

= Black Tie (30 Rock) =

" Black Tie " is the twelfth episode of the first season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock . It was directed by Don Scardino , and written by Kay Cannon and series creator Tina Fey . The episode originally aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in the United States on February 1 , 2007 . Guest stars in this episode include Kevin Brown , Grizz Chapman , Will Forte , April Lee Hernández , Paul Reubens , and Isabella Rossellini .

In the episode , Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) attends a foreign prince 's (Reubens) birthday party with her boss Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) and meets Jack 's ex @-@ wife (Rossellini) . At the same time , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) tries to convince Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) to cheat on his wife at a wild party while NBC page Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) encourages him not to .

" Black Tie " received generally positive reception from television critics . According to the Nielsen ratings system , the episode was watched by 5 @.@ 7 million households during its original broadcast , and received a 2 @.@ 9 rating / 7 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = Plot = =

Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) is invited by her boss , Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) , to accompany him to a birthday party for his friend , Prince Gerhardt Habsburg (Loosely based on the Habsburg monarch Carlos II) , in which she accepts . Liz fears the invitation is a date , but Jack denies this when asked . Later , Liz runs into her friend Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) at the party . While the two talk , Prince Gerhardt (Paul Reubens) makes his entrance . He has a physical disability with many disfigurements and illnesses due to " centuries of inbreeding . " Meanwhile , Jack is shocked to see his ex @-@ wife Bianca (Isabella Rossellini) enter the room . When she comes over to say hello , Jack introduces Liz as his live @-@ in girlfriend . She likes Liz and tells Jack not to let her get away .

At the same time , Prince Gerhardt spots Jenna and sends his messenger , Tomas (Will Forte) , over to invite her to dine with him . Eager to become a modern @-@ day Grace Kelly , she talks herself into doing it , despite his problems . Later , Bianca tells Liz that she dislikes the idea that Liz can make Jack truly happy . Liz tells Jack that Bianca is still not over him and to prove it , she goes to her and tells her the two are engaged . At hearing this , Bianca reacts violently and attacks Liz . Later , Prince Gerhardt decides he can now die happy , after he and Jenna discussed their relationship , and drinks some champagne , which he cannot digest . He dies because " he cannot metabolize the grapes . " As a result , the party comes to a conclusion . Jack walks Liz up to her apartment . Before he leaves , he leans in to take off the necklace he lent her , which she mistakes for an attempted kiss . Jack acts semi @-@ repulsed by the idea , and tells Liz to give it up .

Finally , at the 30 Rock studios , after overhearing Pete Hornberger (Scott Adsit) impersonating Elmo from Sesame Street while Pete was encouraging his son to do better with his potty training , Tracy Jordan (Tracy Morgan) compares Pete 's relationship with his wife to that of Samson and Delilah . While working late at night in his office , Tracy enters with Grizz (Grizz Chapman) and Dot Com (Kevin Brown) and a couple of other people , which turns into a party . Pete is still working , while Tracy 's entourage enjoy themselves . Tracy encourages Pete to loosen up , and asks one of the women , Vicki (April Lee Hernández) , to look after him . Pete finally loosens up and begins to give in to Vicki 's temptations , but NBC page Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) sets him straight , telling him to recall the day that he got married .

= = Production = =

" Black Tie " was directed by Don Scardino , and written by Kay Cannon and series creator Tina Fey . This was Cannon and Fey 's first script collaboration , later co @-@ writing the episodes " Somebody to Love " , " Christmas Special " , and " Lee Marvin vs. Derek Jeter " , for season two , season three , and season four , respectively . " Black Tie " originally aired on NBC in the United States on February 1 , 2007 as the twelfth episode of the show 's first season and overall of the

series .

This episode featured guest appearances by actors Paul Reubens and Isabella Rossellini . Fey wrote the role of Prince Gerhardt Hapsburg specifically for Reubens , and he did not have to audition . Fey , in regards to Reubens , said : " We were thrilled beyond belief to get him to do [the role] . " Kevin Lasit , the show 's prop master , built Gerhardt 's wheelchair and puppet legs . Fey said that Lasit " really outdid himself " , and noted that Reubens was kneeling in the wheelchair in the seat built over the top of him . In addition , Reubens wore prosthetic teeth and a wig to accommodate his character 's look . According to Fey , in the DVD commentary for this episode , the show shot an alternate ending ? at Reubens 's request ? in which Gerhardt does not die , " but ultimately it felt better stakes for the story if he 'd die " , in which Will Forte 's character says , " The Habsburg line has ended . You can pick up your gift bags at the coat check . " In " Black Tie " , Rosellini played Bianca , the ex @-@ wife of Alec Baldwin 's character , Jack Donaghy . Rosellini would make a second appearance in the February 8 , 2007 , episode " Up All Night " . Comedian actor Will Forte , who played Tomas , the messenger of Prince Gerhardt , has appeared in the main cast of Saturday Night Live (SNL) , a weekly sketch comedy series which airs on NBC in the United States . Fey was the head writer on SNL from 1999 until 2006 . Forte would later return to 30 Rock as Paul , a love interest of Jenna Maroney 's .

In the beginning of the episode , Liz and Josh Girard (Lonny Ross) are exchanging Yo Mamma Jokes . According to Fey , Liz 's joke , " What 's the difference between your mama and a washing machine ? When I drop a load in the washing machine , it doesn 't follow me around for a week " , was " pretty dirty " , and was surprised that the show was able to get away with the joke . It has since been censored in syndication .

= = Reception = =

According to the Nielsen ratings system , " Black Tie " was watched by 5 @.@ 7 million households in its original American broadcast . It earned a 2 @.@ 9 rating / 7 share in the 18 ? 49 demographic , meaning that 2 @.@ 9 percent of all people in that group , and 7 percent of all people from that group watching television at the time , watched the episode . This was an increase from the previous episode , " The Head and the Hair " , which was watched by 5 @.@ 0 million American viewers . Since airing , the episode has received generally positive reviews from television critics .

IGN contributor Robert Canning called it a " fantastic episode " and rated it 8 out of 10 . He enjoyed all the subplots , and the performances by Paul Reubens and Isabella Rossellini . Julia Ward of AOL 's TV Squad wrote that Reubens and Rossellini were " pretty inspired choices " , and said that " Tracy as the devil , Kenneth as the angel " gag ? in which Tracy was encouraging Pete to cheat on his wife while Kenneth told him not to ? was also " inspired " . TV Guide 's Matt Mitovich was favorable to the guest appearances of Reubens , Rossellini , and Will Forte , but said that Reubens 's role " served up a memorable majesty on a very strong , very laugh @-@ out @-@ loud funny installment " of this episode . Mitovich was impressed with how " Black Tie " handled Liz 's " date " with Jack , citing that lesser shows would have " gone there " in the final scene , " and really jacked up the ' tension ' between its two leads , but Tina Fey and her crack writing staff didn 't . They kept it 99 @.@ 44 percent light , meaning we now won 't ... be wondering , ' What if ... ? ' " In regards to the episode itself , Mitovich said it was an " awesome episode , an immeasurably enjoyable , laugh @-@ inducing series . " Seattle Post @-@ Intelligencer contributor Melanie McFarland said that Reubens was " perfectly cast as such a freak " , though in regards to Rossellini 's appearance " [s] he glides in playing the class act we 're used to , but when Rossellini dissolves into a shocking mess , she yields one of the series ' most absurd scenes yet . " It was rated the 28th greatest TV episode of all time on TV Guide 's list .