

= The Whale (The Office) =

" The Whale " is the seventh episode of the ninth season of the American comedy television series The Office . The episode originally aired on NBC on November 15 , 2012 . The episode guest stars Jack Coleman as Robert Lipton and marks the return of actress Melora Hardin as Jan Levenson .

The series depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In this episode , Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) is tasked with selling paper to a woman ? who is later revealed to be Jan (Hardin) ? from the Scranton White Pages , so Pam Halpert (Jenna Fischer) and the women of the office teach him how to interact with women . Angela Lipton (Angela Kinsey) confides in Oscar Martinez (Oscar Nunez) that her husband , Robert (Jack Coleman) ? who is secretly having a relationship with Oscar ? is cheating on her . Oscar helps her spy on her husband at his yoga class . Meanwhile , Toby Flenderson (Paul Lieberstein) convinces several of the men in the office to grow mustaches for " Movember " .

" The Whale " received mixed reviews from television critics , with many commenting on Hardin 's appearance . The episode was also viewed by 4 @.@ 16 million viewers and received a 2 @.@ 1 / 6 percent rating among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 , ranking fourth in its timeslot . The episode , however , ultimately ranked as the highest @-@ rated NBC series of the night .

= = Plot = =

Andy Bernard (Ed Helms) Skypes into the office from his boat . He is severely sunburned , loses his supply of fresh water in the ocean , and is going mad from lack of human contact despite only been on the boat for two days .

Dwight Schrute (Rainn Wilson) is tasked with winning the Scranton White Pages account . However , the CEO is a woman , and Dwight has trouble selling to women . Pam Halpert (Jenna Fischer) and the women of the office teach him how to interact with women . The lesson , which is taught by Nellie Bertram (Catherine Tate) , Erin Hannon (Ellie Kemper) , and Phyllis Vance (Phyllis Smith) , goes nowhere , and they give up . Pam goes with Dwight to the White Pages , only to find out that the buyer is Jan Levenson (Melora Hardin) . Jan was expecting to meet with CEO David Wallace , and reprimands her assistant for the confusion . Pam quickly realizes that the meeting was just a ruse to take revenge on David for firing her five years ago . However , Dwight remains determined to make the sale , so he has Pam stall while he gets Clark (Clark Duke) , intuiting that Jan has an attraction to underage men due to her rumored affair with her 17 @-@ year @-@ old former assistant Hunter . After he introduces Clark to her , Jan says she will think about it , and tells everyone to leave her office except Clark . As Pam and Dwight leave , Dwight offers a sympathetic comment to Jan 's assistant (a woman) . Pam is pleased , seeing that some of the lessons they gave Dwight on women sunk in after all .

Angela Lipton (Angela Kinsey) confides in Oscar Martinez (Oscar Nunez) that she suspects her husband , Robert (Jack Coleman) ? who is secretly having a relationship with Oscar ? of cheating on her . Oscar thinks that Robert may be seeing another man besides him and convinces Angela that they should spy on Robert at his yoga class . They hide outside of the class and watch as Robert spends time with a younger woman who later turns out to have a boyfriend . Oscar then notices Robert spending most of the yoga practice with a young man , which he finds suspicious . After the class , Robert phones Oscar , and his phone goes off . Oscar panics and silences the phone , and Angela immediately realizes why .

Jim Halpert (John Krasinski) is on a business call with the investors and members of the business venture he is up for . Many distractions from the background make the call difficult . At the end of the day , Jim apologizes , but then hears the person on the phone saying this is not working out . Meanwhile , Toby Flenderson (Paul Lieberstein) convinces several of the men in the office to grow mustaches for " Movember " . He says he is doing this to support the cure for prostate cancer but is actually using it for a chance to socialize more with the office , to no avail . Pete (Jake Lacy) later shows Erin his mustache , but she finds it repulsive . He shaves it off shortly after that .

= = Production = =

" The Whale " was written by executive story editor Carrie Kemper , who is the younger sister of cast member Ellie Kemper , making it her third writing credit for the series . It was directed by Rodman Flender , his first directing credit for the series . The episode sees the return of Melora Hardin as Jan Levenson , a former character in the series who left after the early part of the fifth season . Hardin , did however , make two short appearances on the show during the seventh season episodes " Sex Ed " and " Threat Level Midnight " . Ed Helms only appears in the episode 's cold open ; he was written out of several episodes of the season in order to film The Hangover Part III .

The official website of The Office included several cut scenes from " The Whale " within a week of the episode 's release . In the first 105 @-@ second clip , Toby admits to the camera his amusement that the men at Dunder Mifflin are partaking in Movember with him . In the second 76 @-@ second clip , the women of Dunder Mifflin inform Dwight that his knowledge about women is severely lacking at that he has a long way to go . In the third and final 85 @-@ second clip . Dwight and Pam , while in the car , prepare for their " biggest sales call ever " .

= = Cultural references = =

The title of the episode ? " The Whale " ? is a reference to the popular 1851 novel Moby @-@ Dick by Herman Melville and its main antagonist , the great white whale . The white pages , which is the sale that Dwight is attempting to make , are a listing of telephone subscribers in a geographical area or subscribers to services provided by the organization that publishes the directory . Toby organizes a Movember celebration , which is an annual , month @-@ long event involving the growing of moustaches during the month of November to raise awareness of prostate cancer and other male cancer and associated charities .

= = Broadcast and reception = =

= = = Ratings = = =

" The Whale " was originally scheduled to air on NBC on November 8 , 2012 , but the previous episode was delayed a week when it was replaced with a rerun of The Voice . It eventually aired a week later , on November 15 , 2012 . In its original broadcast , " The Whale " was viewed by an estimated 4 @. @ 16 million viewers and received a 2 @. @ 1 / 6 percent share rating among adults between the ages of 18 and 49 . This means that it was seen by 2 @. @ 1 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 6 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . This marked a decrease in the ratings from the previous episode , " The Boat " , which had received a 2 @. @ 4 rating / 6 percent . The episode ranked fourth in its timeslot , being beaten by the Fox series Glee which received a 2 @. @ 2 / 6 percent rating , an entry of the CBS drama Person of Interest which received a 2 @. @ 9 / 7 percent rating , and an episode of the ABC series Grey 's Anatomy which received a 3 @. @ 1 / 8 percent rating . Despite this , The Office was highest @-@ rated NBC television program of the night .

= = = Reviews = = =

Mark Trammell of TV Equals was very pleased with the episode and wrote that " Rainn Wilson [was] clearly in his element " . Damon Houx of Screencrush felt that the entry was rushed , which resulted in " most characters [getting] 2 @-@ 3 minute storylines , or ? in most cases ? a joke or line or two . " He called it " one of the better episodes of this last season " , but noted that " the show 's going to end with more of a whimper than a bang " . Cindy White of IGN awarded the episode a 7

@.@ 5 out of 10 , denoting a " good " episode . White complimented Dwight and Pam 's situation , as well Angela and Oscar 's development . However , she noted that it " wasn 't hard to imagine Michael in [Dwight 's] situation " . Furthermore , she compared the episode to the third season episode " Women 's Appreciation " .

Erik Adams of The A.V. Club awarded the episode a " C " and was critical of the episode 's focus on " the series ? endgame " , noting that the episode heavily set up both Jim and Dwight 's departure . Dan Forcella of TV Fanatic awarded the episode three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half stars out of five . While enjoying the story 's main plots ? specifically citing Angela and Oscar 's " sneak around " , and Dwight 's endeavor ? he was critical of Jim 's subplot , writing that " I couldn 't care less about the issues he was facing with teleconferencing . "

Melora Hardin 's return garnered critical attention . Forcella wrote that " Jan was definitely a welcome appearance " . Furthermore , he praised her " all @-@ around meanness " and the " hilarity of her singing " . Houx wrote that " the return of Jan Levinson and the final solution to get her business was pretty good . " Adams , on the other hand , was critical of the return of Hardin , noting that " there ? s little reason to justify Melora Hardin ? s presence in ' The Whale ' " other than " an obligation [for] The Office ? s final @-@ season victory lap . " White noted that it " was nice to see Melora Hardin in the role one last time " , but wrote that " it 's a shame that the show is sticking with the crazy version of the character rather than mellowing her out a bit " . Melora Hardin 's performance was later submitted by the producers of The Office for an " Outstanding Guest Actor in Comedy Series " Emmy consideration .