

= The Natural Order =

" The Natural Order " is the twentieth episode of the third season of the American television comedy show 30 Rock . It was written by series creator Tina Fey with co @-@ executive producer John Riggi and directed by Scott Ellis . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network in the United States on April 30 , 2009 . Guest stars in " The Natural Order " include actors Elaine Stritch and Steve Buscemi .

The plot of the episode centers around a conflict between Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) and Liz Lemon (Fey) over favorable treatment . Meanwhile , Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) adopts a gibbon and treats it like her child . Finally , Jack Donaghy 's (Alec Baldwin) mother Colleen (Stritch) visits him on the 35th anniversary of the day that Jack 's father left the family .

" The Natural Order " received mixed reception from television critics . According to the Nielsen ratings system , it was watched by 6 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 7 rating / 7 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

Liz (Tina Fey) , Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) , and Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) all attempt to trick Tracy into arriving at a rehearsal on time . Tracy arrives not knowing what time it is and announces that Liz is racist and treating him like a child . Liz challenges Tracy to behave better so he can be treated as an adult , but he responds by sending a gibbon to replace himself at rehearsal . Liz tells Tracy to arrive on time with his lines memorized the next day if he wants to be treated equally . Tracy retaliates by acting professionally but convincing everyone to treat Liz equally too , by making her lift heavy water jugs , passing gas near her , and inviting her to a strip club along with the other writers . Liz in turn stops Tracy from going to the strip club , noting that because he is acting so professionally he has to write notes for the upcoming script . Liz is uncomfortable at the strip club and Tracy hates writing all night so they agree to return to the " natural order " of things with both receiving preferential treatment .

Meanwhile , Jenna adopts the gibbon Tracy sends to rehearsal and treats it as her child . She dresses it in several costumes including a mariachi outfit , a tuxedo , and a sailor suit . In addition she buys the gibbon a baby doll , referring to herself as a " grandmother . " At the end of the episode Jenna accidentally shakes the head off of the baby doll and the gibbon attacks her .

Jack is concerned for his mother , Colleen (Elaine Stritch) . He tells Liz that the anniversary of his father , Jimmy Donaghy , abandoning their family is coming up and he is afraid of the effect it will have on Colleen . When Jack arrives at Colleen 's hotel room to take her to dinner , however , he discovers she is staying with a man , Paul . Jack , worried she has been taken in by a con man in her time of grief , asks his private investigator Lenny Wosniak (Steve Buscemi) to look into Paul . Wosniak cannot find anything distasteful in Paul 's background , but tells Jack that he is married . Jack reveals this to his mother , but she says she knew and did not care . Colleen is also surprised that Jack thought the anniversary of Jimmy leaving would hurt her , noting that he had once left from the spring of 1957 until he came back and invited her to see Some Like It Hot . Jack talks this over with Liz and comes to realize that as Some Like It Hot was released in 1959 , Jimmy Donaghy cannot have been his biological father because Jack was conceived in 1958 , during the period Jimmy had been absent .

= = Production = =

" The Natural Order " was written by series ' creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey , and co @-@ executive producer John Riggi . The director of this episode was Scott Ellis . This was Fey and Riggi 's second script collaboration , having co @-@ written season one episode " The Head and the Hair " that aired on January 18 , 2007 . " The Natural Order " originally aired on April 30 , 2009 , on NBC in the United States as the twentieth episode of the show 's third season .

This episode was actress Elaine Stritch 's fifth appearance on 30 Rock as Collen Donaghy , the

mother of Jack Donaghy , played by Alec Baldwin . Actor Steve Buscemi reprised his role as private investigator Lenny Wosniak . Buscemi first appeared in the October 18 , 2007 , episode " The Collection " , and went on to direct the third season episode " Retreat to Move Forward " , broadcast on January 22 , 2009 .

= = Cultural references = =

" The Natural Order " is one of several 30 Rock episodes to deal with race . In this episode , when Tracy leaves the first rehearsal accusing Liz of racism he shouts " race card ! " and hands Liz a card with " race card " written on it (" playing the race card " is an expression that means introducing the issue of race into an argument in order to gain the upper hand) . During their disagreement Tracy also says that " we have a black president now " , referring to Barack Obama , but Liz says that he voted for Ralph Nader . According to J. Jeremy Wisniewski in " Race At The Rock : Race Cards , White Myths , And Postracial America " , this plotline is an example of people " want [ing] to have race and do away with it too . " Tracy wants to be treated equally but also wants to continue behaving the way he is used to . Wisniewski says that by the end of the episode , Liz and Tracy , in reverting to " the natural order " , have come to understand the concept of equality ; rather than forcing people " to be equivalent to one another ... considering the different interests of people equally . "

Jack tells Liz that by protecting his mother this time , as opposed to when his father left , he can " put right what once went wrong " which Liz notes is part of the introduction to the television series Quantum Leap . Jack had written a speech to confront Jimmy Donaghy decades ago and attempts to update it for his confrontation with Paul . He asks Liz who is " today 's Nikita Khrushchev " and she suggests Simon Cowell , which Jack agrees with . Jack is also suspicious of Paul because he met his mother in Florida , which Jack calls " America 's Australia , " referring to Australia 's history as a penal colony . Kenneth also shows an NBC tour the spot where " Gracie Allen took Jack Paar 's virginity " and Jack reveals that he once slept with Kathy Hilton .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " The Natural Order " was watched by 6 million viewers , according to the Nielsen ratings system . It also earned a 2 @. @ 7 rating / 7 share amongst 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ old demographic , meaning it was seen by 2 @. @ 7 % of all 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds and 7 % of 18- to 49 @- @ year @- @ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . It was the tenth highest @- @ rated show on NBC that week . This was a decrease from the previous episode , " The Ones " , which was watched by 6 @. @ 3 million American viewers .

Aly Semigran for Entertainment Weekly said the episode " was nowhere near as good " as other recent episodes as it was " too dependent on obvious physical comedy . " IGN writer Robert Canning took no strong position on the episode , saying it had " jokes enough to make it funny , but nothing over the top to make it classic , " rating the episode 8 @. @ 2 out of 10 . The A.V. Club 's Nathan Rabin was more clearly positive about the episode , calling it a " glorious return to form " and grading the episode an A- . Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad opined he was not thrilled with Jenna 's plot , observing that it was " kinda ridiculous (and unfunny , which is the worse sin) . " Sassone , however , said that Liz and Tracy feuding and Jack and his mother battling " are plots that are always good for some laughs . " Television columnist Alan Sepinwall for The Star @- @ Ledger wrote that while " The Natural Order " was not a " classic episode " it was still " solid enough , in the end . " Sepinwall enjoyed Jack and his mother 's story , but commented that the Liz and Tracy rivalry was a " hit @- @ or @- @ miss . " TV Guide 's Bruce Fretts said this episode " is easily the show 's most grounded episode ever , even if it does feature a gibbon in a mariachi suit . The script [...] dares to deal with issues of race and gender from a typically irreverent perspective . " Fretts noted that Elaine Stritch and Alec Baldwin " share a surprisingly tender scene as Colleen tells her son , ' You 're my good boy [...] I just love you to death . ' "