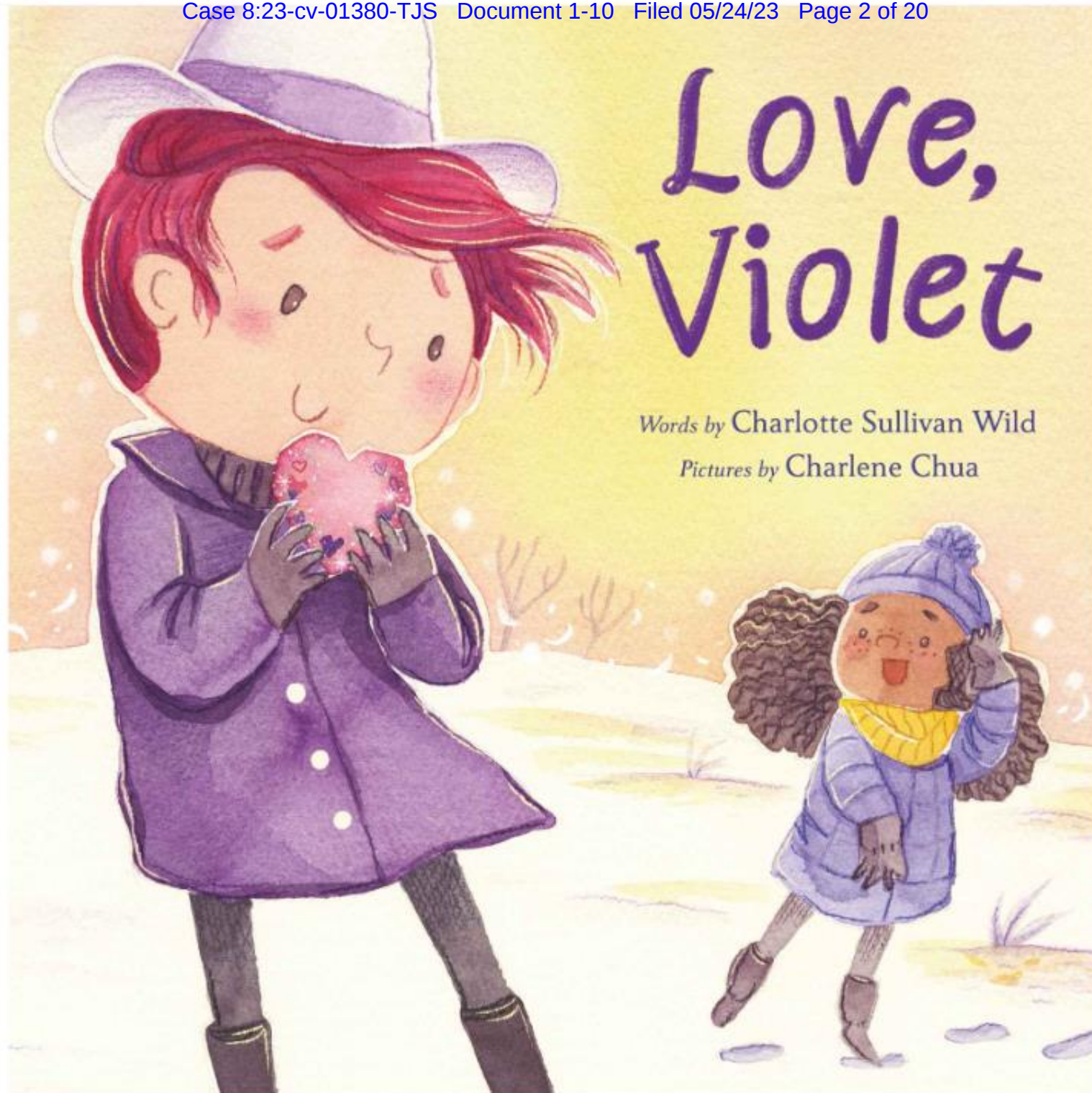


Exhibit H



For Tara, wearer of adorable hats, who wooed me with handmade valentines.

Cara mia, I still have a crush on you!

Also for Melissa, Isabel, Benji and Brian, Jodi and Ro, David, Annie, Melody, Chelsea, Sandy, and everyone at Thrive Youth Center. For all of us who have longed for a story of our own. Love, Charlotte

For J. N. and H. Y., even though you'll never know —C. C.

Love, Violet



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Pictures by Charlene Chua

Farrar Straus Giroux
New York

As far as Violet was concerned,
only one person in her class raced like the wind.
Only one had a leaping laugh.
Only one made Violet's heart skip.



But whenever Mira came near . . .



"What are you drawing, Violet?"

"Want to play horses, Violet?"

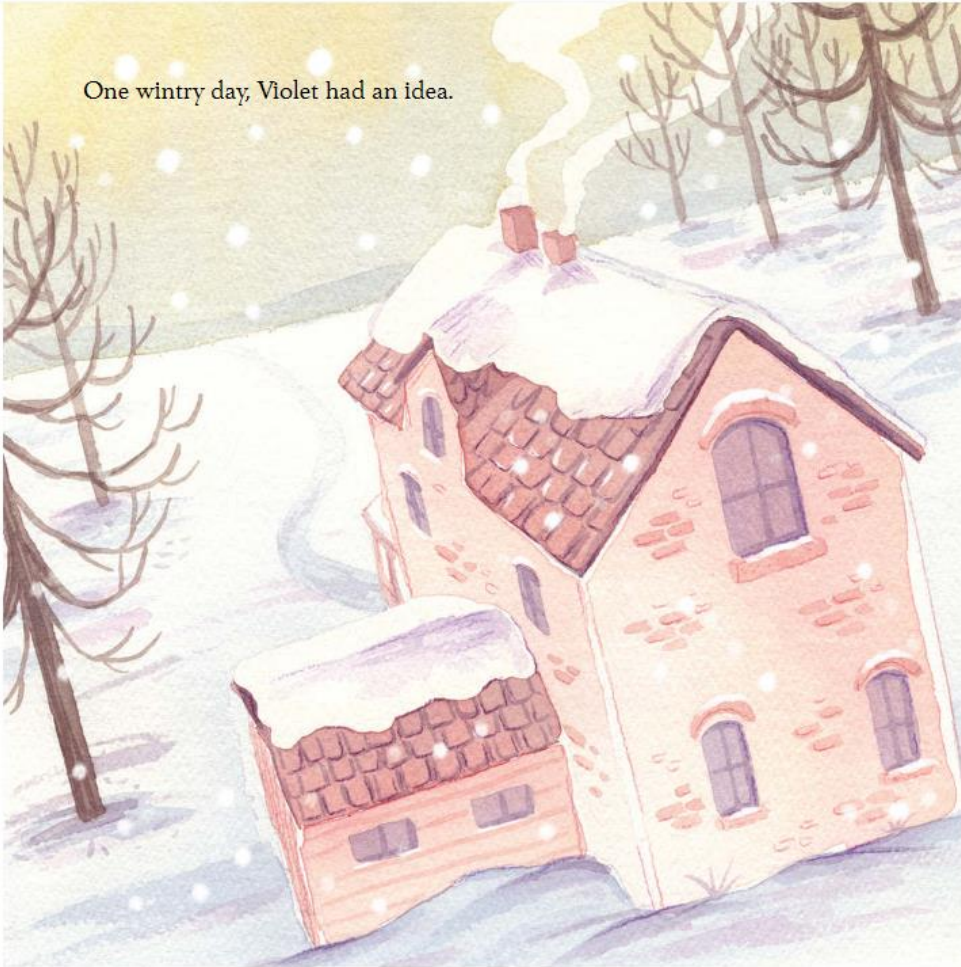


"Where's Violet? We're line buddies today."



... Violet went shy.

One wintry day, Violet had an idea.



An idea with crayons and scissors, glitter and glue.

When it was just right,
she signed her valentine,
Love, Violet.



Maybe tomorrow their
adventures would begin!



On Valentine's Day, Violet woke to shimmering snow.
On went her boots and lucky cowgirl hat.
And under that hat went Violet's surprise!

As Violet kicked through snow to school,
Carlos asked, "Did everybody bring valentines?"
"I bet you made a SPECIAL one for somebody!"
teased Jade.
"Ewww! Did not!" cried Carlos. "Violet, did YOU?"
Violet blushed hot. "I gotta go." She darted through
the wintry gust with her hat pulled low.

Just then, Mira raced up like the wind.

"Nice hat, Violet."

Snow sparkled on Mira's eyelashes.

Mira was magnificent.

But what if Violet's valentine *wasn't*?

Suddenly, Violet's heart thundered like a
hundred galloping horses.

She reached for her hat and . . .

THUMPity. THUMPity. THUMPity!



bolted.



All day long, Violet's stomach lurched.
What if Violet couldn't give her valentine?
What if Mira didn't *want* her valentine?
What if . . . they never adventured?



"Time for valentines!" called Mr. York.
Violet squeaked.

Queasy and quivering, Violet delivered her valentines.
All. But. One.
She looked left.
She looked right.
She lifted her hat . . .





At recess, Violet made a lonely angel in the snow.
How could she ever face Mira now?



Then laughter lassoed across the playground.
A laugh like leaping horses.
A laugh that warmed Violet down into her boots.

Violet sprang up.
Only one person had praised her hat.
Only one hadn't laughed when she fell.
Only one had ever asked her to play horses.
Could it be Mira *wanted* to be her valentine?



"MIRA!" cried Violet. "I have something for you!"

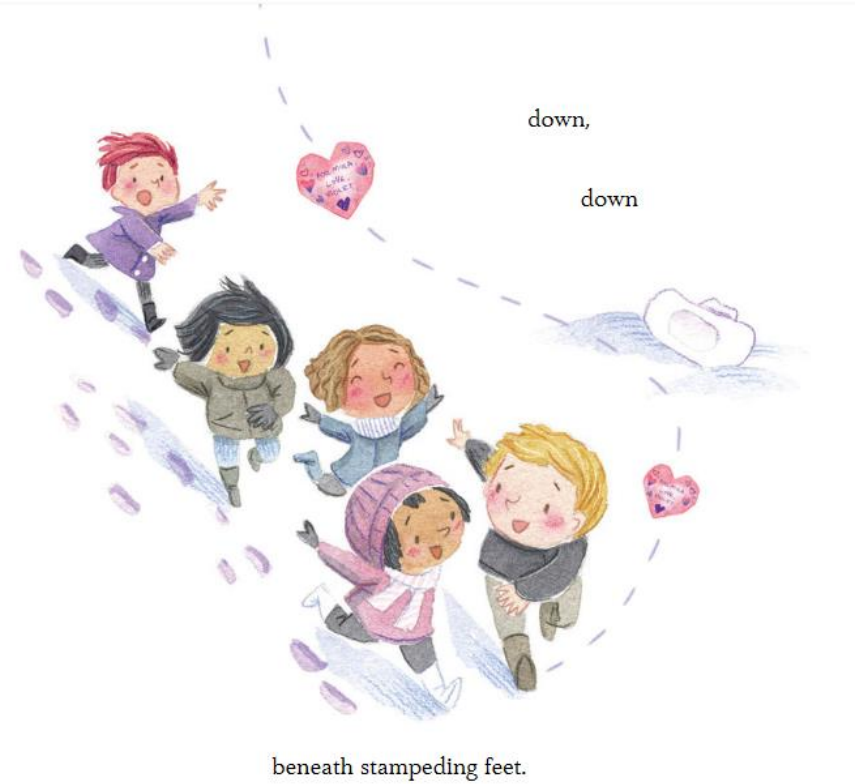
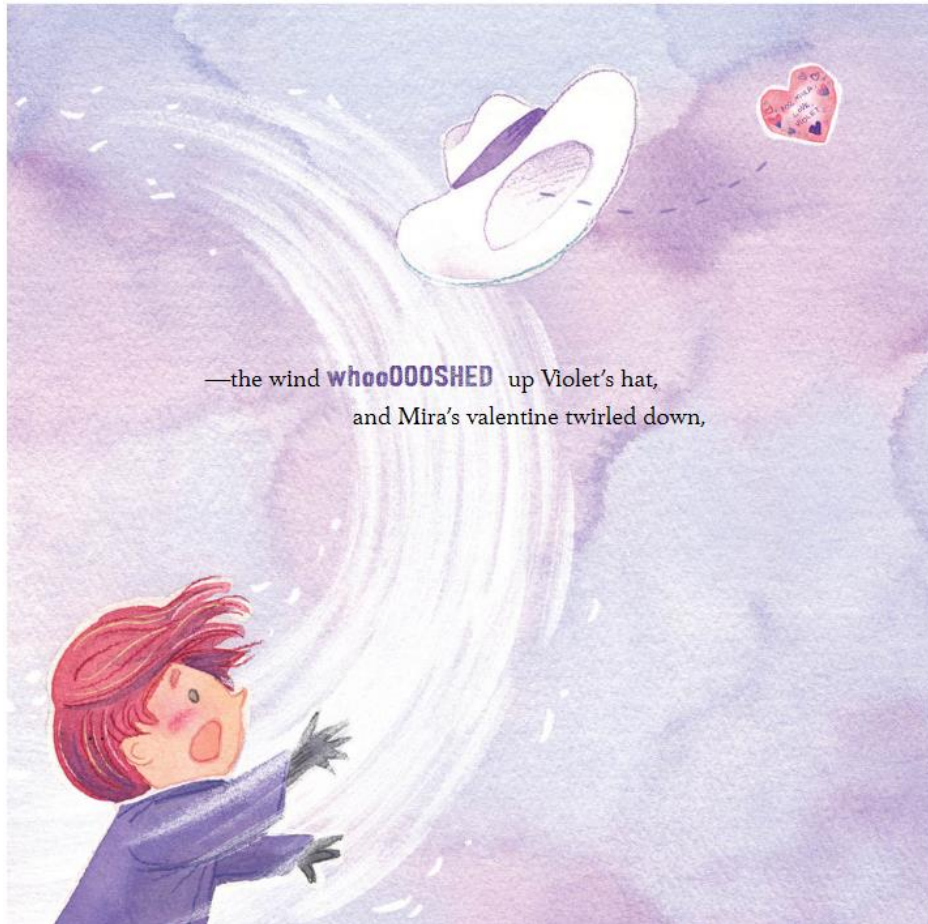
Violet flew through the snow.

She scaled drifts!

Slid across ice!

She even dodged a barrage of snowballs
under the jungle gym WHEN—





"NOOOOOOO!"

Mira raced like the wind. "Violet! What's wrong?"
Violet sniffed. "This was for you. But it's *ruined*."



"For me? Violet . . . it's so pretty!"
Mira tucked a torn bit into her cap.
It glittered beside her hair.





Then, with a shy smile, Mira reached into her pocket and pulled out a locket.
"For you," said Mira.





And they were off,
galloping over snowy drifts
to see what they might find.

"Want to go on an adventure?" asked Violet.
"Yes!" cried Mira.

Together.

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