

## = Three Men and a Comic Book =

" Three Men and a Comic Book " is the twenty @-@ first episode of The Simpsons ' second season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on May 9 , 1991 . In the episode , Bart catches a glimpse of the original issue of Radioactive Man for sale at a comic book convention , so he , Martin , and Milhouse combine their money to buy the valuable comic book , only to lose it due to their selfishness and inability to share .

The episode was written by Jeff Martin and directed by Wes Archer . It features cultural references to comic book characters such as Casper the Friendly Ghost and Richie Rich . Several new characters make their first appearance on the show in the episode , including Comic Book Guy , Radioactive Man , and Mrs. Glick . Since airing , the episode has received generally positive reviews from television critics for its use of parodies and cultural references . It acquired a Nielsen rating of 12 @. @ 9 , and was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network the week it aired .

## = = Plot = =

When Bart attends a comic book convention dressed as his superhero alter ego Bartman , he finds the first issue of Radioactive Man for \$ 100 at Comic Book Guy 's Android 's Dungeon . However , he does not have enough money to buy it , and Homer refuses to give him extra money , so he decides to get a job . Bart turns to Mrs. Glick , who gives him fifty cents for his hard work . Bart then goes to the Android 's Dungeon , with only a few cents extra , where he runs into Milhouse Van Houten and Martin . He talks them into pooling their money and buying the comic book . Since none of them want to let the comic book out of their sights , they decide to spend the night together in Bart 's treehouse . The three get progressively more paranoid and Bart becomes convinced that the other two are conspiring against him .

Eventually , the tension is at a breaking point . When Martin gets up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom , Bart thinks he plans on stealing the comic and subsequently ties him up . Meanwhile , a thunderstorm approaches . Milhouse tries to alert Marge that Bart has gone crazy , but Bart thinks he is making a move for the comic and tackles him . Milhouse rolls over the side of the treehouse , but Bart catches him precariously by his sleeve . When a gale of wind takes hold of the comic so that it flies towards the treehouse 's entrance , Bart is forced to decide between it and Milhouse . After mulling over his options , Bart chooses Milhouse and pulls him up into the treehouse . The comic flies out the entrance and is shredded by Santa 's Little Helper on the ground , hit by lightning , and completely destroyed . The next morning , the three boys reflect on how their inability to share led to the destruction of the comic , although Bart , has forgotten the experience .

## = = Production = =

The episode was written by Jeff Martin and directed by Wes Archer . Characters making their first appearance on the show in the episode are Comic Book Guy , Mrs. Glick , Radioactive Man , Fallout Boy , and Bartman . Although many suggestions state that Comic Book Guy was inspired by the show 's creator Matt Groening , Comic Book Guy was partly inspired by a clerk at the Los Angeles Amok book shop who , according to Simpsons writer George Meyer , often " [ sat ] on the high stool , kind of lording over the store with that supercilious attitude and eating behind the counter a big Styrofoam container full of fried clams with a lot of tartar sauce . " Matt Groening noted : " I can 't tell you how many times people have come up to me and said , ' I know who you based that comic book guy on . It 's that comic @-@ book guy right down the block . ' And I have to tell them , ' No , it 's every comic @-@ bookstore guy in America . ' " Cast member Hank Azaria based Comic Book Guy 's voice on a student who went by the name " F " and lived in the room next door at his college . Mrs. Glick was based on an old lady Martin and his brother used to do chores for when they were kids . Martin said they got to " pull weeds until [ their ] hands would bleed " , and yet they were only paid two quarters for several hours of work . American actress Cloris Leachman provided the voice of Mrs. Glick in the episode .

The episode features a parody of *The Wonder Years*, in which Bart stares into the distance after realizing that he has to get his first job, and an older version of Bart's voice is heard saying "I didn't realize it at the time, but a little piece of my childhood had slipped away forever." Daniel Stern guest starred as the voice of the adult Bart, just like he did for the adult voice of the character Kevin in the television show *The Wonder Years* (he had also featured with Yeardley Smith in the movie *City Slickers* around the time this episode was produced). According to *Simpsons* writer Mike Reiss, Stern was a "pleasure" to work with and it only took him a few minutes to record his lines. Stern's younger brother David M. Stern worked as a writer on both *The Simpsons* and *The Wonder Years*, so he helped the writers get the idioms and the wording of the parody right. When it originally aired, the song played during this sequence was "Turn, Turn, Turn" by The Byrds. This was replaced in the DVD release with soundalike music, likely to avoid paying royalties for using the song.

= = Cultural references = =

At the beginning of the episode, Lisa reveals that she collects *Casper the Friendly Ghost* and *Richie Rich* comics, and Homer makes reference to *Wonder Woman*. Radioactive Man's origin is nearly identical to the Marvel Comics character *The Incredible Hulk*, as they both gained their superpowers from absorbing massive amounts of radiation during an experimental detonation of a gamma bomb. The warning from the convention MC not to ask questions about the death of Radioactive Man's actor Dirk Richter is a reference to the mysterious death of *Superman*'s actor George Reeves, although the addition of bordello could also be a reference to the unsolved 1978 murder of Bob Crane. When Bart asks Homer for money to buy the comic book, Homer replies: "One hundred bucks? For a comic book?! Who drew it, Micha @-@ ma @-@ langelo?" This is a reference to the Italian painter and sculptor Michelangelo, whose name Homer cannot pronounce.

Milhouse initially goes into the comic store to buy a 1973 Topps card of the former Boston Red Sox player, Carl Yastrzemski, "when he had the big sideburns". When the boys first unwrap the comic book, Martin describes it as "[T]he stuff dreams are made of", which is how Bogart's character describes the Maltese Falcon at the end of the movie, *The Maltese Falcon*.

The Radioactive Man commercial for Laramie cigarettes that Bart and Lisa watch at the convention is a takeoff of *The Flintstones* starring in Winston cigarette television commercials which aired during the 1960s. When Bart begs Mrs. Glick not to apply iodine to his wounded arm, she grabs his arm and the scene shifts to their silhouettes as Bart screams, mirroring a scene in the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*. The accusation and suspicion that grows between the boys is similar to the plot of the film *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. When Martin makes a squealing noise while falling in the treehouse, Bart calls him "Piggy" and threatens to stuff an apple into his mouth, resembling a similar quote from the 1954 book *The Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. Bart trying to save Milhouse from falling from the treehouse is a reference to a scene in the 1942 Alfred Hitchcock film *Saboteur*.

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast, "Three Men and a Comic Book" finished twenty @-@ third in the ratings for the week of May 6 ? 12, 1991, with a Nielsen rating of 12 @.@ 9, equivalent to twelve million viewing households. The episode was the highest @-@ rated show on the Fox network that week. It was the first time *The Simpsons* beat *The Cosby Show* in the ratings. Since airing, the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics. DVD Movie Guide's Colin Jacobson lauded it for its use of new characters, commenting that "of all season two's Bart @-@ focused episodes, only 'Bart the Daredevil' offers competition with 'Comic' as the best of the bunch. It's a tough call, but I ? ll take 'Comic' in a squeaker. The show melds the series' deft satirical tone with exceptional character development. Bart seems to grow especially strongly, and his psychological meltdown in the third act is hilarious." "Three Men and a Comic Book" was named the best episode of the season by IGN. The authors of the book *I Can't Believe It's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide*, Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood, commented that

unless you have a " passing understanding of comic books and their buyers ' behaviour , some of the jokes will pass you by . " Doug Pratt , a DVD reviewer and Rolling Stone contributor , criticized the episode for not being inspired enough , and added that the Wonder Years parody " seems pointless " .

" Three Men and a Comic Book " is Bryce Wilson of Cinema Blend 's favorite episode of the season . Wilson praised the episode for its cultural references , calling them " true greatness " . Surrey Now 's Michael Roberds praised the Treasure of the Sierra Madre parody , saying that it is " one of the more clever film parodies hidden within a typical Simpsons plot . " Colin Kennedy of Empire called the Treasure of the Sierra Madre parody the ninth best film parody of the show , commenting that " Bart turns [ into ] a perfect Bogart ? grizzled , paranoid and sleep @-@ deprived . With lighting and camera angles half @-@ inched from Huston , this priceless gag is joyfully pitched over the heads of 90 percent of the audience . " The episode 's reference to Saboteur was named the 25th greatest film reference in the history of the show by Total Film 's Nathan Ditum .