

= Half @-@ Decent Proposal =

" Half @-@ Decent Proposal " is the tenth episode of The Simpsons ' thirteenth season . It first aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 10 , 2002 . In the episode , to earn money for her husband Homer 's snoring problem , Marge agrees to stay with her old prom date , Artie Ziff , for one weekend ( on the grounds that he try not to grope her like he did in " The Way We Was " ) , but when Homer thinks Marge broke her promise , he runs away with Lenny to work on an oil rig .

Although the episode was written by Tim Long , the idea for the episode was pitched by series ' co @-@ creator and executive producer James L. Brooks . The episode was directed by Lauren MacMullan , who ordered several complicated sequences from the animators , leading to some tensions among The Simpsons staff . The episode 's plot and title is based on the 1993 film Indecent Proposal , and the episode also features references to M \* A \* S \* H , Midnight Cowboy and Five Easy Pieces . The episode features Jon Lovitz as Artie Ziff , the first time he portrayed Ziff since the season 4 episode " The Front " .

In its original broadcast , the episode was seen by approximately 7 @.@ 5 million viewers and finished in 36th place in the ratings the week it aired . Since its original broadcast , " Half @-@ Decent Proposal " has received mostly positive reviews from critics , some of whom considered it among the best episodes of the season . However , the episode has also been criticized for parodying Indecent Proposal nine years after its release , a criticism which the episode 's showrunner Al Jean responded to in the episode 's DVD commentary .

= = Plot = =

Marge is irritated when Homer 's snoring ( so loud , it can be heard throughout most of the city ) keeps her up at night . She sees Dr. Hibbert about the problem , and asks about a surgery , but he says it is expensive and tells them to get out when Homer asks him to do it for free . Developing a sleep problem , she sleeps for a night with Patty and Selma , and hears on the news that her old boyfriend , Artie Ziff , is one of America 's five richest people . She drunkenly dictates an e @-@ mail to Artie to congratulate him on his appearance , but Patty and Selma doctor it to use sexual terms in an attempt to split up Marge and Homer , much to Marge 's horror ( for using the word sex on the Internet ) . Artie , who over the years seems to have developed a rather frightening obsession with Marge ( his house is decorated with a large number of ' Marge ' sculptures / paintings ) , flies in his helicopter to the Simpson house to see Marge .

After arriving , Artie offers Marge a \$ 1 million proposal to spend a weekend with him , just to see what life would be like if they were married . Marge initially rejects the offer , but eventually can no longer stand Homer 's snoring . She chooses to spend the weekend so she can get the money for the surgery . They have a good time until Artie tricks Marge into making out with him against her will in a reenactment of their prom during the 70 's made to mirror the one they attended in " The Way We Was " ( with even its original attendants who were paid by Artie to show up disguised as they were at that time ) . Homer , having just anxiously arrived to check up on them , sees Artie kissing an unwilling Marge and , unaware of the true premises , is devastated , and leaves with Lenny away from Springfield . Lenny seems similarly dejected about his relationship with Carl ; he and Homer get a job in an oil field in West Springfield , a likely death spot for the two of them . On the way there , they discuss the loves they left behind . All cacti resemble Marge to Homer , and Lenny mournfully points out the image of Carl that he carved on a mountain one blissful summer . Meanwhile , Marge leaves Artie furiously , only to discover what Homer had done when she gets home . She finds he is not there and that he had left a tape behind .

While working on an oil rig , Lenny and Homer accidentally set fire to an ant , who in turn sets fire to all her ant companions , who jump in a puddle of oil to extinguish the flames . Their brief sighs of relief are replaced with screams as the whole rig catches fire . Marge goes with Artie along with Carl to West Springfield to save Homer and Lenny . At first , they are reluctant , as Homer still thinks that Marge and Artie are having an affair , and Lenny feels that there is nothing for him in Artie 's

helicopter . However , Artie finally admits defeat to Homer , saying that winning Marge 's love was something that he could never accomplish , even with his billions , and Homer jumps on the ladder to the helicopter . Carl reveals that he is in the helicopter , and Lenny also jumps on to be saved , just before the rig collapses . Homer and Marge 's marriage is also apparently saved when Artie offers a solution to Homer 's snoring problem , a device which converts snoring to music . However , Artie 's voice is soon heard through the device 's speaker , giving Marge anti @-@ Homer subliminal messages and eventually saying that he is watching her through a camera .

= = Production = =

" Half @-@ Decent Proposal " was written by consulting producer Tim Long and directed by Lauren MacMullan . Serving as assistant director for MacMullan was Raymond Persi , who later became , according to current showrunner Al Jean , one of the series ' " best regular directors " . The episode was first broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on February 10 , 2002 . The idea for the episode was pitched by James L. Brooks , who is one of the series ' co @-@ creators and executive producers . He suggested an episode in which Artie Ziff returns and offers Homer a million dollars in exchange for spending a weekend with Marge , trying to convince her to divorce Homer . He also wanted the episode to parody the film Indecent Proposal . Ziff 's wealth had been established in the season 4 episode " The Front " , in which it was revealed that he had become " stinking rich " . The setpiece of " Half @-@ Decent Proposal " , in which Homer 's snoring is keeping Marge awake during the night , was pitched by Long 's ex @-@ girlfriend . Originally , at one point in the episode , there would be a sequence in which Homer travels to Silicon Valley in the wheel well of a jet . The sequence was based on a news story that the Simpsons writers were " really obsessed with " . The episode was one of the first to suggest that Lenny and Carl have an intimate relationship . This revelation garnered scrutiny from the series ' fans , who , according to Jean , were " very angry " over it .

" Half @-@ Decent Proposal " was animated in a very complicated manner . In the DVD audio commentary for the episode , director MacMullan stated that a couple of sequences in the episode were " reaching too far " for the animation process to be " reassembled correctly " . One example , she mentioned , is the scene in which Marge remembers Ziff 's assault from " The Way We Was " . Ziff 's assault is shown as hands reaching for Marge , and was put together by MacMullan in postproduction . Right after Marge 's sisters Patty and Selma send an e @-@ mail to Ziff , the e @-@ mail 's path is elaborately shown through a " trip through the computer wires " . MacMullan stated that , even though she found the scene " illogical " , she maintained that it was " done with great effort " . Because the characters at Ziff 's prom had to wear 70 's styled wardrobe , the animators had to come up with new designs for the character 's clothes . Several of the designs were pitched and drawn by Ron Hauge , a former Simpsons writer who was responsible for coordinating character designs on the series for many years . The dance that Ziff performs at the prom was pitched by MacMullan , and the prom locale was drawn using a photo reference . A scene in the episode shows Homer and Lenny signing on to become oil workers . The manager who hands them a paper clip can be seen smoking , and originally , MacMullan suggested that the manager " puts his lit cigarette out in the [ oil ] can [ next to him ] , and blows his other arm off . " She pitched the idea to Jean , who responded by writing " I wouldn 't . " The episode 's complicated and lengthy animation process was so strenuous that it led the Simpsons animators to start calling MacMullan " Lauren MacMultiplane " .

" Half @-@ Decent Proposal " features the return of Artie Ziff , and the first time since the season 2 episode " The Way We Was " that he was portrayed by American comedian Jon Lovitz . Even though Ziff appeared in the season 4 episode " The Front " as well , Lovitz was not available during the episode 's recording session , and the character was instead voiced by Dan Castellaneta , who is one of the series ' main cast members . Jean stated that Lovitz , who has voiced a variety of characters on The Simpsons before , is one of the staff 's " favorite guest @-@ stars " . The episode also features the first and only appearance of Baron von Kissalot . In the episode , Marge is charged \$ 912 for a taxi drive back to Springfield . She sarcastically tells the taxi driver to send the bill to "

Baron von KISSLOT", who turns out to be a real person. The character, which was pitched by former show runner David Mirkin and portrayed by Castellaneta, has become one of the writers' favorites and was series animation director Jim Reardon's favorite joke of the entire season. Castellaneta also voiced a couple of the ants who are put on fire at the oil tower. The Simpsons staff debated whether the ants would speak or make any sound at all, with series co-creator Matt Groening being notably hesitant to them being voiced.

== Cultural references ==

The title, as well as the episode's premise, is based on the 1993 drama film *Indecent Proposal* and follows the story of the film loosely. The channel BHO is a reference to the real-life television network HBO. Moe's line "He [Artie Ziff] is like a spy in the house Moe" is based on The Doors song "The Spy" from the Morrison Hotel album. The ball in Ziff's manor points back to a scene in the season 2 episode "The Way We Was", in which Marge danced with Ziff. Believing that Marge and Ziff will get married, Homer says that he'll "never be born", a line from *Back to the Future*. Comic Book Guy has several items of merchandise from the Star Wars franchise in his room, including sheets, pictures and a Jar Jar Binks doll.

When Marge leaves with Artie, she sees that Homer has spelt the words "Keep Your Clothes On" as a direct reference to the M\*A\*S\*H season finale, *Goodbye, Farewell and Amen*. In the video that Homer recorded for Marge, Homer holds two toys. The one in his left hand is a "Funzo", a fictional toy which first appeared in the season 11 episode "Grift of the Magi". The fictional area of "West Springfield" is modeled after the American state Texas (purposely once again a red herring to where Springfield is based - it seems to be right next to Texas, until Lisa states that West Springfield is "Three times the size of Texas"). The scene in which Homer and Lenny are travelling to West Springfield is a reference to the last scene in the 1969 drama film *Midnight Cowboy*. The music heard during the scene is also made to resemble the theme from said film. The scene in which Homer and Lenny are working in an oil rig is a reference to the 1970 film *Five Easy Pieces*. The song produced by Artie's invention at the end of the episode is *Sweet Dreams (Are Made Of This)*, originally by The Eurythmics.

== Release ==

In its original American broadcast on February 10, 2002, "Half @-@ Decent Proposal" received a 7 @.@ 1 rating, according to Nielsen Media Research, translating to approximately 7 @.@ 5 million viewers. The episode finished in 36th place in the ratings for the week of February 4 ? 10, 2002, beating such shows as *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Philly* and *Will & Grace*. On August 24, 2010, the episode was released part of *The Simpsons: The Complete Thirteenth Season* DVD and Blu-ray set. Al Jean, Ian Maxtone-Graham, Matt Selman, Tim Long, Dan Castellaneta, Lauren MacMullan, Matt Warburton and James Lipton participated in the audio commentary of the episode.

Six years after the episode's original broadcast, Robert Canning of IGN gave the episode a 9 / 10, describing it as "amazing". He especially liked Lovitz' performance Artie Ziff, calling it "pitch @-@ perfect" and that one of his favourite lines "stands out" because of Lovitz's "great delivery". Canning also enjoyed the prom scene as well as Lenny and Carl's implied intimate relationship, which he described as "a completely unexpected treat". He summarized the episode as "top @-@ notch" and wrote "The writing was smart and tight, and instead of a B storyline, the half @-@ hour was filled out with a number of great throwaway gags [ ... ] It's true we may have never expected to see Artie Ziff again, but "Half @-@ Decent Proposal" was a welcome and very funny return." In January 2010, following the conclusion of *The Simpsons*'s twentieth season, IGN chose "Half @-@ Decent Proposal" as the best episode from the thirteenth season, and following the thirteenth season's home video release, reviewer R.L. Shaffer called it one of the season's "gems [ ... ] with good reason". Both Michael Hikerson of *Slice of SciFi* and Rosie Fletcher of *Total Film* considered "Half @-@ Decent Proposal" to be one of the season's best episodes, with

Fletcher calling it a "stand @-@ out" . Casey Broadwater of Blu @-@ ray.com gave it a positive review as well , describing it as a "strong character @-@ centric episode" .

On the other hand , giving the episode a mixed review , Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide called it "mediocre" . Although he praised Lovitz ' return as Ziff , and though he did not consider it to be one of the season 's worst episodes , Jacobson criticized it for not "hav [ ing ] a lot of zing" . Ron Martin of 411Mania wrote a negative review , calling it a "yearly episode just with different tempters each time" . Adam Rayner of Obsessed with Film criticized the episode 's references to Indecent Proposal , calling it a "rip @-@ off" of the film . Furthermore , he wrote that the episode "manages to be worse [ than ] that dire movie [ Indecent Proposal ]" . "Nate Boss of Project @-@ Blu also criticized the episode 's similarity to Indecent Proposal , calling it "late to the party" . He wrote : "Like South Park imitating the WWE in its 13th year , about 12 years past when it hit its prime , The Simpsons makes an Indecent Proposal themed episode . " Boss also described the episode as "played out , " and criticized it for having "unfunny characters ( Artie Ziff ) , who appear far more often than they should . " In the DVD commentary for the episode , Jean defended The Simpsons ' writers ' choice to base the episode 's story on Indecent Proposal , eight years after the movie was released . He argued that rather than lampooning a current film that will get parodied on other television shows anyway , it is more "interesting" to make an episode based on a story that "people may not be familiar with" .