[3.23] The Focus Group

The Focus Group

Written by Rob Greenberg Directed by Philip Charles MacKenzie

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Transcript {mike lee}

ACT ONE

Scene One - Apartment

Martin is eating breakfast. Daphne, preoccupied, taps her fork on her plate, annoying him. He slides a piece of bread under her fork.

Martin: You got something on your mind?

Daphne: It's Joe. Tonight's our six-month anniversary, but we can't

celebrate until next week because he's flying to Las Vegas

with his buddies.

Martin: Oh, Vegas, huh? Great! Well, tell him not to miss the show

at the Diamond Lounge: a Topless History of the World! If they've still got the same Bathsheeba he's in for a real

treat

The doorbell rings. Daphne gets up to answer it.

Daphne: Oh yes, that's just where I want Joe spending our anniversary,

some smutty show in Vegas!

Martin: No, it's very tasteful and historically accurate. Except at

the end, where Eleanor Roosevelt and Eva Braun settle World

War Two by wrestling in pudding.

Daphne opens the door to Niles.

Daphne: Hello, Dr. Crane.

Niles: Daphne.

Frasier comes out.

Frasier: Oh, Niles. To what do we owe this pleasure?

Niles: To an unscrupulous art dealer who's trying to rob me blind.

Last night, I was at a gallery opening, and-

Frasier: Niles, is this going to be a long story?

Niles: Moderately.
Frasier: Walk-and-talk.

Niles follows Frasier into the kitchen.

Niles: Anyway, I was at this opening, in conversation, when I made a rather emphatic point about pointillism, when I lost the grip on my canapé and found that it became airborne! Well, the

next thing I know I'm being confronted by an irate gallery owner who's demanding I reimburse him for the damage to one of his paintings! How he could notice a fleck of foie gras on a Jackson Pollock is beyond me.

Frasier laughs and rolls his eyes at the absurdity.

 ${f Niles:}$ He's getting an estimate, and just to protect myself, I seem

to recall you knowing a trustworthy art restorer?

Frasier: Oh yes, I do, actually. Saved my life last year when Eddie

licked my Liechtenstein! I'll get you his card.

Niles: Oh, thank you.

Frasier goes out and flips through his Rolodex.

Niles: You free for lunch today?

Frasier: Oh, sadly, no. The radio station is subjecting my program

to something they call a "focus group" this afternoon.

Dinner, perhaps?

Niles: Oh, perfect. And what exactly is a focus group?

Frasier: Well, they actually drag a pack of people off the street and

make them listen to my program, and then dutifully record

their opinions about it.

Niles: How demeaning!

Frasier: Oh, absolutely. Can you imagine Sigmund Freud being dragged

into a roomful of Viennese laymen to hear remarks like, "hate that Oedipal thing, but, oh, love the penis envy!" I mean, really! The worst thing is that they may change my show in deference to the opinion of Joe Six-Pack!

Martin: You're worrying too much. I was on a focus group once.

Frasier: That sound you hear is a nail being hammered into my coffin.

Martin: They were trying out a new frozen snack. It was a meatball

with the cheese injected right in the middle.

Niles has to cover his mouth.

Frasier: Just as nature intended.

Frasier goes back to his room. Niles's cell phone rings.

Niles: Dr. Niles Crane. Ah. So, you have the estimate? What? Four thousand dollars, to remove a miniscule gobbet of duck liver?! I could do the same thing with a Q-tip and some club seltzer! Oh well, you may very well say "pay up or else," but I have

something to say to you-

The art dealer hangs up on him. Behind his back, Daphne turns on the television to a daytime talk show.

Woman: [on TV] Yeah, well at least I wasn't fooling around with the

babysitter!

Man: [on TV] Shut up!
Woman: No, you shut up!

Not noticing Daphne, Niles snatches the remote and turns off the TV.

Niles: Oh please, I have enough aggravation without having to listen

to a stupid talk show! I swear, the only life forms lower than the people who appear on those shows are the ones who

watch them!

Daphne: Like me?

Niles: What? [sees her] Oh no, I didn't realize-

Daphne: No, no, no, that's quite all right. Although I do find it

interesting that I get criticized for listening to people's

problems, when all you do is get rich from it.

Niles: Surely, Daphne, even you can see the difference between cheap

sensationalism and the practice of psychiatry.

Daphne: Oh, "even me?" As in, "even feeble-minded Daphne?!" Well,

I'll tell you what I can tell the difference between: a true

gentleman and a condescending prig!

Niles: [flabbergasted] I... am NOT!

Daphne: He said priggishly.

Niles throws down his phone. Undying adoration and worship are all well and good, but this is WAR!

Niles: Forgive me if I'm not as down to earth as you and your

tattooed, muu-muu wearing brethren!

Daphne: You pompous twit!

Niles: Couch zombie!

Daphne: Snob!
Niles: Brat!

Daphne: Oh, shut up!
Niles: No, YOU shut up!

Martin: I'm glad we turned off the TV.

He gets up and goes to his room. Niles and Daphne snap out of it.

Daphne: Oh, Dr. Crane, I'm so sorry! I'm just so upset at Joe!

I didn't mean a word of it!

Niles: Daphne, I apologizeDaphne: Oh no, it was my fault-

Niles: I called you a couch zombie-

Daphne: No, please-

Niles: [offers hand] Friends?

Daphne: [shaking] Oh, of course.

She goes to the kitchen, laughing with relief. Niles just stands there, shell-shocked. Frasier comes out.

Frasier: Niles, what was that all about?

Niles: I'm not sure. But, oh, mama, it was glorious! Blood-

pounding, sarcastic zingers flying!

Frasier: Are you saying you that enjoyed fighting with Daphne?

Niles: Every exhilarating moment! It was pure, unbridled passion!

I think I still have some of her spittle on my forehead! Oh, why did Dad ever tell us not to fight with girls?

It's wonderful! The friction between us-

Frasier: Niles, is this going to be a long description?

Niles: Very!

Frasier: Walk-and-talk.

They go out the door, Niles continue to wax rhapsodic.

FADE OUT

Scene Two - Conference Room

A dozen average-looking people are seated around a long table. In the middle is a tape recorder. On one wall is a two-way mirror.

Frasier: [on tape] By showering a reluctant girlfriend with gifts, Billy, you're applying a band-aid to a gaping wound. My advice is to find someone who will return your worthy affection, or your wallet, as well as your bed, will be empty. I see we're out of time. Thank you for listening. This is Dr. Frasier Crane, wishing you all good mental health.

The moderator turns off the tape recorder.

Moderator: OK, let's talk about Dr. Crane's show. Oh, I know you've been eyeing this two-way mirror, but the other people behind there are data consultants, so please speak freely. There's no one involved with the show whose feelings could be hurt.

On the other side, Frasier and Roz are watching, along with a data collector with a clipboard.

Conference Room:

Man 1: I liked everything about it.

Observation Room:

Frasier: On the other hand, it's good to keep an open mind.

Conference Room:

Man 2: I like that Roz. I think her voice is really sexy, especially that throaty laugh of hers.

Observation Room:

Roz: Wow, that's nice. I didn't know I had a throaty laugh.

Collector: You do. I've noticed it too.

Roz: Really? Oh, you. [throaty laugh]

Conference Room:

Man 2: The stuff he says really seems to make a lot of sense.

Woman 1: Yeah, it's funny. I mean, he takes his callers seriously, but he can kid around with them too.

Woman 2: Yeah, I listen to a lot of radio, and I think this is a great show.

Observation Room:

Frasier: Well, I just don't know how much more of this I can listen
 to!

In the Conference Room, the moderator notices one man is quiet.

Moderator: Manu, I notice you've been quiet. Uh, do you have

something to say? **Manu:** Me? No.

Moderator: We'd like to hear your opinion of the program.
Manu: Well, it... I don't know. Something about... I

don't like it.

Observation Room:

Frasier: Well, who is this cheeky nonconformist?

Collector: [checks clipboard] Well, let's see, his name is Manu Habib, married, no children, owns his own newsstand.

Roz: Wow, that is so weird, to hear someone's whole life summed up like that. "Roz Doyle, Radio Producer,

single." [throaty laugh]

Conference Room:

Moderator: Well, getting back to your thoughts, Manu, you said there

was something about the program you didn't like. Can you

be more specific.

Manu: I don't like him.

Moderator: Why?

Manu: I don't know. I just don't like him.

Man 2: Oh, I do. I'm gonna start listening to him all the time.

Woman 1: It's a great show.

Everyone but Manu choruses in agreement.

Observation Room:

Roz: My God, Frasier, this is a love-fest! I can't believe we

were even worried about it.

Frasier: "I just don't like him." Hmm...

In the Conference Room, coffee is brought in.

Moderator: Well, looks like our coffee's here. Why don't we take a

quick break, OK?

The group gets up and takes cups.

In the Observation Room, Bulldog comes in:

Bulldog: Hey, sports fans! How's it going in here?

Frasier: Bulldog, I thought they were testing your show across the

hall?

Bulldog: Oh, yeah, they are. But after ten minutes it's just the

same-old, same-old. Guys love me, chicks pretend not to.

Whoa, your group's even uglier than mine!

Roz: Would you knock it off? These people happen to like us.

Bulldog: Oh, will you guys lighten up? You got to get in the spirit

of things.

A man in the conference room comes up to the mirror.

Bulldog: Hey, hey! This is great, I live for a moment like this.

The man sticks a finger in his teeth. Frasier, Roz, and the consultant look disgusted.

Bulldog: That's right, that's right, go for it, right there, right

there.

Frasier: Bulldog-

Bulldog: As long as you're in there you might as well go after the

Huevos Rancheros you had for breakfast!

Frasier: Oh, stop it!

Bulldog: Hey, ten bucks says he eats what he finds.

Frasier: Oh, that's disgusting!

The man comes out with a speck of food on his finger.

Bulldog: Come on, come on, come on— [the man puts the finger back in his mouth] BINGO! Do I know these people or what?!

Frasier, Roz, and the consultant all make disgusted faces and shoo him out.

FADE TO:

Scene Three - Apartment

The doorbell rings. Martin opens the door to Niles.

Martin: Hi, Niles.

Niles: Hey, Dad. May I assume from your dress windbreaker that

you'll be joining us for dinner?

Martin: Yep, but I'm making a pitch that we eat at the Timber Mill.

I got a coupon from there that expires tomorrow.

Niles: Oh. If I dine there tonight, so may I.

Daphne comes out with a bowl of potato chips.

Daphne: Hello, Dr. Crane.

Niles: Oh, there's the British bobcat!

Martin: Now, look, she's still a little bit over the edge about this Joe thing. So you better watch your step or you're gonna have a repeat of this morning.

Niles: We wouldn't want that, would we? Chips, Daphne? Was that wise?

Daphne: What do you mean?

Niles: You know what they say, "many chips make for chunky hips."

Waddle, waddle, waddle!

Martin: Have you lost your mind?!

Daphne: Oh, no, no, I'm glad if I put on a few pounds. Now maybe Joe

will stop nagging me to plump up!

Niles is disappointed as his first salvo backfires. Frasier comes in.

Martin: Hey, Fras, how was the focus group?

Frasier: [sulky] Fine, I guess.

Martin: Oh, well, you said yourself they didn't mean anything.

Niles: Only one?

Daphne: I'm sure someone must have said something nice.

Frasier: Well, all the other eleven had nothing but high praise.

Martin: Eleven out of twelve liked you? You should be thrilled! F..DR didn't have that kind of approval rating.

Daphne: Yes, or Churchill for that matter.

Niles: Churchill—that cigar-chomping gin blossom with a face

attached!

Daphne: You're right about that. There's a kiss hello to put you

off your tea.

Niles is frustrated again.

Frasier: I wish I was able to talk to this man and ask him what it is about me that he doesn't like. But, I-I can't, you see, he

was told that his comments would be kept confidential.

Martin: Just forget it. Come on, let's go out to dinner. I'm buying.

Frasier: Well, what is it he doesn't like about me? My voice, my

manner, do I intimidate him?

Martin: I don't know! What is it about you? Everybody has to love you! Just like when you were in that play in high school.

You get standing ovations every night, all your friends say you're great, you got one lousy review in the school paper

and you sulked for a week.

Frasier: Well, you know, Dad, I'd like to think I've matured a bit

since then. But, you know, you would have sulked too, if you'd read in the paper, "Mr. Crane's attempts to gyrate his hips as Conrad, the teen idol in 'Bye-Bye, Birdie,' made this reviewer say, 'Bye-bye, breakfast!'"

Niles: That review was a mash note compared to my first draft.
Daphne: I know just what you're going through. I once won a dance competition hands down, but instead of celebrating I spent the whole night fretting over my one bad score. [laughs]

Silly-head!

Niles: Idiot.

Daphne raises furious eyes to Niles.

Niles: [at last] Oh, I've stepped in it now!

Daphne rises from her chair.

Daphne: Listen here, Dr. Crane-

Niles: Yeah, Daphne?

Frasier: All right now, Daphne, just a moment! Just try to remember what you're like when you're arguing with Joe. Consider Niles's situation. He's separated. You can't imagine the emotional see-saw he's on. Not to mention the fact that he may be unaware that he's acting like a complete jackass!

Daphne: Of course, you're right. I'm sorry, I should be more sensitive. From now on, nothing you say can make me cross with you.

She goes to her room, leaving Niles feeling cheated and chagrined.

Niles: I suppose I had that coming. Though I think "jackass" was a tad over the line.

Frasier: Well, just consider it payback for the headline, "Crane's 'Birdie' Lays An Egg!"

Martin: All right, now, Fras, you got to let it go. You know, no matter who you are, no matter what you do, you can't please everyone.

Frasier: I suppose my negative baggage is just a pound or two over the weight limit.

Martin: O.K., good, come on, let's go have dinner.

The Crane boys head for the door

Frasier: This is good! This is healthy! I'm letting go!

FADE TO:

Scene Four - Street

Frasier is driving with Martin and Niles. Suddenly he pulls over. Across the street is a newsstand, manned by Manu.

Frasier: There he is. The man who... doesn't like me.

Martin: I knew we should have taken two cars.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

LIAR, LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE

Martin: What are we doing here?

Frasier: I'm sorry, Dad. It's just that "I just don't like him," it's not specific enough. Why doesn't he like me?

Martin: What difference does it make?

Frasier: Well, if his point was valid, I would do something about it.

If it's not, well, then I could dismiss it.

Martin: Fine, go talk to him.

Frasier: I can't. He's not supposed to know I was part of the focus group. You, Dad! You could go talk to him for me.

Martin: Oh, for crying out loud-

Niles: Look, if we're going to be here for a while, could we at least lock the doors?

Martin: Relax, Niles, the neighborhood's O.K.

Niles: The docks are two blocks from here!

Martin: So's the Ritz-Carleton.

Niles: Exactly! We're caught halfway between heaven and hell.

Frasier: All I want is more information. Dad, please? Please go talk to him for me?

Martin: All right, if I get an answer for you, can we go to dinner?
Frasier: O.K., fine. [Martin opens his door] Oh, but wait, wait,

wait! Now you can't just walk up there and ask him. He'll know that I sent you. Got to find some artful way of introducing the subject.

Niles: Can we at least hide Dad's handicapped sign? It sends a clear signal that we're incapable of fighting back!

Martin: So do your suspenders.

Frasier: All right, I've got it, I've got it. You're a business man in town from Chicago. No, no, it's too obvious. Uh, from Cleveland. No would ever pretend to be from Cleveland.

Martin: Fine, then we eat. [starts to get out]

Frasier: Wait, wait, we're not through yet! Yes, you've had a bad sales month, and you're a little depressed. You happen to see an add for my show on the side of a bus, and you were wondering if I'm as intelligent as I look.

Martin: What?

Frasier: Yes, Dad, eat! Honestly, sometimes you can get so obsessed about things!

Martin bites his tongue and gets out of the car.

Martin: Oh, God, it's raining!

He grabs an umbrella, opens it and then walks over to Manu.

Martin: Hi, I'm Marty Crane. My son's Dr. Frasier Crane. He's across the street in that BMW. [Manu looks] No, don't look!

Manu: Oh, my God. He was behind the mirror.

Martin: Look, don't worry about it. He's not mad at you. He just want to know why you don't like him.

Manu: But I do like him.

Martin: No, you don't.

Manu: Oh, yes, I do!

Martin: No, he heard what you said.

Manu: I can't do this. I don't like to say bad things about people, and you are his father—

Martin: No, you'd be doing me a favor! Just answer this one question, and we'll all get out of your life forever.

Manu: All right. I-I don't know your son well. But, uh, I guess I find him, uh, just a little bit... annoying.

Martin: Yeah?

Manu: Annoying.

Martin: O.K. You did good. Thanks.

Manu: Please tell your son I'm sorry that he annoys me so much.

Martin: Will do.

He walks back to the car.

Niles: Not yet... not yet... not yet. [Martin reaches the door]
OK, unlock! [Frasier unlocks the doors; Martin gets in]
And lock! [Frasier locks]

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Martin: Mission accomplished.

Frasier: Good. Did he believe my story?

Martin: Oh, yeah, I had him going pretty good. That Cleveland thing really sold it. Well, we better go eat now, huh? Before he sees us again.

Frasier: Right. [starts car] So, uh, Dad, what doesn't he like about
 me?

Martin: He said you annoy him.

Frasier: Yes, how so?

Martin: Well, I didn't ask him.

Frasier: What do you mean you didn't ask him?

Martin: Oh, geez!

Frasier: I'm sorry, Dad, but I have no idea what "he's annoying"

Martin: Well, it's clear enough to me!

Frasier: I'm just going to have to do this myself!

He gets out of the car. Martin hands him the umbrella.

Martin: Here.
Frasier: Thank you.

He walks over to Manu. In the car, Niles opens his cell phone.

Martin: Who're you calling?

Niles: No one. I just pressed 911, and I'm keeping my finger poised
 over the Send button in case there's trouble with those
 hooligans. [points out the window]

Martin: Oh, the UPS men or the little girls playing in the puddle?

Niles closes his phone. At the newsstand:

Manu: Hello.
Frasier: Hello.

Manu: I can help you?

Frasier: Uh, yes, yes, you were recently speaking with a salesman from Cleveland.

Manu: I don't think so.

Frasier: It was just five minutes ago. He left you and went over to that car waiting right over there. You see?

He points over his shoulder to the BMW, where Martin and Niles are now both staring at him.

Manu: Oh, God, no. You're him, it's you.

Frasier: Yes, yes, it is. I'm so sorry, I really don't mean to bother you but I would like to talk to you for a minute.

Manu: I like your show.

Frasier: Oh, no.

Manu: I like your show, and I like you.

Frasier: That man was my father-

Manu: I like your father!

Frasier: Oh, that's very nice of you, but you see, you told him that,

uh, you find me annoying. [Manu protests] Yes, yes, you did, and that's all right. I don't mind constructive criticism. It's just that I wish you could be a bit more specific. What exactly is it about me that you find so annoying?

Manu: You're not annoying.

Frasier: Yes, I am! Would I be here if I wasn't?

Manu: Well, I have enjoyed talking to you very much, but it's time

for my break.

Frasier: Oh, no, no, please!

Manu reaches up to the metal curtain. Frasier leans forward to stop him, knocking a bottle of Yoo-Hoo over Manu's pants.

In the car, Niles reacts. Martin puts his arm over his eyes.

Frasier: I'm so sorry.

Manu: I am a sticky mess.

Frasier: Let me help you with that.

Manu: No, no, no, it's fine, good.

Frasier: Manu?

Manu: Drive safe.

He pulls the curtain down to hide his face. Frasier knocks on the curtain, causing it to plummet down, crushing Manu's hand. Manu screams in pain.

Manu: No, no!

Frasier: Look, I am a doctor.

Manu: No, no, I just go to the restaurant to put ice on it.

He stumbles away.

Frasier: Right, you know, I'll hold down the fort here! Glad to be of help!

In the car, Niles is watching. Martin's eyes are still covered.

Niles: [matter-of-fact] He's crushed the gentleman's hand, and now he appears to be commandeering his newsstand.

Martin: Uh-huh.

Frasier steps into the newsstand. He notices a smoldering cigar sitting in an ashtray.

Frasier: Oh, good lord. Smoking in the worst places!

He places the ashtray on the ground. A woman [Amanda] comes over.

Amanda: How much for the paper?

Frasier: Ah, yes, uh, well, that would be [checks the paper] oh, fifty cents. [she pays] Thank you so much. There we are.

Amanda: Scuse me, are you Dr. Crane from the radio?

Frasier: Why, yes, I am.

Amanda: Oh, I just never miss your show! I love you! I guess you get tired of hearing that.

Frasier: Oh, occupational hazard.

Amanda: [takes out paper and pen] Oh, would you mind-?

Frasier: Oh, I wouldn't mind at all.

Amanda: To Amanda.

Frasier: [autographs paper] Amanda, it's a pleasure.

Amanda: What are you doing here, anyway?

Frasier: Oh, oh, well you see, let me explain, you see. [steps out of the newsstand] The, uh, radio station conducted a little audio survey today, and although the response was favorable from eleven out of twelve of the participants—

Amanda notices smoke curling up from the floor of the newsstand.

Amanda: Is that smoking?

Frasier: [oblivious] Well, some people might consider it smoking, but

you see, for me-

A fire explodes.

Amanda: FIRE!

Amanda runs away. Frasier, yelling for help, does the same.

In the car, Niles's face is now resting on his hand. Martin, face still covered, is sunk even lower in his seat.

Niles: Oh, my God. Frasier set his newsstand on fire.

Martin: Mmm-hmm.

FADE TO:

Scene Six - Street

As firemen probe through the charred ruins of the newsstand, Manu sits on the sidewalk with his head in his hands [one bandaged]. Frasier comes over.

Frasier: Uh, may I? [sits beside him] Look, I know there's nothing I can say right now that would make you feel any better, but rest assured, I will be financially responsible for everything.

Manu: All this because you had to know why I do not like you.

Frasier: Well, you were kind of vague.

Manu: You want to know why? I'll tell you why. I think you are a smarty-pants. I was too polite to say that before. But then you spied on me, you stalked me, you badgered me, you poured Yoo-Hoo down my Dockers, you crunched my hand, and then, as if all that was not enough, you burned down my newsstand, my livelihood, a gift to me from my beloved uncle, may he

rest in peace!

Frasier: Was that so hard?

Frasier leaves.

END OF ACT TWO

Credits:

Bulldog sits in a chair, eating popcorn. Through the two-way mirror he sees Roz talking to the Collector in the empty conference room. She makes her intentions clear by taking his clipboard and tossing it aside.

They kiss and fall onto the table, locked in an embrace. As they tumble off the table and onto the floor, Bulldog gets up from his chair and leans forward to get a better look.

Guest Appearances

Special Guest Star

TONY SHALHOUB as Manu

Guest Starring

HENRY WORONICZ as Moderator CAMERON WATSON as Data Collector HEATHER MACRAE as Cathy PAT SKIPPER as Gary DAVID BREITBARTH as Chuck LIN SHAVE as Anne ABDUL SALAAM EL RAZZAC as Paul MARITA GERAGHTY as Amanda

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