

= Skinner 's Sense of Snow =

" Skinner 's Sense of Snow " is the eighth episode of The Simpsons ' twelfth season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 17 , 2000 . In the episode , a snowstorm traps the students with principal Seymour Skinner and Groundskeeper Willie in Springfield Elementary . When Skinner uses his army skills to control the students , they overthrow him and take over the school . Meanwhile , Homer and Ned set out to rescue the children using Ned 's car .

" Skinner 's Sense of Snow " was written by Tim Long and directed by Lance Kramer . While the episode 's premise is based on an occurrence in Long 's childhood , the setpiece came from staff writer Matt Selmán . Because the episode takes place in winter , Kramer found it difficult to animate . It features references to Smilla 's Sense of Snow , The Deer Hunter and Kristi Yamaguchi , among other things . In its original broadcast , the episode was seen by approximately 8 @. @ 8 million viewers , finishing in 33rd place in the ratings the week it aired . Following the home video release , the episode received mostly positive reviews from critics .

= = Plot = =

While the Simpsons attend a French Canadian circus called " Cirque de Purée " , a wild blizzard hits Springfield , turning it into a snowsquall overnight . However , Springfield Elementary School stays open regardless of the storm , even though every other local school closes . Only some students , including the classmates of Bart and Lisa , show up while Skinner and Willie are the only faculty members at the school that day . To pass the time , Skinner plays his professed favourite film , a very low @-@ budget , long @-@ running , 1938 holiday movie called " The Christmas That Almost Wasn 't , But Then Was " . When the kids try to leave school , however , snow has piled up , trapping the kids inside with Skinner and Groundskeeper Willie , much to their horror .

Skinner tries to keep the children under control , forcing them to stay together in the cafeteria and eat apples , relish and ( only if they behave well enough ) mayonnaise and will not let them go home until the snow melts . After Nelson tries to escape , Skinner unearths his U.S. Army memorabilia and is reminded of the days when he commanded respect from his troops . Skinner tries to command respect from the students , and briefly succeeds after threatening to hang them in their clothes on hooks on the wall if they rebel . Bart tries to tunnel his way out , but Skinner stops him , and after Willie refuses to destroy the tunnel , Skinner tries to , but is stuck in the resulting cave @-@ in . The students rebel and eventually tie Skinner up in a dodge ball bag . They then set about ' going nuts ' such as racing trolleys in the school hallway , even burning numerous books in the school 's library .

Meanwhile , Homer , with the help of Ned Flanders , sets out to rescue the children but crashes Flanders ' car into a fire hydrant , which sprays water that freezes the car in place . Homer 's repeated gunning of the accelerator causes carbon monoxide to flood the front of the car . Flanders and Homer get high from the fumes and wildly hallucinate . While the trapped children go wild with power , Skinner uses the school hamster , named Nibbles , to get a message to the outside world . Nibbles makes it to Ned and Homer , breaking the window and reviving them : they crash into a salt silo , melting the snow around the school and badly rusting the car but freeing the kids in the process .

Superintendent Chalmers appears and is ready to blame Skinner for the school 's current poor state when Bart takes the place , amending things with Skinner . As he and Lisa leave with Homer and Ned , Homer starts hallucinating again making him see Lisa as a camel and Bart as a dancing girl . Homer tries to kiss Bart , who tries his best to escape , causing the car to lose control and crash , and camel Lisa , then says " Merry Christmas from the Simpsons " !

= = Production = =

" Skinner 's Sense of Snow " was written by Tim Long and directed by Lance Kramer . It was first broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on December 17 , 2000 . The idea for the episode came from Long . One winter during his childhood , Exeter , Ontario , where Long lived ,

was hit by a blizzard . Much to his dismay , Long found out that all schools except Exeter Public School , which he went to , got closed ( in the U.S. , schools are closed entirely at the County or District level , so the real @-@ life situation did not apply here , as it was shown Principal Skinner had the authority to open the school and even to have Otto work his usual bus route ) . Eventually , Long and his classmates were snowed in with the school 's staff . " It was hellish , but then became a sweet thing " , he said . " A couple of the dads braved the cold and brought us food on snowmobiles . So it was sweet . " Two years after Long pitched the premise , staff writer Matt Selman pitched the episodes setpiece , which revolves around the Simpsons ' visit to Cirque du Purée . " I pitched [ the setpiece ] to Tim [ Long ] when we were pitching around ideas " , Selman said in the episode 's DVD commentary . " And I said , ' What about a Cirque du Soleil parody ? ' " The staff then decided to combine the two stories , and production on " Skinner 's Sense of Snow " ensued .

In order to make a faithful rendition of the circus , director Kramer asked the animators to watch a showing of Cirque du Soleil in Santa Monica , but they declined the offer . Regardless , executive producer and former showrunner Mike Scully found that the animators did an " amazing " job animating the setpiece . Because the episode takes place in winter , the animators faced some challenges that they would not have with any other episode . " It just adds another element " , Kramer said about episodes taking place in winter , " People 's clothes have to get tugged in the wind if it 's windy . And you have to make sure the snow is consistent because [ ... ] It 's like a character . If it 's a big snowflake in one scene and then tiny ones where it 's snowing too hard in the next scene ... It 's not gonna work . " The scratches and bad quality of " The Christmas That Almost Wasn 't , But Then Was " were added in by the Post @-@ Production Department , led by Alex Duke . " Our Post @-@ Production Department never gets enough credit , " Scully said , " But they 'll take a film like [ ' The Christmas That Almost Wasn 't , But Then Was ' ] and make it all scratchy and make it look really old . They always do a great job . " The woman in " The Christmas That Almost Wasn 't , But Then Was " was portrayed by Tress MacNeille , while the clown in the Cirque du Purée was voiced by Hank Azaria . The song that plays when Homer and Ned are driving to the school is " Feel Like Makin ' Love " by English rock band Bad Company . Originally , the series ' staff wanted to use " Rock and Roll All Nite " by American rock band Kiss , but they failed to obtain the rights to use it .

= = Cultural references = =

Although the episode 's title is a reference to the Danish mystery novel Smilla 's Sense of Snow , there are no other allusions to the book in the episode . In the episode 's setpiece , the Simpsons visit a circus called Cirque du Puree . The circus is a reference to the Canadian entertainment company Cirque du Soleil . In the film " The Christmas That Almost Wasn 't , But Then Was " , one of the hobgoblins has a similar singing voice as American singer Nelson Eddy . Having just found out that they are trapped in the school , Skinner says " I don 't care if you 're Kristi Yamaguchi - no one leaves the building " . According to Long , the line was written by either Dana Gould or George Meyer , both of whom are former staff writers . While wreaking havoc in the school , Milhouse can be seen doodling a mustache on a picture of Warren G. Harding , the 29th President of the United States . While ordering Skinner to humiliate himself , Bart says " Di , di , mau " . This is a reference to the 1978 drama film The Deer Hunter , in which the Vietcong says the line to their captives . One of the books that the children burn in the school 's library is the 1944 children 's novel Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes .

= = Release = =

In its original American broadcast on December 17 , 2000 , " Skinner 's Sense of Snow " received an 8 @. @ 7 rating , according to Nielsen Media Research , translating to approximately 8 @. @ 8 million viewers . The episode finished in 33rd place in the ratings for the week of December 11 @-@ 17 , 2000 , tying with an episode of the ABC sitcom The Drew Carey Show . Since its broadcast ,

the episode has been released twice on home video . On November 2 , 2004 , it was released along with " Homer vs. Dignity " , " Dude , Where 's My Ranch ? " and " ' Tis the 15th Season " as part of a DVD set entitled The Simpsons - Christmas 2 . On August 18 , 2009 , the episode was again released as part of a DVD set called The Simpsons : The Complete Twelfth Season . Matt Groening , Mike Scully , Ian Maxtone @-@ Graham , Tim Long , Matt Selmán , David Mirkin , Max Pross and Lance Kramer participated in the audio commentary for the episode .

Following its home video release , " Skinner 's Sense of Snow " received mostly positive reviews from critics . In his review of The Simpsons : The Complete Twelfth Season , DVD Verdict 's Mac McEntire wrote that , while he prefers " down @-@ to @-@ Earth " episodes , the more " outrageous " episodes like " Skinner 's Sense of Snow " are the ones that are " standouts " . He added that the episode " provides a lot of solid ' cool kids versus dorky adults ' comedy " , and that the setpiece was the best part of the episode . Matt Haigh of Den of Geek described the episode as " gold " , and considers it to be one of the season 's best episodes . The staff of The Journal , while reviewing The Simpsons - Christmas 2 DVD set , described the episode as " memorable " , and John McMurtrie of the San Francisco Chronicle cited it as " great " . Elizabeth Skipper , another reviewer for DVD Verdict , wrote that most episodes that center around Skinner are " a sure thing " , and that " Skinner 's Sense of Snow " is no exception . Both Aaron Beierle and Jason Bailey of DVD Talk argued that " Skinner 's Sense of Snow " is one of the best episodes of the season . On the other hand , giving the episode a mixed review , Colin Jacobsson of DVD Movie Guide described the episode as " mediocre " . Although he found the children 's revolt against Skinner amusing , he argued that the premise was not used to its full potential . He concluded his review by calling it " a fairly average program " .