

= Holidays of Future Passed =

" Holidays of Future Passed " is the ninth episode of the twenty @-@ third season of the American animated sitcom The Simpsons . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 11 , 2011 . Most of the episode is set thirty years into the future , when Bart and Lisa take their children with them to Homer and Marge 's house over Christmas , while a pregnant Maggie goes into labor . Bart has divorced his wife Jenda and is struggling to become a better father for his two boys , while Lisa has trouble connecting with her rebellious teenage daughter Zia . The Simpsons creator Matt Groening made a minor uncredited cameo appearance as a sports commentator shouting " goal ! " during a football (soccer) game .

Originally written as a potential series finale , the episode has received highly positive reception from television critics who often cited it as the best episode of the season . It has been particularly praised for its humor and for its emotional scenes , such as one where Bart and Lisa sit in their old treehouse and talk about how difficult parenting is . During the original broadcast , " Holidays of Future Passed " was watched by about 6 @.@ 43 million people . Since then , it has garnered attention in the media for a segment taking place thirty years in the future in which it is implied that the city of Dearborn , Michigan is " still under sharia law " . Commentators have had mixed opinions on what the segment is mocking , whether it is the increasing Islamic influence in the US , specifically in Dearborn , or rather those who are thinking that Dearborn is under sharia law in December 2011 , the time that the episode aired .

= = Plot = =

After stuffing themselves with turkey on Thanksgiving , it is time to take the annual Christmas card family photo , and when Bart and Lisa complain about it , Marge notes that they will grow to appreciate the photos when they become older and have children of their own . Lisa questions why Marge would assume they will even have children in the first place , and the episode jumps thirty years into the future via a series of Simpsons Christmas cards . The photos finally settle on a future where Bart is a jobless , divorced dad with two sons whom he does not see often ; Lisa is a successful businesswoman who is married to Milhouse and has a rebellious daughter named Zia ; and Maggie is the lead singer of a famous band and in the late stages of pregnancy . In his apartment , Bart is visited by his sons , who inform him that their mother Jenda teleported them to his place because she wants him to act like a proper father by having him spend time with them . However , he plans on dropping them off at his parents ' house instead . Meanwhile , Lisa fears that Zia is spending too much of her time going into the " Ultranet " , a digital world that people enter with their consciousness by plugging themselves into a laptop . Milhouse suggests to Lisa that she spend time with Zia in order for them to have a better connection , so Lisa decides to take Zia to her parents ' house . Meanwhile , Maggie flies home from London to Springfield to celebrate Christmas with her parents .

When Bart and Lisa arrive at their parents ' home , they stay there with their children . Unfortunately for Lisa , she only gets unhelpful advice from Marge on how to be a better parent , while Zia continues to go into the Ultranet . A furious Lisa ignores it and accuses Marge of being a bad parent . She tells her belief that it 's the parents right to butt in their children 's lives regardless . Marge gets mad at Lisa for her accusations and their conflicting styles of parenting causes a rift in their relationship . Meanwhile , Bart is heartbroken to find out that Jenda has remarried while he has not found anyone new . Feeling depressed , he tells Homer to take his grandsons out . The boys become angry with their father for not spending time with them , but the two have a great time with their grandfather . Bart and Lisa then encounter each other in their old treehouse , where they become slightly drunk and talk about how difficult parenting is . Lisa admitted she had an affair with Nelson a couple of times when Milhouse was away . After exchanging inspirational advice , they realize that they need to try harder to connect with their children . Lisa comes into Marge 's room to apologize for her earlier behavior that made both of them get angry with each other . Marge understands how stressed out Lisa 's been with a lack of communication she has with Zia and finally

offers her some helpful advice . Meanwhile , upon arriving in Springfield , Maggie starts experiencing contractions and Kearney , now a taxi driver , drives her to the hospital .

Homer takes Bart 's sons to a cryonics facility where Grampa has been frozen alive to prevent a disease from killing him . Although a cure has now been discovered , he is kept frozen by Homer because it is cheaper than paying for a nursing home and because Grampa has constantly been rude to him . Homer says to the boys that they should give their father another chance , since he knows Bart loves them . At that point , Bart arrives and apologizes to his sons , admitting how much he treasures them . Touched , the two boys forgive him for not having included them in his life much , while an inspired Homer decides to unfreeze Grampa and forgive him as well . Meanwhile , Lisa goes into the Ultranet to find Zia and discovers a door leading into Zia 's private world . Entering it , Lisa is overjoyed to find that Zia has hung a poster of her next to a series of posters depicting historical women who have made a difference in the world . When Zia arrives , Lisa thanks her for looking up to her and the two reconcile at last , and secretly hides her life as a party poser . With the conflicts resolved , Bart and Lisa gather their children in preparation for a new Christmas family photo . Marge arrives with Maggie , who has given birth to a baby girl . The Simpsons gather into a group just as the family pets (who have evolved greatly over the past thirty years) take the new photo .

= = Production = =

The episode , titled " Holidays of Future Passed " , was written by J. Stewart Burns and directed by Rob Oliver . It was first announced to the press at the Comic @-@ Con convention in San Diego , California on July 23 , 2011 , during a panel with the producers of The Simpsons . " Holidays of Future Passed " is the eleventh episode of the series with a Christmas theme , and the fourth episode set in the future (the others being " Lisa 's Wedding " from 1995 , " Bart to the Future " from 2000 , and " Future @-@ Drama " from 2005) . Originally there was a joke in the episode about a meltdown occurring at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant in the future ; however , it was cut following the 2011 T?hoku earthquake and tsunami that resulted in several nuclear accidents in Japan .

The Simpsons creator Matt Groening made a minor cameo in the episode , though his appearance is not mentioned in the closing credits . In the episode , a robot examines the health of Maggie 's fetus . Maggie 's band is present , and one of the band members presses a button on the robot 's " face " , which is a screen showing its facial expressions , and a football (soccer) game comes on instead . A sports commentator , voiced by Groening , gives a long " goal ! " shout that is heard over the game . According to The Simpsons music editor Chris Ledesma , as the episode was being recorded , " there were only sounds of crowd cheering during that shot and Matt said we needed to spice it up somehow . " After going through some different ideas , the staff settled on a commentator shouting " goal ! " . The staff members wanted Groening to provide the voice and he finished the recording in two takes .

In a 2013 interview with former show writer Conan O 'Brien , Jean stated that this episode was intended to serve as a series finale in the case that cast negotiations earlier in the year forced the show to end .

= = Release = =

" Holidays of Future Passed " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 11 , 2011 . The episode was watched by approximately 6 @.@ 43 million people during this broadcast , and in the demographic for adults aged 18 ? 49 , it received a 3 @.@ 0 Nielsen rating and a seven percent share . This was a decrease from the previous episode , " The Ten @-@ Per @-@ Cent Solution " , which received a 4 @.@ 0 rating . However , that episode was preceded by a popular National Football League game that helped increase its rating . " Holidays of Future Passed " became the most @-@ watched broadcast in Fox 's Animation Domination lineup for the night in terms of total viewers , finishing higher than new episodes of the three series Family Guy (6 @.@

10 million) , The Cleveland Show (5 @. @ 07 million) , and American Dad ! (5 @. @ 00 million) . It also became the second highest @-@ rated broadcast among adults aged 18 ? 49 , being exceeded only by the Family Guy episode which received a 3 @. @ 1 rating . For the week of December 5 ? 11 , 2011 , the episode placed twentieth in the ratings among all prime @-@ time network broadcasts in the 18 ? 49 demographic .

= = = Critical reviews = = =

Since airing , " Holidays of Future Passed " has received highly positive reviews from television critics , particularly for its humor and emotional scenes . In his list of " The 50 Best TV Episodes of 2011 " , BuddyTV 's John Kubicek placed the episode at number forty @-@ nine , writing that the " various glimpses of how all the other characters have changed during the time jump was a cavalcade of comedy moments . " Rex Huffman of The Times @-@ Reporter cited it as " an amusing episode " , and Ology 's Josh Harrison described it as " legitimately funny " . Harrison noted that " seeing so many futuristic versions of familiar characters put an interesting spin on the holiday season . " He also commented : " The whole episode hinges on a surprisingly heartfelt scene that sees Bart and Lisa ? both a bit sloshed ? meeting up in the treehouse to discuss the challenges of parenting . " Similarly , Hayden Childs of The A.V. Club wrote that " Holidays of Future Passed " found " a sweet spot that combined a barrage of non @-@ stop jokes with a tenderness often lacking in latter @-@ day Simpsons episodes . There is even a conversation between the adult Bart and Lisa that rings surprisingly true for adult siblings wrestling with their shared familial past . "

Writing for HitFix , Alan Sepinwall cited " Holidays of Future Passed " as the best future @-@ set episode of The Simpsons since the first one , " Lisa 's Wedding " . He noted that it was " the emotional side of things " that made the episode successful , such as the dissatisfaction Bart and Lisa feel because of their disconnection with the children , and also Homer 's transformation into a " very wise , sweet guy after somehow surviving into old age . " Sepinwall particularly praised the scene at the cryonics facility where Homer encourages the children to give Bart another chance as " really sweet " , and he described the idea of a frozen Grampa as " a clever variation on the very familiar joke of how Homer and the family neglect [Grampa] because he 's such a pain in the ass . " Sepinwall also commended the episode for its jokes about the future , highlighting the scenes revolving around air travel as well as the scenes showing Krusty as " the Andy Rooney of 2041 " and Ralph Wiggum as " an endless series of stupid clones who keep killing one another . " In February 2012 , " Holidays of Future Passed " was listed by Matt Zoller Seitz of New York magazine as one of " Nine Latter @-@ Day Simpsons Episodes That Match Up to the Early Classics " . He noted that the " reconciliations between Bart and Lisa and their kids are moving . "

At the 64th Primetime Emmy Awards in 2012 , " Holidays of Future Passed " was nominated for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program (for Programming Less Than One Hour) .

= = = Response to Islamic references = = =

A segment of " Holidays of Future Passed " was inspired by a controversy over the growing Islamic influence in the city of Dearborn , Michigan , which , according to Bill Gallagher of WJBK , has " a significant Muslim community " . The biggest mosque in the United States is also located there . During the segment in question , set in Milhouse and Lisa 's future home , Milhouse tells Lisa that he has started to feel the symptoms of his seasonal allergies now that Christmas has arrived . He is apparently allergic to Christmas @-@ related things such as holly , mistletoe , and the red part of candy cane . Lisa advises Milhouse to go and stay in Michigan over the holidays , where Christmas is not celebrated because it is " still under sharia law . " Milhouse agrees to do this , but complains that they always make him wear a veil there , pointing to a photo on the wall in which he is standing outside of the University of Michigan ? Dearborn dressed in a burqa .

In a news report about this segment that aired on WJBK , Gallagher noted that it " poked fun at the untrue and unfounded notion that somehow Muslim sharia law prevails in Dearborn . " Dawud Walid

, head of the Michigan branch of the Council on American @-@ Islamic Relations , commented in the report that The Simpsons " is a very prolific show . Now [it] is addressing this anti @-@ sharia fear mongering issue , and perhaps it may gain some currency and ... more people will make fun of it . " The segment was met with mixed reception from students at University of Michigan ? Dearborn . A number of them were interviewed by Gallagher in his report . One student said : " It 's pretty cool showing how ridiculous the hate is . I think it 's pretty funny , " while another noted : " I don 't think it 's a good thing [to mock anti @-@ Islamic bigotry] because we can change it by talking , not making fun . "