

The Veils

A play by Hope Villanueva

Version #11.4

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The Veils

Characters in the Present

Mel Former Marine, back from the Middle East, planning her wedding

Wendy Mel's mother, wants to help but just barely holding it together

Harmony Mel's sister, cool, collected and action-oriented

John Voice Over only. Deceased, Mel and Harmony's Father, Wendy's husband

Characters in the Past

Vargas A fellow soldier in Mel's unit

Stitch A fellow soldier in Mel's unit

Prisoner A Iraqi soldier taken hostage. Same actor as Vargas.

Persian Translations courtesy of Gulzar Jalal and Paul Taviani at Ball State University

A Note on Casting

This play is intended to represent all American women. As such, please consider diversity in casting that might best represent your community or city. However, please do not modify gender. These choices are intentional.

Setting

2008. The suburbs somewhere in America. The family's home.

AND

An American military base in Afghanistan.

AND

Sometimes, both at once, in Mel's mind.

History of the Play and Casting

Baltimore Playwrights' Festival, Staged Reading in January 2016. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Jill Tighe
Harmony	Jen Bevan
Vargas/Prisoner	Drew Kopas
Stitch	Christian Sullivan
John/C.O.	Matthew Dougherty
Wendy	Nancy Dougherty

Directed by Lauren Katz. Stage directions read by Mikey Caferelli.

The 15th Annual Kennedy Center Page to Stage Festival, Staged reading and talkback in September 2016 in Washington, DC. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Jill Tighe
Harmony	Lizzi Albert
Vargas/Prisoner	Ian Anthony Coleman
Stitch	Joseph Mallon
John	Matthew Dougherty
Wendy	Nancy Dougherty

Directed by Clare Shaffer.

The Black and Latino Playwrights' Conference 2016, Workshop and staged reading September 2016 at Texas State University. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Jill Tighe
Harmony	Ana Puig
Vargas/Prisoner	Tito Yeverino
Stitch	Jake Young
John	Oziel Lozano
Wendy	Kaycee Swiere
Commanding Officer	Matteo Ybarra

Directed by Megan Behm.

The Parsnip Ship 2016, Live recorded podcast in New York City, NY. The play was read in front of a live audience and recorded for the podcast in December 2016. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Rebekah Carmichael
Harmony	Stephanie Lavardera
Vargas/Prisoner	Jelani Alladin
Stitch	Rod Singleton
John/C.O.	Bob D’Haene
Wendy	Anna Savant

Directed and stage directions read by Megan Behm.

The Discovery New Play Festival 2017, Workshop and staged reading May 2017 at Ball State University. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Alexandria Hudson
Harmony	Isabel Rivera
Vargas	Tyler Rainer
Stitch	Jacob Barnes
John	Dakota Reed
Wendy	Eva Patton
Prisoner	Conor Korbisch
Commanding Officer	Cody Alexander

Directed by Paul Tavianini. Stage directions read by Carly Masterson.

The Kitchen Dog New Play Festival 2017, Staged reading June 2017 at The Kitchen Dog Theatre in Dallas, TX. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Whitney Holotik
Harmony	Janielle Kastner
Vargas	Tyler Rainer
Stitch	Mike Schraeder
John	Wm. Paul Williams
Wendy	Lulu Ward
Prisoner	Jamal Gibran Sterling
Commanding Officer	Wm. Paul Williams

Directed by Jonathan Taylor. Stage directions read by Jonathan Taylor.

The Women's Voices Festival 2018, Washington, DC. Produced February-March 2018 at The Anacostia Arts Center, produced by Nu Sass Productions. The cast was as follows:

Melody	Schuyler Atkins
Harmony	Renee Wilson
Vargas	Vitaly Mayes
Stitch	Christian Sullivan
John	N. Barry Carver
Wendy	Dannie Caroline
Prisoner	Vitaly Mayes

Directed by Angela Kay Pirko.

The play may also be found on the New Play Exchange:

<https://newplayexchange.org/plays/8250/veils>

You can learn more about the playwright at www.stagewoozle.com.

ACT 1 Scene 1

WIND in the desert, Afghanistan. A little girl's laughter. The voice of Mel's Father, JOHN.

JOHN (V.O.)

Come here! Come on, Mel!

MEL jogs into her own dream space. She holds her imaginary football aloft.

MEL

Ready, Daddy?

JOHN (V.O.)

Throw it!

MEL throws the football back to her unseen father.

JOHN (V.O.)

Who says a girl can't throw? My daughter can goddamn throw! The best quarterbacks throw the ball so it spins in a spiral. I'll show you how to do that, too, someday. If you want to be a quarterback, then you are going to be a quarterback. Whatever you want to do, you'll do it. Anything. My little girl... You could change the world. You know that, don't you?

MEL

Right, Daddy!

JOHN (V.O.)

Maybe you want to be a linebacker instead?

MEL (laughing)

Dad!

A playful tickle or tussle spins her around.

JOHN (V.O.)

Okay okay. Maybe you're a little short. But you could do it.

MEL

I could.

JOHN (V.O.)

Your turn. Go long.

MEL turns to start getting distance...

In Afghanistan, two of MEL's fellow soldiers, STITCH and VARGAS arrive, throwing a football.

JOHN (V.O.)

Go long!

STITCH (O.S)

You ain't got the arm.

VARGAS

Go long!

MEL stops in her tracks.

JOHN (V.O.)

You're stubborn, like me.

STITCH (entering)

(Catching the ball) Boom!

JOHN (V.O.)

Boom.

MEL

Boom.

Afghanistan slowly begins to fade away.

VARGAS

Come on, Garza.

STITCH

I need some back up.

JOHN (V.O.)

From the minute I first held you, I knew. You were like me.

STITCH

No skills!

JOHN (V.O.)

You are like me. We were meant to fly.

WATER DRIPS from the sky. It echoes with a sound that warps time and space. STITCH tilts his head up. VARGAS wipes a drop from his face.

MEL

Dad?

JOHN (V.O.)

I wish I could fly with you.

MEL

You can!

VARGAS

We've got to go now.

The WATER DRIPS grow louder. There is something very wrong.

JOHN (V.O., overlapping)

Fly over the water.

STITCH

Garza?

MEL

Dad?

VARGAS

We've got to go now.

JOHN (V.O.)

Fly over the sand.

STITCH

She's not listening -

MEL

No...

VARGAS

Garza, get up!

JOHN (V.O.)

Anywhere...

STITCH

Garza!

VARGAS

We have to move...

Just go.

An explosion. VARGAS screams.

VARGAS

Mel!

MEL awakens, having leapt from sleep to fully standing. The guys and WATER SOUNDS are suddenly gone.

Dawn. MEL finds herself in the living room of her Mother's house. There is a door that leads to the kitchen as well as the front door. It is August 2008.

MEL wears a US Marines t-shirt and shorts. On the table nearby, there is a stack of bridal magazines. She's made a mess of the pillows and blankets.

She finds her cell phone and dials Doug, her fiancée.

MEL

Doug. It's me... It's 4:15am? Shit. I'm sorry...

She is gasping but trying to catch her breath as her fiancé tries to calm her. This isn't the first time.

MEL

There was yelling and... I want to sleep. Why can't I just sleep without... I'm so tired. (She listens) Okay. (More listening) Doug, I forgot about the deadline tomorrow hey, I'll let you go. (Listening) I know you don't care if I call early. (Listens) Doug, I care. You need your sleep, too. Okay. I'm sorry. I'll stop apologizing

A little laugh as Doug starts to get through to her.

Yeah, I'm lying back down. You're the only one I can talk to... (Listens) Come on, please. I totally want to hear what you're working on. Is it the one about the seagulls or that family of gingerbread men? (Listens) Yeah. Read it to me?

As she listens, she finally relaxes and dozes back off with the phone in her hand.

Morning is bright and forceful. A wireless speaker in the living room kicks on, blaring something high-energy. Someone is singing along from the kitchen. She

takes a magazine and tries throwing it at the speaker in frustration. Fail. She gets up and turns it off.

HARMONY, Mel's older sister, enters from the kitchen, fully dressed for the day and drinking a mimosa.

HARMONY

That was a good song.

MEL glares.

MEL

Aren't you gonna wake up Mom?

HARMONY

It's Saturday. Yoga class and brunch. She's got these yoga buddies and they tree and warrior and something about Namaste. Want a mimosa? (raising her drink)

MEL

How about coffee?

HARMONY

Sunshine in a glass?

MEL

Coffee.

HARMONY bounces back into the kitchen. MEL talks to her through the wall.

MEL

Doesn't Mom run the air conditioner anymore?

HARMONY (O.S.)

Not at night. The electric bill was getting stupid.

MEL

I just can't. What is it about August?

MEL sets down magazine and flops on the couch.

HARMONY (as she returns)

How could you forget? I can't wear my hair down again until October. I wish I could spend the entire summer floating in a pool of sangria. You can't really want coffee in this weather.

HARMONY hands MEL the mug. MEL takes a big swig and recoils.

HARMONY

I thought you needed a mimosa.

MEL

That's why I asked for coffee.

HARMONY

It's got to be happy hour in Europe or someplace. Oh, Mel. It's dress-shopping day. This is gonna be great. Drink. Relax. I'm sure Mom's having one. Hungry? I don't eat breakfast, but

MEL

I'll forage.

MEL heads into the kitchen. HARMONY regroups and hollers at her through the door.

HARMONY (cont')

So... I have like, three seasons of "Say Yes to the Dress" on DVR. I wanted to get started on the research -

MEL (O.S.)

We writing a dissertation?

HARMONY

The worst thing you can do is to show up to the dress place having no idea what you want. I've got the magazines over there

MEL (O.S.)

I saw.

HARMONY

Figured we can go through them together. I think focusing on the dress is the way to go. It really determines what the tone of the rest of the wedding is.

MEL reappears in the doorway.

Here, look at these.

HARMONY pulls a specific magazine and finds a page she's marked with a Post-It Note. HARMONY sees the blank look on MEL's face but keeps trying.

HARMONY

This cut gives you a terrific line. It'll make you look taller. (Nothing yet) Have you given this any thought at all?

MEL

I told Doug yes.

HARMONY

You know you have to wear a dress and have your hair done and dance.

MEL

I don't dance.

HARMONY

You're going to.

MEL

Maybe we'll elope.

HARMONY

You will not! Mom will kill you! Daddy would have - (a quick shift) And Doug wants a wedding.

MEL

Maybe he would rather hop a plane to Niagara Falls?

HARMONY

That's for honeymoons. Besides, he's too old fashioned. We're talking about a grown man who still reads children's books

MEL

Doug's an editor -

HARMONY

The people, the food, the band, the ceremony - Tradition!

MEL

This is a hostile takeover.

HARMONY

Pretty much. Now, a dress.

HARMONY plants a finger on a magazine page. They turn pages. MEL is overwhelmed.

MEL

Maybe I do need a drink.

HARMONY chuckles and heads back into the kitchen. MEL pulls back her hair and tries to focus on the dresses.

MEL (to HARMONY in kitchen)

Harmony? These are so expensive!

HARMONY (O.S.)

Huh?

MEL

Have you seen these prices!

MEL comes across something particularly repugnant. She buries the magazine under a couch cushion. HARMONY reenters with the mimosa and half a bagel on a plate. She gives them to MEL.

HARMONY

Find anything?

MEL

I was... There's just so much.

HARMONY

Isn't it great?

MEL

I'm not going to spend (finding an example)... \$9,899 on this.

HARMONY

Oooh! That's a good deal.

The front door opens and WENDY, their mother, enters in workout/brunch gear. She carries a small shopping bag.

MEL

And who's going to pay for this?

WENDY

I imagine it's going to be me.

HARMONY

Hey, Mom.

MEL

Morning.

HARMONY

How was brunch?

WENDY

They burned the coffee. Good otherwise. This new café is the best. It's only been open for a month or two. But it's right next to Yoga Center. Do I need to separate you two yet?

MEL

Not yet. Have you seen some of these?

WENDY

We should head out pretty quick. I don't want to be late for the appointment. Are you wearing that?

MEL

No...

WENDY

Well, we should get moving.

HARMONY

(to MEL) You brought heels for the fitting, right?

She totally didn't.

HARMONY

I reminded you!

MEL

I don't have any. (*Blank looks.*) I just don't.

HARMONY

(slightly annoyed) I have something.

WENDY

And I picked these up on my way home, as requested.

WENDY pulls out a package and gives it to MEL, who opens the package and pulls out the contents.

HARMONY

Oh, good!

MEL

What is this?

WENDY

Spanx.

MEL

Excuse me?

WENDY

For today. And the wedding obviously.

HARMONY

You put them on under your dress and -

MEL

Look, I'm in the best shape I've ever been in. I don't think I need

WENDY & HARMONY

Yes, you do.

MEL

Aren't I supposed to be happy on my wedding day? Happiness requires oxygen.

HARMONY