

= Bart of Darkness =

" Bart of Darkness " is the first episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 4 , 1994 . It was written by Dan McGrath , and directed by Jim Reardon . In the episode , Bart breaks his leg and becomes increasingly isolated in his room . He starts spying on the neighbors with a telescope and begins to suspect that Ned Flanders has murdered his wife . The episode was produced during the 1994 Northridge earthquake which delayed production by a month , and is largely a parody of the film Rear Window .

= = Plot = =

A heatwave in Springfield leads Bart and Lisa to persuade Homer into getting a swimming pool . To avoid months of persistence , he gives in instantly . Word soon spreads that the Simpsons have a pool and every child in the town comes to use the new facility . After being dared , Bart attempts an ambitious dive into the pool from the top of his treehouse , but gets distracted by Nelson , and falls and breaks his leg . This forces him to spend the rest of the summer wearing a cast and , unable to socialize with the other children , he retreats to his bedroom . His isolation slowly makes him more and more irritable and paranoid . Lisa loans Bart her telescope to entertain him . Soon , Bart hears a woman 's scream next door , and witnesses Ned Flanders burying something in his backyard and screaming " I 'm a murderer ! " He becomes convinced that Ned has murdered his wife Maude , and vows to reveal the truth .

Meanwhile , Lisa basks in the glow of her new popularity . However , Martin Prince gets a larger pool , and everyone abandons Lisa , leaving her inside the empty pool with no idea of how to get out . After Lisa apologizes to her brother for neglecting him , Bart asks Lisa to go and look for evidence of the murder while Ned is out of the house . When Ned returns early , Lisa becomes trapped in the Flanders house , eventually being cornered in the attic ; Bart painfully makes his way over there by himself , just in time to discover that Ned was actually storing an axe and not using it to threaten Lisa . Maude , as it turns out , is actually alive , and had gone to Bible Camp for the weekend , to learn to be more judgemental . The victim of Ned 's " murder " was merely her favorite plant , and the woman screaming actually came from Ned himself . Meanwhile , Martin 's swimming pool explodes after being full with too many kids , and everyone abandons him , although Nelson steals his bathing suit first . When the episode ends , Martin sadly sings " Summer Wind " to himself as he stands naked in the wreckage of his pool .

= = Production = =

Dan McGrath was chosen to pen the episode , while Jim Reardon directed . The episode was originally produced as the season finale of the fifth season , but was held over and aired as the premiere of the sixth . This was because , along with " Lisa 's Rival " , the episode was in production at the time of the Northridge earthquake of 1994 . The earthquake damaged much of the Film Roman building in which The Simpsons writing and animation staff worked , forcing them to move out for three months and continue production in a temporary building . David X. Cohen came in the weekend after the earthquake to see what had happened , and was told that " it was no more dangerous than it was before the earthquake , " as the building was " a ninety year old , decrepit shack . " The only staff members that came in expecting to work were future show runners Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein . As a result , the staff was given a month more than they would usually have had to work on the episode , which Reardon described as " greatly benefiting " it . Having been a director on the series for five years before this episode , he believed that this " was closer to what [he] was trying to achieve as a director than [he] had done before . " He credited this to the extra time , and used it to insert little details , such as having Bart get stuck on the fabric of the chair he was in , and wearing his underwear instead of a swimsuit .

Many of the heat wave jokes at the start of the episode were based on past events of the crew 's lives . The sitting in front of the fridge @-@ freezer joke , came from McGrath , who had done a

similar thing as a child . The Springfield Pool @-@ Mobile was based on a similar vehicle from David Mirkin 's childhood , where a truck with a " spinning cars " fairground ride on the back would often come around his neighborhood . Flanders ' feminine scream was performed by Tress MacNeille and not his regular voice actor Harry Shearer . Krusty 's mispronunciation of Ravi Shankar 's name was an ad @-@ lib , that Mirkin kept in after the editing process because he liked it so much .

= = Cultural references = =

The title of the episode is a reference to the novella Heart of Darkness by Joseph Conrad . The third act of the episode is largely a pastiche of Alfred Hitchcock 's Rear Window . As in the film , a wheelchair @-@ using Bart witnesses an apparent murder through his telescope , with musical cues from the film also being used . James Stewart 's character L. B. " Jeff " Jefferies appears twice , caricatured as he looks in the film . Also , the pictures on the wall of Jeff 's room are a racing car accident and a plane , the same as in Rear Window . The barn building scene with the onlooking Amish man is a reference to Peter Weir 's film Witness . The Itchy & Scratchy episode 's title is a reference to The Planet of the Apes , with the mutants being a reference to the Star Trek episode " The Menagerie " , as well as Beneath the Planet of the Apes . Itchy 's sealing of Scratchy behind a brick wall alludes to Edgar Allan Poe 's short story The Cask of Amontillado . At the end of the episode Martin sings Frank Sinatra 's " Summer Wind " . Springfield 's wax museum features models of The Beatles and the cast of M * A * S * H , and Bart plays Stratego on his own . The pool dance scene sees Lisa in a role like those of Esther Williams , while Bart 's play has similar elements of the works of Anton Chekhov . Dr. Hibbert is watching Jay Leno in his living room .

= = Reception = =

For season six , Fox moved The Simpsons back to its original Sunday night time of 8 p.m. , having aired on Thursdays for the previous four seasons . It has remained in this slot ever since . In this original American broadcast , " Bart of Darkness " finished 44th in the ratings for the week of August 29 to September 4 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 8 @. @ 9 and an audience share of 17 % . The episode was the third highest rated show on the Fox network that week .

Mike Duffy praised the episode , stating it showed that The Simpsons was " just as strong and funny as it ever was . " Elaine Liner of the Corpus Christi Caller @-@ Times praised the writing as " crisp , hilarious and multi @-@ layered " , praising its many cultural references and noting the " biting commentary " of Maude Flanders ' line " I was at Bible camp learning to be more judgmental . " Later reviews shared these sentiments . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , called it a " fine episode " and found that the " eventual explanation for [Flanders '] murderous behavior is hilarious . " Tim Knight called it " a terrific opener to the season . "