

= I Love Lisa =

" I Love Lisa " is the fifteenth episode of The Simpsons ' fourth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 11 , 1993 . In the episode , Lisa gives Ralph Wiggum a Valentine 's Day card when she sees that he has not received any . Ralph reads too much into Lisa 's gesture and , much to Lisa 's dismay , relentlessly pursues her with affection . Lisa snaps at Ralph and angrily tells him they are not together and that she never liked him . Heartbroken , Ralph channels his feelings into his performance as George Washington in the school 's President 's Day pageant . After a thunderous applause from the audience , he is able to accept Lisa as just a friend .

Frank Mula wrote the episode , and Wes Archer served as director . Michael Carrington guest @-@ starred as Rex . Al Jean , show runner of the episode , came up with the idea for the story when he remembered that he had received a valentine from a girl in third grade that read " I Choo @-@ Choo @-@ Choose You " . The episode was well received by critics ; Entertainment Weekly placed the episode twelfth on their top 25 The Simpsons episodes list . The episode received a Nielsen rating of 14 @.@ 9 and was the highest rated show on the Fox network the week it aired . The staff received an angry letter from a Vietnam veteran because of a flashback scene depicting the fatal shooting of a Vietnam soldier .

= = Plot = =

On Valentine 's Day in Springfield , Lisa 's class at the Springfield Elementary School construct paper mailboxes for the Valentine cards they are about to receive . When Ralph does not get any cards and breaks down in tears , Lisa hastily gives him a card out of sympathy . Ralph immediately cheers up , and develops a romantic interest in her . Ralph begins to annoy Lisa at every turn . Lisa tries to escape the situation by telling Ralph she is not ready to be romantic , but Ralph uses his position as Chief Wiggum 's son to get her tickets to Krusty the Clown 's upcoming 29th Anniversary Special , as well as a leading part for himself in a President 's Day pageant in which Lisa also stars . Ralph receives the role of George Washington opposite Lisa as Martha Washington .

With Homer having convinced Lisa that nothing can go wrong at Krusty 's show , Lisa and Ralph go together . On live air , Krusty begins interviewing audience members , and Ralph takes the opportunity to declare that Lisa is the love of his life and that he intends to marry her . Angry , Lisa snaps , stating that she had never liked him and that the only reason she gave him a Valentine was because nobody else would . Later at home , Bart takes the moment to replay that scene to Lisa in which Ralph is humiliated and deeply hurt . Lisa soon feels guilty and regrets her actions in hurting Ralph 's feelings .

On the night of the Presidents ' Day pageant , Lisa tries to apologize to Ralph , but he ignores her to focus on his role . Ralph proves to be a remarkably effective and eloquent actor , gaining the approval of the audience . Lisa approaches Ralph after the performance and apologizes for her actions . He accepts and she gives him a new card with a picture of a bee on it , reading " Let 's Bee Friends " . Ralph laughs at the pun and happily accepts the offer of friendship .

= = Production = =

This was the first episode Frank Mula wrote for The Simpsons . Mula had previously worked with Simpsons executive producer Sam Simon at another Gracie Films show . This was the first season four episode that Wes Archer directed . Jeff Martin and Mula wrote the music for the President 's Day pageant . Michael Carrington guest @-@ stars in the episode as Rex , the boy who auditions for the role of George Washington but is beaten by Ralph .

The story of " I Love Lisa " originated from a personal episode of Al Jean 's life ; when Jean was in third grade , he received a valentine from a girl that read " I Choo @-@ Choo @-@ Choose You " . Years later , Jean wondered if the girl had really liked him . He told writing partner Mike Reiss about it and they thought it could be an idea for an episode where Lisa could give such a valentine to

Ralph Wiggum , who would then take it too far . At that time , Ralph and Chief Wiggum were not established as being related . Jean thought it would be funny if Ralph was Wiggum 's son , considering both characters are " fat and dumb " . A technique the staff used to come up with stories and ideas was to think " what holiday haven 't we done on The Simpsons , or done lately ? " . As they had done several Halloween and Christmas episodes before , the staff liked the idea of doing a Valentine 's Day episode .

= = Cultural references = =

The songs " Monster Mash " (by Bobby " Boris " Pickett) and " Break On Through (To the Other Side) " (by The Doors) are featured in the episode . The orchestral version of Tony Bennett 's " Stranger in Paradise " can be heard in an Itchy and Scratchy cartoon . Homer 's conscience , which tells him that stealing is wrong , speaks with the voice of the fictional character Droopy . During the re @-@ enactment of the Abraham Lincoln assassination at the school pageant , Bart says " Hasta la vista , Abie " in reference to the film Terminator 2 : Judgment Day . The scene of Chief Wiggum sitting behind Krusty at an adult movie theater and Krusty thinking he is about to be arrested is a reference to Paul Reubens ' arrest for masturbating at a pornographic movie theater in Sarasota , Florida .

One of the clips from Krusty 's early TV shows features Robert Frost reading the first lines of his poem Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " I Love Lisa " finished eighteenth in the ratings for the week of February 6 to February 12 , 1993 , with a Nielsen rating of 14 @.@ 9 . The episode was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week . Since airing , it has received many positive reviews from fans and television critics . Entertainment Weekly 's Dalton Ross said the episode was both touching and humorous . He added that in the scene where Bart runs a videotape in slow motion to show Lisa how " you can actually pin @-@ point the second when [Ralph Wiggum 's] heart rips in half " , the audience does not really know " whether you 're shedding tears of laughter , empathy , or both ? you just know that it 's damn good any way you slice it . " The Arizona Republic 's Bill Goodykoontz named the episode one of his five favorites and highlighted Ralph 's line " and my doctor said I wouldn 't have so many nosebleeds if I kept my finger out of there " as one of the best lines in the history of the show . In a review of The Simpsons season four , Lyndsey Shinoda of Video Store cited " Brother from the Same Planet " and " I Love Lisa " among her " personal favorites " from the season .

Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , said their favorite scenes from the episode include Principal Skinner 's flashback to Valentine 's Day in Vietnam , the scene in which Chief Wiggum chases a duck to get his badge back , and the one where Bart and Milhouse play John Wilkes Booth and Abraham Lincoln at the school pageant . They added that those scenes were " just the icing on the cake of the main plot . " In 2003 , Entertainment Weekly placed the episode twelfth on their top 25 The Simpsons episodes list , and in 2008 placed the episode second on their top " 25 New Classic Holiday TV Episodes " list .

= = Controversy = =

When Principal Skinner tells the children at school that Valentine 's Day is not a joke (due to Bart fabricating candy hearts with mean insults) , he has a flashback in which he is sitting in a PBR somewhere in Da Nang in 1969 . On an oil drum next to him is a manila envelope and a photograph of Colonel Kurtz . Skinner sees Johnny , one of his army friends , holding a Valentine card and asks him , " Sending your chick a Valentine ? " , to which Johnny replies " Yep " , right before he is shot to death . Cutting back to the present , Skinner repeatedly calls out Johnny 's name in anguish , to

which a perplexed Bart states " Cool ! I broke his brain . " After the episode aired , a Vietnam veteran sent in a letter to the show that read , " I was watching the Valentine 's Day episode of your cartoon and I saw the horrifying Vietnam flashback . Do you really think this was funny , this horrible experience ? " The staff ignored the letter and , as Wes Archer pointed out , the scene was " an obvious " reference to Apocalypse Now even featuring characters that resembled Chef (Frederic Forrest) and Mr. Clean (Laurence Fishburne) . In contrast , Mark Groening ? the brother of Matt Groening and himself a Vietnam veteran ? " loved " the sequence as well as the episode .