

# The Veils

A play by Hope Villanueva

Performance Draft for The Women's Voices Festival  
2018

Produced by Nu Sass Productions

Version #11.3 Updated 1/31/18

*Stagewoozle@gmail.com*  
*11215 Georgia Ave #938*  
*Wheaton, MD 20902*  
*805-708-4111*

# 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 Cafarella.

**The 15<sup>th</sup> 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 Swierc
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 VEILS is currently in rehearsal (as of 01-31-18) for its world premiere production in Washington, DC as a part of the Women's Voices Festival 2018, produced by Nu Sass Productions.

**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](http://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

Not really.

WENDY

They were on sale.

MEL

Uh, yeah. I'm gonna clean up.

WENDY

I'm gonna shower, too.

HARMONY

Tick tock.

*MEL exits. WENDY starts munching on the remainder of Mel's bagel.*

HARMONY

Mom. Ew.

WENDY

If I don't already have both my daughters' germs-

HARMONY

Still.

WENDY

What time did she get in last night?

HARMONY

Almost midnight. She was out.

WENDY

Doing what?

HARMONY

She was out, Mom. I don't know.

*Of course they know.*

HARMONY (cont')



She only had like 5 days out in Trenton with Doug before she had to turn around and come here for her dress appointment. That's like, nothing. If she wants to go out, she's going to go out, Mom.

*A beat.*

WENDY

The kids fine without you this weekend? I know it's just across town -

HARMONY

Maggie has been our sitter for three years now. And the kids aren't that little anymore, Mom.

WENDY

I never knew what I would come home to when I left you two with your father.

HARMONY

Lance will be at soccer stuff all weekend and Lily can handle herself pretty much. They are almost complete humans. Besides, they love Maggie. All she has to do is feed them, lock them in at night, and not let them burn the house down. I am a free woman for 36 hours. How often do I get to do that?

WENDY

Not often. That's good they have time to run around. Or whatever.

HARMONY (faintly injured)

Without me.

WENDY

You know what I mean.

*Seeing HARMONY is stung, WENDY changes the topic.*

14

WENDY

I know you have a checklist. Some online something. My Space or Tweety-whatever or -

*HARMONY nods.*

HARMONY

Someone's got to steer this ship.

WENDY

Should be a piece of cake.

HARMONY

Does Mel know she has to pick a cake?

WENDY

You make her out to be some uncivilized animal.

HARMONY

I do not. I just thought this would be different. We'd go to menu tastings and shop and... Mom, this is supposed to be... We're supposed to have fun. (indicating Wendy, too) All the girls.

WENDY

I'm having fun.

HARMONY

Yeah?

WENDY

My daughter is getting married. I'm absolutely having fun.

*Beat. WENDY exits.*

*Upstairs, MEL turns on the water to fill the tub. The running water rattles her and she braces herself. After a moment, it's too much. She turns off the water and she pulls out some wipes and begins to clean herself up.*

*The DRIPPING SOUND continues after the water is off. She opens cabinets under the sink, where she finds a small cardboard box. She puts it on the counter, peers inside...*

JOHN (V.O.)

Fly over the water...

VARGAS (V.O.)

Hey, translator girl.

JOHN (V.O.)

Fly.

VARGAS (V.O.)

Throw it.

*She closes the box again. She takes a deep breath. Passing time.*

*HARMONY tidies up the living room, folding blankets and stacking magazines. She gets up and finds the spreadsheet she indeed has printed for the weekend. She focuses on that.*

*WENDY enters, dressed casually, but put together.*

WENDY

I knew there was a spreadsheet.

HARMONY

Remember the charts I had for Daddy's medications? Excel is my life.

WENDY

We had those labeled pill boxes.

HARMONY

That's so analog.

WENDY

Well. (Beat) Harmony?

HARMONY

Mom?

WENDY

Be nice.

HARMONY

I am.

WENDY

At this appointment. Be nice to your sister.

HARMONY

Why would

WENDY

You know what I mean. I can see it on your face.

*MEL enters. She's still dressed sloppily and is pulling a comb through her hair.*

HARMONY

You're not wearing the Spanx.

MEL

How do you even know that?

HARMONY

You need them.

MEL

On my wedding, yes, but not today.

*HARMONY tries to level with MEL.*

HARMONY

I'm sure you think I'm being ridiculous about this.

MEL (conceding)

You are. (A look) Mom, I think there's something up with the plumbing.

WENDY

Oh?

MEL

I was hearing something. Dripping. You should have someone look at -

HARMONY

She won't put on the Spanx.

MEL

I don't need them.

WENDY

But you're bringing them?

HARMONY

You need to wear as many of the items you'll wear on the day of the ceremony as possible.

MEL

I don't know what items I'm going to wear.

HARMONY (with her spreadsheet)

You'll wear Spanx. Hair half up. I think a mid length veil. Earrings and Grandma's pearl necklace. A sensible three inch heel.

MEL

I don't wear one-inch heels.

HARMONY

I could have planned better if you'd responded to that email I sent you.

*MEL begins to hear the DRIPPING SOUNDS again. No one else hears them.*

HARMONY

You could have answered.

MEL

What...

HARMONY

I'm trying to help.

MEL

Do you hear that...?

WENDY

Harmony's got a head for planning. Melody?

*MEL snaps back, but has nothing to say. DRIPPING continues.*

WENDY (cont')

I'm going to start the AC in the car...

*WENDY exits.*

HARMONY

You didn't give me anything to go on, Mel.

MEL (genuine)

Fine. Sorry. Let's get this over with.

*A honk from the car outside.*

*HARMONY starts for the door, then whips around, going up the stairs instead. She returns with a shoebox and rushes out the door...*

HARMONY

Shoes!

*HARMONY is gone. The DRIPPING GROWS and MEL shakes until...*

*Transition to -*  
ACT 1 Scene 2

*Suddenly, a mid-sized military base in Afghanistan as MEL remembers it. It's down time outside one of the buildings. The sun is setting and STITCH and VARGAS are tossing a football back and forth. A stereo plays Elvis tunes.*

VARGAS

Go long.

STITCH

You ain't got the arm.

VARGAS

Go.

STITCH

Didn't daddy ever play football with you?

VARGAS

Go long!

STITCH

You throw like a pogue.

VARGAS

I ain't no pogue!

STITCH

You ain't got the arm.

VARGAS

Run, shithead!

*STITCH gets some distance and nearby, MEL enters carrying a small sack.*

MEL

You'll never get him.

VARGAS

Shut up!

*VARGAS lets the ball fly and is way off. STITCH has to chase it down.*

VARGAS (cont')

I can't concentrate when you're distracting me.

MEL

Nope. You just don't have the arm.

*STITCH pads back in with the ball.*

VARGAS

Where were you?

MEL

Had a bite.

STITCH

Dinner with the Afghanis a regular thing now?

VARGAS

Hot date, Serge?

MEL

(chuckle) If you consider tea with 9 year old boys and their mother a hot date. Here.

*She opens up her sack and pulls out a pack of cigarettes for each of the guys.*

VARGAS

How do you do that?

MEL

*Man hamintwry xwbam!* (I am just that good!) Easier to bargain if you speak the language, Lance Corporal.

VARGAS

I have got to learn desert speak.

MEL

It's called Persian out here.

STITCH

Helps if you're not a dick, too.

MEL

*Kamlan.* (Absolutely.)

VARGAS

Stitch, they would love me. They would take me in and make me their ruler.

MEL

Right.

*VARGAS lights up a cigarette and STITCH pockets his pack. STITCH picks up the football.*

STITCH (to MEL)

You up?

MEL

The evening checks all locked and loaded? The Humvee straight?

STITCH

Would we be tossing the ball if we hadn't?

VARGAS

Even I know better than that.

MEL

At ease, men. At ease. Let's go.



*MEL throws her sack aside and she and STITCH start tossing the ball back and forth lightly.*

VARGAS

So, I heard something today.

STITCH

Oh yeah?

VARGAS

Yeah. Our translator girl is gettin' married.

STITCH

Yeah? Cool.

MEL

Thanks.

VARGAS

You don't wear a ring.

MEL

I do not. Not out here. That shit is expensive.

STITCH

Truth.

MEL

If I lost that... fuck, man. I left it back home with my Mom. Safe and sound in a prissy little velvet box.

STITCH

I got engaged a couple times.

MEL

Oh yeah?

VARGAS

How'd that go?

STITCH

I still ain't married.

*STITCH throws MEL the ball with some extra force. They continue throwing throughout.*

STITCH

Hey. I'm a solid guy. Right?

MEL

Oh... yeah.

STITCH

I'm respectable. Educated. Got... personal hygiene

VARGAS

Uh huh.

STITCH

Great hair. Fantastic taste in music.

MEL

If you don't mind "Blue Suede Shoes" on a loop.

STITCH

Have some respect. That is the The King.

MEL (gesturing to the stereo)

Sorry, Your Highness.

VARGAS

Elvis. All the fucking time, Stitch.

STITCH

The King!

MEL

It's alright. If you're a 75 year old grandpa.

STITCH

(doing Rodney Dangerfield) I don't get no respect... no respect...

VARGAS (flatly)

What the fuck is that?

STITCH

Come on!

*MEL shakes her head. STITCH looks to VARGAS. Nothing.*

STITCH

Rodney Dangerfield? Easy Money? Caddyshack? You're both fucking useless!

MEL

Isn't this all way before our time?

STITCH

Some things are timeless.

*They continue playing. The ball flies and both VARGAS and MEL go for it, colliding. MEL is knocked down.*

STITCH

Damn, Vargas.

VARGAS

Shit. Sorry, Sergeant.

MEL

I'm good.

VARGAS (rising)

I didn't mean to

MEL

I'm good.

*VARGAS looks somewhat horrified.*

MEL (cont')

Look at his face! Shit, Vargas. I'm not gonna break, alright?

VARGAS

Yeah, but

*MEL manages, from the ground, to knock VARGAS back into the dirt. She pops up. STITCH gathers the football.*

MEL

We're cool. Okay.

VARGAS (laughing)

Okay. (VARGAS points) Check that...

*VARGAS indicates the sunset. They stop throwing and take it in.*

STITCH

Another desert sunset on Forward Operating Base Delphi. Ugh.

MEL

*Ya chize zibaiy.* (A thing of beauty.)

VARGAS

What I wouldn't give for a good camera.

MEL

Oh yeah?

VARGAS

I can't get any decent shots with the digital ViviCam I brought. It's like your ring. That shit is expensive.

STITCH

It's just the sunset.

MEL

That is why you're still single.

VARGAS

When we get leave, I'm ordering a new camera. Been spec-ing out this Canon EOS Rebel T6i for months. And this set of lenses... yes!

MEL

Oh yeah?

VARGAS

If you don't have high quality lenses and enough variety your shots will be bullshit. And the aperture control. It's the light. Your eyes change up by themselves. It's goddamn evolution.

STITCH

Thanks, Corporal Darwin.

*STITCH nails him with the football.*

VARGAS

The human eye. No camera will ever be able to give the complete, perfect... I don't know. Look at the sunset. I see the sand at my feet and the sand out on the hill and the sandy colored sky. My eyes can fly across all that shit at once and see every shade of orange. Cameras are just posing. But the sweet little thing I'm looking at will destroy that piece of shit under my rack.

STITCH

How much you dropping?

VARGAS

\$649.99.

STITCH

\$650 bucks?!?

VARGAS

No. \$649.99.

MEL

Why wait?

VARGAS

For what?

MEL

You got the cash? Just do it. Everything's digital now. The sooner you get it, the sooner you get good with it, right?

VARGAS

Yeah...

STITCH

\$650 bucks... That's more than I ever spent on an engagement ring.

MEL

Ohhh. That's why you're still single.

*They heckle Stitch. He changes the topic.*

STITCH

Who's got the movie tonight?

VARGAS

I can find out. Caster had it set up last night.

MEL

You know I can't go in your barracks.

VARGAS

They're doing the projector in the chow hall.

MEL

Cool.

*VARGAS lights up another cigarette as he watches the sunset.*

MEL

Those will kill you.

*VARGAS takes a deep inhale and blows rings.*

VARGAS

Probably.

MEL

Seriously.

STITCH

But you keep bringing them back.

MEL

Well, Vargas asks so nicely.

STITCH

I wish you could bring back a bottle of whiskey.

MEL

Yeah.

VARGAS

Enough of that'll kill me, too. The sun will give me cancer, soda will give me cancer, these smokes will give me cancer. Something will kill me in the end. Might as well be something I like.

STITCH

(Trying to retake the conversation) Hey, I'm romantic.

VARGAS

Stitch. No.

STITCH

The ladies love me.

VARGAS

Have you seen you in a bar?

STITCH

I'm approachable!

VARGAS

Shit

STITCH

I have game. (To Mel) You'd marry me, right?

MEL

Sorry. Taken.

*VARGAS makes the sounds and gesture of a bomb falling slowly and exploding. MEL cracks up.*

STITCH

No respect!

*A horn sounds, an alarm.*

Fuck...  
VARGAS

I hate that thing.  
MEL

21 hundred siren test.  
STITCH

Fucking waste of time if you ask me.  
VARGAS

Gotta make sure it works.  
STITCH

We ain't gonna get hit. Not here.  
VARGAS

Totally.  
MEL

I think the CO likes doing it just to fuck with us. Set that off and stress us out.  
Nothing's gonna happen on base.  
VARGAS

Part of the deal, man. Chill.  
STITCH

*MEL parks and opens a bottle of water. In a moment, the test siren stops.*

Fuck.  
VARGAS

Hey, movie night. Right? Sound good?  
STITCH

If the movie doesn't suck.  
MEL

I'm gonna go grab details.  
STITCH



VARGAS

Cool.

*STITCH heads off.*

VARGAS (cont')

If only it would rain.

MEL

This is the desert.

VARGAS

The big sandbox.

MEL

Keep wishing.

VARGAS

I can't believe you don't smoke, Garza.

MEL

It's 99 degrees out here. What do I need to smoke for?

VARGAS

Dunno. Unwind.

MEL

That's why I keep you and Stitch around.

VARGAS

Really? That's just sad for you.

MEL

Meh. Limited options.

*They chuckle.*

VARGAS

Hey, about knocking you down

MEL

I'm fine.

VARGAS

I'm sorry.

MEL

I wouldn't play if I couldn't take it.

VARGAS

My dad didn't teach me how to throw a ball, but Moms did teach me some stuff. She was pretty damn serious when she taught me not to hit women. Moms is basically right all the time... So it goes against my childhood teachings. And I apologize.

MEL (amused)

Why do you guys think I'm made of glass?

VARGAS

Why are you making this hard?

MEL

Out here, I'm not a girl. I'm a Marine.

VARGAS

Yes, Serge.

MEL

So treat me like a goddamn Marine.

VARGAS

Can you just let me apologize already?

MEL

You did.

VARGAS

Alright then.

*They both mull over the moment.*

MEL

Your dad didn't teach you to play catch?

VARGAS

No. Did yours?

MEL

Yeah. And baseball. Not softball. But yeah, he did. So who did teach you? I mean, you suck, but someone did.

VARGAS

My little league coach taught me to swing a bat. High school football coach taught me how to take a hit. Moms, she did the rest on her own.

MEL

Sounds like she is a badass.

VARGAS

She is. You gonna throw that?

*The ball moves to VARGAS.*

MEL

My mom's not really... Dad did the sports. Camping. That stuff.

VARGAS

That's cool. (After a moment) I always thought it was fucked up that Moms didn't have a guy she could count on, you know? No doubt, she had her shit under control. Kept me in line. But some asshole kid like me ain't always the best company. (A few beats) If Moms had been born a guy, who knows what she'd be doing. Different times then, she says.

MEL

Yeah. Yeah.

*They keep watching the sunset. Very faint DRIPPING begins.*

MEL

That camera?

VARGAS

Yeah. But it'd get scratched. All this sand. My lenses would be fucked.

MEL

That would suck. But the shots.

VARGAS

Yeah. I know. But maybe some things are better if they just stay in your memory.

*Afghanistan begins fading away. Her world becomes nothing but DRIPPING.  
Fear.*

MEL

Stitch? Vargas? Anyone...

*Sudden transition to -*

ACT 1 Scene 3

*Back at the House, that afternoon. WENDY and HARMONY enter from the front door, returning from the shopping trip. HARMONY sets down the shoes she lent to MEL.*

HARMONY

Well, that was the worst.

WENDY

Really, Harmony

HARMONY

She walked, Mom. She didn't even want to ride home with us.

WENDY

She got a call.

HARMONY

It's a mile and a half away.

WENDY

It sounds long to you. I jog two miles down Primrose Avenue to yoga. So she took the call. So what, Harmony?

*Audible sigh. A look from WENDY.*

HARMONY

But she didn't pick a dress. Not even close.

WENDY

I rescheduled the appointment for tomorrow. No big deal. She's going to find a dress. We just have to nudge her into motion, get her through this first wedding planning hurdle, and you know... get a little momentum.

HARMONY

Is that what that was?

WENDY

You weren't exactly easy when we were planning your wedding.

HARMONY

At least I was invested. Focused. I was -

WENDY

Terrifying. You made your salesgirl cry. You told Jason that he could pick the cake.

HARMONY

Mom

WENDY

No, he can choose the filling. Then you yelled at him for the filling he chose.

HARMONY

Lemon does not go with chocolate.

WENDY

You screamed at the caterer. You changed florists four times. And how many bands did you go through? I'm just saying that you had your "process".

HARMONY

This isn't a process. It's a disaster.

WENDY

I don't know why you have to be so doom and gloom.

HARMONY

I'm cheerful. I'm rainbows and freaking unicorns.

*A thought.*

WENDY

Maybe she'd go for something more traditional?

HARMONY

Have you met Mel? (Beats) Well?

WENDY

It'll be a surprise.

HARMONY

Great. I'm going to call the kids.

*WENDY heads upstairs and HARMONY goes in the kitchen.*

*MEL comes in, finishing a call, cigarette in hand. As she hits the open doorway, she rewinds just long enough to put out her cigarette and keeps coming inside. She is relieved that none of her family is in the living room.*

MEL

I'm going to quit. Stitch. I'm quitting. Yeah, I know. These things will kill me. Cut me some slack. If you knew what this trip was like, you'd buy me a carton of smokes. Hey, I gotta go. There was something I wanted to check. You too, man. Later.

*MEL pops a piece of gum, then goes upstairs and retrieves the box she had found. She brings it downstairs and begins extracting items – The first few are photos and letters, then a delicate shawl wrapped in tissue paper. There is a small note card inside with it. HARMONY enters.*

MEL (light)

Where's Mom?

HARMONY

Upstairs harnessing her chi or something. What's that?

MEL

It was under the sink in the upstairs bathroom. There's some cool, old stuff from Dad's service days.

*MEL tries to hand the pictures to HARMONY, but she doesn't take them.*

MEL

Here. Harmony?

HARMONY

Put it back. Wherever you found it, put it back.

MEL

What? Why?

*HARMONY snatches the pictures and starts shoving everything back in the box.*

MEL

You're gonna crush them!

Put it back. HARMONY

Stop! MEL

Mom's upstairs. Hurry. HARMONY

What is your problem? MEL

Get this out of here before she comes back down. HARMONY

*A frenzy ensues as HARMONY gets everything in the box and shoves it into MEL's confused arms.*

What MEL

Don't do this to her. Mom's been good - HARMONY

Dad would have wanted her to have it. MEL

*HARMONY is very aware of drawing WENDY's attention from upstairs. She measures herself carefully before saying...*

You weren't here. HARMONY

I would have come home if I could have MEL

You didn't. HARMONY

I would have been in your way. We could have hired someone. MEL



HARMONY

Mom would never -

MEL

Professional help. We could have found a way.

HARMONY

You keep saying “we”. Inaccurate, don’t you think?

MEL

Don’t act like such a goddamn martyr.

HARMONY

Mom’s going to hear you.

MEL

Dad’s things belong to her.

HARMONY

She’s planning her daughter’s wedding. Just let her be happy.

MEL

If you won’t give them to her, then I will.

*HARMONY rushes MEL and knocks the box away, spilling the contents. MEL drops to her knees to pick them up.*

MEL

The fuck, Harmony!

*A charged silence.*

HARMONY

Mom would still be curled up on the bed in her robe where I found her if it wasn’t for me.

MEL

She’s stronger than that.

HARMONY

How the hell would you know? I was the one who picked up and sorted his prescriptions. I got the locksmiths to change all the locks. I scheduled the doctors. All when I should have been at Lance's soccer games or Lily's recitals.

After he was gone, I pulled Mom out of bed and made her coffee. Talked her into the shower after four days. I had to convince Mom to let me clean out the closets and drawers. I called up Mom's friends. Got her back to having a life.

MEL

Harmony -

HARMONY

So let her be. That box of whatever that is doesn't need to be here.

MEL

Then what? You gonna keep her locked up? Decide what she can handle -

HARMONY

I'm protecting her.

MEL

Do I need protecting, too?

HARMONY

Maybe you do.

MEL

Your poor little sister can't plan her wedding... Harmony, help me! You're having a great time picking out my dress for me. I'm surprised you hadn't bought one already when I flew in.

HARMONY

Maybe if you'd pull your head out of your ass

MEL

I guess I had to try it on -

HARMONY

I'm not the one who made a scene in the dress store.

MEL

I did not.

HARMONY

I was right there.

MEL

I didn't like them.

HARMONY

You couldn't smile or say thank you or

MEL

And it was hardly a scene.

HARMONY

I tried to tell you

MEL

Here's what you're going to do and here's how you're gonna do it.

HARMONY

I bought you all those magazines.

MEL

Don't I know it

HARMONY

I'd almost think you didn't want to get married!

MEL

Screw you. I love Doug.

*HARMONY starts jabbing with her words.*

HARMONY

Besides, it's not like you could do any of this yourself.

MEL

There it is.

HARMONY

There's what?

MEL

The Harmony I know. Harmony the Savior.

*WENDY enters wearing her wedding dress from years before. She stops in her tracks, unnoticed by her daughters as they are locked in battle.*

HARMONY

Some people need saving. Some people can't save themselves. Some people aren't capable

MEL

Cause I don't like playing dress up?

HARMONY

Because you can't commit to anything.

MEL

You're right. Know what, I can just give you my credit card and you can pick out a dress. Flowers. Cake. Whatever. I really don't care. You should call Doug and coordinate with him. Here.

*MEL holds out her cell phone to HARMONY.*

MEL

Take it! Let me know what you two decide.

*Something slowly comes loose in WENDY as her daughters fight.*

HARMONY

I'm trying to help you.

MEL

I don't want your help.

HARMONY

Well, you obviously need it.

MEL

No I don't.

HARMONY

And why am I the only responsible one? Who helps me?

MEL

You don't want anyone to!

HARMONY

Fuck off, Mel!

MEL

No one would do it as perfectly as you could. We're not good enough for you. We never have been.

HARMONY

Where were you when I needed help? Where were you for Daddy?

MEL

I was kinda busy being deployed.

HARMONY

Bullshit.

MEL

I couldn't exactly hop a cab home from Afghanistan.

HARMONY

There's protocol for that and you know it. You just decided you didn't want to. Me and Mom weren't worth your trouble.

*DRIPPING SOUNDS begin and MEL starts hearing voices.*

HARMONY (cont')

You left us here. Daddy had a stroke and you left us here.

JOHN (V.O.)

My girls.

HARMONY

I shouldn't have expected anything different. You leave the pieces for other people to pick up.

JOHN (V.O.)

Sugar and sand.

HARMONY

It's what you do.

MEL

I couldn't be here. I couldn't

JOHN (V.O.)

Wendy is downstairs...

HARMONY

Someone else will fix it for you, right?

JOHN (V.O.)

Downstairs making coffee

HARMONY

You can't even do the right thing when -

*HARMONY puts on her own brakes. More DRIPPING and voices...*

HARMONY (cont')

I'm trying to help you be normal

STITCH (V.O.)

Throw it

since you don't seem to know how.

VARGAS (V.O.)

Go long!

MEL

Well, I'm not

STITCH (V.O.)

You ain't got the arm.

and it's about time you got over it.

VARGAS (V.O.)

Go long!

HARMONY

I'll get over it when you get over being a bitch.

*New sounds, pleading, pain...*

MEL

You just don't know what to do if you can't pull everyone's strings and make them do a little dance for you.

JOHN (V.O.)

Tiny hands

HARMONY

How did you get Doug to propose?

MEL

You know all about marriage

HARMONY

Bribery or what?

MEL

- and I have no idea about anything?

HARMONY

I bet he doesn't know what he's getting himself into.

VARGAS (V.O.)

Garza...

JOHN (V.O.)

Between my palms

STITCH (V.O.)

We have to go

VARGAS (V.O.)

Get up...

Garza ...

MEL

You have so much more experience with weddings than I do. And how was that divorce? I know how much you truly enjoy paperwork.

*MEL lets that land.*

MEL (cont')

I don't want your help. I don't want your advice or your Spanx -

*MEL sees the shoebox.*

MEL

And I don't want your fucking shoes!

*MEL takes the box of shoes and throws the box squarely at HARMONY.*

HARMONY

What the fuck?

WENDY

Stop, stop, STOP!

MEL

Mom

WENDY

Why can't you grow the hell up? For one second, why can't you act like sisters?

*MEL and HARMONY realize that WENDY is wearing her wedding dress –  
Her “surprise” for them.*

HARMONY  
What are you wearing?

WENDY  
I had... an idea... for Melody.

JOHN (V.O.)  
My little girl.

HARMONY  
No...

JOHN (V.O.)  
Your tiny palms in mine.

WENDY  
I know it's sort of...

JOHN (V.O.)  
Do you remember?

WENDY  
The fabric is still in good condition.

JOHN (V.O.)  
All my girls.

WENDY  
The lace

JOHN (V.O.)  
My girls...

MEL  
Oh, Mom.

WENDY



It still fits.

*MEL hears the DRIPPING increase.*

HARMONY

Know what? I'm going home. Mel, if you don't want me to save your fiasco of a wedding, I'm going to stay out of it. Don't blame me when it all goes to shit. And you can keep the shoes. You might need them someday.

*HARMONY exit. WENDY and the house fade away.*

MEL

Dad?

JOHN (V.O.)

I wish I could fly with you.

MEL

Make it stop. Dad

JOHN (V.O.)

I wish...

MEL

Dad!

*Sharp transition to -*

ACT 1 Scene 4

*STITCH is relaxing outside at night, playing solitaire. VARGAS enters, geared up. A new camera hangs from a thick lanyard on his neck.*

Hey. STITCH

Who's winning? You or you? VARGAS

That's not how the game works, dumbass. STITCH

It's solitaire. VARGAS

Yeah. STITCH

How does it work then? VARGAS

I don't expect you to understand the complexity of the timeless battle against one's self. STITCH

Okay. Have fun playing with yourself. VARGAS

*STITCH gives him the "hand job" gesture and goes back to his game. They laugh. VARGAS poses to show off the camera. STITCH doesn't look up.*

Well? VARGAS

What? STITCH

Well? VARGAS

What? STITCH

*VARGAS shifts pose.*

If you want something just STITCH (cont')

Look up, dumbass. VARGAS

*He does.*

Cool. STITCH

Yeah. That's it. VARGAS

Nice toy, Lance Corporal. STITCH

Worth every penny. Gonna take it out on patrol. A little test run. VARGAS

Yeah? STITCH

Just some patrol. I dunno. Just a little adventure for Beatrice to warm up on. VARGAS

Um... STITCH

Don't VARGAS

You named it? STITCH

Beatrice is my mother's name. (Pause) They name ships and cars. VARGAS

STITCH

I'm just not even...

VARGAS

Let's play a real card game when I get back.

STITCH

Blackjack.

VARGAS

Can you count to 21?

*VARGAS takes a swipe at STITCH, who dodges. More laughter. MEL enters, seeing the camera right away.*

MEL

Hey, it's here! Congrats, man.

VARGAS

Pretty, isn't she?

STITCH

And now he's gonna get Beatrice covered in sand on patrol.

MEL

Oh.

STITCH

\$650 bucks...

VARGAS

Hell. Why you gotta kill my buzz, Stitch? Shit...

*VARGAS takes off the camera and hands it to MEL.*

VARGAS (cont')

I'll break it in on base. There's sand here, too, but less, I guess.

MEL

You'd be pissed if you fucked it up on the first day.

STITCH

Exactly.

VARGAS

Just... Make sure it gets back to my rack. The case is in my foot locker.

MEL

Totally.

VARGAS

(sigh) Patrol time. Don't...

MEL

We won't.

STITCH

We won't!

VARGAS

Later then.

MEL

Later.

*VARGAS exits. STITCH continues his card game.*

MEL

Hey.

STITCH

Hey.

*MEL sits. She examines the camera with interest before setting it carefully beside her.*

MEL

Nice out tonight.

STITCH

Yeah. One of the better ones.

*They are quiet and comfortable a moment.*

MEL  
Can I ask you a personal question?

STITCH  
No.

MEL  
Geez.

STITCH  
Yeah, sure.

MEL  
I don't have to.

STITCH  
We'll go like this: You ask one, then I get one. Cool?

MEL  
Good.

STITCH  
Ask away.

MEL  
Were you really engaged three times?

STITCH  
I really only count two. Once, I was sixteen. So doesn't count.

MEL  
Okay. What about the other two?

STITCH  
What about them?

MEL  
Well. Why didn't it work out?

STITCH

Sometimes it just doesn't. And that was two questions. My turn. What the hell are you doing here?

MEL

Same as you.

STITCH

But you're a

MEL

A linguist?

STITCH

A girl.

MEL

I thought you weren't like that about it.

STITCH

I'm not. I'm just saying. There's not a lot of women here. You're smart. You coulda done something else, right?

MEL

I guess so.

STITCH

Then what are you doing here?

MEL

My dad was in back in the day.

STITCH

In the Corps?

MEL

Yeah. He didn't talk about it a lot. But I found this thing. It was before Christmas and I must have been nine or ten. I was home. My older sister was there, but that's pretty much the same as being alone in my house. So I decided to go hunting for presents. See if they had any hidden around the house yet.

STITCH

My dad woulda beat my ass.

MEL

I wasn't planning on getting caught. So, I'm going through the closet and all the weird cubbies and I found this bundle. Like this big (holds out her hands a few inches apart) and soft, wrapped in paper tissue. I opened the tissue and there was this fabric, yellow and orange and pink. Really smooth and soft, like water. And in the middle of it was a sealed letter with my mom's name on it and an old picture. He didn't see any crazy combat, but he traveled. He's in his uniform in front of this amazing building. There's no date or place on it, but Italy, maybe. He had this look on his face. Like he'd won a prize or something. He looked strong. And happy. I figured he found that in the Corps.

STITCH

Nice.

MEL

My turn?

STITCH

Fair enough.

MEL

Three engagements? What happened with that?

STITCH

The last one was a bitch.

MEL

Is that just cause she broke it off?

STITCH

No. I broke it off. Cause she's a bitch. Jessie made herself out to be one thing and she turned out to be something else. So I broke it off. She kept the ring.

MEL

What about the other one?

STITCH

Caroline was great. She was the good one, you know. Maybe we were still young and all, but they say sometimes you just know and with her, I knew. She'd go over to my house every Sunday afternoon and bake with my mom and



my grandmother. She'd put the icing into plastic sandwich bags and decorate the cookies with little swirls. I almost didn't want to eat them. (Beat) My ass got huge.

MEL

So why did that end? Was your Elvis playlist more than she could take?

STITCH

Nice. No. Car accident.

MEL

Oh. I'm sorry.

STITCH

Long time ago. And Caroline is a good memory. How about yours? Military?

MEL

Hell no. He's a book editor at a company that does children's books.

STITCH

Smart, huh?

MEL

Yeah. We dated when we were younger. Then you know, life happened and we did our separate things. He was at Berkeley... But then I bumped into him at this summer BBQ back home. He listened to me tell him about my Palestinian history course and he said the best history teachers are storytellers. I keep telling him he should write his own book. Maybe he will eventually.

STITCH

You don't talk about him much.

MEL

I'm around a bunch of dudes all day.

STITCH

But... what's his name?

MEL

Doug. Isn't this too... girl talky?

STITCH

We all do it.

MEL

It turns my stomach.

STITCH

I bet you good money that before he proposed, Doug was having some serious hashing-it-out conversations with his buddies, too.

MEL

He's not really a guys' guy.

STITCH

Doesn't matter. When big shit goes down — men, women, whatever — we all turn back into paranoid little kids who just need some back up.

MEL

Glad I didn't do the asking.

STITCH

I should know. Heh. And he's cool with you being out here?

MEL

I'm a terp. I'm not exactly in the direct line of fire.

STITCH

You know what I mean.

MEL

He says he knows that I know what I'm getting into. That's a pretty good sign, I figure. Doug was junior assistant something for the Pee Wee football league under my Dad when he was in high school. Some kid would get banged up on the field and he'd sit there with the kid, cross-legged on the grass. Not babying, but... Look them right in the eye and be like, "It hurts, but you're gonna be okay. And I'm gonna stay right here with you until you're ready." He's like that. He somehow makes you safe enough and strong enough to keep doing whatever it is you want to do.

*MEL's face has filled with warmth and STITCH sees it.*

STITCH

When's the wedding?

MEL

Next Fall. God, my family is going to be a mess.

STITCH

They know, right?

MEL

Oh yeah. My mom is a control freak. Or was before my Dad passed away. And Harmony is like the espresso-version of my mom. The planning is going to be a fucking nightmare. Mom is going to want to dress me in some awful Disney princess thing. Ugh.

STITCH

Rather do your dress blues?

MEL

I could.

STITCH

Like a dude?

MEL

I could! But no.

STITCH

What do you want it to be like?

MEL

I don't know.

STITCH

I thought girls grew up dreaming about their weddings.

MEL

Not this girl. What did you want?

STITCH

Want for what?

MEL

For when you eventually get married. You said guys think about this shit, too.

STITCH

Outside. I thought being in a bunch of trees. Back home we have banyan trees. They have long root-vine things that hang down to the ground and make a tangle of... That. And a breeze.

MEL

Cause you can plan that.

STITCH

I know... And good, cold beer. Sweaty bottles and cans. Kona Brewery for me and Shiner Bock for her. All three girls were from Texas. Funny, huh?

MEL

That's weird.

STITCH

And you?

MEL

It's supposed to be about us. Me and Doug. So... simple.

STITCH

No 500 person reception?

MEL

Hell, no. Family, of course. I wish my Dad were still here, but... I want friends there but nothing too crazy. Vegetables wrapped in bacon.

STITCH

Yes!

MEL

No. Dates wrapped in bacon. Live music.

STITCH

DJs all suck.

MEL

We'd like an outside thing, too. What are the skinny trees with the white peel-y bark on the trunks?

STITCH

Birch trees?

MEL

And a dress that I feel like myself in. So when me and Doug get to the altar, we still are ourselves.

*They are peaceful. STITCH idly picks up the camera. He handles it like someone who knows cameras.*

STITCH

It would have gotten ruined out there.

MEL

Oh, yeah.

STITCH

Come on.

*STITCH begins to work the settings on the camera.*

MEL

What are you doing?

STITCH

We're going to be his first pictures.

MEL (grinning)

He's going to be pissed.

STITCH

Yup.

MEL

Do you know what you're doing?

STITCH

Stand there...

*MEL hops in front of the camera. A click and series of beeps. STITCH leaps into the frame beside MEL. Flash and whir.*

MEL

You didn't make it.

*STITCH resets. Beeps for longer... They pose. Flash and whir.*

STITCH

One more.

*Reset -*

*There is an explosion and shouting. Sirens go off. The sounds of men being woken up and springing into action.*

STITCH

What the

MEL

Vargas!

*Another explosion. MEL and STITCH run toward the chaos.*

*The camera flashes, capturing nothing.*

*Blackout. End of Act.*

ACT 2 Scene 1

*A perfect sunset. MEL is watching it with VARGAS at her side. He's a bit tussled. They have a half empty bottle of whiskey that VARGAS takes a swig of before handing it to MEL. They're both happily wasted and drink casually throughout. MEL has a photograph in her hand.*

VARGAS

You two are such dicks. I told you not to touch my camera.

MEL

You left it right there!

VARGAS

I thought you would appreciate a good piece of equipment when you saw it.

MEL

I did. It's a great camera.

VARGAS

I know.

MEL

Yeah.

VARGAS

That's why I didn't want you assholes touching it.

*Laughter. VARGAS checks out the photo.*

VARGAS

This shot sucks.

MEL

I love this picture!

VARGAS

It's a selfie.

MEL

Uh. Yeah.

VARGAS

You took a selfie with a \$700 camera.

MEL

\$649.99.

VARGAS

Yeah.

*VARGAS doesn't laugh.*

MEL

Are you okay?

VARGAS

That's a stupid question, Sergeant.

MEL

Vargas... What...?

*Faintly, a knock on a door. Maybe MEL hears it. Maybe not.*

MEL

You're being totally weird.

VARGAS

You're missing it, you know?

MEL

What are you babbling about?

VARGAS

You're missing everything.

MEL

Vargas.

VARGAS

Just get your head out of the sand and throw the ball.

MEL

You're freaking me out.



VARGAS

Sorry. I can't help it. I'm dead.

*Questioning, drunken moment.*

MEL

Fuck you.

VARGAS

Yup.

*Another knock on a door. Maybe a rattle of keys in the lock. MEL is confused.*

MEL

No. Fuck you.

VARGAS (light)

Fuck you.

*VARGAS turns to her in all seriousness.*

VARGAS

I'm dead.

MEL

Then how

VARGAS

You're drunk. You tell me.

*The door opens and HARMONY enters, jerking MEL back into reality. It's late evening in the living room. Her mother's wedding dress is draped over a chair, her father's box is on the table. She is still holding the bottle of whiskey and the photo, which she quickly pockets.*

*There is a stand-off of sorts. MEL figuring out what just happened. Then...*

HARMONY

I'll get Dad's stuff out of here. Mom shouldn't have to. (Beats) Can I come in?

MEL

It's not my house.

HARMONY

It was. (Beat) Well can I?

*MEL gestures "yes". HARMONY takes only a few steps in.*

HARMONY (careful)

You drink alone?

MEL

And?

*MEL drinks. HARMONY goes to the box and moves it in a more prominent place. She then wanders over to the dress.*

MEL

I'm not wearing it.

HARMONY

You must be thinking about it.

MEL

I'm not. Okay?

HARMONY

Okay. (Chuckling) It's nice of her to offer... It's a choice.

*MEL offers the bottle to HARMONY.*

HARMONY

I don't really do...

MEL

Suit yourself.

*HARMONY stalls, then takes the bottle. She sips.*

HARMONY

This burns.

MEL

It's whiskey.

HARMONY

There are better tasting drinks.

MEL

I was not about to be sipping boxed wine with the guys on leave.

HARMONY

I guess not.

*MEL takes back the bottle and drinks.*

MEL

Why is planning a wedding like passing an act of Congress?

HARMONY

Probably for the same reasons. One: Everyone has an opinion. Two: For them, those opinions are fact. Three: No one is willing to compromise.

MEL

Compromise...

HARMONY

We're not so great at that.

MEL

Know who is? Doug. He's practically Switzerland. (Beat) Maybe I should just wear Mom's dress to shut everyone up.

HARMONY

Honestly? You'd hate it.

MEL

Yeah.

HARMONY

So you do care?

MEL

Of course I do. If I didn't know for a fact that Doug wanted an actual wedding, I'd tell him we should march straight over to the courthouse. Done. That's just not Doug.

HARMONY

He's a romantic...

MEL

Yeah. He gets excited when we talk about picking music or the cake.

HARMONY

All men get excited about cake. Priorities.

MEL

Priorities. Exactly. Just... Aren't there better things to worry about?

HARMONY (playful)

Like cake?

*MEL muses before beginning a story.*

MEL

There was this family that I'd visit when I was deployed. They had two little boys and I'd buy smokes for my buddies off them.

HARMONY

I'd kill my kids if I caught them

MEL

These kids are lucky if they have parents. Cigarettes are like cash out there. Their mom made me a dark cinnamon-y tea and this great flatbread. I'd sit with them and talk a while. Bring the boys Kool-Aid. And I'd get smokes.

HARMONY

You don't smoke.

MEL

I didn't. (Correcting herself) Don't. They had this little goat. Kinda this scraggly grey and brown little thing. Their kids were hungry all the time. I didn't get it. They're hungry and they have goat meat, but they won't eat it. Then they explained it. They used the goat for milk, so if they killed her, they'd

have meat for a little while but then they'd be out of meat and milk and then where would they be?

HARMONY

Not eating cheeseburgers.

MEL

I'm being serious.

HARMONY

I get it. I'm a little buzzed. I thought you had a point?

MEL

Point is there's just bigger shit to worry about than this. That is my point. Why does the fact that I haven't obsessed over fashion make me a bad person? It's like I'm programmed wrong. Shun the outsider!

HARMONY

So yes, we should all be more globally conscious and less like "poor me and my First World Problems"...I know.

*Quiet.*

MEL

You're buzzed?

HARMONY

This is strong.

MEL

How buzzed?

HARMONY

Shut up.

MEL

Drunk?

HARMONY

Shut up!

MEL

You're such a cheap date. Do you know how many times I've seen you drunk?  
Never. That's how many times. Never.

HARMONY

Your sister, the prude.

MEL

My perfect big sister.

HARMONY

And how do I do? With making people think that I'm perfect?

MEL

Pretty good, I bet.

HARMONY

I drink. I just don't get... you know.

MEL

(Realizing) Once. I did see you.

HARMONY

No, you didn't.

MEL

I got up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom. Mom and Dad didn't even bother to wait up for you cause... well, you're you. You came through the door and got into a fight with the coffee table.

*MEL flails in imitation of young Harmony falling into the coffee table.*

MEL

Fell flat on your face. You rolled over and checked that you hadn't damaged yourself. And then you laughed. I wanted to be old enough go to parties with boys and drink. And laugh. Like you were. Like nothing mattered.

HARMONY

I barely remember that night. I mean I remember it but

MEL

You were drunk?

HARMONY

Yeah.

MEL

When did you stop laughing?

*HARMONY stands and goes to the box.*

HARMONY

I never started. That wasn't real. I wasn't really laughing. I was drunk.

MEL

Why do we do that? We never laugh in this house.

HARMONY

Daddy did. I was daddy's little girl. He worried about me. He fussed over me. But he played with you.

MEL

He coached me.

HARMONY

He let you play catch and run and jump and fall and get scraped up. And he laughed with you. Don't you remember?

*MEL is quiet. HARMONY goes in the kitchen and quickly returns with a pair of lowball glasses with ice.*

HARMONY

If we're gonna do this... (pouring for herself) I know you were deployed in the Middle East -

MEL

Afghanistan. Helmand Province.

HARMONY

- but I'm not really sure about what you did over there.

MEL

I'm a translator.

HARMONY

I know. But what did you do? Did anything...?

*Quiet.*

HARMONY (cont')

Why don't you ever say anything?

MEL

It's the way it is.

*HARMONY doesn't get it.*

MEL (cont')

I don't know. It's not a rule. But we don't talk about it.

HARMONY

Sounds like a rule.

MEL

It's... If you were actually a part of anything, you don't go broadcasting it. Things that happen there, should stay there. So they don't fuck things up when we come home.

HARMONY

Does that work?

MEL

It's the right way. Of all people, you should appreciate doing things the "right" way.

*HARMONY picks up one of their Father's letters and skims it.*

HARMONY

He clearly wasn't lucid anymore. "I know this is my house and this is my room and this is my hand. Hands in the sand..." (reads more silently) This barely makes sense.

MEL

But they're his. It wasn't all bad. Sometimes, he was still himself.

*HARMONY puts the letter back down.*



HARMONY

You haven't been home in almost two years.

MEL

Eighteen months.

HARMONY

You missed the worst of it. He stopped being himself. He would wander off, so we started locking him in his room at night. He just couldn't remember why... sometimes. He wouldn't hurt her on purpose. Daddy never meant to... he was just afraid.

*MEL reads part of the letter to herself.*

HARMONY (cont')

He had good days. He'd call me into the room and I'd sit on the edge of the bed next to him and he'd take my hand between his big palms. Just like when we were little. Daddy's hands were so big.

MEL

Yeah.

HARMONY

He would start telling me about the Snow Queen or The Velveteen Rabbit.

MEL

He had them all memorized.

HARMONY

I could sit and listen to him forever. He'd ask me if I wanted to hear another one tomorrow. I'd say, "Yes, of course, Daddy". And then he'd say, "I love you, Melody". How was I...? (Pain) I tried to tell him, "Daddy, I'm Harmony", but then he'd get confused and panicked. So finally, I just agreed with him. He said, "I love you, Melody".

*HARMONY takes the letter from MEL and continues reading it.*

HARMONY

"My hands and Wendy's hands and their hands  
Holding hands  
Why is there laughing?  
Can we all fly out the window?"

*Quietly, they both drink. After a moment, MEL's attention drifts back to her mother's dress.*

MEL

I kinda want to try it on.

HARMONY

Okay... (Pause) You're screwing with me.

*MEL meets HARMONY's look.*

HARMONY (cont')

Do it.

MEL

I'm gonna. No pictures. This is a covert op.

HARMONY

Oh. Yeah.

*MEL scoops up the dress and ducks into the kitchen. HARMONY paces the living room while MEL changes.*

HARMONY (cont')

You good in there?

MEL (O.S.)

Yup -

HARMONY

This is great.

MEL (O.S.)

I think...

HARMONY

It's like time travel.

*HARMONY keeps waiting.*

HARMONY (cont')

Mom is going to go crazy if she finds out you put that thing on and she wasn't here to see it.

*MEL walks out in the dress. It's awful, mostly because she's clearly uncomfortable in it.*

MEL

How bad is it? Be brutally honest.

HARMONY

You look like someone shoved a porcupine up your ass.

MEL

I feel like it! The horror...

*They are laughing pretty well by now. MEL takes up her drink.*

HARMONY

Wait up...

*HARMONY goes for her cell phone.*

MEL

This is NOT ending up on Facebook.

HARMONY

Twitter?

MEL

No!

HARMONY

Want a bet?

MEL

Oh my god. If Doug ever saw this

*MEL is chasing HARMONY around the living room, holding her drink aloft.*

HARMONY

You're gonna spill!

MEL

The camera!

HARMONY

Hell no!

MEL

I will murder all the parts of you!

HARMONY

I give! I give. But you should have a copy of this. And Doug wouldn't want to miss it.

MEL (a momentary blip)

What?

HARMONY

Doug. He's missing this. Come on, give me your phone.

MEL

Uh. Okay.

*MEL gives HARMONY her cell phone and strikes a pose for the camera.*

MEL

Can I get out of this now?

HARMONY

Please.

*MEL exits back into the kitchen. HARMONY slumps back on the couch and checks out the picture on MEL's phone. A shattering sound and HARMONY perks up. A moment later, MEL emerges with the dress in her hands. There is a wet stain down the skirt.*

MEL

What do we do?

HARMONY

Is there club soda?

MEL

Mom is going to kill me.

HARMONY

Try to hold up that layer.

*HARMONY runs into the kitchen. MEL tries to lift the damp section up.*

MEL

It's her wedding dress!

*HARMONY returns with a towel and club soda and goes to work on the stain.  
MEL breaks into a panic, but stays in place.*

MEL (cont')

It's not working.

HARMONY

Give me a minute.

MEL

I ruined it. I ruined it...

*DRIPPING begins. VARGAS steps out of nowhere. Maybe she sees him. Maybe not.*

HARMONY

It was an accident.

VARGAS

Good job. (Golf claps)

HARMONY

And we're going to get this out.

MEL

You tried.

VARGAS

Where's my camera when I need it?

MEL

Shit.

HARMONY

A professional cleaner -

VARGAS

What are you doing, Garza?

MEL

God.

*The DRIPPING increases and MEL begins to panic. A distant explosion and a dark swirl of voices...*

JOHN (V.O.)

Does my Wendy ever want to fly?

My girls in my house

Sugar and spice

Sugar and sand

Both scratchy

Can we all fly out the window?

Tiny hands

Between my palms

HARMONY

I'll take it in tomorrow.

VARGAS

Go long, Garza!

Go on, Sergeant.

Have another drink.

Come on!

HARMONY

Mel!

VARGAS

We've got to go now.

HARMONY

Melody!

VARGAS

We have to move...

HARMONY

GARZA!!!

*HARMONY has finally cut through and MEL comes back to the present, though the specter of VARGAS lingers. HARMONY refills the remaining glass and gives it to MEL. HARMONY sips from the bottle.*

Are you okay? HARMONY

*MEL looks at VARGAS.*

I could, uh... I'm your sister. HARMONY

We don't talk about it. MEL

Alright. HARMONY

*Quiet.*

You need to go? MEL

No. The kids would already be getting to bed. I can call the house. (Beat) You should at least send that picture to Doug. HARMONY

He'll love it. When I do crazy things. He... he loves that. MEL (shaky)

Yeah. HARMONY

*MEL takes up the phone but her hands are still shaky.*

Can you send it? MEL

Sure. HARMONY

*HARMONY sends out the text and places Mel's cell phone down on the table between them. They drink. They set down the bottle and VARGAS picks it up. MEL rises, leaving HARMONY in the living room. MEL follows VARGAS as he leads her idly back into her memory...*

*End of Scene.*



ACT 2 Scene 2

*Night. STITCH deals out a hand of solitaire. He is not okay. He looks up at the sky and stops. He throws down the deck and gets up, pacing. He re-gathers the cards and starts shuffling and re-dealing the game.*

*MEL comes out and sits quietly beside him.*

Wait. No. MEL

What? STITCH

You missed... (she points). MEL

Oh. STITCH

*He relocates the misplaced card.*

Thanks. STITCH (cont')

*He plays for a bit. Quiet.*

You're back. STITCH (cont')

Yeah. I'm back. MEL

I can re-deal. Poker? STITCH

No, I'm cool. MEL

Okay. STITCH

*STITCH stops playing cards and looks at her.*

MEL

You can ask if you want.

STITCH

Whatever I do when I'm on. Whatever you do when you're on. You do what you need to do, right?

MEL

Right.

STITCH

You... It's better this way. Take the orders. Follow them.

MEL

Brainless Leathernecks.

STITCH

You wanna be the one to decide who we point our Mi6's at? Who we blow up? You want that heat?

MEL

That's not what I'm saying.

STITCH

Then what?

MEL

I want to be able to say, "I can't do this."

STITCH

It's the chain of command. You didn't decide. So it's not on you.

MEL

Yeah. But I didn't do anything to fix it. I made it worse.

*STITCH gives her air to expand, but she doesn't.*

MEL (cont')

I wish I had a shot.

Tequila. STITCH

Lime. MEL

No lime. Hell yeah. STITCH

You have a tougher stomach than me. One bad experience

That's all it takes. STITCH

*STITCH takes out his camelpack.*

Come on. STITCH (cont')

*MEL follows suit. STITCH holds his water up.*

We'll do this right when we're back in the states. STITCH

Yeah. MEL

Lance Corporal James Vargas. STITCH

For Vargas. MEL  
*Yak dwst ra dar parishun haly mishnasan, hamchwn tala dar atash shnaxte mishawad.* (A friend is known in adversity, like gold is known in fire)

*STITCH and MEL pour out a portion of their water on the ground. They both drink.*

Ooh-rah. STITCH (gentle)

MEL

What happens now? Vargas is dead. What really happens to us next?

STITCH

It's war. Maybe some of us weren't going to make it home.

MEL

Wasn't that part of what we agreed to when we enlisted?

STITCH

This is a goddamn support unit. We're supposed to drive your ass from place to place. I didn't agree to have myself blown up and I'm pretty sure Vargas didn't sign up for that shit either. (Pushing it down) Why doesn't it ever cool off here?

MEL

The big sandbox. (Beat) Can I have a cigarette?

STITCH

You don't... You sure?

MEL

Yeah.

*STITCH retrieves a cigarette from his pack and lights it for MEL.*

STITCH

Those'll kill you.

*They smoke a moment.*

STITCH (cont')

We're lucky that he was the only one.

MEL

I'm supposed to be glad?

STITCH

We're lucky that it wasn't us.

MEL

It could have been us. It was one of us.

STITCH

Was.

MEL

What did you say, Sergeant?

STITCH

He's - He's not one of us anymore.

MEL (sharp)

Vargas will always be one of us.

*She has physically grabbed him. MEL processes and then releases him.  
STITCH turns back to his card game.*

STITCH

We can start a new card game.

MEL

No.

STITCH

You still going back to the world? (Beat) Aren't you supposed to go back home in like, a few weeks?

MEL

Yeah. I'm supposed to rotate out.

STITCH

You're getting married.

MEL

I can't think about... They just sent me in there and they made me...

STITCH

I wish I could go home. Just for a while. Not like I want out of the Corps. But if I could step away long enough to take a breath. I can't get oxygen in my lungs. It's all dust.

MEL

Sand.

STITCH

I can't breathe.

*MEL pours out some of her water, drop by drop.*

MEL

His goddamn camera. \$649.99. Remember?

STITCH

Beatrice.

MEL

What now?

STITCH

You've got rotation. Take it. Go home and -

MEL

Get married?

STITCH

If that's what you want. Yeah. Be happy.

MEL

Right now? What kind of person does that? And I haven't seen my family since my dad... So I go and then what? Hi, I'm back and Dad's dead and Vargas is dead and more of my friends could be dying right now, but let's try on dresses? That is fucked.

STITCH

You've got an opportunity and you're gonna miss it.

MEL

I can put off the wedding. Most of it's still not locked down. I can change the date

STITCH

Shit, Garza -

MEL

It's not that big of a deal. I'll delay my leave. We'll play poker. Blackjack instead of solitaire.

STITCH

And you'd let your guy play solitaire?

MEL

He has people.

STITCH

I have people. Even without you. Without Vargas. I have people.

MEL

The 24/7 Elvis keeps them away.

STITCH

I'll turn it off and find people to play with until I get my turn to go home. Take your turn while you have it.

MEL

I don't think I can go. Stitch -

STITCH

Pick out your spot. With that tree you want.

MEL

Birch.

STITCH

Birch. With the white, narrow trunks.

MEL

Bacon wrapped dates.

STITCH

Yeah.

MEL

Shiner Bock.

STITCH

That would taste so good right now. (Beat.) Damn. It's too hot. It doesn't even cool off in the dark.

MEL

Yeah.

*STITCH scoops up his playing cards and turns to leave.*

MEL (cont')

What do we -

STITCH

Shut up. Take this and shut up.

*STITCH pulls out the photo MEL had at the start of Act 2. She recognizes it as the photo they took the day Vargas died.*

STITCH (cont')

I had it printed. I...

MEL

We played with his camera.

STITCH

We abso-fucking-lutely did. Take it with you.

*She resists and he presses MEL's hand closed around it.*

STITCH

Whatever it was, whatever you did in that room with that... Leave it here. Get on that plane. Don't think about it or talk about it ever again. Just leave it in the hot fucking desert.

*STITCH leaves. MEL is left looking up at the sky.*

*The DRIPPING SOUNDS build and surround her.*

*End of scene.*



ACT 2 Scene 3

*Back home, MEL has the water running to fill the tub. She closes the curtain and tries to calm herself until the tub is full. She turns the water back off, throwing the curtain closed again in frustration.*

*Through the bathroom door, she hears...*

Mel? WENDY (O.S.)

Yeah? MEL

The water is running. WENDY (O.S.)

No it's not. MEL

Mel. WENDY (O.S.) (Mom tone)

I turned it off. MEL

I can hear it, Melody. WENDY (O.S.)

Lay off, Mom. MEL

Don't speak to your mother that way. JOHN (O.S.)

*MEL jumps to her feet. The DRIPPING sound begins again.*

Are you okay? WENDY (O.S.)

I know we taught you better than that. JOHN (O.S.)

MEL  
Daddy?

WENDY (O.S.)  
Melody?

*She takes deep breaths. It's not helping.*

WENDY (O.S.)  
You're scaring me.

MEL  
He's gone.

JOHN (O.S.)  
My little girl...

MEL  
He's not here, he's not...

WENDY (O.S.)  
You're scaring me.

MEL  
Leave me alone!

*Nearby, MEL hears coughing and choking. A struggle. Where is it coming from? Is it in her head?*

JOHN (O.S.)  
I won't have you disrespecting your mother like that.

MEL  
No, sir.

JOHN (O.S.)  
I thought you were gung ho, Garza.

MEL  
Daddy, you never call me that.

JOHN (O.S.)

You've got a spotter to take care of. We picked him up hauling ass through the sand after the blast.

MEL

Yes, sir.

JOHN (O.S.)

Then what is your damage, Garza?

MEL

(Swallowing) Lance Corporal Vargas, sir. It's a conflict of interest. I was out there yesterday and I saw the explosion -

JOHN (O.S.)

We all saw.

MEL

I saw... Vargas. I'm... I'm a terp, not an interrogator. I can't interrogate I'm not trained - I can't

*More coughing... from inside the shower. The PRISONER begins to speak in Persian from the dark..*

PRISONER

*Lwtfan, komakam kwn.*

(Please. Help me.)

JOHN (O.S.)

This haji killed Americans.

PRISONER

*Please. Mcha dastam dard mikune.*

(My wrists hurt.)

JOHN (O.S.)

Killed Marines.

MEL

Daddy...

PRISONER

*Einha xaily tang ast.*  
(These are too tight.)

*DRIPPING becomes the sounds of someone being waterboarded. Coughing and gasping between the breaks in the water sounds.*

JOHN (O.S.)

Find out what this guy knows.

MEL

Please no

*MEL is shoved into the interrogation room and falls to the ground. A door slams behind her. The rest of the bathroom vanishes into space. Only the shower remains.*

*MEL slowly moves toward the sounds and she opens the shower curtain to reveal a PRISONER. MEL backs away. His hands are zip tied at the wrists and a hood is over his head. The hood and upper part of his clothing are soaked.*

*The PRISONER coughs up water, then appears to float out of the shower. The shower fades away, leaving her in a dark, cavernous place with periodic DRIPPING that echoes.*

*PRISONER holds up his wrists and kneels.*

PRISONER

*Namitwnam Angwshtanamrw his knam.*  
(I can't feel my fingers.)

JOHN (O.S.)

You've got a job to do.

*MEL inhales deeply and turns her attention to the PRISONER.*

PRISONER

*Mitwnam nafas kishidantrw bshnavam.*  
(I can hear you breathing.)

MEL

We know you're involved. *Ma torw drst baAde hamle svare mashine gasht kardim.*  
(We picked you up right after the attack on our patrol vehicle.)

PRISONER

*Lwtfan, komakam kwn.* Please.  
(Please. Help me.)

MEL (interrupting him)

*Maemwryatt cha bwd?*  
(What was your mission?)

*Silence.*

MEL (cont')

It was an IED. They found a cell phone on you.

PRISONER

*Komakam kwn.*  
(Help me.)

MEL

*Ewn mashe bwd?*  
(Was that the trigger?)

*Silence.*

MEL (cont')

*Ke hadafRw eixtisas dade?* Who gave the order?  
(Who assigned the target?)

PRISONER

*Gwsham ba shwmast.*  
(I hear you.)

MEL

Answer me. Who gave you the order?

PRISONER

*Gwsham ba shwmast.*  
(I hear you.)

MEL

*Ke hadafRw eixtisas dade?* Who, shithead?  
(Who assigned the target?)

*PRISONER* tries to get to his feet. *MEL* pushes him back.

**MEL**

*Arwm bash!* It's so damn hot.  
(Stay down!)

**PRISONER**

*Gwsham ba shwmast.*  
(I hear you.)

*The DRIPPING intensifies slowly and steadily.*

**MEL (cont')**

We know you were there. You were there and Vargas (She swallows a lump.)  
You did that to Vargas.

**PRISONER**

*Man kary nakardam.*  
(I did nothing.)

**MEL**

*Ma midanim ke shwma ewnja bwdy.* You killed him. He's ...  
(We know you were there.)

**PRISONER**

*Man hich jaiy nabwdam.* I was nowhere.  
(I was nowhere.)

**MEL**

Don't lie to me, you murderer.

**PRISONER**

*Man hich jaiy nabwdam.*  
(I was nowhere.)

**MEL**

Stop lying! You fucking haji!

**PRISONER**

*Man kary nakardam.*

(I did nothing.)

MEL

I should blow your fucking brains out.

PRISONER

*Hich chy!*  
(Nothing!)

MEL

Shut up!

*MEL full force punches the prisoner in the face. He falls over, in obvious pain.*

*She is about to go at him again, out of control, when she is grasped by an invisible force and is pulled away from the PRISONER and falls to the ground. She regroups, terrified.*

MEL

Fuck me.

*The PRISONER moans in pain. Something in the tone of the room starts to change.*

MEL (cont')

Did you? Did you kill Vargas? Shit.

JOHN (O.S.)

Do you ever want to fly?

MEL

What if you didn't and I...

JOHN (O.S.)

Fly out the window.

MEL

Shit. Shit, shit, shit.

PRISONER

*Gwsham ba shwmast.*  
(I hear you.)

What?  
MEL

I hear you.  
PRISONER

My little girl.  
JOHN (O.S.)

How the Hell?  
MEL

Listen...  
JOHN (O.S.)

I hear your words.  
PRISONER

No. No, you don't.  
MEL

Shhh...  
JOHN (O.S.)

All your words.  
PRISONER

Stop. Shit.  
MEL

I hear who you are.  
PRISONER

Stop.  
MEL

I know who you are.  
JOHN (O.S.)

I know who you are.  
PRISONER



JOHN (O.S) and PRISONER (out of sync)

I know what you are.

*The hood slides from the PRISONER's face to reveal VARGAS beneath.*

MEL

The fuck?

VARGAS

I know, right.

MEL

I'm losing my mind...

VARGAS

You know I'm not really here? I got sent home and they had me buried proper. But you.

MEL

What?

VARGAS (amusing himself)

You know your dad played football when he was deployed, too? Remember when I knocked you down?

MEL

Yeah.

VARGAS

Where's the tough girl I knew in Helmand Provence?

MEL

I'm -

VARGAS

We're all so fucked up. Some of us more than others.

*VARGAS cracks up at his own joke.*

VARGAS (cont')

You talk to Stitch? He drinks.

MEL

We all drink.

VARGAS

He drinks and then loads up his pistol. He took his Jeep to Rogue River Forest outside Medford. He still has the ring he gave Caroline. The good one. He can't forget her either. He got wasted, dropped that little sapphire into a handle of vodka. He perched it up on a tree stump and shot it up. Then he pushed the barrel up under his chin.

*VARGAS grabs MEL under the chin where STITCH burned himself.*

VARGAS (cont')

He left a burn mark from the hot barrel right here. A red hot circle.

MEL

You're hurting me.

*VARGAS lets her go.*

VARGAS

Stitch went back the next day. He couldn't find that ring. How much money has that dickhead spent on engagement rings? Look at you shaking like that.

MEL

I'm cold.

VARGAS

Gonna do anything, Mel? Gonna get up? You made of glass?

MEL

No.

VARGAS

Gonna stay curled up all wet and pathetic like a pogue or you gonna get up and fight?

MEL

I can't.

*VARGAS knows. His tone shifts. Hard love.*

VARGAS

You think you can't. I know. But that never stopped you before.

MEL

Vargas, I'm a mess. It's a disaster and I can't -

VARGAS

Fucking do it anyway.

MEL

I can't think -

VARGAS

Get up and grab the ball -

MEL

Everything is dripping down the walls in my head.

VARGAS

I hear who you are. I know who you are. I know what you are.

MEL

What am I, Vargas?

VARGAS

You are a Marine. You knocked my ass in the sand.

MEL

I don't know anymore.

VARGAS

Yes, you do.

MEL

Help. Please help me.

VARGAS

You have to decide. Decide to get up.

*VARGAS offers her his hand. MEL takes it and stands.*

VARGAS (cont')

Fucking go long.

*End of Scene.*

ACT 2 - Scene 4

*Back in the living room, HARMONY has emptied the box and is sorting it on the coffee table. She has sunglasses that she's pushed up on top of her head.*

*MEL enters from the shower, still off-center.*

MEL  
Hi.

HARMONY  
There's coffee.

MEL  
Thanks.

HARMONY  
Cantaloupe, too.

*HARMONY holds up some medals from the box.*

HARMONY  
Dad's things. Look at these...

MEL  
Awards.

HARMONY  
Do you know what they're for?

MEL  
This is a Vietnam Service medal. That's an Expeditionary medal and that's a Combat Action

HARMONY  
Dad never said anything. You either?

*MEL shakes her head, no.*

HARMONY  
These should be displayed somewhere.

MEL

I don't know why Dad didn't put them up before.

*MEL picks up an envelope with a photo and a letter. WENDY enters.*

MEL

Mom, look

HARMONY

Mel, I don't know...

MEL

It's fine. (To Wendy) I found this box of Dad's.

WENDY

Let me see that.

*MEL gives WENDY the photo.*

HARMONY

There's all this other stuff, too. More letters. Awards.

WENDY

We have to get to Melody's appointment. Don't want to be late.

HARMONY

We won't be.

MEL

Hey, I'd like to take Dad's medals.

WENDY

Dress shopping part two, remember.

MEL

Doug wants me to put my things up from Afghanistan. They can go next to Dad's.

HARMONY

Mom?

*The girls stop silent as WENDY goes to the dress, which is draped over a chair.  
She touches the stain as one would touch an open wound.*

We're so sorry, Mom. HARMONY

It was an accident. MEL

Oh no... WENDY

Mom MEL

I want... WENDY

We're handling it. HARMONY

I want to keep my dress! WENDY

We're taking it to the cleaners. MEL

Take the medals WENDY

Mom MEL

- or whatever else is in there. WENDY

Are you okay? HARMONY

I wore this with him! WENDY

*They all stop and WENDY slumps, wrapped around her wedding dress, shaking slightly. HARMONY and MEL are horrified at what they've done.*

*Then... WENDY's shaking becomes a soft, self-aware laughter.*

WENDY

This wasn't even the dress I wanted. My mother was paying for it and... When he stood at the end of that aisle and I walked up to him... Your father loved it. These sleeves. And the swishing sound from the skirt... At the reception later, he'd grab the skirt up and he'd laugh. Your father was so handsome in his dress blues. In that uniform, he was a prince. I know you girls have seen pictures, but it's not the same.

Mel, everything changes and you lose things you thought you'd have forever and everything about that one day will be in that dress. This wasn't the dress I dreamed of... but it might be the thing you have left.

*After that release of long bottled emotion, WENDY can breathe.*

We had too many years left. (Slight shift) Mel, if you'd like your father's medals, take them home.

MEL

Thanks, Mom.

WENDY

They mean more to you than they do to me and I need to... (A sigh to herself, then...) I don't know if I'll ever really move on.

MEL

Don't you have to?

WENDY

Have you?

*MEL weighs the thought heavily before speaking.*

MEL

I enlisted because of him. And the last time I was home, he told me to stay away.

HARMONY



What?

MEL

Dad took my hands and made me sit with him that way he did, you know?

*HARMONY nods.*

MEL (cont')

He said that he was proud of me for going in the Corps. That he knew I was strong, but he didn't want me to see what was going to happen to him in the end. Dad told me to fly away and stay away. He made me promise. Mom. I'm sorry. Harmony...

*HARMONY turns back to the box. WENDY consoles and accepts what MEL has said. They are all quiet for a moment.*

WENDY

Harmony, anything else good in that box?

HARMONY

(Gathering herself) Yeah, a bunch of stuff... Look at this.

*HARMONY holds a smallish bundle wrapped in tissue with a note – The bundle MEL found years ago as a child.*

MEL

It's for you.

*HARMONY hands it to WENDY, who opens the note and then looks to the photograph. MEL was right. The fabric is like water.*

WENDY

He brought it over from Europe.

*WENDY hands HARMONY and MEL the photo and MEL remembers it. WENDY reads silently, then aloud to her daughters.*

WENDY

“You said you'd always wanted to see Paris, so I'm sorry you're not here with me. But

*Continuously, JOHN's voice joins WENDY's.*

WENDY and JOHN (V.O.)  
a tiny French woman was selling these at an outdoor market” -

JOHN (V.O.)  
And I told her about you. I'd gone for a walk and ended up on Rue Gît-le-Coeur. She was wearing a bright yellow dress and a giant sun hat. An apron over her dress. Had to be 75 years old. She caught my eye and waved me over. My French is pretty terrible, but we got to sort of talking. When I said *ma femme*, she lit up and put this in my hand. I talked about you... I don't know how much she understood. But, you have been here

WENDY and JOHN (V.O.)  
“In a way.”

WENDY  
I remember this. He came back and said he'd gotten me a gift when he was in France and he'd misplaced it.

HARMONY  
Aw, Dad!

WENDY  
I told him it didn't matter. (Shift) I have nowhere to wear it.

*WENDY has a precious moment with the scarf. When she's done, she folds it nicely and sets it aside.*

WENDY (cont')  
It's time to go.

HARMONY  
Is it going to be better this time?

MEL  
How should I know?

HARMONY  
It's your dress.

*Slowly, VARGAS appears out of nowhere, unseen by MEL.*

MEL

There's this image of this "bride" I'm supposed to be or the "girl" I'm supposed to be. And all I can think about is... (She pulls back the memory) There are people who are still supposed to be here. Picking a dress feels so frivolous.

*As she speaks, she feels, then sees Vargas. For the first time, his appearance brings MEL comfort.*

WENDY

It might feel that way. But Mel... It's not just a dress.

*WENDY and MEL measure each other with concern.*

WENDY (cont')

Are you coming to this appointment today? Are you actually coming? I'm afraid that you're missing it.

*MEL looks to VARGAS and they lock eyes.*

VARGAS

Go long.

MEL (quietly)

Go long.

*MEL makes a choice.*

MEL

Well. I know one thing. (trying to be playful) I'm not wearing your dress.

HARMONY

That's a start.

MEL

But let's go. I have to wear something.

WENDY

I have an idea. (clarifies herself) A better idea.

*WENDY holds up the shawl.*

WENDY (cont')

I think you should wear it on your day. It's unconventional. You're unconventional. And it's from your father.

MEL

Dad can't walk me down the aisle, so...

*WENDY nods.*

MEL (cont')

So whatever dress I choose is going to have to go with this. Okay? (To Harmony) I'll need your help with that. You know I'm not good at it.

HARMONY

Well... nothing too busy then.

*MEL scoops up the football.*

MEL

I have to get going if I'm going to take Mom's dress into the cleaner before this appointment.

HARMONY

Yeah.

MEL

Come with me. We'll get donuts.

HARMONY

You can't eat donuts right now.

MEL

I can eat whatever I want. I have Spanx.

HARMONY

That's not how that works!

MEL

Relax, Harmony.

*MEL lobs the football to HARMONY, who catches it awkwardly.*

MEL

We'll turn on the radio. Or... (a big decision) we can talk.

HARMONY

We can?

*MEL hesitates, then nods "yes".*

WENDY

Why don't I take in the dress?

MEL

You sure, Mom?

WENDY

I'll meet you at the appointment.

HARMONY

Let's do it. I'll start the AC. Mel, see you in the car?

MEL

Yeah.

*HARMONY nods and goes to her car. WENDY holds MEL back, then offers the shawl to MEL.*

MEL

Won't we be late?

WENDY

We have time. You'll want to see this with the dresses.

MEL

Doesn't white go with everything?

WENDY

Still.

*WENDY holds the scarf open. She starts to wrap it around MEL, who flinches.*

WENDY

You should feel what it's like.

MEL

To what?

*WENDY wraps the scarf around MEL and pulls her hair loose on her shoulders.*

WENDY

Feel what it's like. Just to feel it.

*End of Play.*