

= The Alliance (The Office) =

" The Alliance " is the fourth episode of the first season of the American comedy television series The Office , and the show 's fourth episode overall . The episode aired on NBC in the United States on April 12 , 2005 . It was written by Michael Schur and directed by Bryan Gordon , marking their first credits for the show .

In this episode , paranoia takes over the members of the office as downsizing rumors swirl . Dwight (Rainn Wilson) forms a Survivor @-@ esque alliance with Jim (John Krasinski) against the other employees ? later adding Pam (Jenna Fischer) also . Meanwhile , Michael (Steve Carell) arranges a morale @-@ boosting birthday party for Meredith (Kate Flannery) ? although her birthday is more than a month away . Michael agonizes over writing the perfect greeting in her birthday card , and in the end , his joke falls flat , ruining the party .

The episode was inspired by popular reality television shows , most notably Survivor . Originally , the first cut of the episode ran 37 minutes long and the producers considered making the episode a two @-@ parter , one focusing on the Alliance and another focusing on Meredith 's birthday party , but later decided against the idea . In addition , several of the lines and scenes from the episode were improved or ad @-@ libbed by the cast . " The Alliance " was viewed by an estimated 5 @. @ 4 million viewers and received a 2 @. @ 4 / 6 % rating share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . The episode received positive reviews from critics .

= = Synopsis = =

Although time has dragged on , the downsizing rumors at Dunder Mifflin have not ceased . Dwight (Rainn Wilson) feels particularly threatened by the impending crisis , and , in an act of desperation , forms an alliance with his office nemesis Jim (John Krasinski) . Jim sees the alliance as an opportunity with great potential and agrees as a lark . He immediately enlists Pam (Jenna Fischer) ' s help in the situation . The two continue to perform a series of office pranks at the expense of Dwight .

Meanwhile , Michael (Steve Carell) tries to boost morale in the office by having an office birthday party for Meredith (Kate Flannery) , even though her birthday is a month away . Michael agonizes over writing the perfect greeting in her birthday card . In the end , his joke (and subsequent rejected ones) falls flat and ruins the party . At the same time Oscar also gets him to donate money to his nephew 's cerebral palsy walk @-@ a @-@ thon , which Michael accidentally overcontributes to in an effort to look like a good boss .

At the end of the day , after a breakthrough in his pranks on Dwight , Jim giddily grabs Pam 's hand in an attempt to explain what has just happened . However , Pam 's fiancé Roy (David Denman) catches this and sees it as an attempt by Jim to make a move on Pam . Jim tries to convince Roy that it was just " office pranks " and asks Dwight to back him up , but he simply denies any involvement leaving Jim awkwardly embarrassed . Dwight reveals that he had no problems betraying Jim , despite the fact that he recently fell into one of Jim 's tricks .

= = Production = =

The episode was inspired by popular reality television shows , most notably Survivor . The " Can I trust Jim ... " line was a direct reference to the show and was a " last @-@ second addition " according to Daniels . In addition , Randall Einhorn , the camera man for the episode , was a camera man for Survivor . When the episode was being written , many of the cast and crew feared that it would bear too many stylistic resemblances to Curb Your Enthusiasm . Daniels later defended the show , saying that the show was different because of " the fact that they are on TV and they know they are being filmed . [They know they 're] on camera . " During the writing of the episode , Daniels made the writers spend actual time on the set , most notably in Michael 's office . Mindy Kaling later noted that she " hated it . "

The first cut of the episode ran 37 minutes long and the producers were tasked with cutting the

footage down to 22 minutes . Executive producer Greg Daniels considered making the episode a two @-@ parter , one focusing on the Alliance and another focusing on Meredith 's birthday party , but the appearance of party hats in the Alliance @-@ only scenes caused him to nix this idea . Because the episode had to be cut down due to time , several scenes were drastically cut . The filming crew actually shot about 15 ? 20 minutes of Steve Carell coming up with terrible card ideas , which was drastically cut for the episode . During the party , Ryan talks to a different woman in the background of each scene . Although not much footage made it into the final episode , the producers thought this was a nice character touch for the new employee . The penultimate scenes of Michael telling several terrible jokes to Meredith was cut down from the original 15 . The final scene where Roy confronts Jim was shot ten different times , each in a different style , ranging from Roy slamming Jim into the wall to Roy asking Jim , " Hey , what are you doing ? " Although the crew felt that the wall @-@ slamming version was more dramatic , they realized that it caused the episode to go from a comedy to an " angry drama . "

Several of the lines and scenes from the episode were improved or ad @-@ libbed by the cast . Jenna Fischer named the party planning scene her favorite scene and called it " longest most horrible meeting of all time " . On the commentary track for the episode , Fischer revealed that the scene was almost entirely ad @-@ libbed . At one point , Phyllis Smith , who portrays Phyllis Margaret Vance (née Lapin) , made a joke that made every one on set laugh , forcing production to halt for almost 45 minutes . Dwight 's " gun show " joke was written by Rainn Wilson . Larry Wilmore later called the " gun show " scene his favorite . Wilmore later said of ab @-@ libs , " part of the fun in writing a show like this is trying to write lines that sound like ad @-@ libs . " Daniels also praised the episode 's lines , saying , " when you know the acting is really good , it all sounds like it 's been improvised . "

The scenes where Dwight climbs into a box almost did not make the episode . Mike Schur , who wrote the episode , feared that Dwight climbing into the box would not only make the episode " crazy broad , " but also make the rest of the episode look boring by comparison . After shooting the scene , however , he described it as " the most natural thing in the world . " Phil Shaw , the stunt man for The Office , did most of the work in the box . Schur described Dwight 's emergence from the box as his " action hero " moment . Daniels likened the scene to the movie Alien .

= = Reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

In its original American broadcast on 12 April 2005 , " The Alliance " was viewed by an estimated 5 @.@ 4 million viewers and received a 2 @.@ 4 / 6 % rating share among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 2 @.@ 4 % of all 18 ? 49 year @-@ olds , and 6 % of all 18 ? 49 year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . The episode , airing after Scrubs , retained 100 % of its lead @-@ in 18 ? 49 audience for the second week in a row .

= = = Reviews = = =

The episode received positive reviews from critics , with many praising the developing relationship between Pam and Jim . Travis Fickett from IGN praised the episode and compared Jim and Pam 's relationship in the first season to that of the fourth , saying , " Jim and Pam simply work better before they were a couple . The fact that Roy can come between them here is fun ? and reminds us that it was more interesting when something could still come between them ! " In summary , he concluded that , " [' The Alliance '] is one of the better early episodes of the show , and going out with Dwight talking to the camera ? his hair dyed blonde ? is genius and gives us (up to this point) the most perfect ' Dwight ' moment of the show so far . " Television critic Robin Pierson noted that in the episode , " The Jim and Pam relationship begins to take real shape here . " He later called the moment when Roy nearly attacks Jim as " a much more ' real ' moment than the rest of the episode . "

" Furthermore , Pierson criticized the characterization of Dwight , noting that his actions were " stupidly naïve " . Miss Alli from Television Without Pity gave the episode an A.

Erik Adams of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " B ? " . He felt that the episode was " akin to a newborn deer working the wobbles out of its legs " and that " it ? s a milestone for The Office , in that it represents the first time an episode generated so much material it could ? ve occupied a full hour of airtime " . He felt that Michael 's plot was funny , but had issues . He argued that the retooling of Michael 's character made him a more likable character even when he was doing something inappropriate ; in this episode , however , his behavior is too cringe @-@ inducing . Adams praised the scene wherein Dwight emerged from the box , calling it one of " The Office 's first great sigh gags " . Furthermore , he felt that the scene was symbolic , as it produced " a stronger , deadlier , better character " .