chemical glassware in the chemical lab.

Bas: Does this actually mean that I have to clean something?

Frank: I don't care. My duty is to inform you, that it is your duty to clean everything. Good luck! (*Walks out*)

(Manolis, Bas and Raoul approaching Kinga threateningly)

Bas: Tall?..

Raoul: Blonde?..

Manolis: with sea-deep blue eyes?

Kinga: (*running away*): But it's trueeeee!..

(everyone runs out chasing Kinga)

Scene 2. Frank, Manolis, Danielis, Jante, Kinga, Belg

Storyteller: Well, for those of you who do not know, I can tell that being a student in Amsterdam Biophysics group is not only scientific, but also extensive wildlife experience. And Frank did very well here. He survived not only rainforests and salt water crocodiles in Australia, but also the wilderness of Belgium Ardennes! This part of the story is called 'The leader'.

Frank, Manolis, Danielis, Jante, Kinga walk in the Ardennes. Frank is carrying a map, Jante and Kinga are carrying umbrellas, Danielis (bare footed) is half-carrying Manolis, who is limbing a lot.

Kinga: I cannot go any further! I am all wet, I am cold my feet are hurting, I want a warm bath and a glass of hot wine!

Jante: Me too! And I also saw a weather forecast: this afternoon we are getting snow, hale and the total eclipse of the Sun! This is the usual weather in the Ardennes in May! Why oh why I left my warm and cosy apartment in Amsterdam? And I am hungry as well!

Manolis: Leave me here, I want to dye. I have my pride too!

Danielis: No way, my brother, I will carry you till the end! If only I had socks! Frank! Is the village still far away?

Frank: *(looks at the map):* three kilometres and seven hundred fifty meters.

Kinga and Jante: Oh no!...

Kinga: But last time I asked you said it was four kilometers! And that's ages ago!

Frank: *(looks at his watch)* This is 4 minutes ago. We are moving with the average speed of 4 kilometers per hour. In 56 minutes we will be in the village, if the average speed remains the same.

Manolis: In Greece, we would take a taxi. Can someone call a taxi for me? Otherwise I prefer dying here... My feet are just two big wounds...

Danielis: No, keep going, remmember: there is beer in the village.

Manolis looks a bit cheered up and tries to continue miserably

Jante: Oh, God this backpack is killing me... I doubt if I can make it to the village...

Kinga: I am exhausted. And we get this bloody rain! Frank, do something – you are a leader!

Frank: I heard this ancient Dutch song from my grandfather... He said it was used as a last resort during the World War I. After hearing it even the most exhausted Belgian and Dutch soldiers would get up and bravely attack the enemy. I think it's time to use it. *(starts marching and singing):*

Er is een potje met vet
Al op de tafel gezet
Potje potje potje potje vet
Al op de tafel gezet.

Dat was de eerste couplet
Over een potje met vet
Potje potje potje potje vet

Al op de tafel gezet.

(Everyone joins in the singing and start marching cheerfully. They come to the village bar. Everyone sits down, tired. There is a Belg in the bar, drinking beer. Frank gets himself a beer, sits down next to the Belg).

Frank: Hi, Manneke! How is life?

Belg: Allright Manneke. What are you doing here?

Frank: Well, we are tourists from, Holland, you know. Maybe you know where we could drink a glass of water, because we are so hungry that we don't even have a place to sleep?

Belg: Huh? I did not get it.

Frank: *(to himself)* Oh, I forgot that it's Belgium and I have to be simple. *(To the Belg)* Well, you see we are cold and tired and we would like to spend a night somewhere... Warm and with a non-leaking roof.

Belg: Well, to say the truth, I had a small hotel next to this bar, but it went bankrupt, because all the customers were Dutch – they wouldn't spend an extra cent. I am sorry.

Frank: Maybe if I tell you an important Dutch military secret, you could make an exception for us? Do you want to know why there was never a war between Holland and Belgium?

Belg: Wow! If you tell me this, you can stay in this hotel for free for as long as you want! Why?

Frank: Because as soon as the Belgians start marching against Holland, we switch all the traffic lights to red!

Belg: Oh! So that was why!.. Okay, here are the hotel keys, make yourself at home. *(to himself)*. And we are going to occupy Holland in the meantime! *(Leaves excited)*.

Frank: *(to himself)*: Stupid fool. He has no idea that the real reason is because on the road from Belgium to Holland at the border there is a sign saying 'Holland weg'. *(To the others)* Guys! We have rooms for tonight! With hot showers and cold beer! Let's go!

(Everyone jumps up and leaves for the hotel)

Scene 3. Frank and Rienk.

Storyteller: And now it is time to look at the part of Franks life that officially ended today: being a PhD student in Biophysics group. And the last part of the story is called 'The Masterpiece'.

Frank is sitting at the computer, programming. Rienk walks in.

Rienk: Hello, mister de Weerd! How is life? Did you do something useful lately?

Frank: Well, I was working on the measuring program for the BMI pump-probe setup. I updated the old program significantly, implemented some new options.

Rienk: Oh, very interesting! Can I see them?

Frank: Sure. Look, there is this new command: capital M.

Rienk: Yeah, I remember it was there before. It means 'measure'.

Frank: Yes, but now it measures not only pump-probe on the sample, but also absorption, fluorescence. It also takes blood pressure and cholesterol level of the person performing the experiment and there is a little solitaire game to keep the scientist busy while the data is being collected.

Rienk: Amazing, amazing...

Frank: And I added another command. Capital F.

Rienk: And what does it do?

Frank: Well, it fries the sample of course. F -kj 100 means 'fry the sample with 100 kJ of energy'. And there is also the option F -kc 100. Then you can give the energy in kilocalories. *(Krzysztof walks in looking worried)*

Krzysztof: Frank, what's the matter with the BMI laser? I typed in some command, there was a green flash of light and now the laser does not work any more!

Frank: You probably used another new option of the program: capital X. It means 'explode the laser'. X -g explodes the laser with the flash of green light, and X -b explodes it with the blue flash!

Krzysztof: Oh, my god. So I blew the laser... *(leaves)*

Rienk: Oh, so the laser does not work anymore? How are we going to get scientific results now? We need to fix the laser as soon as possible!

Frank: Don't worry, I have thought about it. I present you my biggest pride! The commands P and Th.

Rienk: And what do they do? Ruin the whole building?

Frank: No. Command capital P produces a scientific paper, and Th - PhD thesis. For example P -20 produces a 20 page long paper. Th -150 produces the PhD thesis that is 150 pages long. I ran some tests last week and I produced these... *(pulls out Markus', Bas', Raoul's theses)*. Of course, they are just testing versions. This is the real one! My thesis! *(pulls out his own thesis)*. Actually, I defended it today. You were there, remember?

Rienk: Oh, yes, now that you say it... Excellent defence! By the way, may I have these other theses? I have some phd students who cannot produce one in seven years, so I will give these to them so that they leave the group. We need some fresh blood.

(Frank gives him the 'test' theses and Rienk leaves excited)

Frank: *(looks around at all the people)* Don't you understand? It's over! My thesis has been defended today. All you can do now is drink beer and have a good time!