

Act III.

(The Simpsons are sitting at home watching the evening news with Kent Brockman. The television screen behind Brockman has a caption written in cursive over a blue background that reads "It's About Time!")

Kent: I know I'm saying "It's About Time" the rhinoceros was domesticated. Professor John Frink has the details.

Frink: HAY-llo, Kent, vay. Yes, after fifteen years of hard and demanding conditioning, training, and unhealthy neurochemicals, the rhinoceros is as good a pet as a cute wittle puppy dog. Here, boy!

(A rhinoceros, jumping about and wagging its tail, licks Frink's face.)

Frink: Awww, hahahahah! That's a good rhinoceros. Down, boy. Now... roll over!

(The rhinoceros rolls over on top of Frink, who falls.)

Frink: Oh GOD! Help!

(Crashing noises. Crunching noises. Then just static. Back to Kent Brockman.)

Kent: Mr. Frink? Ok, we lost the connection. But in more local news, I say "It's About Time" that Bumtown got a decent restaurant. And many would say it did, thanks to one Marge Simpson. (Picture of Marge appears behind Brockman.) Marge and most of her ubiquitous family have appeared on our program before, but this time none of them have been charged with any serious crimes. (Marge sits down next to Brockman.) Marge, Marvin J. McMillard, world-renowned food critic extraordinaire, gave you his most glittery accolade to date in his magazine, "Foody Blues". Would you mind revealing some of your secrets for the viewers at home?

Marge: Um, well, it wasn't really anything that great. I...uh, try to make food I like, some recipes were passed down to me by my mother. What can I say? I like to cook, and I'm glad to have an opportunity to express myself that way.

(Homer, watching with Marge and the rest of the family back at the Simpson house, isn't happy at all.)

Billy: (from offscreen) Don't be modest, Marge! You're right perfect!

Marge: (modestly) Oh, quit it!

(Homer looks even angrier.)

Kent: Well, that's our trademark ridiculously short interview. Good night.

(Homer turns off the television.)

Lisa: I'm so glad our family's financial crisis is over.

Bart: Mom, could I borrow five dollars? I still need to get Nelson back.

(Marge hands Bart five dollars and he walks off.)

Homer: Bart, but you usually ask me... (looks in his wallet, but there is no money. Bart has already exited anyway)... never mind.

(Lisa exits.)

Homer: Marge, this isn't fair.

Marge (who has always been partially aware of the conflict between her and Homer): What's unfair? I've got a job that lets me feel human, and our family is secure.

Homer: But I feel... well, subdued.

Marge: Subdued. That's exactly how I've felt for ten years now. You can't possibly...

Homer: I work eight hours a day making one dollar and thirty cents an hour for a greedy man, to come home to a wife who's having her way with a sleazy cowboy with...

Marge: Don't talk about Billy that way; he's a gentleman at heart. I think you're being very insensitive to me.

Homer: Insensitive? I'm the most sensitivest guy in Springfield.

Marge: No you're not. Remember when you took that tour of Microsoft and you were so mean that you made Bill Gates cry?

(Homer bursts out laughing uncontrollably, rolling over onto his side.)

Homer: Yeah, that was funny. (He composes himself again, and speaks angrily.) But that's different. You're robbing me of my manhood. I'm the man of the house and your job is draining that manhood from me.

Marge: I hardly think that saving our household from ruin can be a bad thing, Homer.

Homer: It is.

Marge: I'm doing what I enjoy, Homer. I'm making money and I'm making others happy and I'm having a good time. If you have a problem, then maybe it's you who needs to change. I'm going to bed. You can make your own dinner. (She exits.)

(Homer growls.)

(Caption: "December 31st, 1999")

(The Simpson home vaguely resembles what it once was, but the furniture is more lavishly decorated. Lisa's appearance is something better than it once was. Bart is listening to a walkman with headphones, and is wearing trendy khaki pants. Maggie sucks on a porcelain pacifier which sparkles in the light. Homer, however, is wearing the same clothes he normally does, and sullenly watches the television.)

Enter Marge.

(Marge is dressed in an elegant green dress and is wearing lipstick. She is talking on a cel phone.)

Marge: Ok, see you in a little bit, Billy. Goodbye.

(She places the cel phone in her felt purse.)

Lisa: Hey mom!

Bart: Hi mom!

Lisa: Is it time to go yet?

Marge: Just about.

Bart: You comin', there, Homeboy?

Homer: Not on your life.

Lisa: This is going to be the greatest New Year's celebration ever. And to think that it would be held at my own mother's place of business. It's a preppie girl's dream come true.

(Homer grimaces.)

Bart: Well, let's go. Do you think you could make those special mint squares that...

Marge: I think so. Homer, you're not coming?

Homer: No way, Marge! It's The Soggy Pigeon Show! See ya next year.

(The television shows an average sitcom house with an average sitcom family. They are gathered around a table. The father holds a soggy little pigeonbird in his hand.)

Little Cutie Brat: Ken I keep 'im, daddy?

Little Cutie Teenager: Please, daddy? We'll take really good care of him. He's a fine pigeon.

Dad: I don't know, kids. This pigeon is awful soggy. You'd have to feed him every day.

Little Cutie Brat: Oh, we will, daddy.

Dad: Jan, what do you think about it?

Mom: I think he'd make a great addition to our house, filling the void that Uncle Byrd left when he died last week.

Dad: My gosh. I'm feeling sad and pain right now. It's only been a week now that Uncle Byrd's been gone, and already we're replacing him with a pigeon. A soggy pigeon, but a pigeon nonetheless.

Mom: Please, Frank? He does sort of look like Uncle Byrd.

Soggy Pigeon: I talk sort of like him too.

Dad: Okay, we'll keep... (Marge shuts the TV off.)

Marge: Homer, you have to come. It's New Years.

Lisa: Come on, dad.

(Homer sighs, then turns off the television. He oozes angrily out the door followed by Bart and Lisa.)

(It's a snowy December evening. Homer has trouble finding a parking space at the Greasy Fork. The parking lot is brand-new, and gets much use. The building itself is more classy and has doubled in size. Marge, who is holding Maggie,

Bart, and Lisa, run in through the front door, which is in working order. Homer walks in slowly and peevisly.)

(The restaurant, which has more than reached its capacity, is abuzz with cheer when Marge enters.)

Jimbo: You rule!

Skinner (who's seated next to Mrs. Krabapple): Viva Marge Simpson!

Barney: This place makes Moe's look like a dump!

Moe: Yeah!

Marge (not too modestly): Oh, thanks.

(Enter Billy, who's wearing a tuxedo, and whose hair is slicked back.)

Billy: (affectionately) Hey Marge! I've been taking orders all night. The kitchen's all yours-- (gestures in the direction of the kitchen) oh, I see you've brought your --husband--.

(Homer just scowls at Billy.)

Marge: Oh, yes. Homer doesn't come in very often.

Billy: So "pleased" to see you again.

(Homer remains scowling. Billy sees copious envy in that man's eyes and decides to play on it.)

Billy: Marge, darling, I've been thinking. This place attracts more and more business every day. I think that it's only fair to give you... another raise!

Marge: How kind of you, Billy. I do accept.

(Homer is turning blue.)

Bart: Congratulations, mom.

Marge (to Billy): Let's go fix up some grub, pard.

Billy: I'd be much obliged, m'lady.

(The exit into the kitchen, while Bart and Lisa run over to the only unoccupied table. Homer walks over there too.)

Lisa (pressing down on the table): Look, dad! The tables are fixed!

Homer (apathetic): Good, good.

Bart: I'm gonna order a Chicken Margesala with a Malamarge for dessert and a non-alcoholic Margerita.

Lisa: I'm gonna order the Blue Hair Special.

Homer: Well, that sounds unappetizing.

Bart: Oh, cheer up, dad. Look, mom named one of her meals after you.

(Bart points to an entry in the menu labelled "Homer-fried chicken". Homer is not impressed. By this time Billy has entered.)

Billy: Our most unpopular meal, as a matter of fact. What'll you have, Bart?

Bart: The Chicken Margesala.

Billy: You want Margerine with that?

Bart: You betcha.

Billy: What to drink?

Bart: A Margerita.

Billy: And you, Lisa?

Lisa: Blue Hair Special.

Billy: Good choice. What about you, gringo?

Homer: I'll have a nice lukewarm bowl of Billy Jenkins' homemade country-fried soup, if you don't mind.

(Gasp! All is silent in the restaurant and everyone looks at Homer.)

Billy (laughing grudgingly): Heh. We don't serve that anymore 'round here, stranger. Do we, fellas?

Sideshow Mel: I should say not, you freak!

Miss Hoover: What sort of lunatic are you?

(Everyone begins yelling at Homer, who stands up. This is as much as he can take. He starts to walk out of the Greasy Fork. People begin throwing their food at him.)

Homer: Please! I only have so many white shirts!

(Late evening at the Simpson house. The sun has set and there is little light left. Homer removes his soiled shirt and throws it in a pile on the floor with another one with a huge ketchup stain on it, and a third with a brown and gray soup stain on it. He puts on another shirt, and plops angrily onto a chair. He angrily dons a party hat and sticks one of those party kazoo-thingees in his mouth and inflates it with his breath.)

(Late evening at SNPP. Mr Burns has lost all hope of retaining all his money. He is gathering all his things and ready to return home to his piles of money that could be easily pilfered.)

Mr. Burns: Ho hum. It's finally over. My lifelong megalomania is coming to an end, Smithers.

Smithers: If there's anything I can do...

(They exit Mr. Burns' office and he locks the door. Smithers is holding Burns' jacket.)

Mr. Burns: Oh, you've done all you could. I knew it was too good to last. I might as well devote the rest of my life to philanthropy like so many washed-up Rockefellers.

Smithers: Sir...

Mr. Burns: No, my mind's made up.

(Burns and Smithers are now walking through the parking lot.)

Smithers: We can at least go back and try to keep what we can.

Mr. Burns: Where does it look like I'm going, Smithers? I don't want to end up in ruin.

(They pass Lenny, who's begging for money. He is unshaven and his clothes are disheveled. Apparently he hasn't had as much good fortune as Marge.)

Lenny: Penny for the poor, my good man?

(Burns tosses him a quarter.)

Burns: Here, have a quarter.

(Smithers watches sympathetically.)

Lenny: Whoa, thanks there, mister.

(It is now fully dark in Springfield and the sky is lit up by a 50-ft neon sign depicting Marge with a 90-foot head of argon blue hair. Jazzy music is playing at the Greasy Fork, and the patrons are loosening up. Marge swerves carefully between the dancing customers to the tables, carrying a tray of dishes and cups.)

Mrs. Krabapple: Hey! It's Marge!

Ned Flanders: Marge, you make the besterrific elephant sandwiches a la mode I've ever had!... (Ned keels over in pain.) Ohhhhhh, I got the queasy wheezies. Better go. (He stumbles out the door.)

Marvin: My name is Marvin J. McMillard, world-renowned food critic extraordinaire, and this is the most stupendousest New Year's celebration I've ever been to.

Willie: Here's to the greatest darn cook o' the century! (Raises his glass.)

(Everyone else does too.)

Marge: Thank you, everybody! It's a pleasure to know such wonderful people! And if I could be anywhere at the end of the year 1999, I'd want to be here at the Greasy Fork Restaurant!

(Everyone cheers.)

Meanwhile...

(Homer sits in his room, staring angrily at a picture of Marge. He sets it down and a thought comes to him.)

Homer: No, Homer. Marge isn't to blame for my problems. The one responsible is... MR. BURNS! (He stands up and walks out of the room. A dramatic chord is heard.)

Meanwhile...

(Billy stands in an alcove of his restaurant's kitchen, holding a ring. He

looks nervously at it, and then at Marge, who doesn't notice. A clock behind him reads 11:59.)

Billy: Well, God, if you're up there, help me out. This is my moment. The minute approaches. I'm gonna tell her. Here goes...

(As he nervously approaches Marge, Moe's voice interrupts him.)

Moe: Heeeeey! You got one of them soldering and polishing devices. I got one of these for my bar!

(The countdown faintly begins in the background.)

Billy: Yep. We don't really use it anymore.

Moe: And it's of the same make. Say, are you related to this lady Jenny who lives in...

Billy: Look, I really need to do something.

(But it's too late.)

Everybody: HAPPY NEW YEAR!

(Startled by the commotion, Moe trips and falls into the soldering device. When he removes his head, it is shiny.)

Moe: Hey! I'm clean again. I've never felt so --buff-- before.

Billy: That's great, Moe, but I really need to find Marge.

(The night sky is lit up with fireworks. The camera moves down to a red siren light, which goes out. The camera goes down still further to Homer, who was staring at the light. At this angle, we see that the light was suspended upon a large fence with a gate. When Y2K kicks in, the red light goes out. Homer pushes the gate in. He has entered the domain of Burns.)

(Inside Burns' house, Burns stands atop his large pile of money, looking down at the door. Smithers stands beside him.)

Burns (quite insane): I can't watch the door all night. I forget to calculate in the time lost when blinking. Smithers, here's where youuu come in. We're going to have to choreograph our blinks so eyes are never closed at the same time. We'll blink every four seconds. You start two seconds after me. Starting now.

Smithers: Yes sir.

(They begin alternately blinking every two seconds.)

Smithers: Uh... Mr. Burns?

Burns: Yes, Smithers?

Smithers: You know, the area behind us is still vulnerable. Neither of us is looking over there.

Burns: Hmmm, good point. Here, I'll spin 'round and 'round and 'round clockwise, and two seconds after I start, you spin 'round and 'round and 'round and 'round counterclockwise.

Smithers: Whatev--.

Burns: Starting now.

(Two seconds after Burns starts spinning, Smithers does. At this point, Homer bursts into the room wearing a mask and carrying a large sack.)

Smithers: Mr. Burns! It's a money robber. Homer Simpson, as a matter of fact

Burns: I can't see (spinning around to him) AH! There he is!... How do we get him from up here?

Smithers: I don't know. We never planned that out.

Homer: Burns!!! You've alienated the citizens of Springfield for the last time! I'm taking three hundred thousand dollars, twice the amount you've stolen from the workers of the power plant, and I'm distributing it to them in a Robin-Hood-like manner! And what's left I'm keeping for myself.

Burns: I'd like to see you try, you masked fiend.

(Homer scoops some of the money into his sack.)

Burns: AAH! No! Don't do that.

Homer: You've destroyed my family more than Y2K ever could, and this money will make sweet reimbursement.

Burns: Do something, Smithers!

Smithers: I don't know how to get down!

(Homer scoops the last of the money into the sack. This causes a little bit off the top to fall down, and Burns falls along with it, to a brutal and bloody demise.)

Smithers: OH LORD!

(Burns' eyes are closed.)

Smithers: I can't blink until he opens his eyes!

(Homer lets out an evil laugh and begins to run out of the room.)

(Smithers strains to keep from not blinking, but eventually gives in and starts crying.)

Smithers: YOU'RE FIRED!

(Homer swiftly drives away from Burns' manor, into the chaos of uncontrolled traffic. The traffic lights don't work and most of the lights in the buildings are off.)

(As Homer recklessly passes an ATM machine spewing out thousands of dollar bills, another car passes Homer even more maniacally. It's Ned Flanders, who's being tormented by an elephant sandwich a la mode too many. He's become kind of pale and his voice is deeper.)

Ned: Hiiiiiii, neighbor!

(Homer screams.)

(Back at the Greasy Fork, Billy finally has a chance to talk to Marge alone. In the eating area, a huge party with confetti, champagne, balloons, and dancing is ensuing.)

Billy: Marge?

Marge: Yes, Billy?

Billy: Umm, this might sound stupid, but, well, when you first applied here, I hired you because I needed a hand. I was lonely. Then you saved my business. You're the greatest person I've ever met. Little by little, well, I've fallen in love more than any man in history has... with you.

Marge: Billy?

Billy: Yes, it's true. (He holds out a ring.) Go on, Marge. Leave that Homer fella and get the new millenium off to a new start.

(Out the window, Marge can see panic going on outside. In the restaurant, she sees the Comic Book Guy sitting across from a beautiful woman.)

CBG: Wilma darling, I don't think I've ever told you how beautiful the champagne looks in your hair.

Wilma: I can't take it anymore! Kiss me, Comic Book Guy! (She jumps across the table into his arms.)

(It is a time of change.)

Marge: Gee, Billy... I don't know. I mean, you're a great friend, but...

Billy: Oh, come on, Marge. We can run this business together, grow rich together, die together.

Marge: Ummm, no.... I- I can't leave Homer-- I just can't. It's one thing Y2K can't have any effect on... I'm fired, right?

(Tears well up in Billy's eyes, who thinks about that.)

(He shakes his head no.)

Billy: No, Marge. You've saved my business from ruin, and you have been a great friend. You'll be working here long after I am. You can count on that. (He exits into the party. Marge watches him go.)

(Back at the Flanders house, Ned stumbles through the door.)

Maude: Oh, Ned. You're back! I was so worried!

(Ned bites her on the neck.)

(Principal Skinner and Mrs. Krabapple are more than satisfied with the service at The Greasy Fork.)

Krabapple: Bart!

Bart: Yes, Mrs. Krabapple?

Krabapple: Give this to your mother. It's what I think of this place!

(It is a piece of paper with an A+ on it. Bart takes it from her and walks

away.)

(Billy sits down in an empty seat.)

Billy: (sadly) Is this seat taken?

(Miss Hoover is sitting across from him.)

Miss Hoover: It is now, sugar.

(Billy looks at her. He smiles slowly and raises an eyebrow for the camera.)

(Homer runs in through the door carrying a large sack of money. He makes a beeline for Marge, who has just entered the party through the kitchen.)

Homer: Marge!

Marge: Homie!

(They hold each other.)

(Bart, Lisa, and Maggie walk up to them too.)

Homer: I'm not subdued anymore! Marge, I've been fired, Burns is dead, and I got the plant's money back! I've never been happier in my life!

(Big group Simpsons hug.)

Gil: And I won the lottery!

Bart: I love it when things REALLY turn out swell!

Everybody (singing): Should auld acquaintance be forgot...

(End of Act III.)

(Over the credits, however, Marvin speaks.)

Marvin: Ahem! A postscript here, from Marvin J. McMillard, world-renowned food critic extraordinaire. Certain events came to pass in this episode that are impossible and suspicious. I intend to clear that up. First of all, Burns did not really die. The person you saw fall from the money was an anatomically correct plastic model of Burns constructed by Smithers for amusement purposes. Homer got his job back at the power plant the following week after several employees died of starvation. The Greasy Fork was condemned a million times tomorrow, after it was found that the insulation was nothing more than moldy,

home-fried soup. Marge, having no insurance, was forced to go back to the life of the put-upon housewife, and mother of three. Everything turned out just the way things were, and there was no reason to fear Y2K after all... Oh yes, and it turned out that the Soggy Pigeon was really the reincarnation of their beloved Uncle Byrd. That's the end. You can send all comments and death threats to ChaiTheDog@aol.com. Hey, did I ever tell you about...

Gracie: Shh!