

= Mountain of Madness =

" Mountain of Madness " is the twelfth episode of The Simpsons ' eighth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 2 , 1997 . In the episode , Mr. Burns tries to encourage more cooperation among his employees and forces the workers of Springfield Nuclear Power Plant to go for a team @-@ building hike in the mountains . Burns and Homer are paired together and trapped in a cabin that gets buried by multiple avalanches .

" Mountain of Madness " was directed by Mark Kirkland and written by John Swartzwelder . The script underwent many rewrites and the story was completely rewritten . Several new designs and backgrounds had to be created for the wilderness scenes . The episode received mostly positive reviews .

= = Plot = =

Mr. Burns decides to hold a good old @-@ fashioned fire drill in order to excite things up around the plant . Upon hearing the bells ring , the employees panic and fail to clear the plant within 15 minutes . Outraged , Burns declares that everyone will be subjected to a teamwork competition at Mt . Useful . Homer brings his family to the mountain , not realizing it was only for employees , so he leaves them in the visitor center . Homer ends up being partnered with Burns while Smithers has to journey on his own , fuming that he was not paired with his boss . The object of this competition is to reach a cabin at the top of the mountain ; the last team to arrive will be fired .

Along the way , Burns talks Homer into cheating and they use a snowmobile (which Burns refers to as a " horseless sleigh ") to reach the cabin . Arriving several hours early , they settle down in the comfortable surroundings . Burns and Homer quickly become friends . However , while clinking their champagne glasses , they inadvertently cause an avalanche that buries the entire cabin . Despite Burns 's attempt to operate a telegraph machine or Homer 's attempt to dig a tunnel through the snow , they remain trapped . The pair attempt further tunneling escapes , but each time they speak , they cause more avalanches that place even more snow between them and freedom . Meanwhile , Bart and Lisa meet Smithers and offer to help him proceed to the cabin , though they cause more stalling than helping .

Back in the cabin , Burns and Homer are beset by cabin fever . They build snowmen to pass the time (though Burns insists they build real men out of snow) and clothe them at the expense of their own warmth . The other employees reach what appears to be their destination ; however , it is actually a ranger station and they begin to realize that something bad has happened to their colleagues . In the cabin , Homer and Burns stare at each other 's eyes , filling their minds with paranoia . They are both driven mad and attempt to kill each other . After a vicious struggle , Burns ignites the cabin 's propane tank , launching the building out of the snow and propelling it toward the horrified onlookers . Once it comes to a halt , Mr. Burns reminds everyone of the contest , and all the workers hurry inside .

Lenny is the last person in the cabin , and is told he is fired . Burns is informed the completion time of the competition has set a new record , and then decides that no one will be fired after all (although Lenny , who is outside and falls into a crevasse , does not know that) . The episode ends with Mr. Burns and Homer alternately laughing and glaring at each other .

= = Production = =

" Mountain of Madness " was written by John Swartzwelder , although the script underwent many rewrites . According to Josh Weinstein , " a Swartzwelder script is like a finely tooled crazy German machine and if you have the wrong engineers try to fix it , it blows up . And that 's the thing , ' cause it had great jokes but we sort of changed the story and went through a bunch of drafts . " The story was completely rewritten and as a result , the plot became odder and quirkier with the scenes of paranoia deriving from this . The original script was " really crazy " but a lot of the more insane material was cut . However , most of the rewrites were done during the script @-@ writing and did

not require any major animation changes . One change was the ending , which was added after the animatic . The episode features several pairings of established characters who had previously interacted little , such as Smithers with Bart and Lisa . Weinstein feels that this was one of the first episodes to really feature the duo of Lenny Leonard and Carl Carlson and developed them more .

The episode was directed by Mark Kirkland and a lot of new designs and backgrounds had to be created for the wilderness scenes . The backgrounds were designed by animator Debbie Silver . The design of the forest ranger was based on then @-@ Vice President Al Gore . In the episode , Marge watches an old film which includes a comment from naturalist John Muir . The impression of Muir was done by Dan Castellaneta , who originally based the voice on an impersonator he met at Yosemite National Park . However , the producers asked him to make the voice older and crazier .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Mountain of Madness " finished 38 in ratings for the week of February 2 ? 9 , 1997 , with a Nielsen rating of 8 @.@ 8 , equivalent to approximately 8 @.@ 5 million viewing households . It was the second @-@ highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following King of the Hill . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , called it " an inventive episode , with several memorable moments " . Tim Raynor of DVDTown.com said there are some " good , sidesplitting moments to say the least for this witty episode " . DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson called the episode " a good show " and praised it for the " snowy setting [that] allows the other characters to expand as well " .