

= Jack Meets Dennis =

" Jack Meets Dennis " is the sixth episode of the first season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock . It was written by co @-@ executive producer Jack Burditt , and directed by Juan J. Campanella . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in the United States on November 30 , 2006 . Guest stars in this episode include Michael Blackson , Katrina Bowden , Greta Cavazzoni , Teddy Coluca , Rachel Dratch , Annette Hunt , Keith Powell , Ali Reza , Lonny Ross , Brian Stack , and Dean Winters .

In the episode , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) takes back her sleazy ex @-@ boyfriend Dennis Duffy (Winters) , while Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) takes it upon himself to convince her that she is headed for a life of mediocrity . Meanwhile , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) is enraged when a magazine calls him " normal " , and at the same time Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) becomes worried about her age when Jack asks her how old she is .

= = Plot = =

Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) and Dennis Duffy (Dean Winters) have gotten back together after Dennis was the only person who remembered her birthday . Disturbed by Liz 's acceptance of mediocrity , her boss , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) , tries to reform her into someone who enjoys the good life . He refers Liz to the fanciest restaurant in the city , Stone . Nevertheless , Liz declines Jack 's offer to be her mentor . That night at Stone , Jack and his date walk by Liz and Dennis 's table , with Jack very unimpressed by Dennis 's manners . The following day , Jack introduces Liz to a former mentee of his , Howard Jorgensen (Brian Stack) . At lunch the next day , Liz realizes she is frustrated with her relationship with Dennis , then she storms off to Jack 's office to ask for help . Jack motivates Liz to end it with him . Liz comes home to break up with Dennis , only to find him distraught after a loss of his favorite hockey team , the New York Islanders . As a result , Dennis moves in with her .

Meanwhile , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) is upset after being identified in a magazine as an actor behaving normally , far from the insane persona he is trying to maintain . To re @-@ establish his street cred , Tracy gets a dragon tattoo on his face , but is later identified as made of sharpie . At the same time , Josh Girard (Lonny Ross) is told that he is to receive a special gift from Liz Taylor (Rachel Dratch) as a response to an impression he did of the actress on TGS with Tracy Jordan . Liz Taylor sneaks into the 30 Rock studios and , upset over Josh 's impersonation , brutally beats him with a fire extinguisher .

At the same time , Jack , responding to audience research , starts cleaning out green clothes from the set . He asks Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) , one of the stars of TGS , how old she is , and she tells him that she is 29 . As a result of this exchange , Jenna gets botox and collagen injections that go terribly wrong . Later , during a sketch rehearsal ? involving impersonations of Condoleezza Rice , Laura Bush , and John Kerry ? the various mishaps of Tracy , Jenna , and Josh prompt Liz and Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) that it would be impossible for the three to perform on the show . Fortunately , the power in the NBC Studios goes out , canceling the show .

= = Production = =

" Jack Meets Dennis " was written by co @-@ executive producer Jack Burditt and directed by Juan J. Campanella . This was Burditt 's first writing credit , and was Campanella 's first directed episode . The episode originally aired on November 30 , 2006 on NBC as the sixth episode of the show 's first season and overall of the series .

Actor Dean Winters made his 30 Rock debut in this episode as the character Dennis Duffy , a former ex @-@ boyfriend of Tina Fey 's character , Liz Lemon . Comedian actor Brian Stack made his first appearance as Howard Jorgensen , a GE executive and associate of Jack Donaghy 's in the episode . Stack would guest star in the episodes " Succession " and " Larry King " . Rachel Dratch , longtime comedy partner and fellow Saturday Night Live (SNL) alumna of Fey , the latter who was

the show 's head writer from 1999 until 2006 , was originally cast to portray Jenna Maroney . Dratch played the role in the show 's original pilot , but in August 2006 , actress Jane Krakowski was announced as Dratch 's replacement . Executive producer Lorne Michaels announced that while Dratch would not be playing a series regular , she would appear in various episodes in a different role . In the pilot and " The C Word " episodes , Dratch played Greta Johansen , The Girlie Show 's cat wrangler . In " The Aftermath " , she played Maria the maid , who is found by Liz in a closet on a yacht . In this episode , Dratch played actress Liz Taylor . This was Dratch 's third appearance on the show . Various other cast members of SNL have appeared on 30 Rock . These cast members include : Chris Parnell , Fred Armisen , Kristen Wiig , Will Forte , Jason Sudeikis and Molly Shannon . Fey and Tracy Morgan have both been part of the main cast of SNL .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Jack Meets Dennis " was watched by an average of 5 @. @ 97 million households , according to the Nielsen ratings system . It received a 2 @. @ 1 rating among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic . " Jack Meets Dennis " finished in 70th place in the weekly ratings for the week of November 27 ? December 3 , 2006 . This was an increase from the previous episode , " Jack @-@ Tor " , which was watched by 5 @. @ 2 million American viewers .

Alessandra Stanley of The New York Times said the series worked because it played " with the absurdities of the television business lightly " . Stanley felt that 30 Rock was at its best when it revolved around the characters , and not the show itself . IGN contributor Robert Canning said that although Tracy and Jenna " had their moments in two rather weak storylines " , the " unfunny and distracting ' Where 's Waldo ? ' casting [regarding Rachel Dratch 's different characters that she has played on the show] " disrupted the flow of the episode . He enjoyed the improvement of the show , and said that " though not every story this week was stellar , you didn 't go long without a decent laugh . " Canning gave " Jack Meets Dennis " a 7 @. @ 5 out of 10 rating . TV Guide 's Matt Mitovich said the episode was " one of the stronger episodes thus far " , citing that " [e] veryone got funny stuff to do , the Jack @-@ Liz scenes were crackling and teaming with Liz @-@ induced self @-@ humiliation , and we even got a Rachel Dratch cameo (as that angry , angry Liz Taylor) . " Mitovich who had not been a fan of the Jenna character , said that he enjoyed her in this episode . Alan Pergament for The Buffalo News wrote , " The extent that stars go to literally and figuratively maintain their images probably sounded funny on paper [in regards to Tracy and Jenna 's storylines] , but most of it falls flat and illustrates why 30 Rock has been sinking like a rock " . Pergament gave this episode two out of four stars . Amy Amatangelo of the Boston Herald enjoyed Dean Winters ' appearances on 30 Rock , noting that he did a " hilarious turn " as Dennis . Matt Roush for TV Guide reported that Alec Baldwin " stole the show " in this episode .