

= Murder ( The Office ) =

" Murder " is the tenth episode of the sixth season of the U.S. comedy series The Office and the show 's 110th episode overall . It was written by Daniel Chun and directed by Greg Daniels . It originally aired on NBC on November 12 , 2009 . The episode guest stars Andy Buckley as David Wallace , although he only appears via the phone .

The series ? presented as if it were a real documentary ? depicts the everyday lives of office employees in the Scranton , Pennsylvania , branch of the fictional Dunder Mifflin Paper Company . In the episode , rumors spread that Dunder Mifflin is in financial trouble , so Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) tries to distract the office by having everyone play a murder mystery game called Belles , Bourbon , and Bullets . Meanwhile , Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) uses the game as a way to ask out Erin ( Ellie Kemper ) , but fears he may have asked out Erin 's character , instead of Erin herself .

" Murder " was the first entry in the series written by Chun , and was his first script for the series . The episode also was the inception of two major story arcs , the first being the season @-@ long arc of Dunder Mifflin going out of business and its purchase by the printer company Sabre in the episode of the same name , and the second being the budding romance between Andy and Erin . The episode scored a 4 @.@ 2 / 10 rating share in the 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ old demographic , and was watched by 8 @.@ 046 million viewers . The episode received largely positive reviews from critics , with many highlighting its purposeful ridiculousness .

= = Plot = =

In the cold open , Dwight Schrute ( Rainn Wilson ) instructs the members of the office once a year on the various " changes " that various martial arts have experienced . Jim Halpert ( John Krasinski ) pranks Dwight by asking him to demonstrate the moves on himself , because Jim reasons Dwight is the most worthy opponent for himself . Dwight ends up punching , blocking , and kicking his own attacks , and ultimately ends up punching himself in the groin , to the bemusement to the members of the office .

The members of the office learn that Dunder Mifflin is in financial trouble . In an attempt to get the worried staff under control , Michael Scott ( Steve Carell ) and Jim call a meeting to provide optimistic viewpoints , despite the steadily worsening news . In a moment of quick thinking , Michael pulls out a murder mystery party game called Belles , Bourbon , and Bullets and forces the rest of the staff to play along . The staff slowly warms up to the game . It is set in Savannah , Georgia , and everyone has to adopt a Southern accent . Thanks to Pam Halpert ( Jenna Fischer ) , Andy Bernard ( Ed Helms ) , and Phyllis Lapin @-@ Vance ( Phyllis Smith ) , the game becomes a hit . Everyone present starts to play along , except for Oscar Martinez ( Oscar Nunez ) who tries to get updates on the situation from corporate and Creed Bratton ( Creed Bratton ) who shows up late to work and flees after being told he is a suspect in a murder . Jim , however , believes that the entire exercise is pointless .

Andy decides he needs to make a move on Erin ( Ellie Kemper ) before the day is out , as he may otherwise never see her again due to the possible impending closure of Dunder Mifflin . While in character , he asks Erin out for a weekend date , but becomes unsure if he really asked her out , or if he just simply asked out her murder mystery character , " Naughty Nelly . " He is worried that Erin only agreed because Naughty Nelly is a promiscuous character .

Just as the game seems to get interesting , Oscar returns and informs everyone that accounting has been notified to stop payments to vendors . This brings the staff out of the game and back to the reality of losing their jobs . Michael tries to win them back , but accidentally skips to the game 's conclusion , revealing that Phyllis 's character was the murderer . Although everyone else goes back to work even more stressed out , Michael refuses to give up , and continues playing the game with Dwight . After the game , Andy and Erin meet at the receptionist desk , where Erin asks him about their upcoming date . Andy tries to sound out whether the date is real or fictional by suggesting that they go to Savannah for their date . Erin remarks that Savannah is a long way away , but does so in character ; confused by this , Andy slips up and indicates that the " date " was just part of the game .

Erin says she was also just playing , but appears humiliated as she walks away and later reveals to the camera crew she thought the date was real .

Michael tries to introduce another murder and other twists to the story to pull his staff back into the party . This infuriates Jim to his breaking point , and they hold a private talk in Michael 's office . Michael snaps at Jim and points out that he is doing this to keep the office calm . CFO David Wallace ( Andy Buckley ) finally returns the phone calls to Jim , and reveals that while nothing has been officially decided yet , Dunder Mifflin is expected to be insolvent by year @-@ end . Jim hides the news from the staff and nudges them back into the party . Jim finally realizes that Michael was doing this to help his co @-@ workers cope . At the end of the episode , Michael , Dwight , Andy , and Pam find themselves in a fake Mexican standoff lasting until 6 : 00 at night . Jim pulls Pam out so they can go home , and the others pretend to shoot each other to death .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by Daniel Chun , and was his first script for the series . The episode also was the inception of two major story arcs , the first being the season @-@ long arc of Dunder Mifflin going out of business and its purchase by the printer company Sabre in the episode of the same name , and the second being the budding romance between Andy and Erin . According to series creator and episode director Greg Daniels , the episode explores the idea that Michael is positively motivated due to his subconscious ; although his antics seem nonsensical to many members of the office , in the end , his idea to take his coworkers ' minds off of the fiscal trouble proves to be the best choice . This was first explored in the third season episode " Grief Counseling " . Chun later explained in a Q & A with The Office fansite OfficeTally that " the episode was partly about Jim realizing that sometimes Michael isn 't crazy , he 's crazy like a fox " in that sometimes his underlying motives are clever .

Most of the names were based on " Southern puns " , and it took Chun a while to think of all the names . All of the props , cards , and box were designed by the series ' prop department . The producers tried to market the game as a real product , although that never came to fruition . Chun crafted the cold open after being inspired by the second season episode " The Fight " because he wanted to see more " Karate Dwight " . In the original version of the open , the scripted featured Dwight and Michael kicking each other in the groin . Jennifer Celotta , however , suggested that Dwight fight himself . The episode guest @-@ stars Andy Buckley , who plays David Wallace . Buckley appears only via the telephone , and recorded his lines in the annex of the set , to give the illusion that he was calling from a long ways away .

" Murder " was directed by Daniels . Daniels particularly enjoyed directing both the cold open , as well as the closing tag , likening both to " an action film " . In regards to the latter , he referred to it as a sequence that director Quentin Tarantino would have thought up , and noted the importance of having the camera appear in the middle of the Mexican standoff to reveal Fischer . Wilson , Helms , and Carell enjoyed filming the scene , and were particularly exuberant when it came time to fake @-@ kill each other . Several of the scenes , such as when Andy first asks Erin on a date , had to be re @-@ shot so that the cameras were in more discreet places . Daniels later referred to these shots as " spy shots " . Initially , after Michael announces that " there has been a murder " , the show was supposed to have cut to a commercial break . However , the producers realized that this was too misleading , as it would have implied that a real homicide had taken place .

The Season Six DVD contains a number of deleted scenes from this episode . Notable cut scenes include Michael berating and then apologizing to Erin , Michael making a racist remark about slavery while in character , various conference room scenes , and extended sequences of the members of the office playing the game in @-@ character .

= = Cultural references = =

Wallace alerts the office that the companies troubles have been published in the Wall Street Journal , but Michael and Erin mistake this to mean the " feelings journal " , Michael listens to "

Lullaby " by Shawn Mullins to soothe himself ; Chun explained that the reason the song was chosen was because " Michael would probably have loved top 40 pop from the 90s . And I figured the song would have to be devoid of subtext . That 's why ' Lullabye ' felt like a fit . " When Jim lowers the volume on Michael 's computer , the tell @-@ tale " click " of a Mac computer comes out of the speakers . Daniels and Chun note that this was intentional , and they wanted that specific sound , even though Windows computers do not make that sound . Pam 's southern accent is compared to the fictional character Forrest Gump . After Andy successfully does a Savannah accent , Kevin asks him to do " the Swedish Chef " . Andy , not understanding the reference asks " what province " he is from , to which Kevin replies that " he lives on Sesame Street , dumbass . " Angela blames her character 's dabbling with the dark arts ? she portrays a witch doctor in the game ? with being exposed to the Harry Potter series .

= = Reception = =

" Murder " first aired on NBC on November 12 , 2009 . In its original American broadcast , the episode was viewed by an estimated 8 @. @ 046 million viewers and received a 4 @. @ 2 rating / 10 percent share in the 18 ? 49 demographic . This means that it was seen by 4 @. @ 2 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and 10 percent of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . This marked a slight increase in the ratings from the previous episode , " Double Date " .

" Murder " received generally positive reviews , with many complimenting the fact that the show was able to dabble in a ridiculous situation with over @-@ the @-@ top characters while , in the end , still having a point . Dan Phillips of IGN said that the episode was a " major step up " from the " disappointing " last two episodes , " Koi Pond " and " Double Date " . Phillips stated that the episode " struck a nice balance between unbound silliness and grounded drama , even if the silliness dominated at times . " Phillips praised the way that , when Michael stood up to Jim and argued that the office members needed the game to remain sane , " the character I love had returned after playing the part of moronic jerk for too much of this season . " Ultimately , he gave the episode an 8 @. @ 8 out of 10 score , denoting a " great " episode .

Nathan Rabin of The A.V. Club awarded the episode an " A ? " and praised the way it both managed to touch upon Dunder Mifflin 's serious economic trouble , as well as allowed the actors and actresses ? and Steve Carell in particular ? to use " ridiculous accent [ s ] " and " crazy character [ s ] " . He also enjoyed the way that Andy and Erin 's subplot was developed , writing that " Andy becomes a deeper , more lovable character with each passing episode " and that " Erin has quickly become an appealing , engaging character . " He concluded that the episode was enjoyable because it " was silliness with a purpose " .

Alan Sepinwall praised Krasinski 's acting , noting that he got the chance to " nail a great dramatic moment " . He also felt that Dunder Mifflin 's crisis was an interesting development for the show , and put a new spin on the recurring theme of fiscal issues . Finally , he praised the Andy and Erin romancing , noting that it " allows the writers to push a similar scenario [ that had been used with Pam and Jim ] in a more overtly comic direction , while still getting some pathos out of it . " Gage Henry of Paste felt that the entry was a " great way to dust off last week 's " episode . He was pleased that it show @-@ cased Michael as the " all @-@ knowing father figure whose mysterious ways pan out in the end . "