

# [8.12]The Show Must Go Off

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Written by Mark Reisman

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## AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

### Won

EMMY

- **Outstanding Guest Actor in a Comedy Series:** Derek Jacobi
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## Transcript {Mike Lee}

*ACT ONE*

*Scene One - Convention Center*

*Frasier and Roz walk into a Science-Fiction Expo.*

**Roz:** Frasier, I knew when you bought me lunch there was going to be a catch! How long is this gonna take?

**Frasier:** Well, it shouldn't take too long, Roz. I can't believe I'm actually scouring a science-fiction convention for "X-Men" comics. I feel like I'm contributing to the decline of my son's intellect.

**Roz:** Then why are you doing it?

**Frasier:** Well, because I said no to the eyebrow ring.

*He sees a man dressed as a Klingon.*

**Frasier:** Oh excuse me, good sir, um, could you direct me please to Cubby's World of Comics?

**Klingon:** Yeah, it's right over there.

**Frasier:** Oh, thank you, thank you very much. You are a fierce but helpful people.

*He turns to head for the comics booth but stops when he sees a British man in his sixties signing autographs at a table.*

*[N.B. This is Sir Derek Jacobi's first appearance in an American television production.]*

**Frasier:** Good lord, that's Jackson Hedley.

**Roz:** Who?

**Frasier:** Jackson Hedley, the famous Shakespearean actor. He came to my school when I was a teen. He did a one-man show of soliloquies,

and began my love affair with the Bard! Excuse me Roz, I think I'll just go pay my respects to Mr. Hedley.

*Frasier makes his way over to Jackson's table, and stands in line behind a portly long-haired man (Dwayne).*

**Frasier:** Excuse me, um, what's Jackson Hedley doing here?

**Dwayne:** Signing autographs, and being awesome! They've got the whole cast of "Space Patrol" coming this weekend!

**Frasier:** You mean Jackson Hedley was on a television show?

**Dwayne:** What, are you kidding? He's Tobor, the ship's android! Where've you been, man?

**Frasier:** I don't know. Reading, attending the theater, [under his breath] getting haircuts.

[N.B. Derek Jacobi is not the only great Shakespearean actor playing against type in this episode; Ray Porter, who plays Dwayne, is a long-time member of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Company in Ashland, Oregon. I saw him on the stage as Moliere, and as Tullus Aufidius in "Coriolanus." He's got an awesome presence! So, we have two facets of the same inside joke ;- ) - Mike Lee]

*At the other side of the room, Noel Shempsky and a friend, both wearing old-style "Star Trek" uniforms, see Roz.*

**Noel:** Hi, Roz!

**Roz:** [horrified] Hi, Noel.

**Noel:** So you're a closet Trekker! I always had a feeling we were more than mere coworkers. This explains the heat between us.

**Roz:** I feel heat all right - because I'm in hell!

*Jackson Hedley signs Dwayne's t-shirt.*

**Jackson:** There you are, Dwayne.

**Dwayne:** Thanks, Tobor.

*Frasier comes up.*

**Frasier:** Hello, Mr. Hedley. Uh, may I say, it's an honor to see you again.

**Jackson:** Thank you. So what would you like to be autographed today?

**Frasier:** Actually, I already have your autograph. I got it after seeing your performance of "Hamlet."

**Jackson:** Oh, my... that was a long time ago.

**Frasier:** But not forgotten. May I say, on behalf of my brother and myself, thank you for opening our young eyes to the wonders of Shakespeare.

**Jackson:** You are more than welcome.

**Frasier:** Tell me, do you get to do much theater anymore?

**Jackson:** Oh no, I'm afraid those days are over. The show became so popular. I can't get cast as anything but an android, a cyborg, or, when I get the chance to really spread my wings, a mutant.

**Frasier:** Ah well, what a shame. For you, and the theater.

**Jackson:** Oh, you are very kind. Well, my fans await. It was lovely meeting you, Mr....?

**Frasier:** Frasier Crane. Thank you, Mr. Hedley.

*He goes back to where Roz is waiting.*

**Frasier:** It just breaks my heart to see that man reduced to this. It's so demeaning.

**Roz:** Well, so he's not doing Shakespeare. But look, he's got tons

of fans that worship him! What's so demeaning about that?

*At Jackson's table:*

**Fan:** Hey, Tobor, would you do my kid's birthday party?

**Jackson:** *[sighs and gives him a card]* Here's my card. Uh, travel time is extra, and I eat by myself.

*Frasier and Roz exchange a shudder.*

FADE OUT

*Scene Two - Apartment*

*Frasier is sitting on the couch. Niles comes in carrying a suitcase, followed by Martin and Eddie.*

**Niles:** Hey, look who I found at the airport!

**Frasier:** Oh-ho, welcome home, Dad! So, how was Florida?

**Martin:** Oh, it was a whirlwind! Duke and I hit the dog track, and then we met the "Michael Jordan of High-Life Players" at the Red Lobster, but the place I went back to most of all was Cap'n Pete's Gator Farm.

**Frasier:** Ah, did you go see the Hemingway home?

**Martin:** Well, you know Fras, you can't squeeze everything in. But I tell you, these gators are amazing! You're out in the Glades in this fanboat, and it's just you and Cap'n Pete and that cooler full of raw chickens!

**Niles:** And to think I wasted my last vacation in Vienna.

**Martin:** And then he dangles a chicken at the end of the stick, and before you know it a fifteen-foot monster comes rushing out of the water, and he's yelling, "Hurry up and take the picture, this sumbitch is heavy!" *[laughs]*

**Frasier:** That's delightful, Dad.

**Martin:** Where's Daphne?

**Niles:** Uh, my honeybunny has the flu.

**Martin:** Oh, that's too bad. *[aside to Frasier]* Probably got it standing in front of an open refrigerator.

**Frasier:** *[laughs]* Nice to have you back, Dad.

*Martin goes to his room. Niles brings Frasier a glass of sherry.*

**Niles:** Frasier.

**Frasier:** Oh, thank you, Niles.

**Niles:** You will never guess what I found.

**Frasier:** Hmm?

*Niles takes out a slip of paper.*

**Niles:** This is the autograph Jackson Hedley gave me in junior high school.

**Frasier:** Ah, Niles. *[reading]* "Dear Coach Palet, please excuse Niles from gym, for obvious reasons."

**Niles:** The other side.

**Frasier:** Ah, yes. "To Niles, my kingdom for more fans like you. Jackson Hedley." That's lovely.

**Niles:** 'Course, I'm still envious that you got to see him.

**Frasier:** Oh, you wouldn't be if you'd been at that convention, Niles. To see the man who defined Hamlet reduced to hawking t-shirts and sci-fi gee-gaws.

**Niles:** It's a terrible waste of talent.

**Frasier:** Tragic. No artist should have to endure that.

**Niles:** If only people could see him the way we did.

*Frasier has a sudden inspiration.*

**Frasier:** Niles, how difficult would it be to mount Jackson's one-man show? It's relatively simple.

**Niles:** That's true: there's minimal scenery, no supporting ca... wait a minute, are you suggesting-

**Frasier:** Well, why not? There's certainly no shortage of theaters in this town.

**Niles:** We could do it on a Monday night when they're all dark anyway.

**Frasier:** We could revive the man's career, just think what a gift it would be to return this man to the stage, where he belongs!

**Niles:** It would be like repaying him for giving us the gift of Shakespeare!

**Frasier:** Yes, and if the evening goes very well, then who knows? We could be in for a long run, we might even take it on the road!

**Niles:** Why not a television special, we'd reach a much larger audience!

**Frasier:** It could become a cottage industry! T-shirts, posters, personal appearances!

**Niles:** Thank God we've come along to save this man!

*They clink glasses.*

FADE TO:

#### TROTTING THE BARDS

*Scene Three - Theater*

*Frasier and Niles walk onto the empty stage.*

**Frasier:** Gosh Niles, I can't wait to show Jackson his new venue. Gosh, what an honor it is to be reuniting such a great talent with the stage. Is he here yet?

**Niles:** No, he's cutting the opening ribbon at Galaxy Mattresses.

**Frasier:** Well, once this show opens he'll be able to throw away his oversize novelty shears.

**Niles:** Yes, yes. Oh, I just came from the box office. Ticket sales are going at quite a brisk pace.

**Frasier:** Oh, I'm not surprised. I've got half the station coming.

**Niles:** Well, I've got a whole group coming from the wine club.

**Frasier:** Yes, you know, Niles, we've really done a good job of getting the word out. That's why we get to be producers.

*Jackson comes in.*

**Jackson:** Hello, lads!

**Niles:** Oh, Mr. Hedley. Please, join us on the stage.

**Frasier:** Or shall we say, on your stage.

**Jackson:** [*does so, breathless*] Oh, it's been such a - such a long time since I've trod the boards. Do you really think people are going to pay money to see me? After all these years?

**Niles:** The way things are going, we expect a sell-out!

**Frasier:** One week from today, you'll be looking out on a packed house!

**Jackson:** Really? Do you know, the one thing that I-I don't miss about performing live, it's-it's the jitters. [*breathing heavy*] It's the [*dry heaves*] dry heaves. Maybe this wasn't the best idea!

*He starts to go. They grab him and pull him back.*

**Niles:** No, sir!

**Frasier:** Please, please. The theater is your true destiny. It courses

through your veins, it fills your lungs. This... is your stage. Welcome home.

**Jackson:** And you said you'd never produced before.

*Jackson takes center stage. Frasier stands to stage left and extends a hand to the empty seats.*

**Frasier:** Ladies and gentlemen, I bring you to a hall in Elsinore Castle.

**Niles:** [extending his own hand] Denmark!

*Frasier slaps his hand down.*

*Jackson begins with a loud groan, delivering a monologue from "Hamlet" so over-the-top as to make Vivien Leigh seem shy.*

**Jackson:** Ohhhhhh, I die, Horatio! [gasp]

The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit! [gasp]

I cannot live to hear the news from England,

But I do prophesy the election lights

On Fortinbras; [gasp, lies down] he has my dying voice.

the rest is... [exaggerated whisper] silence! [gasp]

- [Hamlet, Act V, Scene 2]

*"Hamlet" dies. Frasier and Niles have just watched their dream castle crumble to the ground with numb horror.*

**Jackson:** [getting up] You know, you boys were right! It's as if I never left!

*Niles is openly gaping; Frasier wears that little nervous smile he reserves for squirming.*

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

*Scene Four - Apartment*

*Frasier is seated at the coffee table. Martin comes out with some snapshots.*

**Martin:** Hey Fras, I just got my alligator pictures back.

**Frasier:** Oh!

**Martin:** Take a look.

**Frasier:** Mm-hmm. [does] Yes.

**Martin:** That's Cap'n Pete.

**Frasier:** Right.

**Martin:** That's the gator boat.

**Frasier:** Uh-huh.

**Martin:** That's a chicken.

**Frasier:** Yeah.

**Martin:** Oh, and that's him: the one I call Snappy.

**Frasier:** [last photo] What's that?

**Martin:** Oh, that's Duke's bypass scar. I had to use up the roll.

*Doorbell.*

**Frasier:** Well, we'll have to look at these later, Dad. That'll be Niles, he's here to discuss our show.

**Martin:** You want a show? Well, take a tip from me, Mr. Producer: one alligator, one chicken, one satisfied audience.

*Martin goes to the kitchen. Frasier opens the door to Niles.*

**Frasier:** Oh hello, Niles, come on in.

**Niles:** Frasier, I got your message, it sounded urgent.

**Frasier:** Yes, yes, it's about Jackson.

**Niles:** Oh please, don't tell me he's getting any worse. Yesterday I saw the stagehands passing out earplugs.

**Frasier:** It's not his fault! He's only rusty! After years on that ridiculous space opera, he's picked up some bad habits! Well, I was fortunate enough to find a videotape of his one-man show. Once he sees this, it will remind him of what good acting is; you know, shake loose the artist from the android!

**Niles:** That, sir, is why you are the first "Crane" in "Crane & Crane Productions!"

**Frasier:** Yes, thank you. All right, listen, Jackson's on his way over here. Let's take a quick peek at this.

**Niles:** Good idea.

*Frasier puts the tape in the VCR and turns on the TV.*

**Frasier:** Oh, his Lear. Oh gosh, that brings back memories. Here, let me turn up the volume. [does]

**Jackson:** [on TV] Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow! You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout till you have drrrrrrrrrrrrrench'd our steeples, drrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrown'd the cocks!

-[*King Lear, Act III, Scene 2*]

Frasier mutes it again.

**Niles:** He's awful.

**Frasier:** The man has no instincts. Just stinks.

**Niles:** I guess we were just too young to know it. Frasier, this is going to be humiliating - not just for us, but for Jackson. What are we gonna do?

**Frasier:** [thinks, then gets up] What all good producers do: we'll shut down and blame the director!

*Doorbell.*

**Frasier:** That'll be Jackson now. All we have to do is get Jackson to bow out gracefully, and we'll refund all the tickets.

*He opens the door to Jackson.*

**Jackson:** Hello, lads!

**Frasier:** Please come in, Mr. Hedley.

*Martin comes out of the kitchen.*

**Jackson:** Ah, you must be the Crane pater! It is a pleasure to encounter the headwaters whence bridge these twin rivers upon which I have launched my humble craft.

**Martin:** Likewise. [goes to his room] I'm telling you: one gator, one chicken.

**Frasier:** Please, Mr. Hedley, won't you sit down?

**Niles:** Yeah.

**Jackson:** [does] Oh, I see my producers have long faces. I think I know why.

**Frasier:** You do?

**Jackson:** Well, it's obvious, isn't it?

**Frasier:** It is to us.

**Jackson:** Well, your worries are at an end: I fired the director! The man's a clod! I mean, not even the stagehands follow

his directions! He shouts at them and they pretend not to hear.

**Frasier:** Mr. Hedley, it's not the director. We have a problem.

**Jackson:** What sort of problem?

**Frasier:** Let me be frank, because an artist of your caliber deserves honesty... an acting performance is a journey of discovery. This brief rehearsal time that we've given you is-is far too short to reach Parnassus, home of the Muses.

**Niles:** Forgive us for being so blunt.

**Jackson:** Ah, I see! We're getting to the real problem: I've got untested producers, and they've got the jitters. Ah, but not to worry, it's perfectly natural! Do you know I've never worked with producers who haven't wanted to pull the plug before the opening night? But I won't let you quit! This show is going on! In the words of our great author, "stiffen the sinews! Summon up the blood! Disguise fair nature with hard-favored [*nearly falsetto*] rage! They lend the eye a terrible aspect!"

*He caps this off with an exaggerated lowering of his brow that succeeds only in squinting his eyes. He leaves.*

**Niles:** I think he's getting better, don't you?

FADE TO:

#### CURTAINS

*Scene Five - Theater*

*Frasier and Niles, wearing tuxedos, are peering from the stage wing out into the audience, which is packed.*

**Stage Manager:** [o.s.] Fifteen minutes to curtain!

**Frasier:** Look out there. Everybody we know is out there. Look at all those smiling faces, soon to be frozen into a rictus of revenge!

**Niles:** The place is packed!

**Frasier:** It's standing room only! [*gets an idea*] You know, Niles... I think we may have exceeded maximum occupancy.

**Niles:** That could be... a fire hazard.

**Frasier:** It would be a shame if someone should... call the fire marshal and he should shut us down.

**Niles:** Yes, it would. A damn shame if the old phone in the marshal's office should start to ching-ching-ching...

**Frasier:** Just call!

*Niles runs off to make the call. The stage manager walks by.*

**Manager:** Ten minutes to curtain!

**Frasier:** No, I'm-I'm sorry, I-I believe that your watch happens to be a tad fast.

**Manager:** It's electromagnetically set to Greenwich Mean Time.

**Frasier:** Get me a Sprite!

*Niles comes back.*

**Niles:** Well, the marshal will be here as quickly as he can. There's a five-alarm in the paper district.

**Frasier:** Just our luck!

**Niles:** What are we going to do now?

*Roz comes backstage with an elderly Englishman on her arm.*

**Roz:** Hey, guys!

**Frasier:** Oh, Roz!

**Roz:** This is Jackson Hedley's father, I found him wandering around out front looking for Jackson.

**Frasier:** Lovely to see you.

**Cecil:** Thank God I'm not late! You know, I'm Jackson's lucky charm. Do you know, he's so superstitious - one day I didn't turn up for opening night, and he refused to go on.

*For Frasier and Niles, Cecil has indeed become a lucky charm.*

**Niles:** Is that so?

**Frasier:** Then we must get you to him immediately! You see, you're at the wrong theater!

**Cecil:** Oh!

**Frasier:** Yes, yes, Jackson's performing clear across town!

**Cecil:** But the sign outside says "An Evening With Jackson Hedley!"

**Frasier:** I know, you see, there's been a terrible snafu-

**Niles:** Snafu!

**Frasier:** -with the marquee letters. You see, they got ours, we got theirs.

**Cecil:** Oh, what's playing here?

**Niles:** "Cats."

**Cecil:** Ah, I love "Cats."

**Frasier:** Who doesn't, but surely you love your son more!

*As Frasier grabs Roz, Cecil gets a ruminative look, as if wondering.*

**Frasier:** This young lady knows this town inside and out! Roz, please escort Mr. Hedley to the Portland Playhouse A.S.A.P.!

**Roz:** But-

**Frasier:** There's no time for butts, please do it now!

**Roz:** Right, let's go, Mr. Hedley.

**Cecil:** Oh please, call me Cecil.

**Roz:** All right, Cecil.

**Cecil:** Do you know, I have a predilection for brunettes.

*As they leave, Roz throws a look at Frasier pregnant with menace.*

**Niles:** Well, should we go break the bad news to our star?

**Frasier:** Yes!

*They go into Jackson's dressing room. Jackson is dressed as Hamlet and singing an aria.*

**Frasier:** Mr. Hedley, I'm afraid we have some bad news.

**Niles:** It's about your father, it seems his plane is going to be late.

**Jackson:** What, you mean my father won't make it for the show?!

**Frasier:** We know this must be devastating to you-

**Jackson:** On the contrary! For once my performance won't be inhibited by that judgmental nitpicker! Tonight I can really cut loose! Those seats in the very back row will be rattling!

**Frasier:** That is good news.

*The stage manager sticks his head in.*

**Manager:** Five minutes to curtain. [leaves]

**Jackson:** And now if you'll excuse me, it's time to center.

*He closes his eyes and breathes deeply. Frasier and Niles go back out*



*into the hall.*

**Niles:** Any more ideas?

*The stage manager comes backstage with the fire marshal.*

**Manager:** These are the producers. The, uh, fire marshal's here.

**Marshal:** Do you guys have any idea how many people you got out there?  
You're way over capacity.

**Frasier:** You're not gonna shut us down, are you?

**Niles:** Frasier, I knew we shouldn't have added all those dry wooden seats.

**Marshal:** Well, maybe next time you'll know better.

*Jackson comes out and opens a prop trunk.*

**Jackson:** Has anyone seen my other skull?

**Frasier:** Mr. Hedley, I'm afraid we have some bad news-

**Marshal:** Hey, you're Tobor!

**Jackson:** Oh, correct.

**Marshal:** I used to watch your show all the time! I even have that old Playboy when Space Princess Alexa did that spread.

**Jackson:** Oh, the one on the lava rocks? Yes, I've got that one too.

**Marshal:** I didn't know he was the one performing tonight. I'll let you guys stay open, on one condition: I get to watch the show.

**Frasier:** [*last try*] We're out of seats!

**Marshal:** It's OK, I'll sit in the aisle.

**Manager:** Three minutes to curtain!

**Jackson:** [*finds his skull*] Ah, here's the right one!

*He goes back to his dressing room. The Marshal goes out into the rows.*

**Niles:** Well, we may as well just take our lumps.

**Frasier:** No, no! We're not going to take any lumps!  
Desperate times call for desperate measures!

*He grabs a ladder and places it under the smoke alarm.*

**Niles:** What are you doing?

**Frasier:** Shield yourself, Niles, "for the rain, it raineth everyday!"

*Niles finds an Oriental rain hat and puts it on. Frasier climbs up, ignites a cigarette lighter and holds it under the alarm. The sprinkler over him goes off, trickling a pathetically fine mist over him. None of the other sprinklers go off.*

**Frasier:** This place really is a deathtrap!

**Niles:** This is hopeless.

*Cecil comes back.*

**Cecil:** I managed to shake that woman, I want to see "Cats!"

*Jackson comes out.*

**Cecil:** Son!

**Jackson:** [*feigning*] Father! My good luck charm!

*He takes a step toward Cecil and slips, landing hard on the floor.*

**Frasier:** Oh my God! Oh Mr. Hedley, are you all right?

**Jackson:** I think I've broken something!

**Niles:** Oh my God, [*to the stage manager*] call an ambulance!

Make sure Mr. Hedley is comfortable!

*Frasier draws Niles aside.*

**Frasier:** Dear God, Niles, I feel horrible. It's as if we wished it, and it happened.

**Niles:** Half of me feels guilty, the other half feels relieved. Actually, it's about 30-70.

**Frasier:** Well, I guess I'd better go out and make an announcement.

*They grin at each other and flash thumbs-up. Frasier goes out onto the main stage.*

**Frasier:** If I may have your attention, ladies and gentlemen. Tonight my brother Niles Crane and I had hoped to bring a great talent back to the stage. A truly, truly gifted actor, a man we greatly admire...

*Unseen by Frasier, Jackson crawls onstage, dragging himself with his hands. The audience starts to applaud.*

**Frasier:** [claps his hands] Yes, yes, he does deserve your applause, but in a tragedy befitting of the Bard himself, it seems that...

*He trails off as Jackson pulls himself across the stage and into the chair set up there for his soliloquy.*

**Frasier:** ...it seems he's ready to begin. Ladies and gentlemen, I bring you now to a hall... in Elsinore Castle.

*He drifts offstage.*

**Jackson:** Ohhhhhhhhh, I die, Horatio! [gasp]

*FADE OUT*

#### **Credits:**

Niles, Frasier, and the Stage Manager are standing in the wings, watching Jackson's performance. Frasier says something to Niles, who doesn't respond. Frasier says it again. Still no response. Frasier taps Niles on the shoulder, and Niles takes out his earplugs.

Frasier asks where he got them, and Niles points to the stage manager. Frasier turns to the stage manager, and tries to say something to him, before he realizes he is also wearing earplugs.

The stage manager has no more, so Frasier just walks backstage, covering his ears with his hands.

## **Guest Appearances**

### **Special Guest Stars**

DEREK JACOBI as Jackson Hedley  
PATRICK MacNEE as Cecil Hedley

### **Guest Starring**

JONATHAN ADAMS as Fire Marshal  
MILAN DRAGICEVICH as Klingon  
ALAN HEITZ as Fan

PATRICK KERR as Noel Shempsky  
BEN LIVINGSTON as Stage Manager  
RAY PORTER as Dwayne

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## **Legal Stuff**

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