

Frank Meets Francine

by Foster Trecost

The storm snuck in like a random thought. Drops bleated the sidewalk and made a sound I'd heard before, but wasn't sure where. I interviewed in an hour and didn't have an umbrella, so I ducked through the next door I passed. It didn't matter what they sold, I wasn't there to make a purchase.

Once inside I turned around to look through the glass door. It rained harder and I checked my watch. Then the sound of rain took over and I got lost looking for it. That's when she spoke: "Can I help you?"

Her tone made it clear I had no business in her store. I spun around to beg her pardon, ask permission to stay a few minutes more, but she wasn't there. My focus went to the things around her, the things that blended her into the background. Then two words snuck in my mind like the rain, but I realized they weren't random at all: "Fried eggs," I said.

She didn't need to vocalize her confusion.

"The sound," I said. "The rain reminds me of eggs, frying in the pan." I had found the sound. And I had found something else, too. Everything made sense, the whole world seemed clear, and it sparkled before my eyes.

I'm not sure what she thought, but she softened, her features, her tone. She spoke with her expression and what it said was that everything would be okay. I looked at my watch, but the interview was no longer a concern. "Do you see something you like?"

I did. I saw lots of things I liked. She spent the next two hours helping me decide what I liked best. She totaled our selections and asked my name. I nearly came out with out Frank, but said Francis instead. Francis sounded better, softer, more appropriate, but she wasn't convinced. "How about Francine?"

That rainy afternoon sprang upon me four years ago. I've been Francine ever since.

