

= The Break @-@ Up (30 Rock) =

" The Break @-@ Up " is the eighth episode of the first season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock . It was written by co @-@ executive producers Brett Baer and Dave Finkel , and directed by Scott Ellis . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in the United States on December 14 , 2006 . Guest stars in this episode include Rachel Dratch , Chris Hansen , Keith Powell , Lonny Ross , and Dean Winters .

In the episode , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) finally dumps Dennis Duffy (Winters) and prowls the singles scene , where she proves to be particularly inept at picking up guys , under Jenna Maroney 's (Jane Krakowski) tutelage . Meanwhile , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) and James " Toofer " Spurlock (Powell) clash , landing both in sensitivity training , and Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) dates a certain " high @-@ ranking African @-@ American member of the Bush Administration . "

" The Break @-@ Up " received generally good reception from critics . According to the Nielsen ratings system , the episode was watched by 5 @.@ 9 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 8 rating / 8 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic . Scott Ellis received a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Directing for a Comedy Series for " The Break @-@ Up " .

= = Plot = =

Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) comes home to find her wall full of knife holes , a great dane roaming her apartment , and a complete stranger on her bed , all courtesy of her boyfriend , Dennis Duffy (Dean Winters) . She breaks up with him , but Dennis claims squatter 's rights , so she gives him a week to move out . Liz and her friend , Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) , go out to try to pick up some men , but are very unsuccessful . The next day , Dennis walks in to the staff office of TGS with Tracy Jordan , announcing he has found a new apartment and reads a heartfelt letter to Liz . The staff suddenly turns on Liz after Dennis walks out , and Jenna suggests to Liz that in light of the previous night 's disaster , she should re @-@ consider getting back together with him . She suggests making a list of pros and cons . Liz compiles her list of pros and cons . She marks down a positive remark after coming home to find that Dennis has cleaned up the apartment , put up shelves and a TV stand , and left her dinner . In the evening , Dennis returns with an early Christmas present for Liz . She invites him in , but soon sees Dennis on Dateline 's To Catch a Predator . As a result of this , Liz breaks up with Dennis , and marks it down as a con .

Meanwhile , James " Toofer " Spurlock (Keith Powell) is upset that Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) is cross @-@ dressing on TGS because it is demeaning to African @-@ Americans . After a bit of objection , Toofer convinces Tracy to stop , handing the female character over to Josh Girard (Lonny Ross) . Once Josh 's character is successful , Tracy is upset with Toofer . Liz convinces Toofer to work with Tracy . As they work together , Tracy gets upset with Toofer 's supposed lack of blackness , and endearingly calls Toofer a racial slur . The next morning , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) , Liz , Toofer , and Tracy sit down for a meeting about Tracy 's vocabulary from the previous night . Tracy and Jack point out that the African @-@ American community has adopted the word to deprive it of its meaning . In trying to reach out to Tracy , Toofer says the word again but because of his perceived cultural whiteness , everyone , including Tracy , is offended in a way they weren 't when Tracy used the term . Tracy and Toofer attend sensitivity training , start arguing , and in the process develop a new sketch for TGS . When show starts running short on time , Liz offers Tracy the option to either air the sketch or one from the Star Jones cooking show , Tracy chooses the latter . Toofer is initially upset , but agrees with Tracy 's decision when he finds the sketch funny .

In a subplot , Jack is secretly dating Condoleezza Rice , but gets upset when he sees Vladimir Putin touching her back . After being put on hold by Condoleezza , Jack walks into the bathroom and runs into Dennis there . Dennis , finding Jack a kindred spirit , shares his understanding of his relationship , motivating Jack to play hard to get . As a result , Jack breaks up with Condoleezza .

== Production ==

" The Break @-@ Up " was written by that season 's co @-@ executive producers Brett Baer and Dave Finkel , and directed by Scott Ellis . This episode was the first writing credit for both Baer and Finkel , and the first one Ellis directed for 30 Rock . Baer and Finkel would later collaborate on the episode " Fireworks " , that aired in the show 's first season on April 5 , 2007 . " The Break @-@ Up " originally aired on NBC on December 14 , 2006 as the eighth episode of the series .

This episode was actor Dean Winters ' third appearance on the series as the character , Dennis Duffy , a former boyfriend of Tina Fey 's character , Liz Lemon . He appeared in the episodes " Jack Meets Dennis " and " Tracy Does Conan " . Finkel has appeared on the show in a 10 @-@ second internet sitcom , Makin ' It Happen , alongside staff writer Kay Cannon . The two play husband and wife . A series of Makin ' It Happen was produced and the webisodes aired on NBC.com.

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 this episode , Dratch played Pamela Smew , a group therapist in charge of sensitivity training between Tracy and Toofer . This was Dratch 's fifth appearance on the series . 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 . Chris Hansen of Dateline NBC 's television segment To Catch a Predator appeared as himself in this episode , in which he confronts Dennis on To Catch a Predator .

== Reception ==

According to the Nielsen ratings system , " The Break @-@ Up " was watched by 5 @. @ 9 million households in its original American broadcast . It earned a 2 @. @ 8 rating / 8 share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . This means that it was seen by 5 @. @ 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 . This was a decrease from the previous episode , " Tracy Does Conan " , which was watched by 6 @. @ 84 million American viewers . Scott Ellis , director of the episode , received a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Directing For a Comedy Series at the 59th Primetime Emmy Awards . Since airing , the episode received good reviews from television critics .

IGN contributor Robert Canning said that " The Break @-@ Up " was " well put together " , noting that it had " [g] ood set ups and good execution " and that it " gave us good comedy " as it had " plenty to work with . " In regards to the Liz and Dennis story , he admitted that while it was funny , it was " fairly stereotypical . " Canning commented that Jack 's relationship with Condoleezza Rice in the episode was a " great concept " and " offered up a good number of chuckles " , although " it never became as clever as it appeared it was going to be . " Canning gave the episode a 6 @. @ 5 out of 10 rating . TV Guide 's Matt Mitovich was complimentary towards the episode , reporting , " Now this is what I 'm talking about . Second @-@ tier cast integration , multiple stories going on , intimations that Condoleezza Rice likes phone sex ... Another winning week for NBC 's 30 Rock . " Mitovich enjoyed the fact that Jack was in a relationship with Rice , writing that another show " would build [the] whole episode around them " but that 30 Rock " made it that much funnier by playing it in the background and thus getting to be more outrageous with it . " Julia Ward of AOL 's TV Squad wrote that Alec Baldwin " always knocks the ball out of the park on the acting front " but noted that " the best material " in this episode belonged to the Tracy and Toofer story . " The show does have a tendency to telegraph its punchlines , but it was nice to have the two men 's differences resolved by finding the funny in a Star Jones / excessive vomiting sketch . " Ward was complimentary towards Jane Krakowski , observing that her " comic timing " in " The Break @-@ Up " was " impeccable as usual , but it would be nice to see her character get a tad more three @-@

dimensional . " Amy Amatangelo of the Boston Herald enjoyed Dean Winters ' appearances on the show , citing that he does a " hilarious turn " as Dennis , while the Houston Chronicle 's Mike McDaniel opined that Winters had a " [s] cene @-@ stealing and hilarious role " on the show .