

[7.10]Back Talk [1]

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An Event Six Years In Coming

Finally....

Transcript {nick hartley}

Act One.

Scene One - Frasier's Bedroom.

It's just after seven in the morning and Frasier is fast asleep. Eddie runs in and jumps on the bed. Eddie has an electric voice box attached to his collar. Martin is obviously offstage with a microphone, as his voice comes through the box. It is done to sound like a dog.

Martin: [v.o. as Eddie] Rrrr'appy Rrrr'irthday, Rrrr'aizer!

Frasier: [wakes up, sarcastically] Eddie! You can talk!

Martin: [v.o. as Eddie] I've always been able to talk. I just save it for special occasions like somebody's rrr'irthday.

Frasier: Yes, Eddie, thank you very much. But listen, I'd like to talk about Dad. I think his mind may be slipping.

Martin enters with his microphone.

Martin: Hey, don't say things like that. He's a dog, he might not know you're joking.

Frasier: Why, Dad, I didn't even know you were here! [smirks]

Martin: Well, just give me a couple more minutes and I'll have your birthday breakfast all ready. Come on, Eddie!

Martin exits as Eddie follows him.

Martin: [v.o. as Eddie] Rrrright behind you!

Frasier gives a glance out of the door as he begins to get up.

CUT TO: Living Room

Martin is pouring some coffee as Frasier enters in his dressing gown.

Frasier: Oh, well, that's very nice, Dad.

Martin: Oh, and look what I got. A newspaper from the day you were born. [*hands it to him*]

Frasier: I keep telling you to clean out that closet of yours! [*sits down and reads it*]

Martin: I ordered it!

Frasier: Yes well, let's just see what other wonders occurred on that day. [*laughs and reads*] "SUSPECTED PINKO OUTED FROM CROSSING GUARD POST" What a jolly world I was born into.

Martin: I know tonight's your party, but here. [*lights a candle on a cupcake*] Happy birthday! Make a wish.

Frasier: Oh Dad, thank you.

Frasier stands. He bends over the table to blow it out - and freezes.

Martin: What's the matter?

Frasier: My back! [*in pain*] It's completely seized up!

Martin: Well, here...

Martin guides him back down into his seat.

Frasier: My God! It's been a little tender lately. I went to see the doctor last week, he told me there was absolutely nothing wrong with it.

Martin: Oh, doctors never tell you anything, they're all just a bunch of overpaid quacks. [*off Frasier's glare*] Oh, I'm sorry, I don't mean you. I'm talking about real doctors!

Frasier: [*after he gives Martin a look*] How can this be happening to me? I'm always so conscientious about back safety. Why, just the other day when I needed that large heavy stack of books from down in the storage room, I insisted that Daphne make three trips.

Martin: Well, you know what, I've got that old girdle in my bedroom. Let me go get it.

Frasier: Dad, wait, I'm not going to wear anything called a girdle.

Martin: What if I call it a back-brace?

Frasier: Get it!

Martin does so and leaves the scene to his room. Then the doorbell sounds. Frasier sits still motionless.

Frasier: [*calls*] Daphne!

However, she's not in. The doorbell rings twice more.

Frasier: Oh, God... Coming! [*slowly gets up and edges to the door*] This wouldn't be taking me so long if my housekeeper were here. [*finally opens door to Daphne*]

Daphne: I'm a physical therapist!

Frasier: Then perhaps you could get me into a chair!

Daphne: [*supports him*] Oh goodness, is your back bothering you again? Oh, I'm sorry I made you get up. I forgot my keys.

Frasier: You know, perhaps you should get a spare set made just to keep at Donny's. For God's sake, you're practically living there as it is.

Daphne: [*guides him to sofa*] Oh, now, Dr. Crane. You better get used to it. Once I'm married, I will be living there. [*then*] I know what'll help that back, a nice massage.

Martin enters with the girdle.

Martin: Here we go.

Daphne: Oh, the girdle! That'll help.

Martin: Now, it's kinda hard to put on by yourself. But if Daphne holds one end and I hold the other, you can kinda spin into it.

Frasier: Please Dad, this is humiliating enough as it is.

Martin: What's humiliating about it? Look, you just hook it in the back like a bra.

Frasier: Just give me that! [*snatches it*]

Frasier exits to his room struggling with the girdle.

Daphne: Mr. Crane, does it bother you when I stay over at Donny's?

Martin: No.

Daphne: Well, it seems to bother Dr. Crane.

Martin: Oh, he's just cranky because of his back.

Daphne pours herself a cup of coffee, noticing the paper that Martin gave Frasier.

Daphne: Good Lord! Queen Elizabeth had another baby! I don't care what science can do, it's just not right.

[*N.B. A slight discontinuity here - Frasier's birth year has been given as 1952. Queen Elizabeth's second child, Princess Anne, was born in 1950, two years after her brother Charles. Elizabeth did not give birth again until 1960.*]

FADE OUT

Scene Two - Radio Station.

Roz is preparing for the show in her booth. Connie enters Frasier's booth with some flowers for Frasier, as Frasier hobbles inside with her, he is using a cane.

Frasier: [*referring to Connie placing the flowers on the console*]
Oh, that'll be fine right there, be sure to thank the gang for the flowers, Connie.

Connie: You're welcome, Dr. Crane. Happy Birthday. [*exits*]

Roz: [*realizes*] Birthday? [*then quickly*] Happy birthday, Frasier.

Frasier: Thank you, Roz. Not off to the best start though, my back is out.

Roz: Why don't you go home? We'll just air "The Best of Crane." I'll drop your gift by later.

Frasier: No, no, Roz. I promised my listeners that I'd read a birthday address.

Roz: [*searching for a gift to give him*] Well, people might have forgotten, people do have busy lives, you know. [*notices a book on the side*]

Frasier: No, Roz, I announced it twice. Anyone paying the slightest attention would know.

Roz takes a gift bag with shoes in it, empties the shoes out and puts the book inside the gift bag.

Frasier: What are you doing over there?

Roz: Just, wondering when to surprise you with your... present!
[*holds up gift bag*]

Roz enters Frasier's booth and hands it over.

Frasier: Oh, Roz.

Roz: Yes, now is as good a time as any.

Frasier: You know, we keep promising each other that we're not going to do this. We've got to stop spoiling one another.

Roz: Well, what am I supposed to do? Just forget your birthday?

Frasier: [*looks at book*] Oh, Good Lord, Roz. You know, I read the most wonderful review of this recently.

Roz: I hope you like it.

Frasier: Oh look, you've inscribed it.

Roz: [*worried*] I did?

Frasier: [*reads*] "You'll always be my baby."

Roz: I must have had a glass of wine when I wrote that.

Frasier: [*reads*] "Love, Mom."

Roz, ashamed, goes back to her tasks as Niles enters with a gift bag.

Niles: There's our bent and broken birthday boy.

Frasier: Hello, Niles.

Niles: I've brought you a little gift. Say hello to sweet salvation, the "Lumbar Log."

Frasier: Thank you, Niles. [*takes it and props it behind his back*] I think the whole thing is probably stress-related.

Niles: Well, that's very possible. Birthdays can be anxiety-provoking, especially for people of a certain age.

Frasier: I am not "of a certain age," Niles. I am smack dab in the middle of "not a kid anymore." I won't be "of a certain age" for another ten years.

Roz: You know, if your back pain is stress-related, I read a magazine article with an exercise that might help. You just go someplace where nobody can hear you and list all the things that bug you.

Frasier: In what esteemed medical journal did you find this little tidbit - "Cosmo"?

Roz: No, [*proudly*] "Glamour"!

Frasier: Oh, that's priceless. "I can't find the right shade of lipstick," "I look terrible in a bikini," "He can't find my G-spot."

Roz: I said do it someplace private!

Niles: You know, it couldn't hurt, Frasier.

Frasier: Oh, Niles, it's absurd.

Niles: Hmm, the more you resist, the more I'm wondering if there's something you're trying to avoid.

Roz: Well, thanks for backing me up, Niles. You know, the same article said if you rub a raw potato...

Niles: If we're going to sell him on this, you should drop out now.

Roz: OK.

Frasier: Nobody's going to sell me on anything. That sort of exercise only helps people who lack self awareness. I for one am... [*spasm of pain*] God almighty!

Niles: Well, no wonder you're stressed, you've got a whole universe to run.

Roz: Thirty seconds, Frasier. [*enters her booth*]

Niles: All right, I'll be off. You take care of yourself, I'll see you tonight. [*exits*]

Roz: Are you sure you're up to this?

Frasier: Oh, I'll be fine, Roz. I'm not as delicate as all that.

Roz: How did you do it anyway?

Frasier: Blowing out a cupcake.

Roz: You know, Frasier, we can always put on "The Best of Crane."

Frasier: No, no, Roz. Now, just have a little bit of faith in me. I'm a lot tougher than that. Tell you what, if I feel like I need help towards the end of the show, I'll give you a little signal, all right? [*shows her an example of her signal*]

Roz: All right, five seconds.

Frasier: Gosh you know, these flowers really are beautiful. [*on air*] Good afternoon, Seattle.

Frasier takes a sniff of the flowers, causing him to sneeze, forcing his back to move and causing him to scream in pain. He sneezes again and screams again as Roz puts a hand to her earphones. He sneezes a third time and falls off his chair in agony. Niles runs in from the corridor as Frasier rolls around on the floor. His hand comes up from under the console and signals Roz.

FADE TO:

EDWARD CRANE, PH.D.

Scene Three - Frasier's Apartment.

The apartment is empty as Frasier enters on the shoulder of Niles.

Niles: Hello! Anyone here? *[no reply]*

Frasier: I guess they're all out.

Niles: *[hurrying across room to sofa]* Okay, well let's just get you settled!

Frasier: Niles, Niles, slow down. For God's sake, we're not running a three-legged race. *[falls onto sofa]* Do you have somewhere to be?

Niles: Well, since you bring it up, I do have a luncheon with my new lady love.

Frasier: Oh, well, gosh, I'd hate to have my pain stand in the way of that! How could that orthopedist of yours tell me there was nothing wrong?

Niles: Frasier, I looked at the x-rays myself, this is not a skeletal problem. There, now you're all fine and I'm sure Dad will be by soon.

Frasier: No, wait. This couch has absolutely no support. *[points to chair with ottoman]* Let's try that chair over there, please.

Niles: All right. *[picks him up]* You're not heavy, you're my brother.

Niles and Frasier slowly move over to the chair.

Frasier: How could you take me to that unprofessional hack? All he did was give me a bottle full of horse tranquilizers. He didn't care about getting to the root of the problem, he just wanted to shut me up!

Niles: I think it might be time for one of those pills!

He settles Frasier on the chair in a most obscure way. He is kneeling on the ottoman with his forehead resting on the chair back. He looks like a contortionist.

Niles: All comfy?

Frasier: This won't do, it's even harder than a seat on a public bus.

Niles: Oh, when were you ever on a bus?

Frasier: At a cocktail party once for the "Friends of Transit."

Niles: I wasn't invited to that.

Frasier: Will you just help me up, for God's sake! *[he does]* Oh God, you know, maybe I should take another one of those pills.

Niles: All right, I'll get you a glass of water, okay?

Frasier: Right.

Niles rushes into the kitchen and talks from offstage. Whilst Niles is speaking Frasier takes the pills from his pockets and wanders over to Martin's chair slowly.

Niles: *[o.s.]* You know, things are really going well with Mel. I've been out with her almost every night. I don't want to jinx things but I dare say we're well on our way to becoming what might almost pass as an item.

Frasier falls down into Martin's chair as Niles enters with a glass of water.

Niles: I mean it, Frasier, she is just the... [*notices him*] Oh my God, did you fall?!

Frasier: No, I'm actually quite comfortable, Niles. And look, there's no glare on the television... and here's a lovely place to set your drink. [*he does*]

Niles: Just give me your hand and whatever the chair's telling you, don't listen.

Frasier: No, it's helping my back actually. You know, and when you sit in it, you don't have to look at it.

Niles: If you're really interested in correcting this problem and not just medicating it, you should consider that technique Roz mentioned - you know, listing your problems aloud.

Frasier: Oh, give me a break.

Niles: It's perfectly possible that this is connected to some submerged anxiety. What's bothering you?

Frasier: Oh, yes, Niles, you really expect me to sit here all alone in some apartment, prattling on endlessly about my problems like some sort of a lunatic. [*Niles slowly leaves unnoticed by Frasier*] If you think I'm going to do that, you're the one who needs to get his head examined...

He notices Niles's disappearance. Then Frasier sits quietly before Eddie runs from behind him and jumps onto his knee.

Frasier: Oh, good God! Oh, Eddie, please just shoo! Get off me, get off me!

Eddie jumps onto the sofa and stares at him.

Frasier: What? Do you want to know what's bothering me too? Well, here's a start, I'm talking to a dog, that bothers me... I'm another year older today. I suppose that bothers me, but not as much as people seem to think. [*takes pills*] I'm still single, that's a big one. Not having a woman to share my life with. The only women in my life are friends; Roz and Daphne. Daphne's not even here anymore, she'll be married soon. That's going to be tough on Dad.

Pause.

Frasier: Who am I kidding? It's going to be tough on me. It's been nice having her here. Even when my love life hasn't been going so well, I can always come home to a warm and considerate woman. You know, that's probably why I've been so brusque with her lately. I know that once she's gone, I'll probably be twice as lonely. Well, it's quite a realization, isn't it?

Daphne walks on in her dressing gown fresh from a shower, unnoticed by Frasier.

Frasier: I really do love Daphne and I'm about to lose her. I've got to show her how I feel about her, while I still have the chance.

Daphne, worried by these comments, walks back to her room again.

Frasier: Well, I don't know whether it was the therapy or the painkillers but I actually feel a bit better. Let's try

this. [*pulls himself to sit more comfortably on the chair*]
Ah...

Eddie buries his head under the pillow.

Frasier: You know, there are subtler ways to let the patient know his hour is up.

Daphne enters, acting.

Daphne: Oh, Dr. Crane! I didn't know you were here, I can't hear anything in that shower of mine, it's like a soundproof vault!

Frasier: Daphne, I wanted to apologize for being so short with you this morning.

Daphne: It's fine.

Frasier: No, it's not. It's never fine. Listen, come here, please.

She does but reluctantly.

Frasier: Give me a hug.

She hugs keeping a distance between his body and hers.

Frasier: Oh Daphne, do you know how much you mean to me?

Daphne: [*worried*] I'm getting an idea!

End of Act One.

Act Two.

Scene One - Frasier's Apartment.

Daphne is sat at the dining table staring into space as Martin enters. He notices Daphne's behavior.

Martin: [*enters*] Hey, Daph. [*no response*] What's wrong? Are you all right?

Daphne: Well, actually no. I overheard something I wasn't supposed to hear. It's about Dr. Crane. I overheard him say he's in love with me.

Martin: What?

Daphne: And he wants to show me how much he loves me while he still has the chance.

Martin: Oh, jeez, not this!

Daphne: You knew about this?

Martin: I'm not getting in the middle of this!

Daphne: Then it's true?

Martin: Look, I kept my mouth shut for six years, I'm not saying anything now. [*exits to kitchen*]

Daphne: [*gobsmacked*] Six years?! He's felt this way for six years?!

Martin: [*o.s*] You didn't hear that from me!

Frasier enters from his room in a robe.

Frasier: Daphne. Daphne, I can't lower myself into the tub.

Daphne: Well, don't look at me!

Frasier: No, I thought I'd skip the bath and take you up on that massage you offered. Those expert hands of yours might be just what the doctor ordered. [*slyly*] Let's do it in my bedroom, shall we?

Daphne collects herself and slowly walks to Frasier's bedroom.

CUT TO: Frasier's Bedroom.

Frasier is waiting as Daphne enters. She is still in her robe.

Frasier: What kept you? [*Daphne murmurs*] Daphne, here, just help me out of this robe, please. I nearly killed myself putting it on.

She does slowly and covers her eyes in case of "gratuitous nudity." She folds the robe up, glad to see that Frasier is wearing pants. He goes onto the bed and Daphne apprehensively goes to him.

Daphne: [*breathes*] Here we go! Now, remember, your back's very tender, so no sudden movements.

Daphne slowly moves towards the back with her hands. She is very scared. Her fingertips press lightly onto his back and he lets out a groan of pleasure. Daphne quickly removes her hands and gets off the bed.

Daphne: You know, I'm catching a draft in this robe, perhaps I better change.

Frasier: I'll be waiting!

Daphne: [*looks back in disgust*] Ooh!

Daphne exits down the hallway before Martin arrives to see Frasier.

Martin: Hey, Frasier.

Frasier: Yes, Dad.

Martin: Did Daphne tell you?

Frasier: Tell me what?

Martin: She found out Niles has a thing for her.

Frasier: What?

Martin: Yes.

Frasier: How?!

Martin: Well, she said she overheard him earlier saying how much he loves her.

Frasier: Oh, dear God, no wonder she's been so distracted. What did you say, did you confirm it?

Martin: Well, yes, I said I knew about it.

Frasier: Oh, Dad...

Martin: Well come on, what else was I going to say?! And then I told her it was none of my business and I took off out of there.

Frasier: [*thinks*] Wait a minute! How did she even see Niles today?

Martin: I don't know, but she said she overheard him saying he loves her and that he wanted to tell her while he still has the chance.

Frasier: [*realizes*] Oh, no!

Martin: What?

Frasier: I said that.

Martin: [*groans*] Oh, not you now!

Frasier: No, no, no, Dad, not that. I was just doing a little exercise to try and help my back and I was talking out loud about how much I was going to miss Daphne. She must have overheard me and misunderstood.

Martin: Who were you talking to?

Beat.

Frasier: If you must know, I was talking to Eddie.

Martin: [*smirks*] Helps, doesn't it!

Frasier: Oh, stop it. Thanks to you, now Daphne thinks I'm in love with her. Here I am asking her for a massage, how is she expected to interpret that?!

Daphne enters with a big woolly jumper on.

Martin: *[noticing her]* Hard to say! *[exits]*

Frasier: Oh, Lord.

Daphne: Just take a deep breath and try to relax.

Frasier: Daphne...

Daphne: Let's both do that, shall we? *[breathes deeply]*

Frasier: Daphne, Dad told me that you overheard me.

Daphne: He did?

Frasier: Yes.

Daphne: Well, I certainly picked the wrong person to confide in.

Frasier: No, no, no, I'm glad he told me, because the truth is you misunderstood. You see, when I said how much I cared about you, I didn't mean it in a romantic sense.

Daphne: *[hopeful]* Then you don't love me?

Frasier: Oh, no, of course I love you, Daphne, but as a friend, that's all!

Daphne bursts into laughter and relief as she hugs him.

Daphne: Oh thank God! What a relief! I mean I was flattered, but...
[laughs]

Frasier: That's fine, off you go... *[his head spins]* Oh my, my head.

Daphne: It must be those pills. Come on, let me give you that massage while you can still feel it.

Frasier: All right.

Daphne takes her jumper off and pushes Frasier onto the bed. She kneels beside him and massages him. Frasier begins to relax.

Frasier: You know, Daph, we really are going to miss you around here.

Daphne: It's going to be hard for me too. Something I haven't even wanted to think about - leaving. I know I grumble a bit, but I do love you and your father. I'll still come around though, we'll still see each other.

Frasier: You know what?

Daphne: What's that, Dr. Crane?

Frasier: Dad's chair.

Daphne: I'm not taking it with me if that's where you're heading.
[laughs]

Frasier: It's so comfortable!

Daphne: You took quite a few of those pills, didn't you? *[pause]* You know what's curious, though?

Frasier: Cats!

Daphne: *[laughs]* Yes! But I'm talking about our little mix-up. When I said to your father, "Dr. Crane's in love with me," he said it's been going on for six years now. What did he mean by that?

Frasier: Oh that... he meant Niles!

KA-BOOM!!!

This revelation shocks Daphne into a state of confusion. This is the turning point of the show.

Daphne: What?

Frasier: Niles... he's crazy about you!

Daphne: *[transfixed in mental conflict]* Dr. Crane? *[then to Frasier]* Dr. Crane!

But he's already fallen asleep.

FADE TO:

Scene Two - Frasier's Bedroom.

A few hours later Frasier is woken up once again by Eddie with his voice box.

Martin: [v.o. as Eddie] Come on, Rrr'irthday Boy. Wakey, Wakey, time for Cakey!

Frasier: Dear God! Has a year passed already?

CUT TO: Living Room

Meanwhile, the dining room table is set up with birthday decorations. Eddie, Martin and Daphne are wearing party hats.

Daphne: [putting on her hat] Please, the elastic's pinching behind my ears!

Martin: Oh, come on, it's just for a couple of hours.

Daphne: It's pulling my hair!

Martin: You don't hear Eddie complaining, do you? [v.o. as Eddie] I rr'uv my hat!

Daphne: You know, I'm this close to breaking that thing into a million pieces!

Frasier enters in his dressing gown.

Frasier: Well, isn't this festive! Oh, Daphne, by the way, thank you for the massage, I think it did just the trick.

Daphne: Anytime, Dr. Crane.

Frasier: Listen, just before I drifted off I'm afraid I might have said something I wish I hadn't.

Daphne: [worried] Yes?

Frasier: It's about Dad's chair, it may be comfortable but I still want to get it out of here.

Daphne: [tense] Oh, that.

Frasier: Why, I didn't say anything else I shouldn't have said, did I?

Daphne: Well... [then] No, no. And don't worry. [points at chair] Mum's the word!

The doorbell sounds.

Daphne: [sarcastic] I'll get it!

Frasier: Why, thank you.

Daphne goes to the door as Martin talks to Frasier.

Martin: Did you straighten things out with Daphne?

Frasier: Yes, I did.

Martin: Boy, that was a close one. I almost blew Niles's secret!

Frasier: Would you try to be more discreet! I can't pull your chestnuts out of the fire every time!

Daphne opens the door to Niles. She looks very nervous and Niles can sense something is up.

Niles: Good evening, Daphne.

Daphne: [tense] Dr. Crane.

Niles: You look different somehow. [covering?] Have you done something new with your hair?

Daphne points to her hat and takes it off, symbolically removing her badge of office. She is now a new person.

Niles: That must be it!

Niles, confused by her actions, goes to greet Frasier and wish him many happy returns as Daphne looks him up and down from afar with

silent eyes.

End of Act Two.

Credits:

Frasier goes into the living room in his bathrobe with a glass of sherry. He looks around surreptitiously, finds he's alone, and lowers himself with a blissful sigh into Martin's chair. Martin comes in behind him and leans over to meet Frasier as he reclines into the chair. Frasier is startled and sits up abruptly.

Guest Appearances

Guest Starring

LISA ROBINSON as Connie

Synopsis {kathy churay}

BACK TALK [1]

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE - FRASIER'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Frasier is lying peacefully asleep as Eddie comes trotting in wearing a little party hat. He jumps up on the bed and lays his head on Frasier's shoulder. Suddenly Eddie's collar begins to talk, in Martin's voice, wishing Frasier a happy birthday. Frasier replies that he would rather talk about Martin, whose mind seems to be slipping. Martin comes into the bedroom laughing and tells Frasier to get up for the birthday breakfast Martin has prepared. He leaves, Eddie trotting right behind, as Frasier climbs out of bed.

THE LIVING ROOM/DINING ROOM

Frasier shuffles in wearing his bathrobe, and Martin has a great time serving up the breakfast he's prepared. It is complete down to the last detail, including a tiny cupcake with a single candle. Frasier is touched and leans over to blow it out, then freezes in pain. His back has gone into spasm, and he can barely move. Martin rushes to the bedroom to retrieve an old girdle which, at Frasier's glare, he renames a back brace. While Martin is gone the doorbell rings, and Frasier makes his painful way over to let Daphne in.

Daphne sees his condition and helps him to the couch, apologizing because she's forgotten her key again. Frasier is irritated and comments shortly that she keep a spare one at Donny's, since she's practically living there already. Daphne comments that soon she will be living there once she's married, and suggests a massage for Frasier's back. Frasier heads off to the bedroom with the girdle to prepare for his massage.

SCENE TWO - THE RADIO STATION - LATER

Frasier's coworker follows Frasier, who is moving quite slowly, into the studio carrying the flowers he has been given by the studio staff for his birthday. Roz is seated in her booth reading a book as they come in, and she panics to hear that it's Frasier's birthday. She frantically searches for something that will pass as a birthday gift while Frasier gets settled, and finally packs the book she's been reading into a gift bag hauled out from under her desk. She brings it out to Frasier, who promptly opens the book and discovers the inscription to Roz -- from her mother.

Roz retreats to the booth as Niles comes in with his own birthday gift -- a lumbar support pillow that Frasier greets with great enthusiasm. Niles also suggests that perhaps Frasier's back has gone out from the stress of having another birthday. Frasier isn't amused by the suggestion, but Roz notes that she recently read in a magazine that to relieve stress one ought to go somewhere completely private and list out loud all the things that are causing stress. Frasier laughs the idea off, but Niles notes that the more Frasier protests, the more Niles has to wonder whether the birthday isn't really bothering him after all.

Roz cues the countdown to the start of the show, and Niles pats his brother affectionately and departs. Frasier is still groaning in pain, and Roz offers to run a backup tape so that he can go home, but Frasier refuses to disappoint his listeners. Roz signals that he's on the air and he opens his mouth to speak, but the flowers on the console make him sneeze, causing another back spasm. Frasier falls off his chair and, from his position on the floor, lifts his hand above the console to frantically signal Roz to run the backup tape.

SCENE THREE - THE APARTMENT - A SHORT TIME LATER

Niles enters practically carrying Frasier, who limps to the couch with his brother's help and collapses. But the couch isn't comfortable, and he has Niles move him to one of the chairs instead. This is even worse for his back, and Niles nervously suggests that he stay put, since Niles is late for lunch with his new lady friend, Mel, with whom he's been out almost every night. Frasier refuses, and Niles goes to get a glass of water so that Frasier can take a pain killer. Frasier

tries to change positions and searches the room for a likely looking spot to rest. His eyes alight on Martin's hideous recliner, and overcoming his nausea, he drags himself over to the chair and flops down.

Niles returns from the kitchen and is overcome with amazement to see Frasier sitting in the loathesome chair, but Frasier assures him it's quite comfortable for his back. Frasier takes a tranquilizer as Niles looks worriedly at his watch and urges him to try the technique Roz mentioned -- listing his problems aloud. Frasier goes into a mini-tirade ridiculing the idea, during which Niles sneaks out the door to his luncheon.

Frasier finally looks around and realizes he is alone, except for Eddie who comes trotting in and jumps up on Frasier, then is unceremoniously shooed onto the couch, where he settles down. Frasier begins to talk to Eddie, though really to himself, speculating on what's been bothering him. What really bothers him is that he doesn't have a woman to share his life with, only friends like Roz and Daphne. And soon Daphne will be gone too, and Frasier will be twice as lonely. That's probably why Frasier has been so short with her lately.

Daphne comes in from the bedroom wearing her bathrobe and still damp from a shower, just in time to overhear Frasier tell Eddie that he really does love Daphne and has to show her how he feels about her, while he still has a chance. Daphne is utterly shocked, and ducks back to the hallway before Frasier can see her.

Frasier finishes talking to Eddie as Daphne reappears, walking very stiffly and warily this time. Frasier greets her affectionately and calls her over to the chair for a hug, which she does very gingerly as he begins to tell her how much she means to him. Daphne looks as though she'd rather be anywhere else at that moment.

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE - FRASIER'S LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

Daphne is sitting alone at the table, still in her bathrobe and looking stunned as Martin comes in from outdoors. He notices her troubled expression and asks what the problem is. Daphne tells him that she overheard Dr. Crane say that he was in love with her. Martin is exasperated to learn what she's overheard, but refuses to get into the middle of the situation. He retorts that he's kept his mouth shut for six years and he's not about to start interfering now. Daphne's jaw drops as Frasier comes in from the bedroom, telling Daphne that he can't seem to get into the bathtub and thinks a massage would help. Would she come to his bedroom and massage him? Daphne is totally at a loss for words as Frasier goes off down the hall.

SCENE TWO - FRASIER'S BEDROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Daphne creeps cautiously into the bedroom, still wearing her bathrobe, to find Frasier standing next to the bed waiting for her. He takes off his robe to reveal a pair of modest pajama bottoms, and drapes himself face down on the end of the bed to wait for his massage. She's excruciatingly uncomfortable but climbs up on the bed like a good sport to start the massage. She warns him sternly to make no sudden movements that might hurt his back, and after several tries, finally brings herself to risk touching him. But at Frasier's groan of pleasure she leaps off the bed again, claiming to feel a draft and running out of the room to change clothes.

A moment later Martin comes in, making sure that Daphne's gone, to tell Frasier that Daphne found out Niles is in love with her. Frasier is shocked, but as Martin explains, Frasier realizes that Daphne must have overheard him talking about her. Just then Daphne comes in, bundled up in a bulky pair of sweatpants and a baggy zippered jacket. Martin beats a hasty retreat, and Frasier explains to her that she has misunderstood, that he only loves her as a friend.

Daphne is hugely relieved and gives him a warm hug, then suggests Frasier lie down so she can give him the massage after all. Frasier is light-headed from the pain killers, and begins to chatter drunkenly as Daphne starts working firmly on his back. She tells him how much she will miss him and his father, and starts to wonder what Martin meant by his comment about him loving her for six years. Frasier, flying high on pain medication, replies offhandedly into the bedspread, "Oh, that? He meant Niles."

Daphne looks as though she's had an electric shock. "What?" she stammers. "Niles," mumbles Frasier. "He's crazy about you." And promptly falls fast asleep. Daphne tries frantically to question him, but he's out like a light.

SCENE THREE - FRASIER'S BEDROOM - SOME TIME LATER

Frasier is still fast asleep as Eddie bounces up on the bed and begins licking his ear. Frasier wakes up to hear Eddie's talking collar announce that it's time for his birthday dinner. Grumbling, Frasier gets off the bed.

THE LIVING ROOM

Daphne and Martin are wearing party hats and setting the table for dinner as Frasier shuffles in. He pulls Daphne aside and apologizes for any indiscreet comments he might have made before he drifted off to sleep -- like criticizing his father's chair. Daphne assures him uncomfortably that she'll keep quiet, but her manner prompts Frasier to ask if he said anything else he shouldn't have. Of course not, Daphne replies staunchly. The doorbell rings and she goes to answer it as Frasier and Martin whisper what a close call they had, keeping Niles's secret. Thank goodness they managed.

Daphne answers the door to find Niles bearing a birthday gift for Frasier. She greets him awkwardly and Niles stops on his way into the living room to look at her more closely. She looks different, he tells her. Has she done something new with her hair? She fumbles with her hair and finds the party hat, which she pulls off with a stiff smile. That must be it, Niles remarks, and goes over to greet Frasier as Daphne stares after him with an extremely troubled expression.

FADE OUT.

CREDIT TAG

Frasier into the living room in his bathrobe with a glass of sherry. He looks around surreptitiously, finds he's alone, and lowers himself with a blissful sigh into Martin's chair. Martin comes in behind him and leans over to meet Frasier as he reclines into the chair. Frasier is startled and sits up abruptly.

END OF SHOW.

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