

# **NOT AN AFTER-SCHOOL SPECIAL**

**a one-act play by**

**Jeffrey Smart**

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Are you overdosed on teen problems – dramas about eating disorders, drunk-driving, suicide, etc.? Then this darkly humorous one-act is the antidote.

Violet is in the nurse's office after having fainted that morning. One by one her friends visit her and one by one she takes advantage of them by confessing to all the ills teens are supposed to have. With a story of illiteracy, she gets the bright but mousy Moxie to do her homework. A tale of bulimia gets tomboyish Caryn to give up her car keys. A fable of drunk-driving gets the uptight Kelly to bring Violet her boyfriend. And you won't believe what Violet says to get super-hot Bryce to loosen up. When the truth comes out and all the stories collide, will Violet repent? Or will this play avoid the moralistic endings you're so sick of? One thing's for certain: This is "Not An After-School Special."

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**VIOLET:** a high school student.

**MOXIE:** a mousy girl.

**CARYN:** a tomboy.

**KELLY:** a good girl.

**BRYCE:** a good-looking boy.

**NURSE**

## **SETTING**

The nurse's office at school. Very white and sterile. Visible are two cots with thin mattresses. There is one entrance, leading to the rest of the nurse's office, through which everyone must enter. There is a tiny bedside table. There is a white curtain which can be drawn to separate the two cots.

## **PROPS**

fashion magazine (Violet)

book bag (on floor)

book bag/purse with car keys (Caryn)

candy bar (Caryn)

flowers (Kelly)

## **COSTUMING**

VIOLET is wearing very tight clothes, probably a tube top and pedal pushers with clunky heels. At any rate, her clothes are at odds with the victim she will play. MOXIE might have glasses and a sweater and is dressed in beige. CARYN probably wears jeans, a guy's shirt and a down-filled vest or jacket that makes her look a little bigger than she is. KELLY is prep-school neat and could be wearing a blue jumper with white blouse. BRYCE dresses in the sexy, relaxed contemporary style of whichever young male media star is hot at the moment. The NURSE wears scrubs but could go as far as the starched white dress with cap.

## NOTES

This play is pure comedy – people take Violet's pity act at face value while pursuing blindly their own needs to be "good" people: sympathetic, caring and selfless when their friend needs help. They don't notice Violet's bad lying or her often blatant disgust for them or her sudden switches from victim to calculating manipulator. The play is, in fact, a black comedy, where you laugh at "decent" behavior and cheer for the "villain," who eventually wins. For predecessors, you can look at Restoration comedy where the intelligent people win at the expense of the dim people, but you can look further back to Ben Jonson's *VOLPONE* with its dark satire as a partial inspiration for this play.

If you need to justify this play, say that the piece is a learning tool and you hope people will learn to balance their hearts with wise thinking. Sympathy is fine, but we must learn not to be dupes. The play could also be considered a corrective to the current "victim" culture: we all need to take responsibility for ourselves and not blame one another and not encourage that behavior in others. Besides, nothing Violet talks about is real, so what's the objection?

If you have to, you can change every "God" into "gosh" or "heck." Also, you can cast the Nurse with a man.

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*(AT RISE: VIOLET is on one cot, supported by pillows, with her feet, shoes still on, on the bed. She is heavily made up, right down to painted fingernails, and wears just about the tightest clothes she can. She does not look sick – she looks bored, flipping fiercely through the pages of a fashion magazine. She gives an irritated sigh, tosses down the magazine and stands up. The NURSE enters immediately with finger wagging in admonition.)*

NURSE: Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah! You stay in that bed.

VIOLET: It's a cot!

NURSE: You lie back down on that cot, then. You are staying here until we know what's wrong with you.

VIOLET: Nothing's wrong with me! I feel fine.

NURSE: Lie down! *(VIOLET does.)* You are not fine; you fainted this morning. Now, I got your doctor's number from your mother, so I'm gonna give him a call.

VIOLET: That's really not necessary.

NURSE: Don't you take that tone! You are sick and you're not moving until your doctor tells me otherwise.

VIOLET: Fine. *(SHE picks up the magazine.)*

NURSE: I'll look in on you in a little while.

*(NURSE stands and looks at her. VIOLET looks back in annoyance.)*

VIOLET: Goodbye!

*(NURSE half-shrugs and exits.)*

VIOLET: *(To HERSELF.)* I don't need this.

*(SHE sets down her magazine and starts to get up.)*

MOXIE: *(Offstage.)* Violet?

*(VIOLET gets back on the bed quickly and snatches up the magazine. MOXIE, a mousy girl, enters.)*

MOXIE: Violet?

VIOLET: Oh, it's you. *(SHE returns to the magazine.)*

MOXIE: I heard you were in the nurse's office.

VIOLET: Yeah.

MOXIE: Are you sick?

VIOLET: *(Sarcastically.)* Yeah, Moxie, I'm sick.

MOXIE: I'm sorry. What's wrong?

VIOLET: What do you think's wrong?

MOXIE: I don't know. We were talking and all we know is you fell over. I came up with a list of possibilities, but you know how it is with me and my brain – one idea leads to another and another.

VIOLET: Yeah, you always liked your brain.

MOXIE: But there were too many possibilities. Psychological dementia, atmospheric inversion, congenital ischemia. My brain was whirling in alternatives and this emotional dread kept creeping up on me like kudzu. I had to find out. Violet, is it ... is it ... a brain tumor?

VIOLET: A brain tumor?

MOXIE: I don't want you to die.

VIOLET: It's not –

MOXIE: Oh, please, don't let it be a brain tumor.

VIOLET: It's not – !

MOXIE: If it's a brain tumor, I'll do all your homework.

VIOLET: *(Changing HER mind.)* – not worth lying to you, Moxie. It's a brain tumor. *(SHE falls back limply on the bed.)*

MOXIE: Oh, God, no!

VIOLET: They won't tell me how much time I have to live.

MOXIE: Oh, God, Violet! How awful! How awful, awful, awful!

VIOLET: *(Stopping HER.)* Moxie! *(Back to being the victim.)* I don't want anyone to know. Promise you won't tell anyone.

MOXIE: Not even Caryn?

VIOLET: No.

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