

Cast of Characters

Lars, 16

Chrissy, 16

Place

A high school cafeteria.

Time

The present. Late afternoon on a school day in the Fall.

Sensitivity, USA

by Emmett Loverde

SCENE: *A high school cafeteria, late afternoon on a school day in early Fall. Lunch garbage is scattered on the floor and the tables, which are empty...*

AT RISE: *...except for LARS GROLSCH, 16, who sits at a table. He sports long sideburns, dark clothes, army jacket, and a black knitted cap. His scowl hides his good looks even from himself. Two cheap microphones have been set on the table; they connect to a cheap tape recorder. LARS has a typed list of questions. He is speaking into a cellular telephone.*

LARS. I don't even need these questions. All I have to do is turn on the tape recorder and let her talk. *(Listens.)* That doesn't even enter into it. *(Listens.)* Even if she is, it doesn't matter. I'm a journalist. I'm above it. *(Listens.)* Same to you!

(CHRISSEY enters. She sparkles good-naturedly in slightly sickening pastels with some pink.)

She's here I gotta go.

(He hangs up. He stands up quickly, trying to cover his nervousness.)

Hey.

CHRISSEY. *(Brightly:)* Hi! Are you Lars?

LARS. The one and only. Are you ready?

CHRISSEY. Sure! This'll be so fun!

LARS. *(Sarcastic:)* Won't it just? *(Presses RECORD on tape recorder.)* Okay this is Lars Grolsch for the Beechwood High Chronicle and I'm interviewing Christine Parker—

CHRISSEY. You can just call me "Chrissy".

LARS. I'm interviewing "Chrissy" Parker for the November 16 issue.

CHRISSEY. This is so cool!

LARS. (*Tapping mic.*) Could you, uh—

CHRISSEY. Oh, sorry! (*Into her mic.:*) This is so cool.

LARS. So Chrissy, when did you first realize you were popular?

CHRISSEY. Oh when I was... (*Smiles uneasily.*) What's this interview supposed to be about?

LARS. You, like I said in my e-mail.

CHRISSEY. But what makes me worth interviewing?

LARS. (*Reviews his notes.*) Let's see...class president two years in a row, head cheerleader as a sophomore—

CHRISSEY. Spirit Club.

LARS. Sorry, Head Spirit Club Person—

CHRISSEY. Nobody else wanted it.

LARS. I find that shockingly difficult to believe.

CHRISSEY. I'm serious. This year the football team wasn't even ranked.

LARS. How could they be "ranked" before the season starts?

CHRISSEY. Last year's statistics. Pre-season scores. Who graduated. You don't write for the sports section, do you?

LARS. (*Insulted.:*) Hardly.

CHRISSEY. I sure want to.

LARS. How could you find the time? (*Back to his list.:*) Spirit Club. Glee club. Candy Strippers. 4-H. Peer Health Counselors. Spanish Club. Close-Up. Mock Legislature. Monkeybrains... (*Stares at her.*) "Monkey-brains"?

CHRISSEY. Anthropology Club.

LARS. Okay, but "Monkeybrains"?

CHRISSEY. Well how dorky does "Anthropology Club" sound?

LARS. About as dorky as "Candy Strippers".

CHRISSEY. Candy Stripers is an institution. That name will never change, dignified or not.

LARS. Say it's ten years from now and somebody's reading your resume. What are they going to think when they come to "Monkeybrains"?

CHRISSEY. In ten years no one's going to care. What clubs are *you* in?

LARS. You're not going to need a resume in ten years? What are you going to be, a housewife?

CHRISSEY. I asked what clubs you're in.

LARS. Hey, I'm the interviewer.

CHRISSEY. You still haven't told me why you're interviewing me.

LARS. I figure you're somebody a lot of kids look up to.

CHRISSEY. (*Touched:*) Thanks. I try to be.

LARS. And I just want them to see who you really are.

CHRISSEY. Oh. Thanks?

LARS. Next question... Who's the best kisser in school?

CHRISSEY. What paper is this for?

LARS. So you're avoiding that subject. Okay, next question! How can poor kids—?

CHRISSEY. I have no idea who the best kisser is!

LARS. Can't decide, eh? Anyway, how can poor kids—?

CHRISSEY. Do you write a gossip column?

LARS. This will make the front page, I guarantee.

CHRISSEY. I don't want names of people I've kissed on the front page!

LARS. Hundreds of girls at this school need to know who to kiss!

CHRISSEY. "Whom" to kiss.

LARS. Are you in the English Club, too?

CHRISSEY. Clearly *you* aren't.

LARS. Didn't they teach you in charm school not to mouth off to a journalist?

CHRISSEY. This is journalism?

LARS. I could show you my fan letters.

CHRISSEY. *You* get fan letters?

LARS. I have.

CHRISSEY. That's nice, Mr. Journalist, but I'm getting very uncomfortable with this "interview", so—

LARS. Why are you so uncomfortable?

CHRISSEY. Because your questions are nobody's business.

LARS. Why? What are you hiding?

CHRISSEY. Hiding? You don't even know me. (*Gathers her things to leave.*) And you never will.

(She starts to walk away.)

LARS. Don't you want to dispel the myths?

CHRISSEY. (*Stops.*) What "myths"?

LARS. "Myths" are stories or legends that—

CHRISSEY. I know what the word means. What myths?

LARS. Fine. If you think the record's straight as it is, we'll go with that.

CHRISSEY. Whatever.

(She flounces away. LARS dials his cell phone as CHRISSEY pulls hers out and dials. Each tries to talk quietly so as not to be overheard.)

LARS. (*Into phone:*) She squirmed the whole time like a bug on a pin! And I barely got through a quarter of my questions.

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) Is it legal to slap a reporter?

LARS. (*Into phone:*) She knew what she was in for. *The Beechwood Chron* isn't *People* magazine. We want blood, baby!

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) He wanted to know who the best kisser in school is! Like I would know!

LARS. (*Into phone:*) She refused to clear her name so I'll just go with what my sources told me. (*Listens.*) Like that she's kissed twenty-five

guys in two years—and two girls! Juicy, eh?

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) Okay, I know who it isn't. (*Shakes head.*) Definitely not Ryan. Terrible breath. Not Jaime, either—he tried to lick me!

LARS. (*Into phone:*) Sure it's news! (*Listens.*) Because it's *her*! Kids look up to her! Every girl in school wants to kiss Ryan Folsom. It's our duty to let them know what's in store.

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) No, she was drunk and she kissed *me*! I promised her I wouldn't say anything but then she blabbed it all over the place. I was her coming-out story!

LARS. (*Into phone:*) Sure it's not war reporting but if it's okay for the queen of the school to kiss girls, think of what that could mean for gay and lesbian kids still in the closet. It's crucial to get the story out—we could prevent suicides. *I certainly don't get off on this stuff.*

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) I'm not "hanging around"! I'm basically gone! He can print what he wants.

LARS. (*Into phone:*) It's not irresponsible! She left, so... (*Looks around.*) She's about to leave...

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) Well I'm about to be gone...

LARS AND CHRISSEY. (*Into their phones, simultaneously:*) Another chance???

LARS. (*Into phone:*) But she's a prissy little...

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) But he's a sniveling little...

LARS. (*Into phone:*) ...prima donna!

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*)...twit!

LARS AND CHRISSEY. (*Into their phones, simultaneously:*) Absolutely not!!

LARS. (*Into phone:*) She's not my type!

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) He's not tall enough!

LARS. (*Into phone:*) She wears too much pink!

CHRISSEY. (*Into phone:*) He's too bleak!

LARS. (*Into phone:*) She's too happy!

CHRISSEY. *(Into phone:)* He's too angry!

(Both sigh simultaneously.)

LARS. *(Into phone:)* Fine. She'll just bury herself.

CHRISSEY. *(Into phone:)* Fine. He won't listen to me anyway.

LARS AND CHRISSEY. *(Into their phones, simultaneously:)* I'll call you when it's over.

(LARS hangs up and turns toward CHRISSEY. CHRISSEY hangs up and starts walking back to LARS.)

LARS. Hey.

CHRISSEY. Hi. *(Pause.)* I noticed you had more questions on your list.

LARS. Don't worry—you gave me plenty of great stuff.

CHRISSEY. I just want to make sure you don't print lies or gossip.

LARS. So you want some more, huh? *(Sets up the recorder and microphones and starts recording.)* Interview with Christine Parker, Part Two. Ready?

CHRISSEY. Yes.

LARS. Do you have any grooming hints for your fans?

CHRISSEY. What "fans"?

LARS. Your admirers.

CHRISSEY. Any "fans" I have can groom themselves just fine.

LARS. What really made you come back here?

CHRISSEY. Well, I promised you an interview. And I felt bad, like I wasn't keeping my promise.

LARS. Is this your first time feeling bad?

CHRISSEY. You wouldn't say these things if that tape recorder weren't on.

LARS. You wouldn't talk to me if it wasn't on.

CHRISSEY. I'd talk to you if I knew you. I didn't know you. Now I don't want to know you.

LARS. How long have you been in this school district?

CHRISSEY. Since I was eight. *(Pause.)* What about you?

LARS. *I'm* doing the interview—

CHRISSEY. Get over it. How long have you been in the district?

LARS. Since I was five. I guess you never noticed me before.

CHRISSEY. No, I didn't. There. Satisfied? I'm a B-I-T-C-H. Print that.

LARS. You were in Miss Nagle's class.

CHRISSEY. I guess you did your research.

LARS. *(Embarrassed:)* I was in that class, too.

CHRISSEY. You were? Then thanks for helping make me miserable.

LARS. Me? I never—

CHRISSEY. When I arrived in that classroom no one talked to me for three days except Julie Foss—and all she did was tell me my hair was ugly.

LARS. She was wrong.

CHRISSEY. I cried all the way home every day.

LARS. Your hair was pretty. I remember. With a little pink bow.

CHRISSEY. You remember my bow?

LARS. *(Boy does he ever.)* Vaguely.

CHRISSEY. You could have said something.

LARS. I was eight!

CHRISSEY. Exactly. Eight. Before high school. Before cliques and cheerleaders and who's-dating-who.

LARS. Who's dating *whom*.

CHRISSEY. *You* never took the time to get to know *me*, Mr. Gross. That makes you a hypocrite.

LARS. The name is *Grolsch*. Like the beer.

CHRISSEY. Like what beer?

LARS. The beer. Grolsch.

CHRISSEY. “Grolsch Beer”?

LARS. You drink “Grolsch” beer?

(CHRISSEY’S cell phone rings.)

Excuse me. *(Into phone:)* Hello?

(CHRISSEY walks far enough away to be out of earshot of LARS.)

(Into phone:) No! He’s trying to embarrass me.

(LARS dials his cell phone.)

LARS. *(Into phone:)* Can you come down and give me a hand?

CHRISSEY. *(Into phone:)* I just answer his stupid questions and he twists everything around.

LARS. *(Into phone:)* Of course I can handle her. But I need a witness. Kind of.

CHRISSEY. *(Into phone:)* I’m not going to give him what he wants! He was mean to me. When I was eight. I’ll explain later.

LARS. *(Into phone:)* Fine. Send her down instead. Send somebody. Just don’t leave me alone with this...vixen.

CHRISSEY. *(Into phone; nodding:)* That’s not a bad idea. So the *weirder* I act, the more easily I can deny it later. Gotcha. *(Hangs up.)*

LARS. *(Into phone:)* That’s right, it’s all on tape. Okay. Have her come as soon as she can. Bye.

(CHRISSEY returns with the attitude of the shallowest person on Earth.)

CHRISSEY. I’m so sorry for that interruption, Mr. Beer. One of my little fans needed grooming hints.

LARS. Can we get back to my questions?

CHRISSEY. Yes, let’s. I have to get to a nail appointment.

LARS. A nail appointment?

CHRISSEY. *(Shows him her ring finger.)* Today we’re doing this one.

LARS. Which brings me to my next question... *(Reads from list:)* How can poor kids stay in fashion?

CHRISSEY. Good heavens. Fashion isn't for the poor. The poor should know that.

LARS. Any thrift shops you would recommend?

CHRISSEY. What's a "thrift shop"?

LARS. (*Reads off list:*) Is pink the new pink?

CHRISSEY. Pink is to the modern woman what purple was to those ancient Roman guys. They could only get that rich purple dye from squeezing it out of these poisonous fish. A slave could only squeeze a certain number of the fish before he died. So the more slaves you could afford to waste, the more purple dye you had, and the more purple dye you had, the more purple clothes you had, and the more purple clothes you had, the richer you obviously were. Now *my* favorite pink dye comes from squeezing blood from the less-fortunate.

LARS. That outfit has somebody's *blood*??

CHRISSEY. Just a squeeze.

LARS. (*Reads off list:*) Do you think we'll win the war in Viet Nam?

CHRISSEY. Viet Nam...that's west of here, isn't it?

LARS. It's a little country. Full of Vietnamese.

CHRISSEY. I thought we won that silly war.

LARS. Good—you've heard of it.

CHRISSEY. War is a dreary topic. Does your little army jacket mean you like war?

LARS. It's just a cool jacket.

CHRISSEY. Did it come from a "thrift shop"?

LARS. (*Reads off list:*) Let's see... Do you follow religion?

CHRISSEY. Religion follows me. Anyway, fashion is my religion.

LARS. (*Eyes dancing with glee:*) It is?

CHRISSEY. Yes. Old-style religion was fattening, full of coffee and doughnuts and guilt and stress. Besides, fashion predates religion. I'm sure the best-dressed cavemen got more dates.

LARS. (*Reads off list:*) College or marrying well?

CHRISSEY. College? Who needs college?

LARS. If you're not interested in college, why'd you join all those weird clubs?

CHRISSEY. To meet cute guys.

LARS. What for?

CHRISSEY. To marry well! Duh. And to see which one's the best kisser.

LARS. You can find cute guys in "Monkeybrains"?

CHRISSEY. I could meet the next Bill Gates.

LARS. Are those your breasts?

CHRISSEY. (*Momentarily shocked, but recovers.*) No. They belong to all who gaze upon them.

LARS. Are they real?

CHRISSEY. That's irrelevant. They're less like parts of my body and more like dreams. Other people's dreams. (*Looks pointedly at him.*) Your dreams.

LARS. W-what's the longest you've ever held onto a boyfriend?

CHRISSEY. My commitment to finding the Best Kisser in School takes precedence over any particular boyfriend...or girlfriend.

(LARS stares at her.)

You liked that, didn't you? Anyway, I don't "hold onto" boyfriends. They hold onto me.

LARS. Do you get along with your mother?

CHRISSEY. Mothers are for hanging-up on, slamming doors on, and soaking for birthday gifts. Mine serves her purpose.

LARS. (*Reads off list:*) So just what is your preferred way to dump a lover?

CHRISSEY. I never dump.

LARS. They dump you?

CHRISSEY. I drop out of touch. It makes me stunning and heartless, which is excruciatingly cool. Dumping someone gives him—or her—the

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