

= Bart 's Comet =

" Bart 's Comet " is the 14th episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . The episode originally aired on Fox in the United States on February 5 , 1995 . In the episode , Bart Simpson accidentally discovers a comet , which is heading towards Springfield . The show 's writing staff saw an issue of Time magazine which presented the threat of comets hitting Earth on its cover , and decided to create an episode in a similar vein . John Swartzwelder wrote the script , while Bob Anderson directed . " Bart 's Comet " contains references to Where 's Waldo ? and The Twilight Zone , and received positive commendations from reviewers .

= = Plot = =

After Bart sabotages Principal Skinner 's weather balloon by adding a Skinner @-@ shaped flag that reads " Hi , I 'm Big Butt Skinner " to it , Skinner decides to punish him by having him help with his amateur astronomy , which he engages in at 4 AM before school starts . Skinner dreams of finding something in the sky and having it named after him . When the weather balloon drifts by the playground , Skinner runs off to catch it , leaving Bart unattended with the telescope . Bart accidentally locates a comet which is named after him , much to the consternation of Skinner , who loses both his chance at having a celestial body named after him , and the grip on the weather balloon , causing it to fly off again . Scientists soon discover that the comet is heading straight for Springfield . Professor Frink plans to launch a missile at the comet , dispelling everyone 's fears (save only by Lisa , who knows that this plan can backfire , and Moe , because in any circumstance , his tavern will be destroyed anyway) . However , the missile flies past the comet , instead blowing up the only bridge out of town , dooming the people .

After a Congressional bill to evacuate Springfield is defeated due to a congressman attaching a bill to help fund " the perverted arts " to the evacuation bill , Homer decides that they should stay in the bomb shelter that Ned Flanders built . Anticipating this , Ned had built it large enough for both families . One hour before Springfield is destroyed , the rest of the townspeople arrive , demanding a place in the bunker . Homer is unable to close the door and someone has to leave . Homer decides that the only thing the " world of the future " will not need is left @-@ handed stores and tells Ned to go . Ned tells Rodd Flanders to shoot him if he tries to come back in before leaves the bomb shelter , Moe decided that they should play a barnyard noise guessing game to pass the time ; however , it causes a huge argument .

Eventually , Homer feels guilty and leaves as well , followed by the other townspeople and they all converge on a hill with Ned to await death . As the comet enters the atmosphere , it burns up in the thick layer of pollution over Springfield , popping Skinner 's weather balloon and destroying Ned 's bunker on the way . The town decides to burn down the observatory to prevent a similar incident from ever happening again . The Simpsons , however , are more worried at the fact Homer correctly predicted the fate of the comet---that it would burn up and fall to earth as a rock no bigger than a Chihuahua 's head (it even lands next to an actual Chihuahua for comparison) .

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Bob Anderson . After seeing an issue of Time magazine , which presented the threat of comets hitting Earth on its cover , the writing staff decided to have an episode based on the concept of a comet hitting Springfield . They fleshed out the episode 's plot over several days and Swartzwelder then set about writing the details of the script . According to showrunner David Mirkin , examples of " Swartzwelder humor " in the episode include the American fighter pilots mistaking Groundskeeper Willie for an Iraqi jet and cutting to Grampa and Jasper outside a 1940s General store . For the bomb shelter scene , the mass of townspeople was constructed on multiple layers so that it was easier to animate .

Kent Brockman 's list of gay people is composed of the show 's production staff , who had to sign legal agreements that they would not sue their own show . As a result , according to Groening ,

many of the staff appear on lists of gay people on the Internet . The episode marks the first appearance of Database , a character show creator Matt Groening dislikes if he is used for anything more than one line .

Mirkin considers the episode to be one of his all time favorites , calling it a " perfect Simpsons episode " due to the size of the plot , emotion and observational humor .

= = Cultural references = =

The couch gag is a reference to the animation of Fleischer Studios . The constellation of the Three Wise Men is a drawing of the The Three Stooges . The townspeople yanking their collars after the rocket destroys the only bridge out of town is a reference to Charles Nelson Reilly 's performance in The Ghost & Mrs. Muir . Waldo from Where 's Waldo ? appears near the top @-@ left of frame during the first group shot in the bomb shelter , imitating the style of the Where 's Waldo ? books . The bomb shelter scenes were based on The Twilight Zone episodes " The Shelter " and " The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street " . The episode makes references to Back to the Future , including when Professor Frink accidentally sets his town model on fire , just like Doc Brown . The Super Friends are named after the 1970s cartoon of the same name and as the comet approaches Springfield , the townspeople sing " Que Sera Sera " , a song originally recorded by Doris Day for Alfred Hitchcock 's 1956 film The Man Who Knew Too Much .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Bart 's Comet " finished joint 33rd (with The X @-@ Files and Hangin ' with Mr. Cooper) in the ratings for the week of January 3 to February 5 , 1995 , with a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 3 . It was the fourth highest rated show on the Fox network that week .

Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , called it an " excellent episode " and praised the " great moment when the ever @-@ pious Maude Flanders happily sacrifices her Neddy . " Mikey Cahill of the Herald Sun picked the episode 's chalkboard gag " Cursive writing does not mean what I think it does " as one of his favorite chalkboard gags in the history of the show . Colin Jacobson of DVD Movie Guide said in a review of the sixth season DVD that he did not " share the same level of enthusiasm for it " as Mirkin , concluding : " I think it provides a consistently strong show . It stretches reality a bit , but that ? s not a problem ? or unusual for the series ? and the program ends up as a positive one . " Ryan Keefer of DVD Verdict gave the episode a B- . In the July 26 , 2007 issue of Nature , the scientific journal 's editorial staff listed " Bart 's Comet " among " The Top Ten science moments in The Simpsons " .