

Frank's 75th Christmas

Brandon Daughtry Slocum





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Frank's 75th Christmas

by Brandon Daughtry Slocum

*Presented by the Silver Stage Players
at the John T. O'Connor Center, Knoxville, Tennessee 2007*

Original Cast

<i>Frank Montgomery</i>	<i>Charlie Stevens</i>
<i>Martha Montgomery</i>	<i>Jeanette Stevens</i>
<i>Kay</i>	<i>Yvonne Fields</i>
<i>Trudy</i>	<i>Carol Doane</i>
<i>Patricia</i>	<i>Jan Rickard</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>Becky Chandler</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>Claudia Jewell</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Bettie Wilkie</i>
<i>Officer Brodie</i>	<i>Yvonne Fields</i>
<i>Dr. Reid</i>	<i>Almetor King</i>
<i>Angel</i>	<i>Mary Davis</i>

*Directed by Brandon Daughtry Slocum
Production Stage Manager, JP Schuffman*

Characters

Frank Montgomery: a crotchety man, age 75

Martha Montgomery: his wife

Kay: an Episcopalian rector

Trudy: a fun ball of fire postal employee

Patricia: a tired woman working retail

April, May, June Swann: three eccentric spinster sisters

Officer Brodie: a community security guard

Dr. Reid: A caring and kind cardiologist

Angel: a supernatural being

The action takes place in a retirement community in Florida. It is played with minimal props and suggestive settings.

Scene One

(A table and two chairs, a newspaper, a list, some cards. Martha is 'cooking breakfast' as Frank enters Up Right and crosses to Stage Right chair. Martha crosses to chair. He sits and reads the paper, never looking at his wife)

MARTHA: Good morning.

FRANK: Humph.

MARTHA: Did you sleep well?

FRANK: Humph.

MARTHA: Can you believe it's Christmas Eve? The weatherman says it will be 75 degrees by this afternoon.

FRANK: Hate Florida

MARTHA: Well, your back doesn't miss the winters back home.

FRANK: My back's no better here. Just hotter.

MARTHA: I have a million things to do before tonight, would you mind running a few errands for me today?

FRANK: Can I take the car?

MARTHA: You know what the doctor said about you driving the car. Take the golf cart, that's why we bought it.

FRANK: No self-respecting man is going to be seen driving a damn golf cart to the store.

MARTHA: Practically every "self-respecting man" in this community drives a golf cart.

FRANK: Marlin Tate doesn't drive a golf cart!

MARTHA: Marlin Tate is only 62 years old, Frank.

FRANK: Then what the hell is he doing here? I was putting in a forty-hour week

when I was 62.

MARTHA: He retired early ... to enjoy life a bit more.

FRANK: If watching old folks drive golf carts around an old folks community is his idea of a good time, he should have stayed on his job.

MARTHA: Here's the list. Can you read it?

FRANK: It's printed big enough to read on a billboard,

MARTHA: I can read it. Why can't you do all this stuff?

MARTHA: *(Stands and crosses Down Right)* My ladies' auxiliary is taking dinner to all the people who can't cook for themselves anymore, then I'm off to the community center for the children's choir, and then my bridge club is having a late lunch, and...

FRANK: Alright! I get it. You know everybody and everybody knows you.

MARTHA: Well, they know you too, Frank. If you would just try to make some friends ... adjust a bit.

FRANK: *(Kay enters extreme Down Left with a broom)* I am adjusting! I'm adjusting to my back hurting everyday and my eyes quitting on me and my damn arthritis. I'm adjusting to not being able to work for a living and trying to figure out if we're going to live longer than the money we have will last.

MARTHA: You have the list, Frank. Try to have a good day.

FRANK: Humph.

(Martha exits Up Center--Frank takes the list and crosses to Center --The table and chairs are removed. He sees Reverend Kay, the rector, sweeping)

KAY: Good morning, Frank. God bless you on this beautiful Christmas Eve morning.

FRANK: Humph. Don't know why you're bothering to sweep... those steps will just be covered up in sand again in no time. The whole damn state is made of the stuff.

KAY: Well, hopefully, they will stay clean just long enough for people to make

their way to service this evening. Will I be seeing you in church this Christmas?

FRANK: I'm a Methodist for Pete's sake!

KAY: God doesn't care about denomination, Frank. God is the same wherever you go. Won't you consider joining us, just this once?

FRANK: The pews are too hard, hurts my back. And you keep the air conditioning on too high, hurts my arthritis. And that incense stinks and bothers my sinuses. And, I've already got one woman at home telling me what to do, I don't need to come to church to get another one telling me what to do...no offense.

KAY: None taken, Frank. None taken. Merry Christmas, Frank.

FRANK: Humph.

(Kay exits Down Left--Frank goes into the 'post office to mail Martha's Christmas cards. A small counter has been moved on Stage Left. Trudy enters Stage Left and stands behind the counter.)

TRUDY: Good morning, Frank! Merry Christmas!

FRANK: Humph.

TRUDY: Are you mailing your Christmas cards? It's a little late, isn't it?

FRANK: You know, most of these aren't going but a block! Martha could've walked around and delivered them, instead she wastes money on stamps and sends me down here to wait in line.

TRUDY: *(speaking to an imaginary customer)* You go on over to Trisha, baby. I'll deal with Mr. Scrooge here.

FRANK: About time.

TRUDY: Now, Frank, you know if you come to the post office on Christmas Eve, there's going to be a line.

FRANK: Ought to hire extra people.

TRUDY: You want to come work at the P.O. at Christmas?

FRANK: I'd do a damn sight better job than this crew seems to manage.

TRUDY: I know you would, Sugar. I know you would.

FRANK: Just mail these cards for Martha.

TRUDY: How is that sweet wife of yours?

FRANK: Out feeding people and playing bridge and making friends, acting like she's a teenager at a new high school.

TRUDY: Well, you tell her Trudy says hello and Merry Christmas...will you do that for me?

FRANK: Humph.

(Trudy exits Up Center--Counter is struck--Frank turns from Up Center and crosses to Dawn Right--Patricia enters Stage Right. Frank goes into 'the store' and starts aimlessly walking through the shelving, occasionally stopping and turning to read things, Patricia who doesn't like Frank very much, comes to help him)

PATRICIA: Hello, Frank. Can I help you find something?

FRANK: Too much stuff in here ... can't ever find anything.

PATRICIA: Has it ever occurred to you to bring your glasses to the store with you?

FRANK: Has it ever occurred to you to mind your own business?

PATRICIA: What are you looking for...a Christmas present for Martha?

FRANK: She got the condo in Florida, she got a brand new dishwasher just back in May, and she went on that stupid cruise with her bridge club in September. I think that's plenty for one year, don't you?

PATRICIA: Sure, Frank. What are you here for then?

FRANK: *(eyeing the list)* Scotch tape...woman sends me four blocks for Scotch tape.

PATRICIA: *(Getting the tape for him)* Here you go, Frank. *(Frank turns to go)* Merry Christmas, you crotchety old fart!

FRANK: I heard that!

PATRICIA: Good!

(Patricia exits Up Center. Frank alms to Stage Left. April, May, and June enter extreme Down Left and cross to Stage Left. Frank exits the store and runs directly into the Swann Sisters ... April, May & June ... dressed in antique and very formal dresses, hats and gloves, the sisters sing-song pattern)

FRANK: Oh, no.

APRIL, MAY & JUNE: Good mornin' Mr. Montgomery!

FRANK: Humph.

APRIL: Isn't it a beautiful ...

MAY: Christmas Eve morning...

JUNE: Remember April, the Christmas Eve back home...

MAY: When it snowed so deep...

APRIL: Daddy couldn't drag the tree home...

JUNE: No, he couldn't...

MAY: The snow was just too deep...

JUNE: Just too deep...

APRIL: And Mama and May decorated the coat rack...

JUNE: And put it in the corner...

APRIL, MAY, and JUNE: Just like a real tree...

FRANK: *(Frank steps Down Left and the Sisters step Down Stage, blocking his exit)* Uh, if you ladies will excuse me...

APRIL: And I woke up in the middle of the night...

MAY: Well, you smelled the smoke...

JUNE: She smelled the smoke...

APRIL: And we all ran downstairs...

MAY: Daddy went first...

JUNE: And May's new coat was just smoking away...

MAY: It was June's old coat, but she had outgrown it...

JUNE: I had outgrown it.

APRIL: So, it was May's coat then...

MAY: And Daddy had to throw the whole coat rack...

APRIL: Out in the snow!

FRANK: *(Frank: crosses down stage right.)* That was a great story, really, thank you. I really must be on my way now.

APRIL, MAY & JUNE: Merry Christmas! Tell Martha Merry Christmas!

FRANK: Crazy women...crazy as you can get and still walk loose on the streets.

(Frank is stopped again by running headlong into Officer Brodie. Officer Brodie enters from Up Center and crosses Down Center.)

OFFICER BRODIE: 'Morning, Frank.

FRANK: Humph.

OFFICER BRODIE: Think it will snow? *(Laughs)*

FRANK: Ha. Ha. You're a riot, you know that?

OFFICER BRODIE: Nothing wrong with adding a little humor to the job.

FRANK: What job?

OFFICER BRODIE: My job. This job. To protect and serve, you know?

FRANK: Middle-aged woman like yourself, dressed up in your rent-a-cop uniform...next thing you know, they'll be giving you a gun. Say, you can shoot the

triplets there for jaywalking.

OFFICER BRODIE: Well Frank, I married a man a bit older than me...ended up in a retirement community before I was ready to retire. It's a good job. You should consider joining the force.

FRANK: Me? Yeah, all duded up in my blue uniform, telling people driving golf carts to slow down...not a chance.

OFFICER BRODIE: It would get you out of the house a few hours a day, out from under Martha's feet.

FRANK: Martha's feet aren't ever there for me to be under! Woman is gone all the time, playing bridge, volunteering at the school feeding poor people...

OFFICER BRODIE: Martha's a good woman, Frank. You might think about being more like her...

FRANK: And I might sprout wings and fly to Mexico too.

OFFICER BRODIE: (*Officer Brodie turns to the Sisters.*) Go home, Frank.

FRANK: Yes, ma'am, officer ma'am! (*He salutes her and walks away*)

(*Frank stops, clutches his left arm, and collapses. Officer Brodie and the Swann sisters run to him -Officer Brodie kneels at his side*)

OFFICER BRODIE: (*on her walkie-talkie*) I need medical to the corner of Broad and Chestnut. Now. Possible cardiac arrest. White male, approximately 75 years old.

APRIL, MAY & JUNE: Oh, my!

(*blackout*)

Scene Two

(*The scene changes to a hospital room--Frank in bed, with tubes in his nose, a hospital gown on, Martha at his side. Doctor Reid enters Up Right. Martha crosses Stage Right.*)

MARTHA: Thank you for being here ... Christmas Eve and all.

DOCTOR REID: People get sick on Christmas Eve too. I need to ask you some questions about Frank. How has he handled retirement?

MARTHA: He just can't seem to get interested in anything. It's like he thinks the only work worth doing is work you get paid for. I try to tell him that there is plenty of work to be done, right off our front doorstep, if he'd care to look.

DOCTOR REID: How has he adjusted to the move down here?

MARTHA: He hates it, or acts like he does. He never really had any friends or hobbies back home either. All he did was work. He had a few friends at his job, but they never did much outside of work. What does any of this have to do with his heart attack?

DOCTOR REID: Martha, Frank has had a very mild coronary episode. It isn't unusual or particularly threatening to a man in his condition. He is in pretty good shape physically for a guy his age. I'm more worried about his mental and emotional state.

MARTHA: I don't understand.

DOCTOR REID: Martha, I think Frank may be depressed. His body is still in the fight, but his soul isn't. Frank has to want to live. He has to have a reason. Do you think he would go to a therapist?

MARTHA: Frank?

DOCTOR REID: Yes.

MARTHA: Doctor Reid, I can't imagine Franklin Montgomery going to a shrink.

DOCTOR REID: *(Dr. Reid steps Up Center. Martha crosses Down Right.)* Well, let's talk about it again in a couple of days. Right now, he just needs to rest. Speaking of which, you look like you could do with a bit of sleep yourself. Why don't you go down to the family lounge and try to catch a nap?

MARTHA Well...

DOCTOR REID *(Dr. Reid crosses to Martha and takes her hand.)* We'll come get you when he wakes up, promise. But, I doubt we'll have too much trouble out of Frank tonight. Get some rest. *(Martha and Dr. Reid cross Up Center to exit.)*

MARTHA: Thank you, Doctor. And Merry Christmas.

DOCTOR REID: Merry Christmas. (*Martha exits -Dr. Reid turns to Frank*) And Merry Christmas to you too old man. I hope you wake up wanting to be here. (*Dr. Reid exits Up Center. The Angel enters Up Center*)

ANGEL: Frank, wake up.

FRANK: Humph.

ANGEL: Frank, wake up. (*She pinches him on the arm*)

FRANK: Am I dead? Where am I?

ANGEL: ICU at the moment. You had a nice little coronary on the sidewalk this morning.

FRANK: Am I dying?

ANGEL: That's why I'm. You tell me.

FRANK: What?

ANGEL: Well, you could die from this, if you're willing to give up... if you're ready to not be here anymore. Who would have thought that Frank Montgomery would turn out to be such a big chicken?

FRANK: I'm no chicken!

ANGEL: Really? What, other than being a coward, have you been doing for the last couple of years? You're too afraid to invest in your own life, too afraid to make amends or get a job or go to church or spend time with your wife?

FRANK: You don't know the first thing about it!

ANGEL: Oh, I don't? Do you think you are special? Do you think you are the only person in the world with a bad back and aching joints? Do you think you're the first old man to ever just throw your life away and give up?

FRANK: I don't know what else to do. I'm not good for anything anymore.

ANGEL: You could join community security, like Mary Brodie.

FRANK: Glorified crossing guard...

ANGEL: That glorified crossing guard saved your life today. You could possibly do the same thing for someone else...wouldn't that feel good.

FRANK: My back hurts all the time, my hands hurt...

ANGEL: Mary Brodie has had five children and survived breast cancer ... I think you could keep up with her, if you tried. (*Angel crosses Down Left*) You know a lot about carpentry and plumbing and household things ... you could help out your neighbors.

FRANK: Too old for that.

ANGEL: The Swann sisters had to pay a plumber two hundred dollars to come out and unstop a drain. Are you telling me you are so old and pitiful you can't unstop a drain?

FRANK: What if I can?

ANGEL: You could have saved the sisters a lot of money and done a good turn for your neighbors.

FRANK: They didn't ask me to do it.

ANGEL: Sometimes you just offer, Frank. You don't wait to be asked. You have met those women and you know they don't know the first thing about taking care of a house. (*Angel crosses Down Right*) And what about Kay?

FRANK: What does the Reverend have to do with this?

ANGEL: Nothing. Other than she is a trained professional who sees that you are depressed and fading away. She has tried everything short of bribery to get you involved in your community.

FRANK: I am not depressed, thank you very much. Oprah. And I am not an Episcopalian!

ANGEL: And what about Trudy down at the post office?

FRANK: What about her? I barely know the woman.

ANGEL: She lives across the street from you, Frank.

FRANK: She does?

ANGEL: Yes, she does. She also foster grandparents twelve kids.

FRANK: Well, good for her.

ANGEL: And works full time at the post office.

FRANK: Good for her.

ANGEL: And her husband died just last year.

FRANK: Is that my fault?

ANGEL: No. But did it ever occur to you when you're mowing your lawn to just ride that big old John Deere of yours across the street and mow her lawn too while you're at it?

FRANK: No, it never occurred to me.

ANGEL: There are people all around you, Frank. People you could be helping.

ANGEL: Yes, Frank, they do like you... though God only knows why, the way you treat them.

FRANK: I just want my life back. I want to go back to the way things were before we came here.

ANGEL: It doesn't work that way, Frank. Life moves on, moves forward, and you have to move with it.

FRANK: I don't know that I want to.

ANGEL: Okay, let's go then.

FRANK: Go where?

ANGEL: Somewhere else, away from here, away from your life.

FRANK: Wait a minute, I didn't say I wanted to die.

ANGEL: No, but you have said you don't really want to live ... what's the difference?

FRANK: I...

ANGEL: What is the difference between dying and living like you're already dead?

FRANK: I don't suppose there is much difference.

ANGEL: We can go now, if you're ready.

MARTHA: Frank ... you're awake. They told me they would come get me if you woke up. Who are you talking to?

FRANK: Nobody.

MARTHA: (*Martha sits at his side*) I could have sworn I heard you talking to someone.

FRANK: Martha, do you still love me.

MARTHA: What?

FRANK: Do you still love me?

MARTHA: Well, of course I do, Frank. I love you more than anything in the world. I always have and I always will.

FRANK: I've been thinking about a lot of things, Martha.

MARTHA: Well, you need to rest. You're going to be fine. Doctor Reid says you just need some rest.

FRANK: What else did she say?

MARTHA: What?

FRANK: What else did Doctor Reid say, Martha? Tell me the truth.

MARTHA: Well, she said she thought you might be... depressed... that you might not be adjusting so well to the move and retirement and...

FRANK: I think she may be right.

MARTHA: What?

FRANK: Listen, Martha. What would think about me joining community security?

MARTHA: Well, I...

FRANK: Just fifteen or so hours a week maybe. I could work while you're playing bridge.

MARTHA: I think that would be great, honey.

FRANK: And, we need to go across the street and help out that Trudy woman. Her husband dropped dead on her, did you know that...and her with all those foster grandkids?

MARTHA: Frank, I... *(Frank gets up and starts removing tubes and looking for his pants Stage Right)*

FRANK: And those weird Swann sisters, I need to get over there before that house falls in around them... silly birds probably think electricity is magic... *(putting on his pants)* And, I've been thinking about taking up golf. If I have to drive a damned golf cart, I might as well learn to actually play golf ...

MARTHA: *(Martha crosses Down Left of Center)* Frank, I don't know what to say.

FRANK: *(Frank crosses to Down Right of Center)* Say you love me.

MARTHA: I love you.

FRANK: Say you forgive me for being such a jerk since we moved down here.

MARTHA: I forgive you.

FRANK: Now give me a kiss. *(Frank gives Martha a sweet and passionate kiss)* Now, get out of here and start signing papers. I'm going home.

MARTHA: I don't know, Frank. I don't know if you're well enough to go home yet. The doctor said...

FRANK: *(Frank leads Martha: Up Center)* I am going home to spend Christmas morning with my wife. Tell Doctor Reid they have to hurry, we don't want to miss Christmas mass at the church.

MARTHA: My goodness! *(Frank gently pushes Martha out of the room)*

FRANK: *(to the Angel)* Are you happy?

ANGEL: *(Angel crosses to Frank)* Are you?

FRANK: I don't know.

ANGEL: Just remember, this is the easy part, Frank. Now you have to go out there and do it.

FRANK: Oh, I'm going to do it.

ANGEL: I hope I won't see you again for a long time.

FRANK: *(Frank takes a step back Stage Left)* You stay clear of me, woman! I have things to do.

ANGEL: Yes. *(Angel starts to exit Up Center)*

FRANK: *(very softly)* Thank you.

ANGEL: *(Angel turns to Frank:)* Hum?

FRANK: Thank you.

ANGEL: Merry Christmas, Frank.

FRANK: Merry Christmas to you to.

ANGEL: Have a happy New Year. *(Angel exits)*

FRANK: I plan on it.

(The angel disappears, Frank takes a look around the room, smiles and exits)

CURTAIN