

= Treehouse of Horror =

" Treehouse of Horror " (originally known as " The Simpsons Halloween Special ") is the third episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on October 25 , 1990 . The episode was inspired by 1950s horror comics , and begins with a disclaimer that it may be too scary for children . It is the first Treehouse of Horror episode . These episodes do not obey the show 's rule of realism and are not treated as canon . The opening disclaimer and a panning shot through a cemetery with humorous tombstones were features that were used sporadically in the Treehouse of Horror series and eventually dropped . This is also the first episode to have the music composed by Alf Clausen , taking over for Danny Elfman who also wrote the show 's theme .

The plot revolves around three scary stories told by the Simpson children in the family 's treehouse . The first segment involves a haunted house that is based on various theatrical haunted houses , primarily The Amityville Horror and Poltergeist . In the second segment , Kang and Kodos are introduced when the Simpsons are abducted by aliens . In the third , Edgar Allan Poe 's " The Raven " is adapted . James Earl Jones guest starred in all three segments . The episode was received positively , being included on several critics ' " best of " lists . Critics singled out The Raven for praise , although Simpsons creator Matt Groening was concerned that it would be seen as pretentious .

= = Plot = =

On Halloween , Bart , Lisa and Maggie sit in the treehouse and tell scary stories , while Homer eavesdrops on them .

= = = Bad Dream House = = =

The Simpsons move into an old house , wondering at its low cost . Their questions are answered when the walls begin to bleed and objects begin to fly through the air , and Lisa senses an evil presence in the house . There is also a portal to another dimension in the kitchen . Marge expresses the desire to leave , but Homer asks her to sleep on it , due to the cost of buying the house . That night , the house possesses Homer and the children , manipulating their minds and making them chase each other with axes and knives . Marge unlike the others however , is instead using her knife to spread mayonnaise on a sandwich and intervenes , breaking the trance . Afterwards , Lisa discovers the source of the haunting - a Native American burial ground hidden in the basement . After the Spirit of The House threatens them again , Marge loses her patience and confronts the house , demanding that it treat them with respect during their stay . The house thinks it over , and eventually opts to destroy itself rather than live with the Simpsons .

= = = Hungry are the Damned = = =

The Simpsons are in their backyard having a barbecue when they are abducted by extraterrestrial life forms (specifically Kang and Kodos) . The aliens explain that they are taking the Simpsons to their home planet on Rigel IV , " a world of infinite delights , " for a ' feast ' . En route they present the family with enormous amounts of food and watch eagerly as they gorge themselves , then check their weights , being particularly delighted at Homer 's mass . Suspicious of the alien 's intentions , Lisa sneaks into the kitchen and finds a book titled How To Cook Humans . She takes the book and shows it to the aliens , who explain to her that part of the title was obscured by space dust , which they then blow away to reveal the title How To Cook For Humans . Lisa , skeptical at this , blows off more space dust , revealing the title to be How To Cook Forty Humans . The aliens blow off the last of the space dust , finally revealing the real title How To Cook For Forty Humans . Enraged at Lisa 's mistrust , they return the Simpsons to Earth , explaining that Lisa ruined the family 's chance at paradise on the aliens ' home planet . Homer and Bart agree with the aliens , but Marge tries to

explain to them that Lisa was just concerned for their family and didn 't know better . Even she agrees that Lisa sometimes needs to tone down her attitude and just ask .

= = = The Raven = = =

Lisa reads " The Raven " by Edgar Allan Poe . In this adaptation , Bart is depicted as the raven , Homer finds himself in the role of the poem 's lead character , while Lisa and Maggie are seraphim . Marge appears briefly as a painting of Lenore . James Earl Jones narrates .

The episode then returns to the treehouse and Bart , Lisa and Maggie , who are not frightened by any of the stories . They climb down from the treehouse and sleep peacefully the whole night . Homer , on the other hand , lies in his bed terrified . As he notices a raven outside the window similar to the one from the poem , Homer hides under the sheets and exclaims that he " hates Halloween " .

= = Production = =

Unlike a typical Simpsons episode , " Treehouse of Horror " is divided into three segments . It is the first in the Treehouse of Horror series of Halloween themed Simpsons episodes . It is considered to be non @-@ canon and takes place outside the normal continuity of the show . A Treehouse of Horror episode has since aired around Halloween every season . Part of the series ' attraction for the writers is that they are able to break the rules and include violence that would not make it into a regular episode . The episode was inspired by EC Comics horror comics , such as Tales from the Crypt . In the first segment , several haunted house films are parodied , including The Shining and The Amityville Horror . The haunted house being built on a burial ground is inspired by the 1982 film Poltergeist . The house was also designed to look like the Addams family house . The second segment 's cookbook is a reference to the 1962 The Twilight Zone episode " To Serve Man " . The third segment reimagines Edgar Allan Poe 's " The Raven " .

In 2011 , staff writer Al Jean commented on the episode : " The idea of it to parody EC Comics was really original and kind of shocking for a cartoon on network television . [Executive producer] Jim Brooks said , ' We better have a disclaimer at the beginning of this Halloween show , ' so Marge came out and warned people that they were going to see something scary . And the funny thing is it 's now very tame by our Halloween standards and by network animation standards . " According to M. Keith Booker , author of Drawn to Television , the warning only made the episode more attractive to children . The entire segment was a parody of the opening of the 1931 film Frankenstein . While similar " warnings " were used to open the second and third " Treehouse " episodes , these quickly became a burden to write and there was no warning for the fourth episode . Instead , it had Marge ask Bart to warn people how frightening the show was during his introduction paying homage to Night Gallery . The tradition was revived for " Treehouse of Horror V " ; after that , they were permanently dropped and the writers did not make any attempts at reviving them . In the opening segment of the episode , and the four subsequent episodes , the camera zooms through a cemetery where tombstones with humorous epitaphs can be seen . These messages include the names of canceled shows from the previous television season and celebrities such as Walt Disney and Jim Morrison . They were last used in " Treehouse of Horror V " , which included a solitary tombstone with the words " Amusing Tombstones " to signal this . The tombstone gags were easy for the writers in the first episode , but like Marge 's warnings , they eventually got more difficult to write , so they were abandoned . Of the series , " Treehouse of Horror " was the only one that included a treehouse as a setting . " Treehouse of Horror " was the first time that an alternate version of the theme that airs over the end credits was used . Originally it was supposed to use a theremin (an early electronic musical instrument) , but one could not be found that could hit all the necessary notes .

Alf Clausen , who has scored most of the Simpsons music , began his work on the show with this episode . The first segment , " Bad Dream House " , was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Wes Archer . The voice of the house was provided by cast member Harry Shearer . Jay Kogen

and Wallace Wolodarsky wrote the second segment , " Hungry are the Damned " , and Rich Moore directed it . Sam Simon wrote the third segment , " The Raven " , and David Silverman directed it . The segment was based on Edgar Allan Poe 's 1845 narrative poem " The Raven " . During production , Simpsons creator Matt Groening was nervous about " The Raven " because it did not have many gags , and felt it would be " the worst , most pretentious thing [they had] ever done " on the show . American actor James Earl Jones guest starred in the episode as a moving man , Serak the Preparer (one of the aliens) and the narrator of " The Raven " . He recorded his lines at the Village Recorder in West Los Angeles . To get the right drooling sound for the aliens , Jones chewed on a cookie close to his microphone .

The sibling aliens Kang and Kodos first appeared on the show on this episode . Every Treehouse of Horror episode since this one must have Kang and Kodos as characters , states an unofficial Simpsons rule . Despite this rule , the writers say the duo will often be forgotten and then added at the last second , leading to brief appearances . The idea of Kang and Kodos came from Kogen and Wolodarsky . In the script , Kang and Kodos were shown as " an octopus in a space helmet with a trail of goo " . The finished design was based on the cover of an EC Comics issue . Although originally designed to constantly drool , Groening suggested that they not drool all the time to make the animation process easier . However , the animators did not mind the work , leading to the drooling staying in the script . Kang and Kodos 's names are derived from two Star Trek characters . Kang was a Klingon captain portrayed by actor Michael Ansara in the episode " Day of the Dove " , whereas Kodos the Executioner was a human villain from " The Conscience of the King " . Harry Shearer voices Kang , and Dan Castellaneta voices Kodos .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Treehouse of Horror " finished 25th in ratings for the week of October 22 ? 28 , 1990 , with a Nielsen rating of 15 @.@ 7 , equivalent to approximately 14 @.@ 6 million viewing households . It was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , beating Married ... with Children . 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 , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , said the first two segments worked better than the third , " but this is a marvelous episode , and set a high standard for the Halloween specials to come . " In 2008 , Canwest News Service chose " Treehouse of Horror " as one of the top five scariest episodes from the television 's past . They singled out Marge saying " This family has had its differences and we 've squabbled , but we 've never had knife fights before , and I blame this house " as a memorable line from the episode . Two of the episode 's segments were singled out by critics as exemplary parts of the Treehouse of Horror series . " The Raven " was selected as the second best Treehouse of Horror segment by Ryan J. Budke of TV Squad in 2005 . Budke described the segment as " one of the most refined Simpsons pop references ever " and knows " people that consider this the point that they realized The Simpsons could be both highly hilarious and highly intelligent . " " Hungry are the Damned " was selected as the fifth best Treehouse of Horror segment by Eric Goldman , Dan Iversen and Brian Zoromski of IGN in 2008 . The IGN reviewers singled out the How to Cook for Forty Humans section of the segment as its funniest moment .

Critics also praised the episode 's relationship to various television shows and Poe 's " The Raven " . Michael Stailey of DVD Verdict described the three Treehouse of Horror segments as " brilliantly crafted tales capturing the best elements of The Twilight Zone , Outer Limits , and Alfred Hitchcock Presents , injecting them into the Simpsons ' universe . " DVD reviewer Doug Pratt described " The Raven " as a " perfect adaptation " . Kurt M. Koenigsberger said in his book Leaving Springfield that The Simpsons , while " not strictly a literary form " , " is certainly the literate of all situation comedies . " Koenigsberger uses " The Raven " as one example in support of the statement " The Simpsons is steeped in the American literary context into which Arnold Bennett made such a splash on his tour in 1911 . "