

= The Client (The Office) =

" The Client " is the seventh episode of the second season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's thirteenth episode overall . Written by Paul Lieberstein , who also acts in the show as Toby Flenderson , and directed by Greg Daniels , the episode first aired in the United States on November 8 , 2005 on NBC .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , Jan Levinson (Melora Hardin) and Michael Scott (Steve Carell) begin a relationship after landing an important client (Tim Meadows) . Meanwhile , the rest of the office finds a screenplay written by Michael and they decide to read it together .

The idea for Jan and Michael to have a romantic relationship was conceived by Steve Carell as far back as the filming of the pilot episode . The kiss between the two was rehearsed and filmed " many , many , many times " , according to B.J. Novak . While filming , Steve Carell and Tim Meadows improvised a good majority of their dinner scene , but most of it never made the final cut . During the production of the episode , the cast and crew were informed by NBC that the show would be picked up for a whole 22 episodes , a move that " surprised " them . The episode received mostly positive reviews from critics and earned a Nielsen rating of 3 @. @ 8 in the 18 ? 49 demographic , being viewed by 7 @. @ 5 million viewers .

= = Plot = =

Michael Scott (Steve Carell) and Jan Levenson (Melora Hardin) meet with a potential client , Christian (Tim Meadows) , at Chili 's . Jan is disgusted with Michael 's antics (which began with Michael changing the meeting location from a hotel meeting room to Chili 's without permission) and refusal to talk business , but discovers at the end of the day that there is a method to his madness when the client bonds with Michael , allowing him to close the deal . Afterwards , in the parking lot , Michael and the recently divorced Jan kiss and leave together .

Meanwhile , Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer) finds a screenplay written by Michael called Threat @-@ Level Midnight starring himself as " Agent Michael Scarn " , and the staff read it together . While reading the script , the character sequence " Dwigt " appears . Pam explains to the camera that originally , Michael based his incompetent sidekick on Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) , but later changed the name with a search and replace . Unfortunately , the search and replace mechanism failed to change Dwight 's misspelled name . Dwight is upset and quickly shuts down the exercise to invite everyone to set off fireworks outside , but only Kevin Malone (Brian Baumgartner) follows .

Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) and Pam break off their respective evening plans to enjoy an impromptu dinner on the roof and watch Dwight and Kevin fool around with fireworks . The next day , Jim jokes about their " first date " , and Pam , in an unexpectedly blunt tone , tells him it was not a date . Surprised and obviously disappointed , Jim makes an unwise comment that at least he didn 't leave her at a high school hockey game , in reference to Pam 's earlier revelation of what Roy had done on her worst date ever . Pam is clearly upset and gets up to go send some faxes , leaving it awkward between her and Jim , who tries unsuccessfully to apologize .

Word quickly spreads that Jan and Michael spent the night together . Michael initially tells the documentary crew that " nothing happened " , that they just talked for several hours , but his story gradually changes to imply that they did more than that . Jan calls , clearly regretting what happened , but Michael refuses to accept her change of heart .

Jim and Michael share a glance at each other , both disappointed in the days ' events .

= = Production = =

This episode was the third episode of the series directed by Greg Daniels . Daniels had previously directed the episodes " Basketball " and " The Dundies " . " The Client " was written by Paul Lieberstein , who acts on the show as human resources director Toby Flenderson . The idea for Jan

and Michael to have a romantic relationship was conceived by Steve Carell as far back as the filming of the pilot episode . According to writer and producer Greg Daniels " it was like he (Michael) was turned on by his teacher . " Writer and actor Paul Lieberstein said that the first idea that anybody came up for the episode was the final shot , where Jim and Michael look at each other and shake their heads , suggesting that they had been through similar experiences . The rest of the episode was written to lead to that scene . The scene where Oscar tells a story about a date getting a background check on him was based on an actual date that Paul Lieberstein went on .

While filming , Steve Carell and Tim Meadows improvised a lot of their dinner scene , but most of it never made the final cut . One improvised scene that did make the final cut was the " Baby Back Ribs " song . In an interview , Jenna Fischer said that the rooftop scene was her favorite to shoot . Fischer recalled that " there was a very small crew up on the roof and they had the cameras really far away . " After the main shooting ended , producers decided to do a re @-@ shoot to explain the " Dwight " situation clearly and concisely . The kiss between Michael and Jan was rehearsed and filmed " many , many , many times " , according to B.J. Novak . While editing the kiss between Michael and Jan , Greg Daniels brought many people into the editing room to see if they thought the kiss was too long or not long enough .

During the production of the episode , the cast and crew were informed by NBC that the show would be picked up for a whole 22 episodes . Initially , the show 's second season had only been brought back for six episodes , to test the water . Despite the lackluster reception the first season had , ratings jumped during the second season to 7 @.@ 7 million in the fall alone . After the ratings success , Kevin Reilly , NBC Entertainment president , " surprised " the cast and crew of the staff and ordered a full season ; he later likened the series to Seinfeld and Cheers , noting that they too had " slow starts " .

= = Cultural references = =

Michael tells Jan that he moved their meeting from a Radisson to a Chili 's , per advice ? that he sent in ? to the magazine Small Businessman . During their meeting , Michael tells Christian and Jan the Lighthouse and naval vessel joke . Dwight reveals to the camera that he was once in a production of Oklahoma ! , and played the part of " Mutie The Mailman " . He explains that the production had too many kids , so they made up extra roles .

Michael 's screenplay is a parody of secret agent films , most notably the James Bond franchise . In Michael 's screenplay , his love interest is named Catherine Zeta @-@ Jones . The name of Michael 's movie has been referenced several other times through the series . In the third season episode " Product Recall " , Michael frantically states that , due to the amount of angry customers , the office has been " put at Threat Level Midnight . " Michael 's screenplay was eventually turned into a home movie , and is viewed by the entire office in the seventh season episode " Threat Level Midnight . "

= = Reception = =

" The Client " originally aired on NBC in the United States on November 8 , 2005 . The episode was viewed by 7 @.@ 5 million viewers and received a 3 @.@ 8 rating / 9 % share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 3 @.@ 8 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 9 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . The episode retained 73 percent of its lead @-@ in " My Name is Earl " audience , the best the show had done up until that point . An encore presentation of the episode , on April 25 , 2006 , received 2 @.@ 4 rating / 7 % share was viewed by over 4 @.@ 8 million viewers .

The episode received mostly positive reviews from television critics . TV Squad 's Michael Sciannamea gave the episode a largely positive review wrote that Michael is " totally taken with himself " , but still " has shown us his vulnerabilities " . Sciannamea noted that , by showing the audience Michael 's humanity , the writers were making " this sitcom so compelling " . Sciannamea , however , did point out that this is the second week in a row that " Pam is offended by something Jim has said or done " , which in his mind " will get tiresome quickly if it continues " . " Miss Alli " of

Television Without Pity graded the episode with a " B + " . Rolling Stone named the scene wherein the employees read Threat Level : Midnight as the tenth funniest in The Office 's first three seasons .

Erik Adams of The A.V. Club awarded the episode an " A " and called it " a series @-@ best episode of The Office whose series @-@ best status sneaks up on you " . He was largely complimentary towards the way the episode built towards a climax , and followed various successful " setup @-@ punchline rhythms " . He also applauded the introduction of the Threatlevel : Midnight screenplay , calling it " a subplot so crucial to the mythology of the series , it would form the basis of an entire episode near the end of Steve Carell ? s time in Scranton . " Adams ultimately concluded that the episode is " a top @-@ notch Office installment overall " , thanks in large part to the Pam @-@ Jim and Michael @-@ Jan subplots and dynamics .