

= Homer 's Enemy =

" Homer 's Enemy " is the twenty @-@ third episode of the eighth season of the American animated television series The Simpsons . It was first broadcast on the Fox network in the United States on May 4 , 1997 . The episode 's plot centers on the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant 's hiring a new employee named Frank Grimes . Despite Homer 's attempts to befriend him , Grimes is angered and irritated by Homer 's laziness and incompetence despite leading a comfortable life . He eventually declares himself Homer 's enemy . Meanwhile , Bart buys a run @-@ down factory for a dollar .

" Homer 's Enemy " was directed by Jim Reardon and the script was written by John Swartzwelder , based on an idea pitched by executive producer Bill Oakley . The episode explores the comic possibilities of a realistic character with a strong work ethic hired for a job where he has to work alongside a man like Homer . He was partially modeled after Michael Douglas as he appeared in the film Falling Down . Hank Azaria provided the voice of Frank Grimes , and based some of the character 's mannerisms on actor William H. Macy . Frank Welker guest stars as the voice of the Executive Vice President dog .

In its original broadcast on the Fox network , " Homer 's Enemy " acquired a 7 @.@ 7 Nielsen rating . It was viewed in approximately 7 @.@ 5 million homes , finishing the week ranked 56th . " Homer 's Enemy " is considered to be one of the darkest episodes of The Simpsons , and it split critical opinion . It is a favorite of several members of the production staff , including Bill Oakley , Josh Weinstein and Matt Groening , but it is one of the least favorite of Mike Reiss . Although Grimes makes his only appearance in this episode , he was later named one of the " Top 25 Simpsons Peripheral characters " by IGN . He has since been referenced several times in the show , most notably in the season fourteen episode " The Great Louse Detective " , in which his son plots to kill Homer .

= = Plot = =

In a new segment of " Kent 's People " , Kent Brockman tells the heartwarming story of Frank Grimes , a man who had to struggle for everything he ever got , including a correspondence degree in nuclear physics . After seeing the show , Springfield Nuclear Power Plant owner Mr. Burns is so touched that he asks Smithers to hire Grimes as his Executive Vice President . However , the following day , Burns sees a sentimental story concerning a heroic dog and demands that it instead be appointed Executive Vice President . Consequently , Grimes is shuffled into Sector 7G , where he must work alongside Homer , Lenny , and Carl . Settling into his new job , Grimes is amazed and aghast at Homer 's bad manners and general irresponsibility . When Grimes prevents Homer from drinking a beaker of sulfuric acid , dramatically slapping it out of Homer 's hands into a wall , a passing Mr. Burns admonishes Grimes for destroying the wall and spilling his acid . Grimes is demoted and later angrily declares to Homer that the two of them are now enemies .

Homer attempts to appease Grimes by inviting him to his home for a lobster dinner in order to make him and his enemy co @-@ worker a friend . Grimes ' visit to the Simpson house only fuels his resentment ; he is incensed by Homer 's ability to live such a comfortable life despite his slothful and ignorant ways . Declaring Homer a " fraud " , a bitter Grimes storms away in anger . The following day , Homer , after getting advice from Marge , makes further attempts to earn Grimes ' respect by acting as a model employee , but his efforts fail . Grimes rants about Homer to Lenny and Carl , both of whom insist that Homer is an essentially decent person . To prove Homer 's lack of intelligence , he tricks Homer into entering a nuclear power plant design contest intended for children , by carefully cutting away all references to them in a promotional poster which he leaves at Homer 's control panel . Homer , unaware that the contest is only open to kids , eagerly takes on the challenge to prove his professionalism . At the contest , Grimes is shocked when Homer 's model , which is almost exactly the same as the current power plant with only a few modifications , easily wins against Ralph Wiggum 's Malibu Stacy dream house , and Martin Prince 's futuristic model that supplies power to the room . The audience 's applause and cheers for Homer cause Grimes to

finally snap and he runs amok through the plant , mimicking Homer 's habits . Entering Homer 's office , Grimes sees a machine labeled " Extremely High Voltage " , sarcastically declares that he does not need safety gloves , grabs the high voltage wires and is fatally electrocuted . At Grimes ' funeral , Homer falls asleep and in a drowsy state tells Marge to change the TV channel , causing all the attending mourners to laugh as Grimes ' casket is lowered into the ground .

Meanwhile , Bart becomes bored during a visit to Springfield Town Hall and buys " 35 Industry Way " for a dollar during a foreclosure auction . It turns out to be a run @-@ down old factory , which he and Milhouse spend the day wrecking it until the next morning Bart returns to find it has collapsed during the night while Milhouse was on watch duty , leaving the rats to swarm Moe 's Tavern .

= = Production = =

" Homer 's Enemy " was written by John Swartzwelder , directed by Jim Reardon and executive produced by Bill Oakley and Josh Weinstein . One of the goals of Oakley and Weinstein was to create several episodes in each season which would " push the envelope conceptually . " The idea for the episode was first conceived by Bill Oakley who thought that Homer should have an enemy . The thought evolved into the concept of a " real world " co @-@ worker who would either love or hate Homer . The writers chose the latter as they thought it would have funnier results . The result was the character of Grimes , a man who had to work hard all his life with nothing to show for it and is dismayed and embittered by Homer 's success and comfort in spite of his inherent laziness and ignorance .

" Homer 's Enemy " explores the comic possibilities of a realistic character with a strong work ethic placed alongside Homer in a work environment . In an essay for the book Leaving Springfield , Robert Sloane describes the episode as " an incisive consideration of The Simpsons 's world . Although The Simpsons is known for its self @-@ reflectivity , the show had never looked at ( or critiqued ) itself as directly as it does in [ ' Homer 's Enemy ' ] . " In the episode , Homer is portrayed as an everyman and the embodiment of the American spirit ; however , in some scenes his negative characteristics and silliness are prominently highlighted . By the close of the episode , Grimes , a hard working and persevering " real American hero , " is relegated to the role of antagonist ; the viewer is intended to be pleased that Homer has emerged victorious . In an interview with Simpsons fan site NoHomers.net , Josh Weinstein said :

The animators and character designers had a lot of discussion about what Frank Grimes should look like . He was originally designed as a " burly ex @-@ marine guy with a crew cut " , but would later be modeled after Michael Douglas in the movie Falling Down and director Jim Reardon 's college roommate . Hank Azaria provided the voice of Frank Grimes , even though such a role would normally have been performed by a guest star . The producers decided Azaria was more suitable because the role involved a great deal of frustration and required extensive knowledge of the show . Azaria felt that the role should instead go to William H. Macy . According to Azaria , " I based the character on William Macy . I can 't really copy him vocally , but I tried to get as close as I could and copy his rhythms and the way he has that sort of seething passion underneath that total calm exterior . " The producers worked a lot with Azaria to help him perfect the role , and gave him more guidance than they normally would . Azaria felt that it was the role he worked hardest on , adding " I think it 's the one we did the most takes on , the most emotional , it felt like the one I worked on the hardest from a performance point of view , in preparation and in execution . "

Josh Weinstein has expressed regret about killing off Grimes after only one episode , describing him as " such an amazing character . " In an interview with The Believer , producer George Meyer said , " Grimes 's cardinal sin was that he shined a light on Springfield . He pointed out everything that was wrongheaded and idiotic about that world . And the people who do that tend to become martyrs . He said things that needed to be said , but once they were said , we needed to destroy that person . I 'll admit , we took a certain sadistic glee in his downfall . He was such a righteous person , and that somehow made his demise more satisfying . "

The subplot , where Bart buys a factory , was added so that there would be some lighter scenes to split up the main plot . According to Weinstein , " We wanted to have a Bart or Lisa kids story to

contrast the heaviness and reality of Frank Grimes . "

= = Reception = =

In its original broadcast on the Fox network , " Homer 's Enemy " acquired a 7 @. @ 7 Nielsen rating . It was viewed in approximately 7 @. @ 5 million homes , finishing the week ranked 56th . The Simpsons was the sixth highest rated show on Fox the week it was broadcast , behind The X @- @ Files , a broadcast of the film The Mask , Melrose Place , King of the Hill and Beverly Hills , 90210 .

According to Josh Weinstein , when the episode was first broadcast , many fans felt it was too dark , lacked humor and that Homer was portrayed as overly bad @- @ mannered . Weinstein considers this episode one of the most controversial of the seasons he ran , as it involves sharp observational humor which he thinks many fans " didn 't get . " Weinstein also talks about a " generation gap " ? he believes the episode was originally panned by viewers , but has since become a favorite among fans who grew up with the show .

Critical opinion of the episode is mixed . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , authors of I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , described the episode as " one of the series ' darkest episodes [ that ] ends on a real downer but is nevertheless also one of the wittiest and cleverest in ages . " In 2007 , Vanity Fair called " Homer 's Enemy " the seventh best episode of The Simpsons . John Ortved said it was , " the darkest Simpsons episode ever ... To see [ Grimes ] fail , and ultimately be destroyed , once he enters Homer 's world is hilarious and satisfying . " Comedian Rick Mercer called it a " great episode , and one of the darkest ever produced . "

Jon Bonné of MSNBC used " Homer 's Enemy " as an example of a bad episode of the eighth season and wrote " even now [ in 2000 ] , when subsequent episodes have debased Homer in new and innovative ways , the Grimes episode stands out as painful to watch . " In April 2007 , former Simpsons executive producer Mike Reiss listed " Homer 's Enemy " as one of his two least favorite episodes , stating , " I just think the episode was in bad taste . "

Several members of the staff have included the episode among their favorites . In a 2000 Entertainment Weekly article , Matt Groening ranked it as his sixth favorite Simpsons episode . It is a favorite of Josh Weinstein , who cites the scene when Grimes visits the Simpson home as one of his favorite scenes , while The Office creator Ricky Gervais has called it " the most complete episode . " In her autobiography My Life as a 10 @- @ Year @- @ Old Boy , Nancy Cartwright , the voice of Bart , praises Azaria 's performance as Grimes , and uses it as an example of how " Accent , pitch , pacing , range and intention " can allow an actor to voice many characters . She writes ,

Sometimes [ in voice acting ] , it isn 't even a big change from your regular voice , but the attitude behind it makes all the difference . [ ... ] We were going to have a guest star play Frank Grimes . [ ... ] Hank , at the table @- @ read , just filling in , created such a beautifully crafted character , beautifully psychotic , that no one was used to replace him .

In October 2006 , IGN.com released a list of " The Top 25 Simpsons Peripheral characters " , in which they ranked Frank Grimes at number 17 , making him the only one @- @ time character to appear in that list .

= = Legacy = =

Frank Grimes has since been referenced several times in the show , often showing his tombstone , and occasionally mentioning him by name . In the season fourteen episode " The Great Louse Detective " , it is revealed that he fathered a son named Frank Grimes , Jr . , who tries and fails to kill Homer . The footage of Grimes ' death is also shown during that episode .

During the nuclear power plant design contest , one of the entrants is Ralph Wiggum , whose entry is rejected by Mr. Burns . When Ralph does not leave the stage , Chief Wiggum says " Ralphie , get off the stage , sweetheart . " This line was later used as the chorus in the song " Ralph Wiggum " by the Bloodhound Gang . In February 2000 , the cast of The Simpsons performed a live reading of the episode script at the US Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen , Colorado .

