

= Realty Bites =

" Realty Bites " is the ninth episode of the The Simpsons ' ninth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on December 7 , 1997 . The episode sees Marge becoming a real estate agent , while Homer enjoys Snake 's car . It was written by Dan Greaney and directed by Swinton O. Scott III .

This episode has the final speaking appearance of Lionel Hutz , five months before the death of Phil Hartman . The episode 's development grew out of a desire by the writers to do a show focused on Marge , where her job did not work out . The episode received positive mention in the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , and is featured in the special 2003 DVD release The Simpsons : Risky Business .

= = Plot = =

Homer drags Marge to a police seized @-@ property auction . While there , he buys Snake 's car , the Li 'l Bandit . Upon seeing this , Snake vows to kill Homer . After the auction , Marge encounters Lionel Hutz , who has become a realtor . Marge decides to try the job for herself and begins to work for Hutz at Red Blazer Realty . She tells prospective buyers her honest opinion about the houses she shows them .

Due to her honesty , Marge does not sell any homes . Hutz tells her to use more positive descriptions when selling the houses , and also tells Marge if she does not sell a house in the first week , she will be fired . Marge tries to bend the truth , but fails as she just cannot lie to others . Marge does not disclose the entire truth of the house she sells to Ned Flanders and his family , which had been the site of a multiple homicide . The Flanders purchase the house and bid farewell to the Simpsons .

Meanwhile , Snake escapes from the prison and jumps into the Li 'l Bandit to get the car back from Homer . They start fighting each other to gain control of the moving car , and Chief Wiggum starts chasing them .

Feeling guilty about her deception and concerned for the Flanders ' safety , Marge goes to check on them at their new house . There , she tells them the truth about the murders , but they are not annoyed . Ned and Maude are pleased to be a part of Springfield 's history , and refuse Marge 's offer of returning the deposit . Unfortunately , the house is destroyed seconds later when Li 'l Bandit and Wiggum 's police car crash through the house . Marge returns Flanders ' down payment . Hutz , irritated at the damage costs and especially by the return of the money , fires Marge . At the end of the episode , Homer takes Marge to the government unemployment office to collect a welfare check .

= = Production = =

The writers wanted to do a " Marge episode " , but one where her job does not work out , unlike previous episodes . The episode marks the first appearance of Gil Gunderson , voiced by Dan Castellaneta , and Cookie Kwan , voiced by Tress MacNeille . Excuses were made by the writers to bring back Gil in future episodes based on Castellaneta 's performance at the table read , which proved popular with the staff . Snake 's prison number is 7F20 , the production code of " The War of the Simpsons " , the episode in which he first appeared .

The piano wire scene was meant to end with Kirk 's sandwich being sliced just the way he wanted , until George Meyer suggested that his arm be cut off instead . Mike Scully described the ensuing laughter at his suggestion as the most intense he had ever heard from the staff , saying : " They were literally choking because the joke was so unexpected . It was a shocked kind of laugh , and it just started rolling , one of those laughs that build the more they reverberate through you . " In the unemployment line , the unemployment recipient with the bucket hat and the beard is a caricature of George Meyer . Due to Phil Hartman 's death , the recurring characters of Lionel Hutz and Troy McClure were retired . As such , this episode is the last speaking appearance of Hutz , with him only

being featured as a background character in some future episodes . McClure 's final appearance would be in " Bart the Mother " , the third episode of season ten .

= = Cultural references = =

The title of the episode is an allusion to the 1994 movie Reality Bites . Gil Gunderson is based on Jack Lemmon 's portrayal of Shelley Levene in the 1992 film Glengarry Glen Ross .

At one point in the episode , Snake sets up a wire across a road to decapitate Homer as he drives by . The wire is supplied by " Acme " , after the brand of equipment used by Wile E. Coyote to try and stop Road Runner in the Looney Tunes cartoons . When Ned Flanders explains to Marge that they were painting Todd 's room red , Todd starts saying " Red room , red room " and moves his finger , like the character of Danny does in the film The Shining .

When Lionel Hutz reads the list of wrecked items to Marge , it is a tribute to the Lethal Weapon movies . The newspaper front page reporting the " Jealous Jockey Murders " carries the statement " Mrs. Astor safe " beneath the headline . This is a reference to the front page of The New York Times on April 15 , 1912 , reporting the sinking of the RMS Titanic three days earlier whilst assuring that " Ismay safe , Mrs. Astor maybe " .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " Realty Bites " finished 21st in ratings for the week of December 1 ? 7 , 1997 , with a Nielsen rating of 10 @. @ 8 , equivalent to approximately 10 @. @ 6 million viewing households . It was the third @- @ highest @- @ rated show on the Fox network that week , following The X @- @ Files and King of the Hill .

The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide said , " A simple but enjoyable romp , with the final few minutes in the Murder House particularly funny . Best thing though is the introduction of the hapless Gil , destined to always be a ray of light in any episode ! " The episode is featured in a special 2003 DVD compilation called The Simpsons : Risky Business , along with " Marge Gets a Job " , " Deep Space Homer " , and " Homer the Smithers " .