

## = Bart 's Girlfriend =

" Bart 's Girlfriend " is the seventh television episode of The Simpsons ' sixth season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on November 6 , 1994 . The plot of the episode follows the secret romance of Bart and Jessica Lovejoy , Reverend Lovejoy 's daughter . Bart tries to end the romance when he discovers that , behind her innocent façade as a preacher 's kid , she is an even bigger troublemaker than he is . Jessica then steals the money from the collection plate , leaving Bart to take the blame until Lisa exposes the truth .

The episode was written by Jonathan Collier , and directed by Susie Dietter . Former The Simpsons ' show runner David Mirkin originally came up with the idea of Bart having a girlfriend that was more evil than he was . Meryl Streep guest stars in the episode as Jessica Lovejoy . It features cultural references to films such as Planet of the Apes and The Silence of the Lambs . Since airing , the episode has received acclaim from both critics and fans , and Entertainment Weekly named Meryl Streep 's role as one of the best guest appearances on The Simpsons .

## = = Plot = =

Bart falls in love with Reverend Lovejoy 's daughter , Jessica . However , when he approaches her , she ignores him . The next Sunday , Bart decides to attend Sunday school to try to convince Jessica that he is a good person , but she still ignores him . Frustrated , Bart goes to the park to play a prank on Groundskeeper Willie , and is punished with detention . Jessica approaches him to express sympathy and invites him to her house for dinner with her family .

During a formal dinner with the Lovejoys , Bart 's crude mannerisms and foul language cause Reverend Lovejoy to forbid him from ever seeing Jessica again . However , Jessica realizes that Bart is a bad boy and tells Bart that she likes him . They begin secretly dating and causing mischief through the town . Bart quickly realizes that Jessica ( an example of the preacher 's kid stereotype ) is even more badly behaved than he is , so at the next Sunday service he tries to make her see the error of her ways . Although she seems to agree , Jessica immediately steals from the collection plate before forcing it back upon the hapless Bart. The congregation mistakenly believes that Bart took the money when they see him with the empty plate . Bart attempts to explain , but they refuse to listen . Although Homer assumes Bart is guilty , Marge is willing to hear him out , but Bart claims he does not know who did it . The following day , Bart visits Jessica at her house , and admits that he does not like her after Jessica refuses to own up to the crime .

Upon finding out the truth , Lisa is determined not to allow her brother to take blame for something he did not do , and she tells their congregation that Jessica is the guilty party . The townspeople then search Jessica 's room , where the money is found under her bed . Rev. Lovejoy refuses to believe that his daughter is guilty until Jessica admits to him she did it to gain attention . She is punished by being forced to scrub the church steps , and Bart receives an apology from the congregation at Marge 's insistence . Later , Bart approaches Jessica at church and tells her what he has learned , to which Jessica responds that she has learned that she can make boys do whatever she wants . Bart then agrees to finish Jessica 's chores as she runs off with another boyfriend . However , as soon as she leaves , he snickers about how bad a job he is going to do on the steps to get back at her .

## = = Production = =

" Bart 's Girlfriend " was written by Jonathan Collier and directed by Susie Dietter . David Mirkin , who was show runner at the time , originally had the idea of Bart having a girlfriend that was more evil than he was . Mirkin gave the idea to Collier to write it with the help of the show 's executive producer , James L. Brooks . Collier said later that he thought it was a case of Brooks coming up with good ideas and him " giggling insequentially " . The idea for the ending of the episode was to have none of the characters learn anything from the experience .

Matt Groening , the creator of The Simpsons , felt that Jessica Lovejoy was hard to draw in his own

style but at the same time make her attractive . Julie Kavner , who provides the voice of Marge Simpson on the show , was particularly impressed by the eyes . Jessica was made the Reverend 's daughter to give the impression that she was good at first and then to show that she was rebelling against the righteousness of her family . In the scene where Bart talks to Jessica outside her house , her baton playing was in the script but the exact choreography was not . Dietter liked its incorporation because it gave Jessica something else , other than Bart , to pay attention to . This was also done in the final scene when Jessica scrubs the church steps and plays with the scrub brush .

Academy Award winning actress Meryl Streep was called in to do the voice of Jessica . Nancy Cartwright , who provides the voice of Bart Simpson on the show , was a huge fan of Streep and she assumed that Streep would record her lines individually , but all of their recordings were done together . Streep showed up alone with no entourage at the Village Recorder in West Los Angeles at 2 : 30 P.M. , where she recorded her parts with Cartwright . Streep was continually doing many different versions of her lines . Mirkin felt she was easy to work with because she was versatile and keen to do a lot of different things , and as Mirkin expressed it , " easily evil " . Cartwright said in an interview with The Pantagraph that she really wanted Streep 's autograph , but was afraid to ask for it . After the recording session , Streep tapped Cartwright on the shoulder , and said her kids were big The Simpsons fans and that she would be in " big trouble " if she did not get Cartwright 's autograph .

In a take off of John Travolta in the 1983 film *Staying Alive* , Bart struts down a street in Springfield after he is invited to dinner at the Lovejoys , just as Travolta strutted through Times Square to the same tune , in a joke written by Jace Richdale , who was the co -@-@ executive producer of The Simpsons at the time . When Homer is musing over Bart 's first date , he begins to sing " Sunrise , Sunset " from *Fiddler on the Roof* , before moving on to " Cat 's in the Cradle " , and then " Yes , We Have No Bananas " . He then begins to weep due to the people in the song having no bananas . The joke was reportedly very expensive for the writers to put in because they had to pay thousands of dollars for the rights to use the songs on the show .

" Bart 's Girlfriend " originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on November 6 , 1994 . The episode was selected for release in a 2001 video collection of selected episodes titled : *The Simpsons ? Love , Springfield Style* . Other episodes included in the collection set were " It 's a Mad , Mad , Mad , Mad Marge " , " The Two Mrs. Nahasapeemapetilons " , and " I 'm with Cupid " . The episode was included in The Simpsons season 6 DVD set , which was released on August 16 , 2005 , as *The Simpsons ? The Complete Sixth Season* .

= = Cultural references = =

In the beginning of the episode , the parents chase the children in a cornfield to eventually round them up for church , which parodies a similar scene from the 1968 film *Planet of the Apes* , where the humans are rounded up by apes . After Bart is accused of stealing from the church collection plate , he is forced to wear a straitjacket in church , which is a reference to Hannibal Lecter 's straight @-@ jacket in *The Silence of the Lambs* . " Misirlou " , the theme song of the 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* , plays during Bart and Jessica 's date . Bart calls Jessica " smart , beautiful and a liar ... " and then claims she is " ... so much better than that Sarah , plain and tall " . The scene then cuts to a shot of a plain and tall girl named Sarah that overhears Bart and begins to cry . The Lovejoy family has a replica of Leonardo da Vinci 's painting *The Last Supper* hanging on the wall in their dining room . The sign on the Springfield Church marquee reads : " Evil Women in History : From Jezebel to Janet Reno " .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Bart 's Girlfriend " finished 53rd in the ratings for the week of October 31 to November 6 , 1994 , with a Nielsen rating of 9 @. @ 6 . The episode was the third highest rated show on the Fox network that week , beaten only by *Beverly Hills , 90210* , and

Married ... with Children .

Since airing , the episode has received many positive reviews from fans and television critics . Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , the authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , said : " Poor Bart gets picked on very cruelly by Jessica in a cleverly drawn study of pre @-@ pubescent love . We 're very fond of the scene in which Bart leaps out of the window at the church , after which Homer cries : He 's heading for the window ! " Colin Jacobson at DVD Movie Guide said in a review of the sixth season DVD : " We don 't often see Bart in a sympathetic light , so shows like this one are fun . " Girlfriend " reminds me of Season Four 's " New Kid on the Block " since it also featured Bart in love , though the programs differ since here the girl reciprocates . Streep does nicely as the bad kid and we get many fine moments in this memorable program . " TV Squad 's Adam Finley said : " Homer and Marge remained in the background for most of this episode , with Bart and Lisa becoming the main focus . Earlier episodes seemed to focus more on the dynamics between the two siblings , and it 's always a nice change of pace when the show examines their love for one another as opposed to constant rivalries . Lisa really wants to help Bart in this episode , and it 's actually quite touching . "

In a 2008 article , Entertainment Weekly named Meryl Streep 's role as Jessica Lovejoy as one of the sixteen best guest appearances on The Simpsons . Total Film 's Nathan Ditum ranked Streep 's performance as the fifth best guest appearance in the show 's history , commenting that she is " the perfect mix of beguiling and devilish as Reverend Lovejoy 's rebellious daughter . " David Mirkin told the Daily News of Los Angeles that " Bart 's Girlfriend " and " Homer the Great " are his favorite episodes of the season . Mirkin liked the scene where Bart is punched by Nelson at the playground because Bart takes a while to recover , which made the scene more realistic . Nancy Cartwright told the Chicago Tribune that this episode , and " Lisa 's Substitute " from season two , are her two favorite The Simpsons episodes .