

= Christmas Special ( 30 Rock ) =

" Christmas Special " is the sixth episode of the third season of the American television comedy series 30 Rock . It was written by executive story editor Kay Cannon , and series ' creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey . The director of this episode was series producer Don Scardino . The episode originally aired on December 11 , 2008 on the National Broadcasting Company ( NBC ) .

In the episode , Liz Lemon ( Tina Fey ) decides to help a charity for underprivileged children after her parents ditch their holiday plans . Jack Donaghy 's ( Alec Baldwin ) mother , Colleen ( Elaine Stritch ) , stops Jack from going on a Christmas vacation so he ends up taking his frustration out on the TGS staff . The TGS crew have to ditch their own plans for a holiday @-@ themed episode of the show .

" Christmas Special " received mixed reviews from television critics . According to the Nielsen ratings system , it was watched by 8 @.@ 9 million households during its original broadcast , becoming the series ' highest rated episode . For her performance in this episode , Elaine Stritch received a Primetime Emmy Award nomination in the category for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series .

= = Plot = =

Liz Lemon ( Tina Fey ) announces to the staff of The Girlie Show with Tracy Jordan ( TGS ) that she is participating in a charity which provides gifts to underprivileged children who write letters to Santa . She buys far more than what is requested in the letter , wanting to see the children 's happiness . When Liz delivers the presents to the apartment in the letter , however , the door is answered by two adults who take the gifts , and she believes she has been tricked . Receiving no help from the US Postal Service , who run the charity , she attempts to have it shut down . This upsets Kenneth Parcell ( Jack McBrayer ) who refuses to believe anyone would scam a Christmas charity . She takes Kenneth back to the apartment to prove she was right , but two children answer the door and Liz accidentally reveals to them that Santa Claus is not real .

Meanwhile Jack Donaghy ( Alec Baldwin ) accidentally backs into his mother , Colleen Donaghy ( Elaine Stritch ) , with his car in Florida . Bedridden , she decides to stay with Jack , and her presence greatly annoys him . Jack reveals to Liz that after he hit his mother he waited eight minutes before calling 9 @-@ 1 @-@ 1 , and is worried she will find out . Jack tries to stay away from his mother by having the cast and crew of TGS produce a last @-@ minute Christmas special . However , Colleen discovers the secret , and confronts him with it . Jack responds by expressing his anger with her for her behavior at Christmas while he was a child . Ultimately , after talking with Liz , Jack realizes that Colleen was actually a caring mother , and reconciles with her .

= = Production = =

" Christmas Special " was written by executive story editor Kay Cannon , and series creator , executive producer and lead actress Tina Fey . This episode was directed by series producer Don Scardino . This was Cannon and Fey 's third script collaboration , having co @-@ written the episodes " Black Tie " and " Somebody to Love " . " Christmas Special " originally aired on NBC in the United States on December 11 , 2008 .

The story with the Jack Donaghy character accidentally hitting his mother with his car was based on an experience by one of the 30 Rock writers . According to executive producer Robert Carlock : " This actually happened . The niece of one of our writers hit her grandmother ? the writer 's mother ? with her car . We kind of spent a day saying , ' Can we do this ? Is everything going to be okay ? ' And she was fine , so we figured that would be a fun , fraught thing to happen between Jack and his mom , especially right before Christmas . "

This was Elaine Stritch 's third appearance as Colleen Donaghy , Jack 's mother , on 30 Rock . She guest starred in the episodes " Hiatus " and " Ludachristmas " . At the end of " Christmas Special " ,

Jack and Colleen sing a duet of " The Christmas Song " . In regards to the duet , Stritch told TV Guide : " It 's [ Jack 's ] fantasy . It was an interesting acting challenge . I didn 't sing it like I sing it ; I sang it like I imagined Colleen Donaghy would try to sing it . "

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Christmas Special " was watched by 8 @. @ 9 million households , according to the Nielsen ratings system , and became the show 's highest rated episode so far . It received a 3 @. @ 8 rating / 9 share among viewers in the 18 ? 49 demographic , meaning that 3 @. @ 8 % of all people in that group , and 9 % of all people from that group watching television at the time , watched the episode . The season premiere episode , " Do @- @ Over " , was up until that point the highest rated episode of the show , with 8 @. @ 7 million viewers . Elaine Stritch received a Primetime Emmy Award nomination for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Comedy Series at the 61st Primetime Emmy Awards for her work in this episode , but lost it to Tina Fey for her satirical portrayal of Sarah Palin on Saturday Night Live .

Critical reception of the episode was not entirely favorable . Television columnist Alan Sepinwall for The Star @- @ Ledger commented that he had not really liked any of Elaine Stritch 's appearances as Jack 's mother on the series , writing that " Jack 's fear and loathing of his mother just feels claustrophobic and uncomfortable instead of funny , and I 'm as eager to see the end of her visits as [ Jack ] usually is . " Sepinwall said that " very little " of " Christmas Special " worked . " I want to be in the holiday spirit , but this is two Christmas duds in a row from 30 Rock , and we can 't even blame the looming writers strike this time around . " IGN contributor Robert Canning believed the show could have delivered a Christmas episode , but noted that their attempt at it " was a little less than satisfying . The ideas were there , but the rhythm of the episode was off . " Nonetheless , Canning said the episode was not terrible . He enjoyed all the plots except for Liz 's , writing that it did not quite fit , and that " the overall result of Liz 's plot just wasn 't all that funny . " In conclusion , Canning gave the episode a 7 @. @ 8 out of 10 rating . Jeremy Medina for Paste found that there was nothing " special " about this episode . In his opinion , Liz should be featured in " new and exciting plot line [ s ] " rather than helping Jack endure his troubles with his mother .

Not all reviews were negative ; Bob Sassone of AOL 's TV Squad wrote : " I 'm a sucker for Christmas episodes . " He was complimentary towards Stritch 's role as Jack 's mother , citing that she has been " demanding and a little difficult , but she also makes you really feel for her . "