[10.9] Don't Go Breaking My Heart [3]

Don't Go Breaking My Heart [3]

Written by Bob Daily Directed by Jerry Zaks

Production Code: 10.6

Episode Number In Production Order: 226 Original Airdate on NBC: November 26, 2002 Transcript written on November 30, 2002

Mum

Gertrude Moon has appeared in the following episodes:

- [9.12] Mother Load [1]
- [9.15] The Proposal
- [9.24] Moons Over Seattle
- [10.5] Tales From the Crypt

A Late Masterpiece?

In the two years since becoming a part of the "Frasier Files" team, I have resisted adding opinions and commentaries, but I was so moved by this episode that in this case I believe it is warranted. The three-episode arc dealing with Niles and his heart surgery was quite risky, and although in the past it would have been easy to say that if any comedy could handle a serious storyline, "Frasier" could, things are a bit different this season.

Critical reception of Season 10 has been lukewarm at best. The major critics seem to be following lock-step with the herd led by TV Guide's Matt Roush in writing off the show as a has-been running on fumes. Since all of the criticisms seem to rehash each other, I often wonder how many of these writers are really thinking for themselves. For me, it is telling that most die-hard fans are fully behind this admittedly autumnal-feeling season--even those who were sorely disappointed by a flawed and uneven Season 8 and a good, but not stellar Season 9.

In this environment, the writers and NBC chose to introduce the most serious storyline yet—the show has dealt with topics such as death, mortality, and wasted opportunities many times in the past, but it has never been this close to the fore. I admit that I too was quite skeptical of the arc. Even during the second episode, "Rooms With a View" [10.8], which was a tour de force acting performance from the five principals, the tension was often so high as to be uncomfortable and it certainly stretched the sitcom genre almost past the point of bursting.

But this third part, easily the finest of the three episodes, placed a triumphant stamp of validation on this very daring storyline. The script provided strong moments of character definition for Niles especially, but also for Daphne, Frasier, and Martin. Rarely if ever have we received an insight into the spiritual life of Dr. Frasier Crane or his attitude toward religion and God. This aspect of the character is finally explored here, and it works perfectly with the man we have grown to know. After a rocky beginning in the eighth

season, Pierce and Leeves have settled beautifully into their roles as TV's ultimate soulmates. After all of their history, the fact that they are now seen as a model of a married couple who love each other deeply on both a physical and spiritual level is really quite an astonishing accomplishment. Martin, whose character has really blossomed over the past two seasons, is now more of a font of wisdom than he ever was.

In short, I no longer care what the critics say about the show. This very fine episode offers proof that the writers and cast don't care either and are still striving to provide us with the best that they can give.

- Kelly Dean Hansen

Transcript (Kelly Dean Hansen)

Skyline: Red, yellow, and blue balloons fly over the city.

ACT ONE

Scene One - Frasier's apartment Roz, Martin, and Frasier are gathered around the dining table.

Roz: So what's the plan? Are we going to turn off the lights and jump out and yell "surprise!"

Frasier: Oh yes, Roz, let's startle a man who just had open-heart

Roz: Sorry, I can't get used to thinking of Niles as "sick."

Martin: Oh, Niles is great. All these exercises he's doing, he's

going to be just as strong as he ever was.

Daphne, Niles, and Gertrude enter the front door.

Daphne: Here's the guest of honor.

Frasier: Niles, good to see you out and about!

Niles embraces Frasier, then Roz.

Roz: You look great!

Niles: Thank you! Thank you, I tell you it's good to be out after being cooped up in that apartment all week. Hello. [He pets Eddie.] I never thought I'd grow tired of reading Flaubert.

Frasier: Niles! Not the soaps! You can't be serious.

Niles: Well, I'm hardly hooked. They fascinate me as-as cultural artifact. I was just telling Gertrude: their use of stock figures is reminiscent of the commedia dell'arte. Yes, uh, Esther is Punchinello, Victor is Flavio, and Nikki -

well, she's just the town pump.

Frasier laughs warmly.

Gertrude: Now do you see why I need my own telly, Daphne.
Daphne: [bitingly] You have your own telly in Manchester.

Roz brings in a tray.

Frasier: Here's champagne and sparkling cider for you, Niles.

and help yourself to brunch whenever you're ready.

Martin: Word to the wise: stay away from the sausage.

Frasier: They're not sausages, Dad, they're "soysages." Niles is on

a postoperative diet. We are trying to support him.

Martin: Oh, sorry. What about the bacon?

Frasier: [grinning] "Fake-un."

Martin samples it and winces.

Niles: Okay, everyone, I'd like to propose a toast. [they all rise]
To my family and friends, your love and support have been overwhelming.

Daphne: Oh, Niles.

Niles: You know, during my operation, I was technically dead for several minutes.

Martin: Yes, we know son, you told us.

Niles: But, it gave me a fresh perspective on everything. It took a brush with death to remind me how lucky I am to be alive.

Frasier: Well done.

Niles: And Gertrude, thank you for giving up the guest bedroom so that I don't have to climb all those stairs.

Gertrude: Oh, no, I'm happy to sleep on that sofa bed with its hard
 metal frame.

Daphne: You have a <u>nice</u> soft bed in Manchester.

Niles: Oh, Daphne, it's okay. Her bracing honesty reminds me that I'm alive. You... you... oh, you! [He tightly embraces Gertrude.] You are a treasure to me. I cherish every day we're together.

Gertrude: Oh, thank you, Niles! There may be others around here who could benefit from a near-death experience.

The others are mystified by Niles's demeanor with Gertrude.

Frasier: Well, let's eat before the fake-un loses its shape.

All go to the kitchen except Roz and Martin.

Roz: Wow! Niles is really loving life with a vengeance.

Martin: Yeah, I was the same way after I got shot. My first day back at the precinct I went around hugging all the guys telling them all I loved them.

Roz: How long did that last?

Martin: Until they started calling me "Martina."

Roz: It is kind of weird seeing Niles all lovey-dovey with Mrs. Moon.

Martin: Believe me, when you're in that state, you can find something to love even in the biggest jerk.

Niles: [from the table] Roz, I want to tell you, you are a treasure.

Maybe I don't say it often enough, but you are.

Roz: [as Martin opens his mouth] Shut up, Martina!

FADE OUT

Scene Two - Café Nervosa

Roz is seated. Frasier enters carrying a CD and humming a familiar Mozart theme. He sits next to Roz.

Roz: Hi. I know that song.

Frasier: Yes, Mozart Symphony No. 40: Molto Allegro. I just bought this new recording for Niles. It is fantastic. I've never heard such string articulation.

Roz: Oh, I remember what it is! It's that commercial with the singing cats. [singing to the Mozart theme] "If your cat has

a yearning for tuna, Da-da-da, Da-da Ocean Buffet, Da-da-da..." One of the cats was wearing a tiny tuxedo.

Frasier: Good! So few cats dress for the symphony anymore.

Niles and Daphne enter.

Daphne: Frasier, Roz.
Frasier: Oh, hi guys!

Daphne: Guess who just walked a mile on the treadmill?

Roz: Oh way to go, Niles!

Frasier rises and congratulates him.

Daphne: The doctor says he's in the 95th percentile of patients recovering from bypass surgery.

Frasier: 95th percentile! That's wonderful, Niles!

Niles: Well, now Frasier, good health is not a competition! When you've heard time's winged chariot hurrying here, as I have, every day is a gift. [noticing Frasier's CD] Oh, yoiks, what

tone-deaf prankster gave you this?

Frasier: [taken aback, but controlled] You've...heard it?

Niles: Well, as much as I could bear. Did you hear what the conductor did to the Andante? I just hope he bought it dinner first.

Frasier: I couldn't agree more, Niles.

Roz: [shocked] Frasier, you said you loved that CD.

Frasier: Well, Niles has convinced my otherwise.

Daphne: You know, I'm in the mood for a scone. Help me pick one out.

Niles: All right. [they walk to the counter]

Roz: That was weird.

Frasier: I'll say. Who can't pick out their own scone?

Roz: No. I mean you and Niles. Usually that would have been a two-hour argument ending in tears and cursing in Italian.

Frasier: I'm afraid those days are over, Roz.

Roz: What happened?

Frasier: Well, it's a long story. Okay. When Niles was in the hospital and he was being wheeled into surgery [he shakes his head with foreboding] he looked so frail and vulnerable, so I... I took my case to a higher power.

DISSOLVE TO:

The scene fades to the hospital as Niles is being wheeled away. Frasier is shown alone in the room, thinking. We hear his prayer.

Frasier: [v.o.] Hello, God. It's me, Dr. Frasier Crane. Though I don't talk to you as often as I should, I want to thank you for all the times you've indulged me in the past - although I have yet to see the inside of the Empire Club. Just kidding. Anyway, today I ask you to look after my brother Niles Crane. I love him, even if I don't always show it, and I regret all the time he and I have wasted in petty quarrels. If you spare him, Oh Lord, I promise to cherish every moment we have together.

CUT BACK TO: Café Nervosa:

Roz: But Frasier, you don't think God is going to strike Niles down if you get in an argument, do you?

Frasier: Well, technically, the way it's structured, he'd come after me, seeing as I was the one who initiated the deal, you see. If I'd had more time, I might have worded things differently, but...

Angle on Niles and Daphne at the counter.

Niles: Oh, oh, uh, let's get this to go. My soap starts in twenty minutes. Ashley might come out of her coma today.

Daphne: You know, since your recovery's going so well, maybe we should check you out, make sure all your equipment's working properly.

Niles: You're not talking about my exercise bicycle, are you?

Daphne: Mmm-mmm. The doctor said it would be OK. If you need a second opinion, maybe Nurse Naughty could make a house call.

Niles: I could use a checkup... but I think we should err on the Side of caution. In a few weeks, I have another stress test. [to the waiter] Thank you. And if all goes well, Nurse Naughty will be one satisfied health care professional.

They begin to walk out and pass Frasier and Roz.

Niles: See you.
Daphne: Bye.
Frasier: Bye guys.

Roz: Bye. Oh, Niles, wait. Frasier says the string articulation is really good.

Niles: In this? Frasier, you know I hold your opinion in highest regard, but are you nuts?

Frasier: Perhaps I am, Niles, thank you.

Niles: Maybe you just need to get your hearing checked.

Frasier: I'll do that. Thank you, Niles.
Niles: [loudly] I'll see you later!

Frasier feigns amusement and chuckles.

Frasier: Very amusing! I get it. Ha ha.

FADE TO:

WEEKS LATER (AND ASHLEY'S STILL IN A COMA)

Scene Three - Frasier's apartment Niles and Frasier enter.

Niles: Oh, oh, here they are. Frasier, tell them what you told me. Frasier: [glaring at Niles and forcing a smile] Freud is the poor man's Jung.

Martin and Daphne stare at each other in surprise.

Niles: I never thought I'd live to see the day. Perhaps this is why I was spared.

Daphne: Niles, how was your stress test?

Niles: Oh, uh, the doctor cleared me for normal food and-and regular physical activity.

Daphne: [embracing him excitedly] Oh, Darling, that's wonderful!

Niles: Yes, you know, in moderation, of course.

Martin: Congratulations, son.

Niles: Thanks.

Frasier: You know, perhaps now, Niles, we can get back to the squash courts.

Niles: Oh, I don't think so.

Frasier: But the doctor said it was OK.

Niles: Yes, but shouldn't there be more to life than competition for useless bragging rights?

Frasier: You didn't think they were useless three months ago when you

won. You bragged for three months.

Niles: I've changed a lot since then. The point is that I have

roses to stop and smell.

Frasier: I see, so let me get this straight. You're going to give up squash and smell roses.

Niles: Poor Frasier. I hope that you don't have to go through what I did in order to become as wise as I have.

Daphne: You can still be wise and play squash, darling.

Martin: Yeah, Daphne's right. Go out and have some fun.

Niles: But I am having fun! Since my incident, birds sing more

sweetly. The sky is so much bluer.

Frasier: Niles, it has rained every day this week.

Niles: I see rain differently too.

Frasier: You know, there's something I need to tell you. It's something I've been thinking about...

At this point there is a loud thunderclap and lightning flash, which Frasier clearly interprets as a divine warning.

Niles: You were saying, Frasier?

Frasier: Nothing.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene Four - KACL Frasier is taking a call.

> Grant: [v.o.] Hey, Dr. Crane. Well, my grandmother died a couple of weeks ago and I feel bad because I never told her how much she meant to me.

Frasier: Well, my heart certainly goes out to you. Grieving is Difficult enough without those unresolved...

Roz: Frasier, I'm sorry to interrupt, but we have Dr. Niles Crane on line two.

Frasier: [pausing] I'm sure you all remember my brother Niles from our last segment. [He forces a grin.] I'm sure all my listeners join me in hoping he can get back to work real soon.

Niles: [v.o.] Thank you, Frasier. I just thought I'd add the Perspective of one who has ducked the scythe of the Grim Reaper.

Frasier: [controlling himself] By all means, go ahead, Niles.

Frasier removes his headphones and rises.

Niles: [v.o.] Grant, your grandmother knows how you feel. When I was briefly dead, the overriding feeling I had was the love of my family and friends.

Frasier has moved to the corner, where an inflatable clown stands. He begins to forcefully punch the clown.

Grant: Wow! So I shouldn't feel bad?

Niles: Certainly not. Get out there and live your life, Grant. Carpe that diem. [Frasier has returned and replaced his headphones.] Isn't that right, Frasier?

Frasier: I couldn't agree more, Niles. We'll be right back after traffic.

Frasier cuts off the talk line and rises. He gives a couple more

punishing blows to the inflated clown.

Roz: I'm beginning to regret betting on the clown.

Frasier: Roz, I can't eat. I can't sleep. I just lie awake in bed at night mentally arguing with Niles. [He throws the clown back in its corner.] And I win every time!

Roz: Frasier, this is insane. Do you really think something bad is going to happen if you break your deal with God?

Frasier: Oh, of course not. Well, maybe a little. I don't know.

Roz, my brother could have died. I can't be ungrateful to whatever higher power may have spared him.

Roz: I just can't imagine that God would be upset...

Frasier: Oh, he's God, Roz! Have you read the Old Testament? He can be ruthless!

Roz: Traffic's done. You're on in five. [She rushes back to her booth.]

Niles: [v.o.] Still me, Frasier. Say, I had some thoughts about your advice to Cynthia from Tacoma...

Frasier again removes his phones and rises.

Niles: Speaking as one who has walked through the valley of the shadow of death, Cynthia, I think diets and exercise should take care of your problem. Nothing like a good fat-free muffin to send you on your way...

In the course of the above, Frasier wrestles the clown to the ground and pummels it mercilessly. He reaches up and grabs the phone receiver, using it to administer even more blows to the unfortunate inflatable toy.

FADE TO:

Scene Five - Niles and Daphne's apartment Frasier has knocked at the door. Daphne answers.

Frasier: Hi, Daph, I'm here for Niles.

Daphne: He's at your place. He said you were meeting him there for

dinner.

Frasier: Well, I specifically told him I would pick him up here.

Ah...

Daphne: Sorry.

She moves to the coffee table, where she is placing cans in a box.

Frasier: It's not bad enough he usurps my radio show... What are you doing?

Daphne: Oh, you'll think I'm silly, but I'm donating food to the poor.

Frasier: Why would I think that's silly? What does that say about me?

Daphne: No, I was just going to say...

Frasier: I do my bit for charity, you know. You have no idea how many vacations I've bought at silent auctions.

Daphne: No, that's not it. You see, when I found out Niles needed heart surgery I felt so scared and helpless, so I kind of made a vow that if he came out okay I would spend more time helping the less fortunate.

Frasier: A vow? You mean, like a promise to God?

Daphne: Yeah, I know, it must sound absurd to you, a man of science.

Frasier: No! No, now when exactly did you make this promise?

Daphne: The night before his surgery.

Frasier: The night before, you say. [He ponders.] Interesting. You

say Niles is at my place?

Daphne: Yeah.

Frasier: Excuse me. Keep up the good work.

He exits. Daphne continues to assemble cans. Gertrude enters.

Gertrude: Oh, what's all this? Daphne: Food for the poor.

Gertrude: Oh, it must be nice to be poor and have people just giving

you food.

Daphne takes this in with mild shock and shakes her head.

Gertrude: Daphne, you were up awfully late last night.

Daphne: Yeah, I was watching television.

Gertrude: Were you? Or was that husband of yours sneaking upstairs

to demand you perform your wifely chore?

Daphne: I wish. He's still not ready to be in the same bed with me.

Gertrude: He's rich, and you don't have to sleep with him. Rub it in,

why don't you?

They sit down on the couch.

Daphne: I know he's trying to ease back into things, but it's been

weeks since the doctor said he was okay.

and now he has that scar, too.

Daphne: I don't think that's it, Mum. I just think he's scared and

I understand that. But how long are we going to go on like

this?

Gertrude: Until you stop babying him.

Daphne: I'm not babying him. I'm just giving him the time he needs.

Gertrude: Oh, piffle. What he needs is a swift kick in the bum. Look,

you've got to seduce him. Use your feminine wiles. That's

how your brother Billy landed Kevin.

Daphne: [nodding] Well, sharing a cell helped. You know, maybe

I'll give that a try. When Niles walks into that guest room tonight, I'll have a surprise waiting for him candles, soft music, a negligée... nothing too sexy,

we don't want to strain his heart.

Gertrude: Well, there's nothing wrong with your ego.

Daphne: Thanks for the advice, Mum.

Gertrude: My pleasure, love. And since you and Niles will be in the guest room, I'll sleep in your room tonight. No sense in

letting that king-sized bed go to waste.

Daphne: This time, use a coaster when you take your teeth out.

Gertrude heads upstairs.

FADE TO:

Scene Six - Frasier's apartment

Niles and Martin are watching the soap on tape.

Martin: Stop the tape. Who's he again?

Niles: That's Diego, the illegitimate son of Sonia LaFontaine.

He joined the army to avenge the death of his brother, although I'm a little worried about him. I'm not sure

he's fighting this war for the right reasons.

Martin: Hey, you want some of this fancy dessert? It must be really

good because Frasier told me not to touch it.

Niles: No. No thanks, I brought some of these tasty rye flats in case I feel peckish.

[N.B. Niles pulls the "rye flats" in a ziploc bag out of what is clearly a fanny pack. This must be one of the ones he won in the first episode of the arc, "Bristle While You Work" [10.7], since he had no idea what a "fanny pack" was before this point.]

Martin: They look like wood! I thought your doctor cleared you to eat normal foods.

Niles: Well, uh, he did, but I feel my tastes have gotten simpler since I cheated death.

He takes a bite of the rye wafer and contorts his face as he struggles to force it down.

Niles: It's hard to explain.

Martin: Don't need to explain to me, son. I know what it's like to cheat death.

Niles: That's true, although I think I got a little closer than you did.

Martin: [offended] Oh, really? Well, let's see. I got shot by a gun, and you ate a bunch of cheese.

Niles: I was clinically dead for several minutes. I looked Death square in the eye.

Martin: Well, you might have looked him in the eye, but I shook his hand.

Niles: Really. Well I kissed him on the cheek.

Martin: Well, I kissed him on the lips. Also, Death was a girl.

Niles: Dad, I don't want to turn this into a competition. I'm just trying to embrace life to the fullest.

Martin: Oh, will you give it a rest!

Niles: Excuse me?

Martin: You haven't embraced a damn thing. All you're doing is yakking about feeling this and experiencing that. You're not doing anything. You won't go back to work or play squash or eat any of your favorite foods.

Niles: I'm just, I'm easing into things until I'm back to normal.

Martin: The doctor says you're there.

Niles: Well, I'm just being extra cautious.

Martin: Sounds to me like you're afraid, son.

Niles: Well, what if I am? Haven't I earned the right to be afraid? I could have died.

Martin: I understand.

Niles: Okay.

Martin: When I got out of the hospital, I was terrified to take a risk. I didn't want to leave the house. Ducked for cover every time a car backfired.

Niles: [pausing] I know my fears aren't rational. I know my heart is sound. I feel fine. But I felt fine before this happened. How do I know that the same thing isn't going to...

Martin: Well, you don't know! That's exactly what I came to realize. Life's a crap shoot. We could all go at any time. That's why we have to make the most of whatever time we've got.

Niles ponders this. Martin, to drive his point home, imitates Niles' pompous phraseology.

Martin: Like sand through the hourglass, so are the Days of Our Lives...

Niles: Okay, point taken.

He rises enthusiastically and taps Martin on the shoulder. He gets his coat and moves to exit.

Niles: Thank you, Dad!
Martin: Where you going?
Niles: To live my life!

Martin: You forgot the rye flats.

Niles: [with a sense of awakening] No, I didn't, Dad. No, I didn't.

Martin: Well, you're not leaving them here!

Niles retrieves the rye flats.

FADE TO:

Scene Seven - The elevator of Frasier's building
A couple exits and Frasier enters the elevator, after which he is alone.

Frasier: Good evening.

The elevator closes. Frasier takes a moment.

Frasier: Hello, God, it's me again. Dr. Frasier Crane. Listen, it seems that when we made our little arrangement, there was another deal in place. Now, I've had some experience with double-booking, and I know that the person who books first always gets priority. So, as long as Daphne keeps her end - which she is, to the letter - it seems our little arrangement would be rendered null and void. Ergo, I am now going to yell at my brother. [He beams.] Unless of course, you give me a sign.

He waits. There is no sign.

Frasier: Very well, then. This is going to be sweet.

Frasier laughs with joy. The elevator dings and opens. Niles is standing there, and Frasier storms out, primed to explode.

Frasier: Niles!

Niles: There you are! You're forty minutes late. Well, no matter, I have more important things to do.

He starts to pass Frasier.

Frasier: Not so fast, Mister! You, sir, have been insufferable for the past few weeks. It might enlighten you to know that your endless preaching has been nothing more than a thin cover for your fear...

Niles: Yes, I know. I know, I know. Dad just told me, and he was right. I've been an ass lately. I am really sorry, but I have to go. My wife is waiting for me.

He steps onto the elevator and pushes the button.

Niles: Frankly, Frasier, I'm surprised you didn't bring this up sooner.

Frasier: But...

The elevator closes with Niles inside and Frasier out. He looks heavenward, quite bemused.

Frasier: Huh... Well played, God. [He takes out his keys.] I'll see you at Easter.

He enters his apartment.

FADE TO:

Scene Eight - Niles and Daphne's apartment. It is dark. Niles runs inside, rapidly shedding his clothing as he rushes upstairs.

A pause. There is a piercing high-pitched scream.

Daphne comes out of the guest room wearing a sexy nurse costume, complete with garters and stockings. Niles runs downstairs, his shirt untucked and his tie still on.

Daphne: Niles! What happened?

Niles is breathing very heavily. He takes in Daphne's costume.

Daphne: Are you all right?

Niles: Yes. I just jumped into bed with your mother.

Daphne: Oh, dear. No wonder she screamed.

Niles: That wasn't her.

Daphne: What were you doing in there?

Niles: I just... wanted to... take my wife into my arms and show her

how much I love her.

Daphne: [excited] Are you sure you're ready?

Niles: Trust me. If my heart can take that, it can take anything.

In a burst of energy, Niles lifts Daphne with the intention of carrying her off. After a few steps it becomes too much and he gives up the effort, setting her down. They walk off holding hands.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

Credits:

In the studio, Frasier is getting ready for his show. He is bossing Roz around, showing her things that need to be done. She shows him a page of copy, and he corrects something and hands it back to her. There are several cardboard Chinese takeout containers on the table, and he directs her to get rid of them. Roz makes a gesture behind Frasier's back indicating her irritation. She goes into her booth. Frasier puts on his headphones and looks into Roz's booth. She is not there. Instead, his recent victim, the inflatable clown, is sitting in Roz's chair with her headphones on.

Guest Appearances

Special Guest Star

MILLICENT MARTIN as Gertrude Moon

Guest Caller

JOHN TURTURRO as Grant

Legal Stuff

This episode capsule is copyright 2002 by Kelly Dean Hansen. This episode summary remains property of Frasier, Copyright of Paramount Productions and NBC. Printed without permission.