

VIOLET AND HARRIS

A one-act play
By Sam Heyman

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CAST

VIOLET - A bundle of thoughts and emotions. Enjoys games. Remembers the good parts, but lacks context.

HARRIS - Has to be the grown up. Trying to get better. Haunted by his past, searching for a future.

VOICES - any gender, any age - A cruel, external source of shame. (Can be doubled and should be delivered by voice over.)

SETTING

The Divided Space in HARRIS' mind.

CASTING NOTE

VIOLET and HARRIS can be played by actors of any age, race and background, but it is recommended that they be portrayed by actors who are roughly the same age, race and background as each other. Additionally, while the characters' names are fixed, the gender(s) of who can portray them are not.

SYNOPSIS

Violet and Harris used to share a room, but now they are separated. Violet yearns to understand why things have changed, but Harris, burdened with self-awareness, must maintain the boundary that separates them at all costs. When Violet starts a game of catch, it is not long before Harris cannot avoid answering her questions. Can he keep himself together without tearing what's left of their bond apart?

PRODUCTION HISTORY

VIOLET AND HARRIS received its first on-stage production as part of the Pittsburgh New Works Festival in September 2025 (dir. Soren De Niz). It will be produced as an audio play by Play On Words Podcast in 2026. As of December 2025, VIOLET AND HARRIS is unpublished.

SETTING: The Divided Space in HARRIS's mind; on one side, lies the conscious mind: HARRIS's domain. It is plainly furnished; a comfortable chair and a rug will do. On the other side, behind the barrier, lies entry to the subconscious mind: VIOLET's domain. Coloring books, board games, various playthings and pillows litter the floor, including a lightweight stress ball. VIOLET's portion of the stage is larger and messier than HARRIS's, but is kept at bay by the barrier between them. The barrier can be conveyed physically with a permeable, translucent curtain or with the use of light; whatever choice is made, it should be clear where one domain begins and the other ends.

AT RISE: HARRIS sits in his chair, reading a book in his hands. VIOLET lays flat on her back, covering her eyes with her hands. She is mouthing a countdown from 10 to 1, only speaking aloud when she reaches 3.

VIOLET

3... 2... 1! Ready or not, here I come!

(VIOLET gets to her feet and excitedly runs in as wide of a circle as she can manage, searching for something, or someone. HARRIS continues reading, silently. VIOLET overturns several objects in search of her target, but finds nothing of note.)

VIOLET

You're a really good hider, Harris. Where could you be hiding?

HARRIS

I'm not hiding.

VIOLET

You're not? Then why can't I see you?

HARRIS

We've been through this, Violet. I've got my room and you've got yours.

VIOLET

Hey, that's not fair! This isn't even my room, this is like... a baby room for babies.

HARRIS

Well, it suits you.

VIOLET

Hey! I'm not a little kid, I'm just as old as you.

HARRIS

But you're still playing games.

(VIOLET balks at this. She picks up the stress ball and winds up to throw it, but stops.)
You really shouldn't.

VIOLET

Shouldn't what?

HARRIS

Nothing.

(A mischievous look flashes across VIOLET's face. She winds up the ball again.)

VIOLET

What happens if I...

HARRIS

Violet, don't.

VIOLET

C'mon, Harris. Let's play ca-a-atch! It can't be that bad.

HARRIS

I don't want to risk it. It's just the rules.

VIOLET

The rules?

HARRIS

For now.

VIOLET

Says who?

HARRIS

It's not a matter of who.

VIOLET

Why not?

HARRIS

Because... it's hard to explain.

VIOLET

You think I won't get it?

HARRIS

Whether you get it or not... it'll just cause problems. Trust me.

VIOLET (incredulous)

Playing catch will cause problems?

HARRIS

No, if... if you cross the barrier... you can't cross it. I have to be here, and you have to be there.

(VIOLET looks at the ball in her hands for a moment. It appears that she's accepted HARRIS's warning, but then she underhand throws the ball across the room, aiming for the other side of the barrier. HARRIS reacts fearfully.)

HARRIS

Violet! What did I—ugh!

(The ball rolls to a stop on HARRIS's side of the stage. From VIOLET's perspective, the ball has disappeared. She cannot see the study; she can only hear HARRIS's voice.)

VIOLET

Okay, but did you die? It made it through, right? It didn't get vaporized?

HARRIS

No... it didn't get vaporized.

VIOLET

Great. Now, pass it back!

HARRIS

Why throw it over here if you just want it back?

VIOLET

Have you never played catch before?

HARRIS

I'm not passing it back. I'm not touching that thing.

VIOLET

Why not? It's a ball, not a bomb. Come on, Harris. Pass it back!

HARRIS

No.

(VIOLET's tone is urgent, desperate. She paces the floor, anxiously.)

VIOLET

Pass it back!

HARRIS

Violet...

VIOLET

If you don't pass it back, I'm coming over there.

HARRIS

You can't! You really can't do that.

VIOLET

Why not? Because it's against "the rules?"

HARRIS

Because you'll get hurt! Because I'll get hurt, because we'll...

VIOLET

Okay... Okay. I'm sorry. I just don't get it... Why can't I see you any more?

HARRIS

We're going in a circle. Because I've got my room and you've got...

(VIOLET waits for HARRIS to finish his sentence. She crosses her arms, expectantly.)

HARRIS (CONT.D)

The barrier keeps us separate. It keeps us both safe. If we can't see each other, it'll be easier for both of us. It'll be easier for us to forget. If you can't come over here, then you can't bring anything over that might hurt me.

VIOLET

You think that I'd try to hurt you?

HARRIS

It's not a matter of trying. I know you're not trying to do me any harm, but... accidents happen.

VIOLET

Wait, wait. Did I hurt you? I don't remember hurting you.

HARRIS

It wasn't you, Vi.

VIOLET

Then who was it?

HARRIS

It wasn't anyone.

VIOLET

You're not making any sense! Stop speaking in riddles.

(HARRIS has accepted the rules without question, but even he does not understand them. He is just afraid of being hurt again. With some trepidation, he approaches the ball on the ground.)

HARRIS

I'm passing it back. I can't have your things cluttering my side.

(When HARRIS grabs the ball, the lights go haywire, blues and reds flashing and overlapping before settling on a violet hue. HARRIS is frozen in place; VOICES emanate, stern and forceful.)

VOICES

Slow down! Stop babbling. You need to stop acting like such a child... You never used to be like this. It's really annoying, pathetic. What's gotten into you?

VIOLET

Harris! *Harris!*

(HARRIS releases the ball from his grip and stumbles backward, VIOLET's call shaking him free from his fixation.)

HARRIS

I can't! I can't!

VIOLET

Can't what? Are you okay?

HARRIS

I'm... I'm fine. I just... I can't touch it. I can't get rid of it, I can't–

VIOLET

Can't get rid of what? The ball? Just kick it, bonehead.

HARRIS

That's... not a bad idea.

(HARRIS, harried, rises to his feet and readies a kick, aiming to send the ball back to VIOLET's side of the barrier. Bracing for impact, HARRIS kicks the ball successfully to the other side. The lights remain unchanged. VIOLET moves to retrieve the ball.)

VIOLET

You did it! Great...

(When VIOLET touches the ball, the lights do not change, but she falls silent and freezes in position.)

HARRIS

Violet? Violet! Did you... did you touch it?

(HARRIS paces the floor and begins to panic. He wordlessly debates with himself whether to cross the barrier, but can't bring himself to do it.)

I told you! I told you it was a bad idea, you never should have done that—I never should have passed it back!

(VIOLET emerges from stasis gasping for breath, as if coming up from underwater. She staggers backward, hitting the ground. HARRIS reacts accordingly.)

Violet?

VIOLET

I...! Har– Harris...?

HARRIS

Vi, thank god. I knew it wasn't safe, I knew–

VIOLET

I heard voices... so many voices.

(The VOICES return, but quieter this time; a recollection permeating the space.)

VOICES

This is getting ridiculous. Stop acting like such a child! You need to grow up!

VIOLET

They sounded like... they sounded like you.

HARRIS

Like me?

VIOLET

Why were they so angry? Harris, why were they so angry? Are you angry with me?

HARRIS

Vi, no. No, I'm not angry with you.

VIOLET

Then why were you saying those things about me?

HARRIS

It wasn't... it wasn't about you. What did the voices say? What did you hear?

VIOLET

I don't want to... I don't want to talk about it.

HARRIS

Violet.

VIOLET

I don't want to!

HARRIS

It's okay! It's okay, you don't have to say anything. We don't have to share everything with each other—

VIOLET

Do you hate me, Harris?

HARRIS

What? Why would you think... Vi, if the voices sounded hateful, it wasn't about you.

VIOLET

Promise?

HARRIS

Promise.

VIOLET

If it wasn't about me... were they... were they talking about you?

HARRIS

It's... hard to say.

VIOLET

Should I... Should I pass it back?

HARRIS

I don't know if that's...

VIOLET

I don't want it here, it scares me. It doesn't belong to me, I've never seen it before.

HARRIS

When you thought it was just a ball, it didn't do anything. You didn't hear anything when you touched it at first. Right?

VIOLET

R-Right. Right, but—

HARRIS

You don't have to touch it with your hands. You don't have to hold it again. Kick it back to me.

VIOLET

But it hurt you, too!

HARRIS

I know, but... I have an idea. Just trust me.

VIOLET

Okay...

(VIOLET stands and gets some distance from the ball, before advancing toward it and kicking it through the barrier. Depending on the ball's trajectory, HARRIS takes care to not let the ball touch him.)

HARRIS

The ball isn't what's harmful.

VIOLET

It's not?

HARRIS

No. It seems like... Every time the ball passes through the barrier, it brings something over with it.

VIOLET

Something bad?

HARRIS

Something that's hard for each of us to take. Things that we're hiding from ourselves, or things...

VIOLET

Things we're hiding from each other. Harris... you know things I don't. We're the same age, but... you know where the barrier came from, right? You can remember.

HARRIS

I... I do. For a while there... I was really struggling with a lot of things. Different thoughts and feelings I didn't know how to talk about. At first, I didn't know that I was struggling. You helped me feel like I wasn't in this alone. I felt excited about everything I had going on. I felt like I could take on the world, but... that wasn't true. The world was too big and I... I was too small. It was getting to the point where I had to find a way to get the thoughts to stop or I would just... I'd be overcome.

VIOLET

When did this start? Why didn't you tell me?

HARRIS

Violet, I couldn't exactly tell you—

VIOLET

Why not? We used to share everything, all of our ideas, all of our dreams! We used to have the same room! Don't you trust me anymore?

HARRIS

It's not that I don't trust you. It's not that I didn't—

VIOLET

Then what is it?

HARRIS

I couldn't tell you I was struggling because... all those thoughts and feelings? They were coming from you.

VIOLET

What?

HARRIS

We always shared everything with each other, but you started needing to take up more and more space. I didn't know where I ended and you began. I was afraid of being carried away, of losing myself, but I could tell that it made you happy. I thought if I... If you got what you wanted, things would get calmer, easier. But it kept getting worse.

VIOLET

Why don't I remember this? Harris, are you lying to me?

HARRIS

I'm not lying! I'm not.

VIOLET

But I would never try to hurt you! I'd never do that!

HARRIS

I never thought you were trying to hurt anyone. But the reality was... we weren't acting like ourselves. I needed help. For both of us.

VIOLET

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!

HARRIS

It wasn't your fault. You were doing what you thought was right.

VIOLET

But it wasn't right, was it? I hurt you, I hurt... us.

HARRIS

Only because you were hurt, too.

VIOLET

And I don't remember because...

(HARRIS hesitates to fill in the gaps. VIOLET paces back and forth. She's beginning to understand, to remember.)

We did everything together. We were a team. There wasn't an end to you or a beginning to me. There was just us. But now, we're separated. Do you think...? Do you think we'll ever...?

HARRIS

I don't know.

VIOLET

Do you want to be alone?

HARRIS

I don't know.

VIOLET

What do you mean 'you don't know?'

HARRIS

I just don't, okay? I thought I was happy when we were together, when we were just one person, but it turns out I was just... going mad.

VIOLET

I made you angry?

HARRIS

Not angry, not angry. You know what it means, don't you? To 'go mad'?

VIOLET

Like crazy? I made you crazy?

HARRIS

We made each other crazy. We weren't good for each other.

VIOLET

You don't really believe that.

HARRIS

It's not a matter of believing, Vi. I was supposed to protect you, but who's supposed to protect me, when you get upset and start hurting me—when you start hurting other people?

VIOLET

I would never hurt you—I would never hurt people!

HARRIS

Even a child can hurt someone. You got us talking so much and so fast and you made everyone start worrying. You hurt Mom. You may not mean to, but your choices... when you want something so much you'll throw a tantrum at anyone who tries to stop you, that's a problem. That's no way for either of us to be, not now. Not anymore.

VIOLET

Harris...

HARRIS

We're the same age, but I'm the only one who's grown up. How can I grow, how can either of us grow if you're in charge?

VIOLET

Harris!

HARRIS

That's why there's a barrier between us, Violet! I have to learn how to grow without you.

(VIOLET is heartbroken. She can't speak. She sits down and tucks her knees against her chest. She cries. HARRIS feels for her, but cannot see her. He sits down in his chair and sighs.)

VIOLET

What about me? I'm never going to grow up, am I? You're going to keep me here, locked away from the world. I'm never going to be a person!

HARRIS

...You will. You're still a part of me. This won't be forever. It just takes time.

VIOLET

"It just takes time." You say that but... You want me gone. You want to be left alone. You said you don't know, but you do know, Harris. You wish I was dead.

HARRIS

I would never wish that.

VIOLET

If someone hurt me like you've hurt me... I'd wish they were dead.

HARRIS

Violet.

VIOLET

I wish you were dead. I wish you were dead! I wish I was dead! I hurt you and I hurt them and I shouldn't be around anymore! I don't belong here, I don't belong anywhere!

(HARRIS rises from his seat, concerned, but afraid to approach the barrier.)

HARRIS

Violet, no, please, no. Please don't say that. Don't even think it.

VIOLET

Why not?! If I was never around, you never would have gotten hurt. If you never got hurt, you would have never...

(VIOLET can't finish the sentence. HARRIS hesitates, but walks toward the barrier.)

HARRIS

If you were never around, I never would have felt all those things, but... I also never would have been happy. I never would have had dreams, hopes, desires. Sometimes wanting something so much can hurt your feelings. But wanting nothing, loving nothing... I don't want to not have feelings at all. I don't want to lose you.

VIOLET

You'd never lose me.

HARRIS

I was afraid I would. When they said they were going to take me to the doctor. I was afraid they'd take you away forever, or worse.

VIOLET

Worse?

HARRIS

I was afraid that I'd... I'd take us both away. For good.

VIOLET

Oh.

(HARRIS becomes overwhelmed, his hand against the barrier. VIOLET hears him close and rises to her feet. She approaches the barrier and feels around for HARRIS' hand.)

You sound close. Are you close?

HARRIS

I'm here. I'm here.

(VIOLET finds HARRIS' hand and grabs hold of it, the barrier serving as a film to separate them. The lights shift. VIOLET winces, in pain, but she bears it. HARRIS sighs, comforted.)

VIOLET

It's going to be okay. I won't leave you.

HARRIS

The doctor said... eventually I'll get back some of what I've lost. For now, the highs won't be so high, and the lows won't be so low. He made it sound like it would help me get better, but... I got scared. Frankly, I... I'm still scared, Violet. I don't know if I can do it alone. I'm not ready to let you go.

VIOLET

You don't have to let me go.

HARRIS

Everyone just wants me to behave, and be patient, and get better. I have to get better. I have to grow up.

VIOLET

I know. I'm sorry. I don't want to hold you back.

HARRIS

You won't. Just... don't ever think that you don't matter to me. You do. I'd be lost without you.

VIOLET

I'd be nothing without you.

HARRIS

That makes two of us.

(VIOLET smiles, comforted, but still emotional.)

VIOLET

I wish we could stay like this.

HARRIS

I know. I have to let go now.

VIOLET

Don't go. Please.

HARRIS

Just for a little while.

VIOLET

I'm scared, Harris.

HARRIS

Don't be scared. I'm still here. Even though you can't see me. Even when you can't feel me.

VIOLET

Promise?

HARRIS

I promise.

(VIOLET grips HARRIS' hand through the barrier, and closes her eyes, steeling herself to let go. HARRIS closes his eyes as well.)

Remember what you used to say, when we'd get nervous on the first day of school?

VIOLET

..."I'm not nervous, no, no, no."

VIOLET and HARRIS

"I'm excited, I'm excited, I'm excited."

(VIOLET and HARRIS release each other from their grasp. The lights shift back to normal. They gaze forward at each other, through the barrier. They each hold the hand that once held each other's as the lights fade to black.)

(End of play.)