

= Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " =

" Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " is the eighth episode of The Simpsons ' tenth season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 6 , 1998 . In the episode Grampa 's kidneys explode , leaving him in urgent need of a donor . His son Homer initially agrees to donate one of his kidneys , but after hearing of side effects of only having one kidney , he begins to have second thoughts about the operation .

" Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " was directed by Mike B. Anderson and written by John Swartzwelder , although the episode 's premise was pitched by former staff writer George Meyer . Meyer also pitched the sequence involving the " ship of lost souls " , which received mixed reactions from The Simpsons staff members . The episode contains references to Night of the Living Dead and North by Northwest , among other things . In its original broadcast , the episode was seen by approximately 7 @. @ 2 million viewers and finished in 54th place in the ratings the week it aired . Following the release of The Simpsons - The Complete Tenth Season , " Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " received mixed reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

Homer decides to take Marge and the kids down to Bloodbath Gulch , a ghost town turned tourist destination . On their way there , Homer 's car breaks down , right in front of the Springfield Retirement Castle , leaving Grampa to assume that they have come to visit him on his birthday . Homer tries his hardest to start the car up again , but is eventually forced to take Grampa with them after he is able to reach them . While in the town bar , Grampa drinks too much sarsaparilla and just as the family is leaving , says he needs to go to the bathroom . Homer refuses to stop , saying that he needs to get home in time to watch an episode of Inside the Actors Studio featuring F. Murray Abraham . Grampa is forced to hold it in for hours and as a result , his kidneys explode . Homer ignored this at first , thinking he needed a new muffler for the car . Dr. Hibbert informs the family that Grampa does not have much time to live , and that the only way he can be saved is if Homer donates one of his kidneys . Homer happily agrees , and is admired and pampered for it by his wife and kids . However , he becomes frightened after finding out about the risks involved in the operation and , while he makes it to the hospital , jumps out a window at the last minute .

Guilt @-@ ridden and ashamed , Homer deems himself unworthy of living amongst civilized people and decides to start a new life at sea , climbing aboard Captain McAllister 's ship , described as " the ship of lost souls " (though the back of the ship reads , " Honeybunch " , because McAllister never painted over the name) . While there , he meets several strange people including a man who looks and sounds like Peter Lorre , who have their own tales of misery . Homer tells them his story but is kicked off of the ship when he mentions that he ran away and left his father to die . Homer eventually drifts back to shore , where he witnesses a father and son build a sand castle and laments how he never had such a relationship with his own father or his kids . Homer decides determinedly to rectify his mistake and takes off for the hospital , trampling the sand castle in the process .

Homer arrives in time , reconciling with Grampa and apologizing for his behavior , but ultimately panics and flees again when Dr. Hibbert says " ... this may sting a little " . Homer 's mad dash from the hospital is stopped by an oncoming truck . While the driver (Hans Moleman) manages to hit the brakes just in time , one of the cars it was carrying slides off and lands on Homer . Homer later wakes up in traction in a hospital bed , and is greeted by Dr. Hibbert , Marge and the kids . Believing Grampa is dead , Homer sadly vows to visit his grave after he gets better . However Grampa , who is alive and well , appears in the doorway and declares that he 's never felt better . From the sheepish look of the others in the room , Homer looks down and discovers that , while he was unconscious , they took out one of his kidneys . Angry at first , Homer vows to get it back , but settles down after his family tells him that he did the right thing for Grampa . They engage in a group hug , and Homer proceeds to consider Bart as a potential donor for himself .

= = Production = =

" Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Mike B. Anderson . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 6 , 1998 . Although it was written by Swartzwelder , the idea for the episode was pitched by former staff writer George Meyer . Nevertheless , the episode still contains several " classic Swartzwelder moments " according to executive producer Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , including Homer escaping on a handcart and the line " this is everybody 's fault but mine " . Because the episode contained several scenes of the Simpsons driving , the animators " orchestrated " the scenes by using several different backgrounds . At one point in the episode 's setpiece , an arranged gunfight is seen . In the gunfight , there would originally be a man saying " Look , up on the roof , it 's a prostitute " and shoot her . Although he thought the gag was funny , Mike Scully , an executive producer and the showrunner for the episode , cut it because the word " prostitute " had already been uttered " at least a dozen times in the episode " . According to Scully , the Fox censors objected to showing Grampa giving Homer NyQuil in order to sleep . Scully compromised it by not showing the NyQuil label in the episode . The music that plays during the establishing shot of Springfield Hospital is based on the theme music from Ben Casey , an American medical drama series from the 1960s .

The sequence involving the " Ship of lost souls " was also pitched by Meyer . It was the last part of the episode to be animated , and was completed in one week . The Simpsons staff were split on whether to include the sequence in the episode at all , with series creator Matt Groening being notably hesitant . " I was very worried about that when I saw the script , " he said in the DVD commentary for the episode . Meyer was also unsure of the sequence : " You don 't see it coming at least , " he said , " I don 't know if it was totally successful . " Scully thought fondly of it however , calling it " very inspired " . The English soldier , French man and the tuxedo @-@ wearing man on the ship were both portrayed by main cast member Dan Castellaneta , who also plays Homer among other characters in the series . The woman on the ship was voiced by American voice actress Tress MacNeille . Honeybunch , the name of the sea captain 's boat , was pitched by Scully 's brother Brian Scully . The name came from Scully 's father , who used to call his wife Honeybunch as a term of endearment .

In a scene in the episode , the Simpsons , outside the Springfield Retirement Castle , try to turn on their car , while Grampa is slowly walking towards them . The scene parodies the 1968 film Night of the Living Dead , with Grampa acting as a zombie from the film . The dancing robots in the Western bar were based on English charity campaigner Heather Mills , while the robot cowboy chasing the robot dancer around in a circle on the bar 's balcony is a reference to a scene in the original Pirates of the Caribbean ride at Disneyland , where the pirates chased women in a similar fashion . The design and voice of the tuxedo @-@ wearing man in the " Ship of lost souls " were based on Austrian @-@ American actor Peter Lorre . Also , the bride is loosely based on Miss Havisham from Great Expectations . The scene of Homer nearly getting hit by a car during his second escape from the hospital is a reference to a scene in the 1959 Alfred Hitchcock film North by Northwest , in which Cary Grant 's character is almost hit by an oncoming truck . American actor Larry Hagman is also mentioned in the episode , when Dr. Hibbert says that Hagman took all the kidneys and livers needed for donors , while Homer states his desire to watch the episode of Inside The Actor 's Studio featuring F. Murray Abraham . The hospital intercom calls for a " Doc Martens " and a " Dr. Bombay " , referring to the British footwear brand and character from the sitcom Bewitched respectively .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast on December 6 , 1998 , " Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " received a 7 @. @ 2 rating , according to Nielsen Media Research , translating to approximately 7 @. @ 2 million viewers . The episode finished in 54th place in the ratings for the week of November 22 @-@ December 6 , 1998 . It tied with a new episode of the ABC program Brother 's Keeper . On August 7 , 2007 , the episode was released as part of The Simpsons - The Complete Tenth Season DVD box set . Matt Groening , Mike Scully , George Meyer , Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , Ron

Hauge and Mike B. Anderson participated in the DVD 's audio commentary of the episode .

Following its home video release , " Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " received mostly mixed reviews from critics . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood of I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide called it " An odd episode [...] that goes on a bit too long and could probably have done with an entertaining B story . " They added that " Homer 's running away is funny the first time , but by the second , it 's lost its impact . " They concluded by writing that " The biggest joke comes from Grampa 's need to go to the lavatory on the way back from the ghost town . Which isn 't that funny at all , really . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson described the episode as a " snag " . He wrote : " " Kidney " offers all the components that should make it good , but it never quite achieves a level higher than average . " He added that " Despite a few funny moments , this one largely leaves me cold . " Digital Entertainment News ' Jake MacNeill wrote that the episode " runs out of steam " after its first act , and considered it to be one of the season 's worst episodes . On the other hand , giving the episode a positive review , Peter Brown of If described " Homer Simpson in : " Kidney Trouble " " as one of the season 's best episodes . The episode 's reference to North By Northwest was named the 24th greatest film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum .