

= Black Widower =

" Black Widower " is the 21st episode of The Simpsons ' third season , originally airing on the Fox network in the United States on April 9 , 1992 . It was written by Jon Vitti , directed by David Silverman , and saw Kelsey Grammer guest star as Sideshow Bob for the second time . In the episode , Sideshow Bob ? Bart 's archenemy ? marries Bart 's Aunt Selma . Bart believes that Bob is planning something sinister rather than marrying for love . He realizes that Bob is planning to kill Selma ; he prevents the attempted murder , and Bob is sent back to prison . " Black Widower " finished 39th in Nielsen ratings for the week that it originally aired . Reviewers generally enjoyed the episode , and gave Grammer 's portrayal of Sideshow Bob particular praise .

= = Plot = =

The Simpsons have dinner with Aunt Selma and her new boyfriend , Sideshow Bob , Bart 's arch @-@ enemy . According to Bob , while he was in prison he spent every moment planning his revenge on Bart for exposing his plan to frame Krusty the Clown ; after receiving Selma 's response to his " Prison Pen Pal " ad , he was inspired to become a model prisoner and earned an early release .

Bob proposes to Selma and she accepts . He makes an appearance at a Krusty the Clown telethon and makes amends ; Lisa encourages Bart to forgive Bob , but he refuses to believe he has changed . When Selma discovers that Sideshow Bob detests her beloved MacGyver , the marriage is nearly called off until he agrees to Homer 's suggestion to take a walk when Selma watches it .

Selma reveals that she is unconcerned about money , as she made a good profit in the stock market ; Bob tells her he hopes he is not marrying her for her money . She also reveals that she has no sense of smell or taste and has cut back on cigarettes , now smoking only after meals and after episodes of MacGyver . Selma sends the Simpsons a tape of their honeymoon , including Bob 's tirade over the absence of a gas fireplace in their hotel room . Bart realizes that Selma has one hour to live and the Simpsons rush to the hotel room .

In the hotel , when Selma retires to watch MacGyver , Bob enjoys a drink downstairs . The hotel room explodes behind him . He goes back to the wrecked room , assuming Selma is dead , but she is unscathed and the Simpsons are waiting for him along with the police . Bart explains how he deduced Bob 's plot : Bob opened the gas valve in the room knowing Selma would not smell the leak , then left while she watched MacGyver , knowing that Selma would light a cigarette afterwards and cause an explosion . Bob asks why the room still exploded if Bart foiled his plot . Chief Wiggum explains that he absent @-@ mindedly threw a match into the room after smoking a celebratory cigar . Bob is taken away by the police , vowing revenge .

= = Production = =

" Black Widower " was written by Jon Vitti , and directed by David Silverman . The staff wanted an episode involving a " mystery " , so executive producer Sam Simon approached Thomas Chastain , head of the organization Mystery Writers of America , to help construct the mystery . A number of clues leading up to the revelation at the end were inserted into the script so that the viewers would be able to solve the mystery on their own . As the episode was being written , the writers had their eyes towards winning an Edgar Award , which is awarded to the best mystery fiction in television and film published or produced in the past year . Despite their efforts , " Black Widower " did not win an Edgar Award .

In the episode , the writers echoed the premise of Wile E. Coyote chasing the Road Runner from Looney Tunes cartoons by having Bob unexpectedly insert himself into Bart 's life and attempt to kill him . Executive producer Al Jean has compared Bob 's character to that of Wile E. Coyote , noting that both are intelligent , yet always foiled by what they perceive as an inferior intellect . For " Black Widower " , director David Silverman updated the character model of Bob to reflect the animation of director Brad Bird . One of Bob 's friends from jail seen in the episode is Snake Jailbird . The

character first appeared in the season two episode " The War of the Simpsons " only as " Jailbird " , but his full name was first mentioned in " Black Widower " . The writers gave him the name Snake because of the snake tattoo on his arm , and the character has gone by that name ever since .

" Black Widower " was the second episode Kelsey Grammer guest starred in as the voice of Sideshow Bob . He had previously appeared in the season one episode " Krusty Gets Busted " , in which Bart gets Bob sentenced to jail for framing Krusty for armed robbery . Grammer initially expected Bob to be a one @-@ time role , but it eventually became one of the most popular roles he ever played , as Bob became a recurring character on the show . Grammer bases his Bob voice on theatre actor and director Ellis Rabb . He had once worked for Rabb , whose " lamenting tones became [ the ] foundation for Sideshow Bob . "

= = Cultural references = =

The episode begins with the family , except for Marge , watching a parody of the show Dinosaurs on television . The staff thought Dinosaurs was a knock @-@ off of The Simpsons , so at one point Bart exclaims " It 's like they saw our lives and put it right on screen , " and points at the television screen . Before she reveals to the Simpson family that Selma 's new boyfriend is Bob , Patty says there is something " disturbing " about him , which results in Lisa imagining him as being The Elephant Man . As Bob remembers his time in prison , a scene with him picking up road side trash is seen , referencing the film Cool Hand Luke . The music in the scene is a reference to the soundtrack of the film as well . Bob also remembers winning a Daytime Emmy Award in the " Best Supporting Performer in a Children 's Program " category . In Selma 's letters to Sideshow Bob , she refers to him by his prison number , 24601 , which is Jean Valjean 's prisoner number in the novel Les Misérables . The reunion between Krusty and Bob at the telethon is a reference to a surprise reunion between former comedy partners Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin on a 1970s telethon . The telethon logo features an Al Hirschfeld @-@ style caricature of Krusty .

" Black Widower " was the second episode to show Patty and Selma 's obsession with the character Angus MacGyver from the television show MacGyver , which has become a recurring joke on The Simpsons . When Sideshow Bob goes into the room to see Selma 's corpse , he turns around the chair , only to see Bart sitting in it . Sideshow Bob turns around and sees Selma in the doorway . These shots , from Bob turning the chair to Selma in the doorway , are a reference to the ending of the film Psycho . The music in the scene , written by composer Alf Clausen , is also a reference to Psycho . In Bart 's retelling of the story at the end of the episode , Homer 's shouts " To the Simpsonmobile ! " as the family rushes to the hotel to save Selma 's life . This is a reference to Batman 's Batmobile and his recurring catchphrase , " To the Batmobile ! " .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Black Widower " finished 39th in Nielsen ratings for the week of April 6 ? 12 , 1992 , making The Simpsons the third @-@ highest rated television series on the Fox network that week , after Married ... with Children and In Living Color . In I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn wrote that he considered the episode a " terrific show " , appreciating Grammer 's work in particular , and he also enjoyed the Dinosaurs gag and Bob 's reaction to McGyver , which he remarked " make the whole thing great fun " . Bill Gibron of DVD Verdict rated the episode 97 % , and considered it a " timeless treat " because of Sideshow Bob 's appearance , calling it " excellent from beginning to end " . Nate Meyers of the website digitallyOBSESSED rated the episode 3 out of 5 . He felt that the episode was " not a strong entry to the series " , noting that " the love story between Bob and Selma never seems to play as well as it should " . Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide remarked that later episodes of The Simpsons seasons were typically of lesser quality than episodes that appeared earlier in a season because of " general tiredness and the pressure of creating so many programs " . However , he found that " Black Widower " was an exception , noting that most episodes featuring Sideshow Bob rarely disappoint . Hock Guan Teh of DVD Town applauded Grammer 's performance

as Sideshow Bob in the episode , saying he could not " get over Sideshow Bob ´ s evil and conniving tone of voice , all delivered in a pseudo @-@ Anglophile accent " .