

= Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? =

" Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " is the fifteenth episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on Fox in the United States on February 21 , 1991 . In the episode , Grampa confesses that Homer has a half @-@ brother , whom Homer immediately tries to track down . He eventually discovers that his brother is Herbert Powell , a car manufacturer . Herb immediately starts to bond with Bart and Lisa , and he invites Homer to design his own car . Homer 's car design turns out to be a disaster , which causes Herb to become bankrupt .

The episode was written by Jeff Martin and directed by Wes Archer . American actor Danny DeVito provided the voice of Herb . The episode features cultural references to cars such as the Edsel , the Tucker Torpedo , the Ford Mustang , and the Lamborghini Cheetah . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 15 @.@ 4 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on Fox the week it aired . Some fans were upset with the sad ending of the episode , and as a result the producers decided to write a sequel , " Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " , in which Herb regains his fortune and forgives Homer .

= = Plot = =

After watching the latest McBain film , Grampa suffers a mild heart attack . Thinking he might die , he is prompted to confess a long @-@ hidden secret : Homer has a half @-@ brother . Grampa explains that he met a carnival prostitute before marrying Homer 's mother , and they had a son that they left at the Shelbyville Orphanage . Determined to find his brother , Homer and his family go to the orphanage and find out that Grampa 's love child was adopted by a Mr. and Mrs. Powell and named Herbert .

Herbert Powell , who looks just like Homer , except he is taller , slimmer and has more hair , is the head of the automobile manufacturer Powell Motors in Detroit , which is in need of new ideas . He is very rich , but is unhappy not knowing who he is and where he comes from . He is overjoyed upon hearing of his half @-@ brother and invites the entire Simpson family to stay at his mansion . Bart , Lisa , and Maggie are enthralled by Herb 's wealthy lifestyle and kind personality , although Marge constantly worries about spoiling her kids . Herb then decides that Homer , being an average American , is the perfect person to design a new car for his company .

Homer is given entirely free rein in the design , but is at first too timid to voice an opinion , as Herb 's designers begin to design the car with their own ideas in mind . When Herb gets word of this , he gives Homer a pep talk that sends him back to the designers determined to build the car with all sorts of weird effects like bubble domes , tail fins and several horns that play " La Cucaracha " . At the unveiling of the new car , Herb is horrified to find that the car is a badly @-@ designed and hideously styled monstrosity that costs US \$ 82 @,@ 000 , leaving Powell Motors bankrupt and out of business , while Herb 's mansion is foreclosed and he loses everything he ever worked for . As he departs Detroit on a bus , he angrily remarks to Homer that he would have been better off if he never met him and that as far as he is concerned , he has no brother . While Marge tries to console Homer , Lisa agrees with Herb and laments on his life before he discovered he was a " Simpson " . Grampa soon arrives and asks about Herb . Before Homer can even answer what happened , Grampa remarks to Homer that he knew " he 'd blow it " , and leaves in the cab he just arrived in , rather than getting in the car with the rest of the Simpson family .

While Homer drives the family home , Bart tells him that the car he built was great , and Homer becomes relieved to discover that at least one person liked it .

= = Production = =

" Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " was written by Jeff Martin and directed by Wes Archer . Both Homer 's mother Mona Simpson and Herb make their first appearances on The Simpsons in the episode . Some fans were upset with the sad ending of the episode , and as a result the producers decided to write a sequel in which Herb would be given a kinder fate . The resulting episode , "

Brother , Can You Spare Two Dimes ? " , aired at the end of the third season . In that episode , Herb briefly settled in the Simpson household , despite his intense continuing antipathy toward Homer . Homer loaned Herb US \$ 2000 , which Herb used to build an invention that translated infantile speech into comprehensible English , based on observations he made of Maggie . He proceeded to mass @-@ produce his new product and regained his fortune . He then bought each member of the family gifts and paid Homer back with a vibrating chair , along with his forgiveness .

The episode was recorded on August 13 , 1990 . The voice of Herb was provided by guest star Danny DeVito , an American actor who was suggested for the role by Simpsons executive producer Sam Simon . Bart 's voice actor , Nancy Cartwright , writes in her autobiography *My Life as a 10 @-@ Year @-@ Old Boy* that DeVito had to record his lines quickly because he had another appointment , so the staff focused on recording his scenes only instead of the whole episode at once . Cartwright was a fan of DeVito 's and recalls : " This morning , at the table read , I had just filled my plate with assorted fruits when Bonnie said to my backside , ' Nancy , I want to introduce you to ... ' and I turned and practically knocked over Danny DeVito , all four feet , eleven inches of him . How embarrassing ! " While recording the scenes , Cartwright stood directly across the room from DeVito , which she appreciated since she got to see him in action . She thought DeVito " threw his body and soul " into his performance . While the recording took part , animation director Archer scribbled down some of DeVito 's attitudes , gestures , and facial expressions on a piece of paper as he performed . In one scene of the episode , Herb tells Homer and the rest of the Simpson family to " [make] yourselves at home . We have a tennis court , a swimming pool , a screening room ... " Cartwright said of it :

This was obviously written with Danny in mind as I have no doubt that he actually has the aforementioned amenities in real life . He has earned his right to stand tall , and it wouldn 't have shocked me to see him spew attitude all over us if he wanted to . But he 's a hard worker and he concentrated on the job [...] As the episode came to its climax , we discovered that all the material things in the world don 't mean as much to Herb as being with family . Somehow I just get the feeling that this part was tailor @-@ made with Danny , the family man , in mind .

= = Cultural references = =

The storyline of a controversially styled car causing the company to fail both echoes that of the Edsel and the Tucker Torpedo , as well as the later DMC 12 . The Edsel was a controversially styled car that bore the name of Henry Ford 's son , Edsel Ford , and is now considered one of the biggest car flops in history . Production of the Tucker Torpedo , which introduced many new features , was shut down amidst scandal and accusations of stock fraud in 1949 . Homer wants the horns of the car he is designing to play the traditional Spanish folk corrido " La Cucaracha " . The Pope shows up for the unveiling of Homer 's new car . Herb berates his staff for suggesting that the company name a new car " Persephone " after the Greek goddess of fertility in Greek mythology . Herb tells the staff , " People don 't want cars named after hungry old Greek broads ! They want names like ' Mustang ' and ' Cheetah ' ? vicious animal names , " referencing the Ford Mustang and Lamborghini Cheetah cars .

The title of the episode is a reference the name of the fictional book " O Brother , Where Art Thou ? " in the 1941 film *Sullivan 's Travels* . Herb lives in a house that looks like American architect Frank Lloyd Wright 's house in Oak Park , Illinois , works in a studio that looks like the Taliesin school of architecture in Spring Green , Wisconsin , and his factory resembles the Johnson Wax Headquarters in Racine , Wisconsin , all three buildings designed by Wright .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " finished twenty @-@ sixth in the ratings for the week of February 18 ? 24 , 1991 . With a Nielsen rating of 15 @.@ 4 , equivalent to approximately 14 @.@ 1 million viewing households , it was the highest @-@ rated show on Fox that week .

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 , wrote that although it is " inevitable " that Homer 's car will be a disaster , the " joy of this episode is anticipating exactly what sort of disaster . " A member of the IGN staff wrote in a season two review that " Oh Brother , Where Art Thou ? " is one of the " real winners to be found in the second season . " Dawn Taylor of The DVD Journal thought the most memorable line of the episode was Homer 's idea of the perfect car , " You know that little ball you put on the aerial so you can find your car in a parking lot ? That should be on every car ! And some things are so snazzy they never go out of style ? like tail fins ! And bubble domes ! And shag carpeting ! "

DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson called the episode a solid episode and said that the introduction of Homer 's brother " could have been gimmicky , especially with a big @-@ name guest star like DeVito , but the concept fared nicely . " Jacobson added that he thought DeVito " brought spark to his part and made Herb fun and lively . The parts in which Homer developed his car were also hilarious and offered some of the show 's best bits . The program even showed some great little moments , like the hallmark Simpson five o 'clock shadow on infant Herb . " Jeremy Kleinman of DVD Talk said the episode " features another great guest voice , this time by Danny DeVito as the voice of Homer 's long lost brother Herb , who reenters Homer 's life and solicits his ' common man ' prospective in building a car . Once again , Homer 's sentimentality comes through . " Total Film 's Nathan Ditum ranked DeVito 's performance as the 10th best guest appearance in the show 's history .

On June 29 , 2013 , Porcubimmer Motors debuted a real @-@ life version of " The Homer , " the car that was designed by Homer in this episode , at the 24 Hours of LeMons race in Buttonwillow , California .