[9.19]Deathtrap

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Written by Jon Sherman Directed by Kelsey Grammer

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AWARDS & NOMINATIONS

Nominated

EMMY

· Outstanding Cinematography for a Multi-Camera Series: Ken Lamkin

Transcript (Mike Lee)

ACT ONE

BRYCE ACADEMY APRIL 3RD, 1967 3 P.M.

Scene One - School Science Lab - 35 Years Ago The science room is empty. Two towheaded boys, Frasier and Niles, stick their heads in.

Frasier: There he is, Niles. That's our Yorick.

The camera pans up to show a small human skull sitting on top of a cabinet.

Niles: He's perfect, Frasier! The missing link to our backyard

production of "Hamlet!"

Frasier: Exactly what I was thinking. [makes a basket with his hands

and leans over] Now get up there.

Niles: Why me?

Frasier: Because I'm the director, that's why.

Niles steps onto Frasier's hands and Frasier boosts him onto the shelf of the cabinet.

Frasier: Come on! Just get up there.

Niles reaches up and takes down the skull.

Niles: [strikes a Shakespearean pose] Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him.

Frasier: Knock it off!

He bats Niles on the knee, causing him to drop the skull onto Frasier's head, and then onto the floor.

Frasier: Ow! [picks up the skull]

Niles: Are you okay?

Frasier: No!

He holds up the skull. The jaw has fallen off and there is a small crack on the surface.

Frasier: You cracked my skull!

FADE OUT

Scene Two - Café Nervosa - Present Day Niles and Daphne are sitting at a table, while Frasier orders at the counter.

Frasier: [speaking quickly] Yes, may I get a double latte please, one shot of decaf espresso, one shot of regular espresso, with some steamed low-fat milk and some non-fat foam?

He looks the barista in the eye, as if daring him.

Barista: [staring right back] Sure.

As he turns to the machine, Frasier goes to the table.

Niles: Well?

Frasier: He didn't even blink an eye. The man's unflappable.

Daphne: He's amazing, isn't he?

Niles: He made me a chai spice ristretto americano con panna as if people had been drinking them for centuries.

Frasier: Truly this is a golden age.

Niles: Oh, did Dad tell you? Our old house is on the market.

Frasier: No, but it doesn't surprise me. That whole area's undergoing what they call a "revitalization." Of course, they'll probably just tear it down and put up a Bennetton, or Bath & Body Works, or Sunglass Hut.

Niles: Actually, I sort of like Bath & Body Works.

Frasier: I do too.

Niles: Well, I had this crazy thought, Frasier. What if we bought the house?

Frasier: You mean as a rental property?

Niles: Perhaps, or as a guest *maisonette* for our out-of-town visitors?

Frasier: Daphne's mother, perhaps?

Niles: Oh, I hadn't thought of that!

Daphne: That's a good idea. Buy her a house and she'll never leave. Frasier: You know, Niles, we could open it up to the general public.

Niles: That's not a bad idea. A warm bed...

Frasier: A freshly-baked scone...

Niles: For a moderate fee...

Frasier: It could pay for itself...

Niles: As a B & B!

Daphne: If you two break into song, I'm leaving.

Roz comes into the cafe.

Roz: Hello, everybody.

Frasier: Oh Roz, listen to this!

She stops and yawns.

Roz: I'm so sorry.

Frasier: That's all right. Here, have a seat. [pulls out her chair]

Roz: I just bought Alice a new hamster, and it's kept me up all night

just running around that squeaky damn wheel.

Frasier: Oh...

Daphne: Why don't you get it a quieter wheel?

Niles: Or oil the squeak.

Frasier: Or take the wheel out at night.

Barista: [bringing Frasier's coffee] Or put the cage in another room?
Roz: Thank you. Where were you all at 3:00 this morning, when I

was trying to shove a Sominex into a carrot?

Daphne: I used to have the same problem when I was raising show rats.

They all stop and look at her (as they so often do with Daphne).

Niles: You don't mean the nasty, plague-propagating vermin, do you? Daphne: No. I mean purebred rats, as in Siamese or Himalayan or Husky.

My most prized one was an Andalusian Blue named Lady Prissy - and she wasn't sick a day in her life, so don't go blaming

all rats because of a few bad apples!

Frasier: A few bad apples? Daphne, they spread a disease that nearly

wiped out half the population of Europe!

Daphne: Shows what you know. Those were common European brown rats.

Frasier: Yes, but the point is-

[N.B. History has taken it for granted that the Black Death was bubonic plague, which would have been spread by ticks and fleas jumping off the hides of rats. However, recent research has suggested that the Black Death might actually have been a form of anthrax, in which case the rats were innocent and the cows were to blame.]

FADE TO:

Scene Three - The Lasskopf House

Frasier, Martin and Niles walk up to the front door.

Martin: Old Man Lasskopf must have owned this place fifty years.

Wonder why he's selling?

Frasier: Probably because he can get fifty times what he paid for it.

Martin: Yeah, he sure knew how to squeeze a penny. You know, he never gave me back my security deposit. I might just bring that up.

Frasier rings the buzzer.

Niles: Oh no, you won't. Once we turn this place into a B&B, we'll

make it all back in tips.

Martin: What the hell is that supposed to mean-?

Mr. Lasskopf, a gaunt curmudgeon, opens the door.

Frasier: Oh, Mr. Lasskopf! So good to see you again, it's been a

long time.

Lasskopf: What has?

Niles: We used to rent this house from you.

Frasier: Yes.

Niles: Uh, I'm Niles Crane, this is my brother, Frasier, and our dad.

Do you remember?

Lasskopf: [looking at Frasier] Nope. [at Niles] Nope. [at Martin] You sort of look familiar.

Martin: Yeah, I should. I paid you rent for ten years, left the place in perfect condition, and you never gave me back my security deposit.

deposit.

Lasskopf: Nope, don't remember you either. Come on in.

Niles: Go ahead, Dad.

They enter the house, which is empty and bare.

Martin: Oh boy, this brings back memories.

Frasier: Oh Niles, do you remember doing our homework up here at the dining room table?

Niles: Oh yes, and afternoon piano lessons...
Martin: Getting haircuts from your mother...

Frasier: And Mom's roll-top desk on this wall over here.

Niles: Where we wrote all the "Crane Boys Mysteries." I can still see you pacing in your writer's tweeds and half-glasses, dictating.

Frasier: And you in your shawl-collar sweater, hammering away at the keys of that old Royal typewriter.

Niles: Gosh, when did those two crazy kids become such a pair of old fuddy-duddies?

[N.B. See [8.19] "Daphne Returns," for the introduction of the Crane Boys Mysteries.]

Frasier: Oh, Niles! Do you remember? Here's the window we used to sneak out of after curfew. [opens it]

Martin: Really, you did? I never knew that.

Frasier: Sure, Dad, we, uh, we used to go out and, uh, chase the girls, and, uh, get a drink or two.

Martin: Well! [to Lasskopf] Boys will be boys.

Niles: Um, Frasier?

Frasier: Hmm?

He motions Frasier into another room.

Niles: We didn't chase girls, we went out to foreign films. Frasier: You think Dad wants to hear that? Throw the guy a bone.

In the living room:

Martin: So, what made you finally decide to sell?

Lasskopf: Moving to the Cayman Islands.

Martin: Whoa, that'll be a change from Seattle.

Lasskopf: Gee, you think?

Martin: I hear they have great scuba diving down there. You scuba?
Lasskopf: Do I look like I scuba? I'm lucky I don't need a tank to breathe on land.

Martin: Just looking for a change of scenery, huh?

Martin: [turns away, muttering] You sure made friends with my security deposit.

Frasier and Niles re-enter.

Niles: No, but it did give us a nice walk down memory lane.

Frasier: Yes... Niles?

Niles: Hmm?

Frasier: Didn't we stash a memory box underneath one of these

floorboards right around here?

Niles: Well, I thought you took that with you when we moved. Frasier: I thought you took it! Do you suppose it's still here?

Niles: Well, it must be!

Frasier: Mr. Lasskopf, uh, would you mind if my brother and I had a look underneath one of the floorboards here? You see, we left a sort of time capsule underneath there.

Lasskopf: No, you don't. Nobody's pulling up any floor here.

Niles: Oh, no, no, we don't need to. The board was always loose. Lasskopf: There's no loose boards. They've all been nailed down,

I made sure of that.

Frasier: Well, couldn't we just check?

Lasskopf: Look, I came here to sell this place, not have it torn apart.

Now are you serious buyers, or are we wasting our time here?

Niles: Well, allowing us to reclaim a small part of our past is hardly a waste of time.

Lasskopf: Oh, no? What do you call sneaking out to drink and chase

girls?
Niles: No, no, no, that wasn't true! We went out to see foreign

films.
Martin: I knew it.

Mr. Lasskopf opens the door, and Martin walks out. Frasier and Niles follow him, protesting.

FADE TO:

IF THESE FLOORS COULD TALK

Scene Four - The Lasskopf House - Night Someone jimmies open the sneak-window from outside. A hand comes in with a valise full of tools, drops it on the floor, then withdraws. Then Frasier and Niles climb in. Both are dressed in dark sweaters and carrying flashlights.

Niles: There we go. Well done, Frasier. You've still got it.

Frasier: Thank you, Niles. Like riding a bicycle.

Each of them sweeps the room with his flashlight, then puts it away and lights a lantern.

Niles: Here we go...

They take out their tools.

Frasier: All right, let's just find our memory box and get the hell out of here. I think it's around... here somewhere.

They stamp around, trying to locate the board.

Niles: I've got it, I've got it, I've got it. This one.

They kneel down and Frasier starts prying the board up with a crowbar.

Frasier: See if I can get this in here... [does]

Niles: Yes, that's it. There it is, there it is, good.

Frasier pries up one, then two more to widen the hole.

Niles: A-ha, well done, Frasier. Yeah, I think that's as far as it'll

Frasier: All right, reach your hand in there and see what you can find.
Niles: I'm not going to put my hand down there, there could be rats.

Frasier: Maybe they're just down-on-their-luck show rats!

Niles: I know, what was that?

Frasier: Don't ask me, you're marrying her. All right, I'll do it.

He reaches in.

Niles: Careful, careful. All right, all right [looking over his shoulder] I can't see anything. Oh, it's not there, is it?

Frasier: Well, I don't know, hang on a minute. Hang on - wait, wait,

waıt!

Niles: Yeah?

Frasier: I've got, I've got - there's something... here it is.

His hand comes up holding a small human skull, browned with age. The jaw is missing and the surface is cracked. They both start and yell.

Frasier: Oh my God, Niles! Look...

Niles: [recoils] Don't give it to me! Is that real?

Frasier: It certainly feels real.

Niles: Well, what's it doing under the floor?

Frasier: Excellent hypotheses, Niles. But unfortunately, neither is plausible.

Niles: Why not?

Frasier: Because, Niles, when you die, your head doesn't pop off like a champagne cork! It remains attached to the spine. And look here, Niles. The temporal bone has been fractured... as if struck by a blunt object.

Niles: So perhaps the poor fellow met his end in some-some sort of violent accident.

Frasier: Violent, yes. But an accident?

Zoom in on Niles' horror-struck (yet excited) face. They both take on voices a la Vincent Price.

Niles: Murder!

Frasier: Murder most foul.

[With apologies to Dame Agatha.]

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene Five - Apartment

That same night at home, Martin is watching TV. Daphne opens the door to Roz and Alice.

Daphne: Hey Roz, Alice, come on in. [they do]

Roz: Hey, Martin. Is Frasier home?

Daphne: No, he and Niles went out - wine club or something.

Roz: Uh, he'll be back soon?

Daphne: Hard to say. Is everything all right? You seem a little edgy.

Roz: [lowers voice] Can I talk to you in the kitchen?

Daphne: Of course.

Roz: Martin, can Alice watch TV with you for a second?

Martin: Oh, sure she can.

Alice climbs up onto the couch while the ladies go into the kitchen.

Martin: What kind of TV do you like?

Alice: Cartoons.

Martin: Oh, really? Your mom lets you watch that stuff - the anvils and dynamite, and people falling over cliffs and things?
[Alice nods] Great, then you should be all over this hockey game.

Reset to: Kitchen

Daphne: So, what's up?

Roz: Do you remember Alice's hamster I told you about?

Daphne: Yeah, still keeping you awake?

Roz: Not anymore. The dog ate it. Well, half of it.

Daphne: Oh, no. Something like that happened when I was a girl. One of our cats got into one of my rat cages and took little old Pink Bottom right out of show business.

Roz: Well, I don't mind the hamster dying. I just don't know how to break it to Alice. She's never had anything die before.

Daphne: Well, how did you parents explain it to you?

Roz: [exhales] The wrong way. When I was six, my canary died.

And that evening, my dad sat on the bed next to me and said,

"dying is just going to sleep and never waking up." Then he
turned off the light and said good night.

Daphne: Well, I'm sure Dr. Crane will have some good advice on how to handle this.

Roz: Yeah. I mean, I know we kid him and stuff, but when it comes right down to it, he's one of the smartest people I know.

SMASH CUT TO:

Scene Six - Lasskopf House

Frasier gazes at the skull held up in his left hand. Niles stands behind him with a white cloth for handling it.

Frasier: One thing is certain: someone is very dead.

Niles: Well, Poirot, you've done it again. Look, can we just put that thing down and call the police?

Frasier: No, no, no, hang on a minute, Niles! I mean, this skull's been underneath there for a long time now, what's another hour going to hurt? Niles, we have a real Crane Boys Mystery here. Why don't we see if we can dig up a few more clues?

Beat. Niles gets excited.

Niles: Ooh, all right, fair enough.

Frasier: Here.

Niles takes the skull and places it on the mantelpiece.

Niles: So, uh, what do we know? We have a victim - or part of one.

Frasier: Correct. Can we establish motive?

Niles: Not without knowing who the victim is.

Frasier: Correct. Can we establish opportunity?

Niles: Whose opportunity?

Frasier: Whose indeed? It would have to be someone who's had access

to this house over the years.

Niles: Yes well, we can rule out Mom and Dad.

Frasier: And of course what would you and I be doing with a human skull?

Niles chuckles.

Frasier: [realizes] Oh wait, Niles! [laughs] Oh, dear God, we're idiots.

Niles: [still as investigator] Why are we idiots?

Frasier: Niles, use your brain! Think back... to elementary school.

Niles: I'm not following.

Frasier: Oh, don't you remember? That was about the time when...

He drapes the cloth over the skull, like a shawl.

Frasier: Mrs. Lasskopf disappeared.

Niles: Oh my God, you're right. And-and you know, they used to fight all the time.

Frasier: Yes, and then suddenly she stopped coming around.

Niles: Well, I always thought that was because they split up.

Frasier: Did they? Or did <u>he</u> split her up? Cutting off her head and hands, so that the body couldn't be identified by dental records or fingerprints!

Niles: I don't know, Frasier, that's pretty out there... although it would explain why Lasskopf didn't want us poking around under the floor. Frasier! We have a victim and a suspect.

Frasier: All right, not so fast, Niles. Are you forgetting Item One from "Top Truths for Teen Sleuths: A Crane Boys' Mysteries Workbork"?

Niles: "A case is rarely elementary, but-"

Both: "Always evidentiary!"

Frasier: Yes, exactly! The only evidence we have is the skull. Niles... hand me those tools. Unless I miss my guess, this floor isn't done talking!

Niles hands him the crowbar.

DISSOLVE TO:

Scene Seven - Later

Half the floor has been pried up, and all of the walls have been stripped. Frasier rushes in from the garage carrying a shoebox and his lantern.

In a scene right out of "The Case of the Red-Headed League," Niles's head emerges from the hole in the floor with his lantern.

Niles: I'm here! I found our memory box, [lifts it out] and I think... [holds up a large rock] this rock could be the murder weapon.

Frasier: Why that rock instead of all the other rocks down there?

Niles: It's pointier.

Frasier: Drop the rock, Niles. The garage has given up something far more interesting.

Niles does, and climbs out. Frasier opens the shoe box and unfolds a bank statement.

Frasier: Take a look at this financial statement.

Niles: [qasps] It appears the Lasskopfs had quite a windfall.

Frasier: Yes, and it was just before the time they asked us to leave.
Niles: [stands up] I see, I see. So, he killed her, collected the
insurance money, and then evicted us, so he'd have a safe place

to dispose of the body!

Frasier: Bravo, Niles! But no! Insurance is messy. They always require a body and a death certificate before they'll pay off. And

messier still, he would have had to kill her, conceal the body,

get rid of us, and then bring the body back here.

Niles: Well, if that's not insurance, then...? [sees Frasier's expectant look] Inheritance.

Frasier: Exactly! Her parents die, and leave everything to her. Which means that now the Lasskopfs want for nothing, but she's the

provider.

Niles: And never misses an opportunity to remind him of it. He's

emasculated!

Frasier: Desperately!

[N.B. Shades of Maris.]

Niles picks up the skull, with the shawl still on it.

Frasier: And so, he hatches a plan. "Darling, why don't we evict the Cranes? We don't need their rent money anymore."

This kills me - Niles holds up the skull and speaks through it like Senor Wences.

Niles: [old lady voice] "No, thanks to my family's frugal nature and
 untimely death."

Frasier: And so, out go the Cranes, and the house is empty. "Darling, why don't we go see in what condition the Cranes have left the house, hmm?"

Niles puts down the skull and goes to Frasier's side, as if they are the Lasskopfs walking through the door.

Frasier: So... in they stroll - he with murderous intent, she with nary an inkling of the tragedy about to befall her.

Niles looks around the room with la-dee-da insouciance.

Frasier: He pretends to inspect the house... "Darling, why what's this mark over here on the wall?" [points to the wall]

Niles: "Where?" [walks over to the wall]

Frasier: "There, look." [Niles bends over] "Closer, closer..." And as she leans in... [comes up behind Niles] he does her in!

Niles: "No, Alfred, no!" [normal voice] - oh, that makes perfect

Frasier: Yes! We have a victim, we have a motive, and we have evidence for both!

Niles: If only we had a murder weapon to tie it all together.

Frasier: Niles, don't you remember? As in many a Crane Boys case, the absence of a weapon does not mean the absence of a crime!

Perhaps he pushed her down the stairs, as in "The Case of the Unhappy Landing!"

Niles: I always thought the title gave it away.

Frasier: Mmm. Well, then we can rename it once we have them published.

Niles: Do you think that would ever happen?

Frasier: Are you kidding? Once this hits the papers?!

FADE TO:

Scene Eight - Apartment

Martin is dozing in his Chair. Alice is asleep on the couch.

Daphne tiptoes in with the laundry basket and wakes him up.

Daphne: [whispering] I'm just gonna go down and check on the laundry.

If Alice wakes up, keep an eye on her, will you?

Martin: What happened to Roz?

Daphne: Alice's hamster died, so Roz just stepped out to the pet store

to get her a new one.

Martin: Sure, no problem.

Daphne leaves. Alice wakes up at the sound of the door closing.

Alice: Where's Mommy?

Martin: Oh hi, hon. Uh, your mom'll be right back.

Alice: Can we watch hockey?

Martin: Uh, no, the game's over, sweetheart. Canadiens won, by the way, so you owe me ten bucks.

Alice comes over with her little purse and gives it to him.

 $[N.B.\ So\ cute\ -\ but\ where\ does\ a\ three\ year-old\ find\ ten\ dollars\ to\ call\ her\ own?]$

Alice: I miss my hamster.

Martin: I know you do, sweetheart. [lifts her onto his lap] and I'm sure he's up in Hamster Heaven missing you too.

Alice: What is Hamster Heaven?

Martin: Well, that's where hamsters go when they die.

Alice: Mommy said he was lost.

Martin: [realizes] Oh, oh... oh, no.

Alice: When will he come back?

Martin: Oh, boy. Well... when a hamster goes to hamster heaven, it can't come back. But that's OK.

Alice: Why?

Martin: Oh, 'cause it's great up there. They got exercise wheels on every corner, and the streets are paved with... what do hamsters eat?

Alice: Hamster food.

Martin: Ah well, that's what the streets are paved with. And there aren't any cats to chase them.

Alice: Does cats have a heaven too?

Martin: Oh, sure! Yeah, same deal, except no wheels, and their streets are paved with fish.

Alice: [looks at Eddie] What about dogs?

Martin: Yeah, dogs too. Just about all animals have a heaven.

Alice: Is Eddie going?

Martin: [surprised, laughs] Oh, no! Not-not Eddie. Not for a long time anyway. I mean, he's really still just a puppy.

Alice: How old is he?

Martin: Uh, he's about ten.

Alice: That's not a puppy!

Martin: Well... uh, hey, why don't we see if there are any cartoons
 on TV?

As he picks up the remote, Daphne enters with the laundry, followed by Roz carrying a hamster in a cage.

Daphne: Look who's here.

Roz: Hey, everybody! Look, Alice! Look what Mommy found.

Alice: A new hamster!

Roz: New? What makes you think he's new?

Alice: Because animals don't come back from heaven. Right, Uncle Martin?

Martin: Right. [to Roz] We sort of had a little talk.

Roz: You what?

Martin: Well, uh, look, I didn't mean-

Roz: Having little talks with Alice is my territory, not yours.
Martin: Well, look, uh, it was an accident. Like I said, I'm sorry.
Roz: Okay. [lowers voice] But death is a tough concept for a kid,

I don't want her to be scared or confused. Alice: [re: hamster] I like this one better.

Roz: [chuckles] Well, I guess she'll pull through. [touches his

shoulder] Thanks for handling it.

Martin: No problem.

Roz: Come on, Alice. Goodnight, Martin.

Martin: Goodnight, Roz. Goodnight, Alice.

Alice: Goodnight, Uncle Martin. Bye, Eddie.

They leave, taking the hamster with them.

Martin: Here, boy.

Eddie runs over and jumps into Martin's lap. Martin looks at him thoughtfully for a moment, then kisses his head and hugs him tightly.

FADE TO:

Scene Nine - Lasskopf House Frasier and Niles stand in the middle of the room as policemen photograph and tag the crime scene. Squad cars are heard outside.

A policeman brings in Mr. Lasskopf by the arm.

Lasskopf: Oh my God! My house! What have you done to my house?

Cop: Is this the man you told me about?

Frasier: Yes, it is, Officer.

Lasskopf: Well, what the hell's going on?

Niles: We dug up your wife, that's what's going on!

Lasskopf: [horrified] You dug up my wife?!

Frasier: I'll bet you thought nobody ever would, didn't you?

Lasskopf: [truthfully] No!

Niles: Well, you didn't count on the Crane boys.

Lasskopf: But, uh... how could you?

Niles: Oh, a little luck and some simple deductive reasoning.

Frasier: That's enough questions out of you! I think this officer here

has a few questions he'd like to ask you himself.

Cop: That's right, sir. Come this way, Mr. Lasskopf.

He leads Lasskopf out.

Frasier: Nice work, men. Well, Niles, another Crane Boys Mystery solved.

Niles: Wait'll we tell Dad!

They start to leave-

Frasier: Oh, oh, we almost forgot our memory box. [chuckles] You know,

we never even looked inside.

He lifts the box and opens the lid.

Frasier: Oh Niles, look.

Niles: Oh... this is the program for our backyard production of

"Hamlet!" [lifts it out]

Frasier: I'd totally forgotten about that!

Niles: So had I!

Niles opens the program... and then shuts it, both of them looking up as it finally clicks.

Frasier: You know, Niles... we may owe Mr. Lasskopf an apology.

Niles replaces the program in the box. Glancing at the policeman still photographing the house, Frasier mouths, "let's go!" and they slip out as quietly as possible.

END OF ACT TWO

Credits:

Café Nervosa:

Frasier goes to the counter as Niles watches from a nearby table. Frasier signals Niles that he's finally got a zinger for the waiter.

He gives the order. Without missing a beat, the waiter puts a cup of coffee on the counter, then produces a small caramelizing torch and sets it afire.

Checked again, Frasier takes his cafe flambé to his table.

Guest Appearances

CAMERON BOWEN as Young Frasier CHASE ARMSTRONG as Young Niles JAMES OLIVER as Barista HAL LANDON, JR. as Mr. Lasskopf ASHLEY THOMAS as Alice Doyle ALEX MORRIS as Cop

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