

= The Fabian Strategy =

" The Fabian Strategy " is the first episode of the fifth season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 81st overall episode of the series . It was directed by Beth McCarthy @-@ Miller , and written by series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on September 23 , 2010 . Guest stars in this episode include Mario Brassard , Matt Damon , Jan Owen , Paula Pell , and Jeffrey Schara .

In the episode , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) interferes in Liz Lemon 's (Fey) relationship with Carol (Damon) as he is determined to help Liz have a relationship that lasts for once . At the same time , Jack struggles to compromise with his girlfriend Avery Jessup (Elizabeth Banks) as she redecorates his apartment . Meanwhile , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) has trouble coming to terms with Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) getting fired as an NBC page and Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) becomes a producer of the fictional sketch comedy show The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan (TGS) . This episode also continued a story arc involving Carol as a love interest for Liz , which began in the previous episode , the season finale of the show 's fourth season " I Do Do " .

Before the airing , NBC moved the program to a new timeslot at 8 : 30 p.m. , moving it from its 9 : 30 p.m. slot . This episode of 30 Rock received generally positive reviews from television critics . According to Nielsen Media Research , it was watched by 5 @.@ 85 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 6 rating / 8 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) , the head writer of the sketch show TGS with Tracy Jordan , goes back to work following the summer break and prepares for the show 's fifth season . At the 30 Rock building , where she works , Liz and TGS producer Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) meet their boss , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) to discuss cutting the show 's expenses . During the meeting , Pete reveals that star Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) now has a producer credit because of changes in her contract that were not set to start until the fifth season of TGS (nobody thought that the show would last that long) . Jenna takes this role seriously and takes on the job of firing people . Eventually , on reviewing the budget , she realizes that her producer credit is costly ? and unnecessary ? and asks Pete to fire her .

Later , Jack asks Liz about her relationship with her boyfriend Carol (Matt Damon) , an airline pilot . She tells him that during the summer break the two met twice a month in a hotel . Jack does not believe that the relationship is serious since Carol never stays at Liz 's apartment . He decides to force Carol to stay with Liz and reserves all the rooms of the hotel that Liz and Carol stay in when he is in New York . During his stay with Liz , Carol bursts into tears and asks her where their relationship is heading as he believes that she is resisting him , which she denies . The next day , Carol decides to leave New York early , but tells Liz that they need to work on their relationship . The two go their separate ways and agree to meet again on October 14 .

During the summer break , Jack 's girlfriend CNBC host Avery Jessup (Elizabeth Banks) moved in with him . Avery decides to redecorate Jack 's apartment . He is not keen on the idea , but not wanting to say no or give into Avery 's demands , decides to employ the Fabian strategy ? named after Fabius Maximus , a Roman general who employed a strategy of avoiding battles , instead wearing the enemy down by attrition . Jack is successful in avoiding redecorating the apartment ; he agrees to knock down a wall instead . At the end of the episode , however , he realizes that Avery has emulated the military genius of Hannibal , outmaneuvering his Fabian strategy , and he ecstatically realizes they are a perfect match , far beyond the level of mere soul @-@ mates .

Elsewhere , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) is missing Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) , a former NBC page who was fired in the previous episode , " I Do Do " . When Tracy returns to work for the new season of TGS , he begins to hallucinate Kenneth everywhere he goes , mistaking the new page (Jeffrey Schara) and Liz for him . Later , Tracy roams the city and sees Kenneth , who is now

working as a page at CBS . Tracy believes Kenneth is a hallucination . Later , the two run into each other again and Kenneth tries to talk to Tracy , but Tracy refuses to acknowledge him as he believes his mind is playing tricks on him . To prove he is real , Kenneth throws himself in front of a car , thus making Tracy believe him . He pleads with Kenneth to come back to NBC , but Kenneth says he is happy working at CBS . At the end of the credits , Kenneth admits to himself that he lied to Tracy and that he misses everyone at TGS . Kenneth then starts hallucinating Tracy .

= = Production = =

" The Fabian Strategy " was written by series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey , and directed by Beth McCarthy @-@ Miller , a long @-@ time television director who worked with Fey on the sketch comedy show Saturday Night Live . This was Fey 's twenty @-@ second writing credit , and McCarthy @-@ Miller 's thirteenth helmed episode . " The Fabian Strategy " originally aired on NBC in the United States on September 23 , 2010 , as the season premiere episode of the show 's fifth season and the 81st overall episode of the series . This episode of 30 Rock was filmed on August 30 , 2010 .

In March 2010 , it was announced that actor Matt Damon would guest star on 30 Rock . He made his debut in the fourth season finale episode " I Do Do " as Carol , an airline pilot and love interest for Fey 's character , Liz Lemon , and reprised the role in " The Fabian Strategy " . In December 2009 , prior to the confirmation of his first guest appearance , Entertainment Weekly informed Damon that he was at the top of Fey 's guest star wish list for the show . A fan of the series , Damon replied " I would do [30 Rock] in a heartbeat if they asked me to come on . She should call my people ? or even better me . Or I could call her . Let 's make this happen . " A day after the airing of " I Do Do " he was asked if he would reprise his role as Carol in the upcoming season and responded " If they 'll have me , I would love to pop in and see the gang again . I had a great time doing it . " In August 2010 , Fey confirmed Damon 's return saying that he would play her boyfriend once the new season began .

Jane Krakowski , who plays Jenna Maroney , revealed to Entertainment Weekly 's Michael Ausiello her character 's plot in which Jenna becomes a television producer as part of her contract as TGS begins its fifth season . " [Jenna] has all these wacky things built into her contract [that kick in at this point] , because nobody thought we 'd still be on the air . So I get to be a producer . " Series producer Paula Pell reprised her role as Paula Hornberger , the wife of Scott Adsit 's character Pete Hornberger . The episode references the ongoing storyline of Liz 's desire to become a mother when she tells Carol that she is on a waiting list to adopt a child . This story first began in the show 's first season , and continued in the third season .

Two months after the airing of the fourth season finale episode , co @-@ showrunner and executive producer Robert Carlock was asked if Jack McBrayer 's character Kenneth Parcell would return in the upcoming season after he was fired as an NBC page in " I Do Do " . Carlock said " We haven 't cracked [how] he is getting [his job] back , but of course he will get back somehow . We wanted a fun thing to shuffle the deck a little bit and send him off into the world . Of course , he will miss it and he will be missed . Events will bring him back . " In " The Fabian Strategy " , Kenneth is now working at CBS as a page for the Late Show with David Letterman . The scene in which Kenneth throws himself in front of a car to prove to Tracy Jordan that he is real and not Tracy 's imagination was filmed on August 27 , 2010 , in front of the Ed Sullivan Theater .

= = Cultural references = =

At the start of the episode , Liz says while sleeping , " No , Tom Jones , no ! " before waking up . This is a reference to a future plot in the episode " Reaganing " in which Liz is having intimacy issues because of a traumatic incident from her childhood that involved a poster of singer Tom Jones . Throughout the episode , Jack refers to the Fabian strategy , a strategy named after Roman general Fabius Maximus , which avoids direct battle in favor of attrition warfare . Jack uses the strategy as he does not want to say no to Avery or give in to her demands . In addition , Jack hails

Fabius Maximus as his role model . When Carol surprises Liz at the TGS writers ' room , staff writer J.D. Lutz (John Lutz) asks Carol if he is on Facebook , the latter being a social networking website . Later , Liz tells Jack not to interfere in her relationship with Carol , as she believes she has the perfect relationship with him . She reveals that she is modeling her life on that of chef Ina Garten of the Food Network show Barefoot Contessa . Jack responds by saying that Liz will never be like Garten , including the " barefoot " part , referring to the fact that Liz has never let anyone see her feet , which is a real life trait of Fey 's .

Liz and Carol discover that one of the things they have in common is that they both love to watch The Muppets presenting award shows . Later , Liz reveals that she has a Life Alert Emergency Response necklace ; this necklace helps the elderly contact emergency services in case of an accident . Carol wonders why Geico ? an auto insurance company ? has multiple mascots , a reference to Geico 's advertising campaigns . Jack plans to seduce the gay interior designer that Avery hired and hopes to get the designer to agree with him to leave the apartment the way it is , explaining to Liz " Do you know what a prize I am in the gay community ? There 's a term for it . I 'm a bear . And I 'm a daddy . I 'm a daddy bear . " Before parting ways , Liz says to Carol " See you October 14 " , a reference to the live episode of 30 Rock entitled " Live Show " that aired on October 14 , 2010 .

30 Rock and Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip ? both of which debuted on 2006 ? 07 NBC lineup ? revolved around the off @-@ camera happenings on a sketch comedy series . Evidence of the overlapping subject matter between the shows , as well as the conflict between them , arose when Aaron Sorkin , the creator of Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip , asked Lorne Michaels to allow him to observe Saturday Night Live for a week , a request Michaels , the creator of Saturday Night Live and executive producer of 30 Rock , denied . Despite this , Sorkin sent Fey flowers after NBC announced it would pick up both programs , and wished her luck with 30 Rock . Fey succeeded where Sorkin did not when Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip was canceled after one season and 30 Rock was renewed for a second . Though 30 Rock 's first season ratings proved lackluster and were lower than those of Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip , the latter was more expensive to produce . In the ending sequence of " The Fabian Strategy " , Kenneth watches the credits for TGS , which include Ricky Tahoe and Ronnie Oswald as writers , the two former head writers on Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip .

= = Reception = =

Before the airing of this episode , NBC unveiled its 2010 ? 11 primetime schedule in May 2010 with the network moving the program from the 9 : 30 p.m. time to the 8 : 30 p.m. timeslot . According to the Nielsen Media Research , this episode of 30 Rock was watched by 5 @.@ 85 million households in its original American broadcast . It earned a 2 @.@ 6 rating / 8 share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . This means that it was seen by 2 @.@ 6 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 8 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . A contributor from Variety reported that Community , an NBC show that airs at 8 : 00 p.m. , and 30 Rock " held up nicely " in their respective timeslots and that the two programs " were up over last year 's opening Thursday hour for NBC in premiere week . "

The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin reported that past season premieres of 30 Rock had a solid track record as being the worst episodes of the season , nonetheless Rabin found " The Fabian Strategy " hilarious and breaking that barrier . He wrote that Matt Damon has been great on the show as Carol ; however , his only complaint was Carol 's character flaw as being too sensitive . Rabin , who has complained " extensively " about Jenna 's character in the past , said the character was in " fine form " in her role as a TGS producer . Rabin gave the episode an A- grade rating . Bob Sassone of TV Squad deemed this episode a " solid season @-@ opener " that featured " lots of great lines and plot development " . Meredith Blake , a contributor from the Los Angeles Times , was thrilled that the Jack and Avery relationship " not only lasted the summer , but is thriving " , and wrote that she was looking forward to the pregnancy storyline involving Avery . Blake noted that Damon 's character was " darn @-@ near perfect , by which I mean ' a male version of Liz . ' " Television columnist Alan

Sepinwall for HitFix said that " The Fabian Strategy " did not " live up to the good old days " of past episodes , nonetheless reported that he " laughed enough " and was pleased with the direction the show took Liz and Carol 's relationship . Sepinwall did not like Tracy and Kenneth 's story , calling it a complete miss , but was appreciative of the other storylines , choosing Pete and Jenna 's as his favorite . Alessandra Stanley from The New York Times was positive about Damon 's role on the show , noting that he has been a " hoot " . Scott Eidler of The Cornell Daily Sun commented that the episode was a " nice start to the [fifth] season " of 30 Rock as it was " perhaps more plot @-@ driven than packed with the emotional and uproariously funny episodes that concluded last season . " Eidler commented that " The Fabian Strategy " never did " [reach] the utter hilariousness of last season , but I hope that wasn 't the climax ... and it can eventually return to its previous heights of hilarity " . TV Guide 's Bruce Fretts was complimentary towards Damon 's role as Tina Fey 's love interest , writing that Damon " showed a refreshingly silly side in keeping with 30 Rock 's anything @-@ goes spirit . " Matt Wilstein of The Huffington Post called the premiere " a very solid first episode " , enjoying Damon 's part on the show and the Kenneth story of him still being fired by NBC .

Time contributor James Poniewozik reported that the Pete / Jenna and Tracy / Kenneth plots were a " hit @-@ and @-@ miss " , however noted it was good to see the show giving the Jack and Liz characters " ongoing direction , not just in their personal lives " . The Atlantic 's Caitlan Smith was skeptical about Liz and Carol 's relationship lasting , saying that Damon " who commands more than \$ 20 million per movie , won 't stick around for long , leaving Liz Lemon Carol @-@ less and in for another round of the entertaining self @-@ loathing that we 've all been coming back for four seasons . "