

= Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? =

" Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " is the twenty @-@ fourth and final episode of The Simpsons ' third season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on August 27 , 1992 . It was originally supposed to be the series première for the next season , but Fox decided to air it earlier , to promote the series première of Martin . Consequently , it became the unofficial finale of season three .

In the episode , Homer is awarded a US \$ 2 @,@ 000 compensation after the radiation from the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant causes him to become infertile . Meanwhile , Homer 's half @-@ brother , Herb , now living on the streets , comes to the Simpsons ' house with a plan on how to regain his wealth . He reluctantly turns to Homer for help , and asks for the \$ 2 @,@ 000 so that he can develop a new product that will translate baby babbling into speech . The product becomes hugely successful and Herb regains his fortune .

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Rich Moore . Danny DeVito guest starred in it as Herb , while Joe Frazier guest starred as himself . " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " was the second time Herb appeared on the show ; he had previously appeared in the season two episode " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " , in which Homer causes him to become bankrupt . The producers decided to create this episode in part because many fans were unhappy about the sad ending to " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " . " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " received positive reviews from critics and DeVito was praised for his guest performance .

= = Plot = =

A routine physical exam at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant reveals that safety inspector Homer Simpson has become sterile after being exposed to radiation . Fearing a lawsuit , plant owner Mr. Burns awards Homer with the " First Annual Montgomery Burns Award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Excellence " and a US \$ 2 @,@ 000 prize in exchange for a legal waiver freeing the nuclear plant of all liability . Joe Frazier is the host of the award ceremony , which features extraordinary extravagance in order to trick Homer into believing that it is a real ceremony .

The Simpsons cannot decide on what to do with the money ( suggesting an encyclopedia subscription , a new washing machine and dryer and a machine gun ) , especially Homer , who wishes to buy the Spinemelter 2000 ; an expensive vibrating chair . Herb , Homer 's half @-@ brother , now living on the streets , was the owner of a successful car manufacturer before he was ruined by Homer . After observing a mother unable to discern what her baby wants , Herb comes up with an idea to help regain his wealth : to create a machine that will translate baby babbling into actual English . Upon seeing a newspaper about Homer 's award ceremony , he decides to visit Homer . After getting cleaned up by the Flanders family , he requests the money to finance his project , though not before a slight loss of inhibition through punching Homer in the face , as Herb is still mad at him . He builds the translator and presents it at a trade show , which proves to be a huge success .

Along with returning the \$ 2 @,@ 000 to Homer , Herb buys several gifts for the Simpson family , including a new washer and dryer for Marge , a subscription to the Greater Books of Western Civilization for Lisa , and a lifetime membership to the NRA for Bart ( since he is too young to have the machine gun he mentioned earlier ) . Herb then tells Homer that his gift to him is forgiveness for ruining him in the first place , and he and Homer re @-@ establish a brotherly relationship . Finally , Homer is rewarded for his generosity and faith when Herb has a truck pull in with the " damn chair " , the Spinemelter , which Homer is ecstatic to receive . The episode ends with the family relaxing in the living room while Homer happily relaxes on the vibrating chair . The final shot is of Homer 's sperm , clearly jiggling , suggesting Homer 's sterility may eventually be cured with the massage chair .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Rich Moore . The reason for the late broadcast on August 27 , 1992 ( the season usually ends in May ) was because the Fox network decided to add an additional episode to the season and show it during the summer to become " the biggest network " on television . As a result , the writers , animators , and producers had to work longer hours than normal to be able to finish the extra episode , which became " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " The idea for the scenes involving the Spinemelter 2000 originated when one of the writers bought a vibrating chair to relax after working 20 hours a day on the episode .

The decision to make another episode with Herb was reached due to many viewers being unhappy about the sad ending to the previous episode " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " ( season two , 1991 ) , in which Homer causes Herb to become bankrupt . It was decided that an episode would be created in which he regains his fortune . Originally the producers were going to end the original Herb episode with Herb saying " I have an idea ! " at the end of it , but they decided to flesh this out into a full story , which resulted in " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " In addition , the producers decided that they enjoyed Danny DeVito 's guest starring as Herb in " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " , so they brought him back . Cast member Hank Azaria noted that DeVito was less enthusiastic in his second performance as Herb : " Some people come in and you can tell they kind of regretted doing it . The second time , Danny DeVito was like ' Yeah , yeah , yeah , let 's get it over with . ' He did a great job , but he didn 't enjoy the process . "

In part because the writers had so many ideas for what Herb would invent , the original script of " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " ended up being too long at fifty @-@ three pages . During the same time as the voices were being recorded , the writers cut some of the material . One of the cut scenes featured Herb running after a train in order to ask which Springfield it was going to ; the writers , however , decided to include a similar scene in a later episode , " Burns , Baby Burns " ( season eight , 1996 ) . There was originally a joke in the script that predicted the breakup of the Soviet Union ; however , as the Soviet Union already broke up between the writing of the script and the air time , the joke was scrapped .

Boxer Joe Frazier guest starred in the episode as himself . Show runner Al Jean has stated that Frazier was hard to record , especially him saying the word " excellence " in the title of Mr. Burns ' award . George Meyer , who directed Frazier , commented that he got the pronunciation right after almost 20 takes . The original script for " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " included a scene in which town drunk Barney Gumble knocked out Frazier , who is a Heavyweight Boxing Champion . Frazier 's son , however , objected to this scene : " Yes , I suggested that they change that . [ Frazier ] was a world champion , and a world champion does not get knocked out . My dad has only been knocked down twice , and that was by George Foreman . " Originally , the producers wanted Foreman to appear instead of Frazier , but he was unavailable .

= = Cultural references = =

The title of the episode and the plot , to a certain extent , is a reference to the common expression " Brother , Can You Spare a Dime ? " , a song of the Great Depression that has been recorded multiple times by artists since . The Walt Disney Company is referenced at the beginning of the episode when a homeless bum mutters to Herb : " Yeah , I used to be rich . I owned Mickey Mouse Massage Parlors , then those Disney sleazeballs shut me down . " While Homer relaxes in the Spinemelter chair at the store he sees images in his head that are a reference to the penultimate scenes of the film 2001 : A Space Odyssey . In one scene , Homer reminisces about sitting on his old couch while watching Dallas , the Hands Across America charity event , the Berlin Wall coming down , and Gomer Pyle , U.S.M.C .. The last scene where Herb presents the Simpsons family with gifts for their trust in him is a reference to the film The Wizard of Oz , in which the Wizard presents Dorothy , the Lion , the Scarecrow , and the Tin Man with gifts .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " finished 31st in the ratings for the week of August 24 ? 30 , 1992 , with a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 7 , equivalent to approximately 9 @. @ 76 million viewing households . It was the second highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network that week following the 44th Primetime Emmy Awards . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide were positive of the episode , particularly praising the scenes involving Homer 's fixation for vibrating chairs and Maggie speaking to the family through the baby translator . The Guardian 's David Eklid said episodes such as " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " , " Lisa 's Pony " and " Stark Raving Dad " make season three " pretty much the best season of any television show , ever . " The episode 's reference to 2001 : A Space Odyssey was named the 27th greatest film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum .

Herb 's reappearance was praised by reviewers of the episode . Nate Meyers of Digitally Obsessed stated that Herb is " a perfect sibling for [ ... ] Homer , with the two characters having a harmonious give @- @ and @- @ take comedic style . Indeed there isn 't a great deal of substance in John Swartzwelder 's script , but it is a great deal of fun with plenty of laughs to more than make up for this flaw . There is also a humorous cameo by Joe Frazier that puts a nice accent on the show . " Bill Gibron of DVD Verdict gave " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " a near @- @ perfect score of 99 / 100 , praising it for " the jokes about what the money could be spent on ( including one of the best bits ever in a Simpsons episode ? Homer sitting on a high @- @ tech vibrating chair ) and a good impetus to reintroduce Herb . "

Several critics have praised DeVito 's appearance . DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said he enjoyed seeing what happened to Herb , " and DeVito 's performance helps make the show more successful ; they really need to bring him back one of these days . " Tom Adair of The Scotsman considers " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " to be a classic episode of the show , in part because of DeVito 's performance . Gibron also liked the choice of DeVito as the voice of Herb as he is " almost the antithesis of everything Dan Castellaneta does with Homer vocally . " Ditum ranked DeVito 's performance as the tenth best guest appearance in the show 's history .