

= The War of the Simpsons =

" The War of the Simpsons " is the twentieth episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 2 , 1991 . In the episode , Homer gets drunk at a party and embarrasses his wife Marge , so she decides to sign them up for a marriage counseling retreat . Homer finds out that the retreat will be held near a lake and packs his fishing equipment , despite Marge telling him that all they will be doing is resolving their differences . At the lake the next morning , Homer tries to sneak away to go fishing , but Marge catches him and he takes a walk instead . On the dock , Homer grabs hold of a fishing pole only to be yanked onto a small rowboat by the fish . When he notices an upset Marge is looking at him , he immediately lets the fish go to prove his love for her .

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by Mark Kirkland . It was the last episode Kirkland directed during his first year on the show . Although not named until season three 's " Black Widower " , the character Snake Jailbird appeared for the first time in this episode . " The War of the Simpsons " features cultural references to songs such as Tom Jones 's " It 's Not Unusual " , Dusty Springfield 's " The Look of Love " , KC and the Sunshine Band 's " That 's the Way (I Like It) " , and Glen Campbell 's " Wichita Lineman " . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 11 @. @ 6 , and was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

= = Plot = =

At a party thrown by himself and his wife Marge , Homer humiliates himself by getting drunk , telling off strangers , and leering at Maude Flanders ' cleavage . The following day at church , Marge signs up for a weekend retreat of marriage counseling hosted by Reverend Lovejoy and his wife Helen . Homer finds out that the retreat will be held at Catfish Lake and packs his fishing equipment , despite Marge telling him that all they will be doing is resolving their differences . On the way to the retreat , Homer stops at a bait shop and learns of the legendary catfish General Sherman .

Back at home , Grampa babysits Bart and Lisa , who trick their grandfather into letting them throw their own party . At the lake the next morning , Homer tries to sneak away to go fishing , but Marge wakes up first . Marge is upset that Homer would choose fishing over their marriage , which Homer fails to understand as he visualizes Marge turning into a catfish . Homer takes a walk instead of returning to bed . On the dock , he finds an abandoned fishing pole . The pole , with General Sherman on the line , yanks him off the pier into a small rowboat , and onto the lake . From their cabin window , Marge watches Homer battle General Sherman and gets frustrated . At home , Bart and Lisa 's party has ended and the house is a total mess . Watching Grampa cry and fearing that he will get in trouble , they frantically clean up the house for him .

Marge attends the workshops alone while Homer triumphantly rows in with General Sherman . When he returns , Marge tells him their marriage is in serious trouble if he values fishing more than her . To prove his love for her , he lets the fish (still alive) go and they return home . Once home , Marge congratulates Grampa on how clean the house is , to which he reveals his secret is " pretending to cry " . Grampa laughs as he reveals to a shocked Bart and Lisa that he tricked them as he leaves , and Bart swears he will never trust an old person again . At the bait shop , General Sherman is still uncaught , but tales are told of a near @-@ mythical figure who almost succeeded : " Went by the name of Homer . Seven feet tall he was , with arms like tree trunks . His eyes were like steel : cold , hard . Had a shock of hair , red , like the fires of Hell . "

= = Production = =

The episode was written by John Swartzwelder , and it was the last episode Mark Kirkland directed during his first year on the show . Kirkland and his animation team were relatively new to animation when they began working on the show , and to make the animation in this episode the best they had ever done , they incorporated all the techniques they had learned during their first year into it .

Kirkland said animating Homer drunk was a challenge for him as he had to analyze how people behave when they are intoxicated by alcohol . He said of the animation : " I shifted [Homer 's] eyes open and close , they 're not working in sync . And of course Homer can 't keep his balance so that 's why he 's shifting back and forth . " Kirkland was raised in New York in an environment similar to the one where the marriage retreat was held . He therefore enjoyed drawing and overseeing the scenery for the episode , and the bait shop was based on the bait shops he visited when he grew up . Snake Jailbird , Springfield 's resident recidivist felon , appeared for the first time on the show in this episode , though he was not named until season three 's " Black Widower " . He appears at Bart and Lisa 's wild house party . A woman named Gloria who seeks marriage counseling at the retreat was voiced by Julie Kavner . It is one of the few times in the history of the show that Kavner has voiced a character other than Marge and her relatives . Gloria 's hair was based on Kirkland 's assistant director Susie Dietter 's hair .

The Simpsons writer Mike Reiss said on the episode 's DVD audio commentary that while the episode was " full of funny moments " , it caused " nothing but trouble " to the staff of the show . One of the troubles was that after the episode had been written by Swartzwelder , an unsolicited writer sent the staff a script which contained a virtually identical story . To avoid a lawsuit , the staff paid him US \$ 3000 and went forward with the episode . Material cut from the episode 's script included many couples who were supposed to be at the retreat instead of the Flanders family , such as Mr. Burns and his mail @-@ order bride , and Mrs. Krabappel trying to reunite with her estranged husband Ken Krabappel . Reiss said the scene played out " horribly badly " , and it appeared as if Mr. Burns 's mail @-@ order bride was a prostitute . The Ken Krabappel character was supposed to be based on singer Dean Martin , but somehow he ended up with a southern accent that made him sound like a hick . The whole scene was rewritten with help from producer James L. Brooks and it was completed after several hours . A scene in which Moe asked Dr. Hibbert to cure his discolored feces was also removed during the first reading of the script after a complaint by Brooks . Series creator Matt Groening later expressed an objection to the ending , which sees General Sherman jumping out of the water and winking at the camera , believing it to be overly cartoony .

= = Cultural references = =

The way Ned Flanders prepares the cocktails at the party is similar to actor Tom Cruise 's bartending stunts in the 1988 film Cocktail . Songs heard at the party include Tom Jones 's " It 's Not Unusual " (1965) , Dusty Springfield 's " The Look of Love " (1967) , KC and the Sunshine Band 's " That 's the Way (I Like It) " (1975) , and Glen Campbell 's " Wichita Lineman " (1968) . Homer 's false memory of the party the following day (in which he imagines himself as being erudite and witty instead of drunk) is a reference to the Algonquin Round Table , a group of New York City writers , critics , actors , and wits . The " Mexican Hat Dance " song is heard when Marge turns on the radio in the car to mute the conversation between her and Homer so that the children cannot hear them fight . When Homer comes into the church late , while looking for his chair , a character who strikes a resemblance to Adolf Hitler is seen . In a flashback sequence , Bart remembers chasing away a screaming babysitter with the car as a toddler . This sequence and the music in it are references to a scene in the 1976 film The Omen , in which the Devil 's child Damien makes animals shriek in terror as Damien approaches . The picture of General Sherman at the bait shop is a reference to the famous hoax picture of the Loch Ness Monster . John and Gloria are a reference to George and Martha from Who 's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ? Homer 's attempt at catching General Sherman , his bludgeoning of the fish and the line " I love you but I have to kill you " are all based on Santiago 's fight with the marlin in Ernest Hemingway 's novel The Old Man and the Sea . The battle between Homer and General Sherman is also reminiscent of Captain Ahab 's battle with the white whale Moby @-@ Dick in the novel Moby @-@ Dick . As Homer triumphantly returns with the captured General Sherman , he sings Queen 's " We Are The Champions " (1977) , altering the lyrics to " I am the champion . " The title of the episode is a reference to the 1989 film The War of the Roses , which tells the story of a divorce battle between a married couple .

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast , " The War of the Simpsons " finished fortieth in the ratings for the week of April 29 to May 5 , 1991 , with a Nielsen rating of 11 @.@ 6 , equivalent to approximately 10 @.@ 8 million viewing households . It was the second highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week , following Married ... with Children . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . The Orlando Sentinel 's Gregory Hardy named it the twelfth best episode of the show with a sports theme (sport fishing) . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , thought the Homer vs. Marge plot was " good on its own " , but it was also " Grampa 's big moment . His final revelation to Bart and Lisa is inspired . " DVD Movie Guide 's Colin Jacobson said the main concern with the episode " stemmed from its start . The scenes at the party were so terrific that the episode could have tanked after that . Happily , it didn 't , as the show provided a consistently high level of entertainment . Between Homer 's excesses at marriage camp and the kids ' antics while Grampa watches them , the program packed in a ton of great gags . "

In a review of the second season , Bryce Wilson of Cinema Blend said " The War of the Simpsons " felt " a bit flat " , but " even in [its] lowest points , humor is easy to find . " Jeremy Kleinman of DVD Talk said it was " another great episode , featuring first , a new level of Homer 's debauchery after drinking way too much at a party the Simpsons host , Reverend Lovejoy 's marital retreat , and an epic battle with a legendary fish named General Sherman . Each of these portions of the episode are filled with laughs , perhaps the funniest being Homer 's distorted high @-@ society recollection of the previous night 's events in which he is hailed as charming and a jolly good fellow . "