

= Lisa 's Rival =

" Lisa 's Rival " is the second episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on September 11 , 1994 . It was the first episode to be written by Mike Scully , and was directed by Mark Kirkland . Winona Ryder guest stars as Allison Taylor , a new student at Springfield Elementary School . Lisa Simpson begins to feel threatened by Allison because she is smarter , younger and a better saxophone player than she is . Their rivalry reaches a climax at the school 's diorama contest , as Lisa plans to sabotage Allison 's entry . The episode 's subplot sees Homer steal a large pile of sugar from a crashed truck , and begin selling it door @-@ to @-@ door .

Although written by Scully , the episode was originally pitched by former writer Conan O 'Brien , while the subplot was suggested by George Meyer . It features references to films such as The Fugitive and Scarface , while production of the episode was affected by the 1994 Northridge earthquake .

= = Plot = =

Lisa feels her status as top student in the class is threatened when a new student named Allison Taylor arrives at Springfield Elementary . While Lisa initially admires having another 8 year old who matches her intellectual prowess , she becomes shocked upon learning that in fact Allison is a year younger than her and had been skipped ahead from the 1st grade in addition to which she is also an aspiring saxophone player .

Lisa tries to befriend her , though she battles her envy and fears that she will lose her purpose . At a band practice , the two girls end up in a saxophone duel that results in Lisa passing out from over @-@ exertion . Their rivalry comes to a head during Springfield Elementary 's annual diorama building competition . Allison constructs a scene from " The Tell @-@ Tale Heart " , by Edgar Allan Poe . Lisa goes to great efforts to produce a better diorama , a scene from Oliver Twist , but it is immediately destroyed by an electric fan that Lisa utilizes , along with fake snow , to simulate a " bitter snowstorm " . Bart decides to intervene and help Lisa sabotage Allison 's entry so she can win . On the day of the diorama contest , he distracts the other students with his own demonstrations to give Lisa time to switch Allison 's entry with one containing a cow 's heart . After Principal Skinner chases Bart away , he discovers the cow 's heart in the diorama and proceeds to humiliate Allison in front of the entire school . Soon Lisa 's conscience intervenes and she produces the real diorama .

However , Skinner is unimpressed by both Lisa 's and Allison 's work and declares Ralph Wiggum 's collection of Star Wars action figures to be the winner . In the end , Lisa and Allison put aside their differences and become friends as they walk off into the sunset , picking up Ralph along the way after he accidentally trips and breaks his action figures .

The episode 's subplot follows Homer after he encounters and then steals hundreds of pounds of sugar he finds at the site of Hans Moleman 's truck accident . Homer decides he can get rich by selling the sugar door @-@ to @-@ door . He keeps the sugar in a pile in his back yard , where he obsessively guards it from thieves . Soon , the sugar attracts bees from a local apiary . The beekeepers track the swarm down and offer to buy the bees back from Homer for \$ 2 @,@ 000 . Before the transaction can be completed , however , it begins to rain , dissolving the sugar ; the bees fly away , leaving Homer without any money or sugar .

= = Production = =

Production of the episode was disrupted by the 1994 Northridge earthquake , which also affected the previous episode " Bart of Darkness " . The Film Roman building used by the staff was so badly damaged it had to be condemned . They were relocated to a new building for a year , and much of the animation for the episode was done by people at home . The day after the earthquake , the only staff members who turned up for work were Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein . Overall production of The Simpsons was disrupted for six months , with a month of production time being lost .

Although written by Mike Scully , the episode 's original concept was pitched by Conan O 'Brien before he left the show . O 'Brien suggested having an episode about a rival for Lisa , but the rest of the episode 's storyline was written by Scully and other staff members . It was the first episode Scully wrote for the show , and he would later become showrunner . Winona Ryder guest starred as Allison Taylor . She was a fan of the show and was popular amongst the staff . David Mirkin recalled that more writers came to her recording session than any other . Her character 's name was derived from the names of two of Scully 's daughters , Allison and Taylor . The subplot was pitched by George Meyer . Homer 's sugar diatribe was pitched by Meyer off the top of his head and animated by David Silverman , who specifically asked to animate the scene after listening to Dan Castellaneta 's performance .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode contains several references to film , television , literature and music . For example , Milhouse 's sub @-@ story is a reference to the 1993 film *The Fugitive* . The film is principally parodied in the scene where Milhouse is at the end of a dam drainpipe and dives into a waterfall when being held at gunpoint by an FBI agent resembling Tommy Lee Jones , who uses the film 's famous line " I don 't care " . Homer 's " In America " speech while guarding his sugar pile is a direct reference to one of Tony Montana 's lines in *Scarface* , and his line " Oh what a world ! " when the sugar melts is the same line used by the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz* , when she melts . Additionally , Ralph 's diorama contest entry is just original Star Wars action figures : his collection includes Luke Skywalker , Obi @-@ Wan Kenobi and Chewbacca . Lisa 's hiding of The Tell @-@ Tale Heart diorama under the gym floorboards is a parody of Edgar Allan Poe 's " The Tell @-@ Tale Heart " , while the speech patterns of the beekeeper voiced by Hank Azaria are based on Adam West 's portrayal of Batman . Finally , Lisa 's imagination features her playing in a band with famous backup artists : Art Garfunkel , John Oates and Jim Messina .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Lisa 's Rival " finished tied for 23rd place (with *Dateline NBC*) in the weekly ratings for the week of September 5 to September 11 , 1994 with a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 9 . It was the second highest rated show on the Fox Network that week .

In a 2008 article , *Entertainment Weekly* named Winona Ryder 's role as Allison Taylor as one of the sixteen best *The Simpsons* guest stars , while IGN placed her sixth on their list of the " Top 25 *Simpsons* Guest Stars . " They also highlighted Ralph 's " classic " lines : " I bent my Wookiee " , and " My cat 's breath smells like cat food . " Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book *I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide* , stated : " Despite being a Lisa show , it is poor Ralph Wiggum who steals the show with three great irrelevant replies , especially those concerning his cat 's breath . " They also highlighted " great scenes between the Simpson siblings , especially Bart 's idea to conquer Allison using a hose pipe . "