

X

Kelsey  
Grammer  
&  
Daughter  
Spencer





# WORKING TOGETHER WAS A GIFT

HOW THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER FACED  
ESTRANGEMENT—AND FAMILY TRAUMA—TO  
FINALLY FIND PEACE AND JOY

By **GILLIAN TELLING**

When Kelsey Grammer pitched his new holiday film to Lifetime, he knew who he wanted to play his on-screen daughter: his real-life daughter, *Greek* star Spencer Grammer. The problem? He hadn't actually asked her yet. "The studio loved the idea, so then I had to tell them, 'Well, we have to make sure she wants to do it first. Because you never know; we blow hot and cold,'" admits the father of seven. Spencer, 39, who is currently getting a graduate degree in directing from Columbia University, wasn't immediately on board. "I was like, why don't we have lunch first and see if this is a good idea?" Spencer says. "But it quickly became apparent it would be fun for us."

Despite their sometimes strained relationship, they agree that making the movie *The 12 Days of Christmas Eve* (airing Nov. 26) was a bonding experience they both needed. "I can't say enough about how great it was," says Spencer.



"I even got to make him laugh a few times, which was such a treat." Says Kelsey, 67: "She's a very talented woman, and I got to say that on-camera to her a couple of times—along with a few other things I hadn't actually told her in real life."

The movie—a cautionary tale about a selfish, workaholic father who puts career above his family (but is given 12 second chances)—was a lot like art imitating life. Kelsey separated from Spencer's mom, actress Doreen Alderman, when she was a toddler, not long after he was cast as Dr. Frasier Crane on *Cheers* (1984-1993) and then on its spinoff *Frasier* (1993-2004). "We started out really well together, my daughter and I," Kelsey recalls of life before 20-hour workdays. "We were together every minute of every day for the first few years of her life, but then I got a television show, and things just changed." As he skyrocketed to fame, he also became known for his romantic entanglements. "Obviously she was a child of divorce, and then had to deal with my new paramours at the time," Kelsey says. "I had this gal in my life or this one for a while. It was difficult for us. It was difficult on us." He also struggled with cocaine and alcohol addiction, and in 1990 spent 14 days in jail for drunk driving. Spencer says: "I don't know if anyone remembers Kelsey Grammer from the 1990s, but there are definitely aspects of this movie that resonate with me personally."

Kelsey's friends and *Frasier* costars urged him to go to rehab for his drinking in 1996, but he has described his earlier wild ways as a coping mechanism. Born on St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, he then moved stateside when he was young. At age 13, his father was shot and killed on St. Thomas by a trespasser on his property. Seven years after that, while Kelsey was studying theater at Juilliard, his 18-year-old sister Karen was kidnapped, raped and

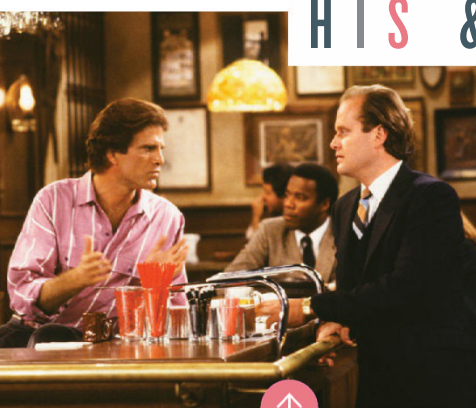


**IN THE SPIRIT**  
"It's about how love can remake a man," Kelsey says of *The 12 Days of Christmas Eve*. He and Spencer are already talking about a sequel for next year.

stabbed to death in Colorado Springs. (One of the convicted killers died in prison in 2019; the other is serving a life sentence.) Five years after his sister's murder, Kelsey's two half brothers, Billy and Stephen Grammer, died while scuba diving off St. Thomas, possibly in a shark attack. "There were some times I pretty much surrendered to despair," Kelsey remembers. "I've been writing a book about the past, and one sentence keeps coming to mind: 'It was an ancient grief that is forever fresh.' You'll always have it with you."

Kelsey, who survived a heart attack in 2008, was further traumatized when Spencer had her own

## HIS & HER GREATEST HITS



### CHEERS (1984-1993)

Kelsey's arc as Dr. Frasier Crane (with Sam Malone, played by Ted Danson) was supposed to last a few episodes, but he quickly became a fan favorite.

### FRASIER (1993-2004)

The sitcom earned Kelsey (with David Hyde Pierce) four Best Actor Emmys. A reboot set in a new city with an entirely new cast (other than Kelsey) is in the works, with rehearsals beginning in February.



### GREEK (2007-2011)

Spencer (with Jake McDorman, left, and Scott Michael Foster) played the popular sorority sister Casey Cartwright on the ABC Family dramedy. "I'd love to see a reboot," she says.



### RICK AND MORTY (2013-PRESENT)

"I love being part of this show," says Spencer, who voices Summer Smith on the Adult Swim series.







‘I feel like  
I’m born  
again almost  
every day  
when I realize  
how much  
love I have in  
my life’

— KELSEY GRAMMER

and Auden, 6—and Kelsey is loving it. “They keep you young,” he says of his brood, which also includes a daughter, Greer, 30, from a previous relationship, and a daughter, Mason, 21, and son, Jude, 18, with Camille. “I feel more fit now than I did 20 years ago.” Spencer says she’s enjoying watching him be a hands-on dad: “I know he’s more there now for his young kids, and that’s an interesting experience, to see him really relish being a father in a new way. But he’s probably more ready for it now.” Being a parent herself has given her a different perspective on him.

“It teaches you about love, and it taught me what my parents had been through, that some of the choices they made were difficult.” (She split from Emmett’s dad, firefighter James Hesketh, in 2017, but says they’re friendly co-parents.)

Despite the tragedies he’s endured, Kelsey, who was raised as a Christian Scientist, says he still has an unshakable belief in God and takes a moment every day to recognize all the things he’s grateful to have. “Life and joy and children and my family and my continued dedication to challenges and to the work I’ve been allowed to do,” he says. “I live a terrific life, and the film I got to do with Spencer was a real gift to us.” ●

brush with death in 2020. She was eating at a sidewalk restaurant in New York City when she tried to break up a fight and was stabbed in the hand. “My median nerve and two tendons were severed,” she says of the incident, which “happened so quickly.” She has struggled with emotional trauma since then and regrets trying to intervene. “It has affected my whole life, honestly,” says the mom of one, son Emmett, 11. “I’m going to be okay, but my son had to tie my shoes for me for six months. And I still can’t do certain buttons [on clothing].” The experience also left her thinking about what her dad went through after the death of his sister: “That probably affected our relationship in a lot of ways,” she says, trying to explain the roots of his demons. “When you lose somebody that you’re close to, especially to something that’s completely out of your control and irrational, it has to be hard to be close to others.”



**Life is better for both of them these days.** After an ugly divorce from *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* star Camille Grammer in 2011, Kelsey wed his wife, Kayte Walsh, that same year. They live in Los Angeles with their three kids—Faith, 10, Gabriel, 8,

## FAMILY TIME



### EARLY DAYS

“We did okay,” says Kelsey (with Spencer at age 14). “I regret I let her down a couple of times, but I also am thankful that we had a chance to make amends.”

### A GRAND NIGHT

“Emmett is a beauty,” Kelsey says of his only grandchild (in early 2020). “He’s such a good kid.”

