

= Verna (30 Rock) =

" Verna " is the twelfth episode of the fourth season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock , and the 70th overall episode of the series . The episode was written by co @-@ executive producer Ron Weiner and directed by series producer Don Scardino . It originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on February 4 , 2010 . Jan Hooks guest stars as the title character of this episode and was her last acting role before dying on October 9 , 2014 .

In the episode , Jenna Maroney 's (Jane Krakowski) mother Verna (Hooks) comes to visit her , and Jenna turns to Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) for help . At the same time , Frank Rossitano (Judah Friedlander) moves in with Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) temporarily , and they both decide to make a pact to give up their bad habits .

" Verna " has received generally positive reception from television critics . According to the Nielsen ratings , the episode was watched by 5 @.@ 93 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 9 rating / 8 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) learns that her mother , Verna (Jan Hooks) , has come to visit her . Jenna does not want to see Verna , though , as she knows that her visit will lead to her asking Jenna for money , so Jenna turns to her boss , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) , for help . Jack , who also does not get along with his mother Colleen Donaghy (Elaine Stritch) , shows Jenna a presentation on how to deal with overbearing mothers . Jenna attempts to follow the presentation , but Verna surprises her by giving her back the money she has borrowed from Jenna and wanting to be in her life again , leading to Jenna ignoring what Jack has told her and reconciling with Verna , making Jack convinced that Verna has an ulterior motive for making amends with Jenna . Later , his suspicions come true when Verna admits that she sneaked her way back into Jenna 's life solely to convince her to star in a reality show featuring them both . Jack tries to let Jenna know Verna 's true intentions but cannot bring himself to tell Jenna as she is so happy . Instead , Jack pays Verna off to visit Jenna on a regular basis , letting Jenna believe her mother has changed her ways .

At the same time , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) takes her staff writer , Frank Rossitano (Judah Friedlander) in as a roommate , and they both decide to make a pact to give up their bad habits : Liz eating junk food and Frank 's smoking . As they continue living together , Liz is having a hard time adjusting to not eating junk food and suspects that Frank is still smoking , due to his calm behavior during the situation . To catch him in the act , she decides to hide a recording video camera equipped with night vision in her apartment . The next day , Liz shows the video to her staff writers , including Frank . However , instead of showing Frank smoking cigarettes , the footage shows Liz sleepwalking , " sleepeating " , ordering pizza in her sleep , eating large amounts of junk food , and eating the cigarettes . However , it also shows Frank having an affair with a much older cleaning lady , whom he calls " mommy " , thus embarrassing them both and breaking the pact .

A subplot involves Pete not being able to have a moment alone at work because of Kenneth continuously talking to him . However , Pete ultimately finds a release by hanging out with homeless people and is able to tolerate Kenneth 's jabbering .

= = Production = =

" Verna " was written by co @-@ executive producer Ron Weiner and directed by series producer Don Scardino . This episode was Weiner 's sixth writing credit , having penned " Secrets and Lies " , " Señor Macho Solo " , " Goodbye , My Friend " , " Mamma Mia " , and " The Problem Solvers " . This was Scardino 's twenty @-@ fifth directed episode . " Verna " originally aired in the United States on February 4 , 2010 , on NBC , as the twelfth episode of the show 's fourth season and the 70th overall episode of the series . This episode of 30 Rock was filmed on December 7 , 2009 .

Comedian @-@ actress Jan Hooks , best known for appearing on Saturday Night Live and 3rd

Rock from the Sun , guest @-@ starred as Verna Maroney , the mother of Jenna Maroney , played by Jane Krakowski . She reprised her role as Verna in the May 6 , 2010 , episode " The Moms " . Hooks is eleven years older than Krakowski . Some television commentators have noted that Hooks 's appearance on 30 Rock was her first acting job since appearing in the 2004 comedy movie Jiminy Glick in Lalawood .

The episode opens with Liz Lemon having a dream in which she is married to Jack Donaghy and is giving birth to their child . Since its beginning , the series has occasionally hinted at a romantic relationship between Liz and Jack . In one episode , Jack passes Liz off as his live @-@ in girlfriend to his ex @-@ wife to make her jealous . In another episode , Jack 's mother tells him that Liz is a perfect match for him , and in the same episode he has Liz listed as his emergency contact . In an April 2010 Esquire interview , series creator Tina Fey said that one of the plots the show will never do is have Liz and Jack get together . " Let me put the Internet at ease : Liz and Jack will never be together . " Alec Baldwin was asked if the two characters will ever hook up ; he responded " I sincerely doubt it , and I think the show is better off that way . Once they cross that line , all the tension goes out of those relationships . And I think the lesson we learned about both those characters is that they are married to their jobs and they are married to their work . "

= = Cultural references = =

In the beginning of the episode , Liz dreams she is giving birth to Meat Cat , a fictional cartoon mascot for " cheesy blasters " , her favorite cheese snacks . This episode made reference to the mascot as it was first introduced in the fourth season 's premiere episode " Season 4 " . Many television reviewers have noted that Jack 's presentation on how to deal with overbearing mothers , given the acronym " ASQ " (Always Speak Quietly) , was a reference to Baldwin 's " ABC " (Always Be Closing) speech seen in the film Glengarry Glen Ross (1992) . The night vision video that Liz shows to her writing staff , in which she is seen sleepwalking , ordering a pizza and eating large amounts of junk food , was a parody of the 2009 horror film Paranormal Activity .

= = Reception = =

According to the Nielsen ratings system , " Verna " was watched by 5 @.@ 93 million households in its original American broadcast . The rating was a 7 percent increase in viewership from the previous week 's episode , " Winter Madness " , which was seen by 5 @.@ 585 million American viewers . The show claimed a 2 @.@ 9 rating / 8 share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , meaning that it was seen by 2 @.@ 9 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 .

TV Squad 's Bob Sassone enjoyed Jan Hooks ' appearance , and said that her role as Jenna 's mother was " good casting . " His only complaint was that this episode had nothing to do with The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan , the fictional show on 30 Rock , and hoped that no other characters have to stay at Liz 's apartment . " Laughter wasn 't constant during [' Verna '] , but the direction it moved in kept interest even when jokes were sparse . That being said , some of the material ... were pretty great by even the show 's lofty standards " , said Paste magazine 's Sean Gandert . In his recap , Adam Mersel for TV Guide was complimentary , writing it had " spot @-@ on one @-@ liners , witty pop culture references , and a hilarious guest @-@ star in Jan Hooks " , and that " Verna " became his favorite episode of the season . Nick Catucci for New York magazine liked Liz and Frank 's plot , noting that their bad habits featured here " culminated in the greatest few moments the show has had in some time . " The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin enjoyed this episode of 30 Rock , writing that the show " was firing on all cylinders . It was good for laughs aplenty but it also helped illuminate Jack 's paternal relationship with Jenna , the source of some of Jenna 's narcissistic craziness and the full measure of Jack 's Oedipal hell . " Margaret Lyons for Entertainment Weekly deemed " Verna " a solid episode from the show . Time contributor James Poniewozik enjoyed Hooks ' performance , and that it was good to see Jane Krakowski 's Jenna " get a story that was not solely about her being an insecure ninny . "

Not all reviews were positive . IGN contributor Robert Canning gave the episode a 7 @. @ 9 out of 10 rating , and said that Hooks ' role as Jenna 's mother " helped the half hour , but this Jenna @-@ centric episode still didn 't blow me away . " He noted that the main plot had funny moments but " there wasn 't much else to invest in . " Overall , Canning reasoned that this episode was very much a stand @-@ alone one " built for some good jokes , and not exactly focused on storytelling . [...] An episode like ' Verna ' can still bring a lot of laughs , but you can 't help but feel like it 's missing that extra something . " Television columnist Alan Sepinwall for The Star @-@ Ledger disliked both stories from " Verna " , and wrote that it was a disappointing episode , and that it was " pretty weak overall . " Meredith Blake , a contributor from the Los Angeles Times , reported that despite Hooks ' hilarious performance , the episode still felt a " little bit like filler " , and that there " wasn 't too much that was especially funny or memorable about it " .