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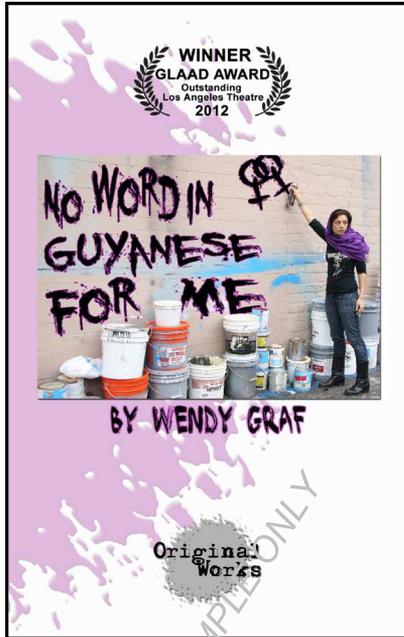
Veils

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NO WORD IN GUYANESE FOR ME by Wendy Graf

Synopsis: *No Word in Guyanese for Me* tells the journey of Hanna, who is made to choose between her identity and the support and love of her family and her precious faith. From her childhood in Guyana to her adolescence in pre and post 9/11 New York City, from a disastrous arranged marriage to her sexual awakening and discovery that there can be someone for whom she is enough, Hanna struggles to come to terms with her sexual identity, her devotion to her faith, and the right to be accepted for who she is while adhering to her family and her faith. Her faith and family test her, and finally Hanna must give them the choice: accept who she is-a gay Muslim-or lose her forever.

Cast Size: 1 Female

VEILS

By

Tom Coash

SAMPLE ONLY

Veils received its world premiere at Portland Stage in Portland, ME, Feb. 27 - Mar. 16, 2014. The cast and crew were as follows:

Directed by Sally Wood

Set Design by Anita Stewart

Sound Design by Shannon Zura

Lighting Design by Bryon Winn

Costume Design by Clinton O'Dell

Stage Managed by Myles C. Hatch

Samar - Hend Ayoub*

Intisar - Donnetta Lavinia Grays*

* denotes member of Actors Equity Association

Veils was the Winner of the 2013 Clauder New Play Competition, Winner of the 2015 M. Elizabeth Osborn Award from the American Theatre Critics Association, recipient of a 2014 Edgerton Foundation National New American Play Award, and a Finalist of the 2015 Steinberg American Theatre Critics Association Award.

Veils was the recipient of a 20/20 Development Award from the InterAct Theatre Company, Phil., PA

Veils was developed at the Seven Devils Playwriting Conference, the iStar Theatre Lab, the Little Festival of the Unexpected, the id Theater, Stageworks/Hudson, and Oklahoma State University.

*Dedicated to my loving parents for starting me
on my travels and to my lovely wife for
sharing them with me.*

SAMPLE ONLY

CAST: Intisar and Samar are college roommates, living in a dorm at the American Egyptian University (AEU), Egypt.

Intisar - Female, African American Muslim, 21-25 years old, wears a veil (hijab) that is wrapped snugly around her head covering her hair but not her face. "Inti" is a strong-willed, intelligent, passionate young woman who is doing a year abroad at the American Egyptian University, a Middle Eastern/Religious Studies major.

Samar - Female, Egyptian Muslim, 21-25 years old, does not wear a veil. Samar dresses in chic, western clothes, modestly dressed when she goes out, not so modest at home or among friends, often wears a NY Yankees baseball hat. She is also a student at AEU, studying journalism. Well off, cosmopolitan, speaks Arabic, French and English. Friendly, outgoing.

SETTING: Cairo, Egypt. Various set location/playing areas are simply portrayed, including university dorm room, school editing room, hotel room. Projections of Egypt have been used to great effect and are encouraged but not required. Same with the live feed video scenes, really cool but not absolutely required.

TIME: Fall, 2010, the months before the Egypt "Arab Spring"

Approximate Running Time: 95 - 100 minutes

HISTORICAL ACCURACY: VEILS is not meant to be an exact or even approximate historical account of events leading up to the Egyptian revolution. For dramatic purposes, historic timelines have been changed and compressed.

PAUSES AND PUNCTUATION:

(...) When at the end of a sentence, signifies the speaker is trailing off.

(..) Signifies a very short pause.

Longer ellipses signify longer pauses.

A slash (/) in the middle of a character's line indicates an interruption. The next speaking character should begin her line where the slash appears.

VEILS

PROLOGUE

(Lights up on Intisar. She is facing the audience, looking into an imaginary mirror, putting on her hijab (a veil/scarf that is wrapped snugly around her head covering her hair but not her face or body). She also wears jeans and a long sleeve shirt. There is a packed suitcase ready and waiting next to her.

Putting on her veil is a natural, easy process, something she does several times a day. At this moment she is putting it on just before heading to the airport to travel from Philadelphia to Cairo for a year studying abroad.

She finishes putting on her hijab, takes a deep breath, grabs her suitcase and heads out. As she crosses the stage, the lights and sounds change.)

SAMPLE ONLY

SCENE 1

(The Cairo airport. The sounds of Cairo chaos, laughing, shouting, horns blaring, police whistles, loud Arabic pop music from taxi radios, jets overhead. Inti enters pulling her suitcase. She has just flown in. Hot, sweaty, jet-lagged, a bit overwhelmed.)

She searches crowd for the person who is supposed to meet her. Her phone to her ear but is getting nothing. Invisible people jostle past her, she jerks her suitcase away from somebody, holds it close to her body, shaking her head “no” repeatedly at the mob of taxi drivers. Sets suitcase down, straddles it, texts but that doesn’t seem to work either.

Samar rushes in. She wears large, stylish Italian shades and a Yankees baseball hat. She is chic as in Paris chic, late as in Cairo late, and hung-over as in way too many shots of Coco Loco. She glances at Inti, looks around, doesn’t see who she’s looking for. Samar rushes off, punching buttons on her cell phone. After a moment Inti’s cell rings. Inti answers. Talking loudly...)

INTISAR: Hello?...Hi?...Yes! I’m here! *(Looking around)* Terminal A. Right in front.

(Samar rushes on again from another direction, looks around, past Inti.)

SAMAR: I don’t see you! Feyn?

(Inti turns, sees Samar, lowers cell, waves.)

INTISAR: Here! Samar?!

(Samar sees Inti, surprised, talking on cell phone.)

SAMAR: Intisar?

INTISAR: Yes!

SAMAR: Il ham du lilah! You made it! Welcome! Ahlan wa-sahlan!

(Samar kisses Inti on both cheeks surprising her.)

INTISAR: Hi..*(Getting kissed.)*..Hi! Wow.

SAMAR: I'm sorry we're late! Egyptians are always late. It's genetic.

INTISAR: No, don't worry.

SAMAR: We drove straight from this all night party in Alexandria. Oh my god. They had like this fountain thing full of Coco Locos. Mish ma-ool!

INTISAR: Wow.

SAMAR: I had to drag Dahlia away from this French guy. *(Uses hand to indicate hot guy.)* Incroyable!

INTISAR: I'm sorry. I could've taken a taxi.

SAMAR: No way! Your first time in Cairo! *(Samar thumbs buttons on her cell phone.)*

Dahlia's circling. You'll love her! *(Samar holds cell to ear, talking to Inti.)* She got her Mom's new Mini Cooper wagon. So cool. We'll have to like squeeze in. No problem. As my Tayta, my grandmother, used to say "silk folds". *(Dahlia answers.)* Dahlia! Ana la ate ha...Yes! Terminal A, bab al matar...ok, ok. We cross over when we see you. *(Glances at Intisar.)* Muush sha-a'-rah! [She's not blond] *(Laughs in answer to whatever Dahlia says.)* Ciao. *(Hangs up, to Inti.)* She hates me. I slept all the way from Alex.

INTISAR: I was afraid you'd never find me.

SAMAR: Right?! Yanni, we couldn't park. Security is totally crazy. Then I thought you were with those Sudanese! Oh my god! I almost forgot.

(Thumbing buttons on her cell.)

INTISAR: What?

SAMAR: Twitter. I have to announce you are here. I love Twitter. *(Thumbing her cell.)*

Ok, there! You are now officially in Cairo. Marhaba! Sabah il kheyr. Good morning. This is the traditional Egyptian greeting.

INTISAR: Sabah il noor.

SAMAR: You speak Arabic!

INTISAR: Shewayya, shewayya. Just a little. I've been taking classes.

SAMAR: Your Arabic is beautiful.

INTISAR: Shuk-ran.

SAMAR: Af-wan! Here, I brought you something. *(Samar takes a string of small, white flowers off her wrist and gives it to Inti.)* Foll! For you. Egyptian flowers. Smell!

INTISAR: Wow. *(Smelling flowers.)* Like jasmine. They're beautiful.

SAMAR: Wear them! Like a bracelet.

INTISAR: Shukran.

SAMAR: Afwan!

INTISAR: Wait, I brought you something too.

(Inti digs in travel bag, pulls out a CD with a little ribbon around it, gives it to Samar.)

SAMAR: Public Enemy?

INTISAR: It's American. Rap music.

SAMAR: I know them! Chuck D!

INTISAR: You do?

SAMAR: My brother, he used to download all the Public Enemy videos.

INTISAR: I know they're kinda old school but I love the lyrics.

SAMAR: *(She recites/sings lyrics from Public Enemy doing a little rapper hand thing.)*

“All I want is peace and love on this planet, Ain't that how God planned it?” *(Samar hugs Inti.)* Intisar, shukran! I'm so glad you're here!

INTISAR: Please call me Inti.

SAMAR: Gameela, Inti! You are so beautiful.

INTISAR: Yeah, right. Ten hours on a plane.

SAMAR: *(Samar's cell sounds, the ring tone is something like Lady Gaga's "Poker Face." She reads text.)* Wait, wait...see! Already my cousin Tarek! He wants to meet us. Very cute. He'll go crazy for you. Are you hungry?

INTISAR: Sure. I mean...

SAMAR: Taban! Ten hours of plane food. I tell him to meet us at Fridays! *(Starts to text.)* You'll like it, very American!

INTISAR: Fridays?

SAMAR: On a boat in the Nile. Very chic.

INTISAR: Get out. Like Friday's Fridays? The restaurant?

SAMAR: Like spicy chicken wings Fridays! Plus they've got a secret alcohol menu. Long Island Iced Teas!

INTISAR: Whoa, whoa. Samar, wait a sec.

SAMAR: You don't like Fridays?

INTISAR: No, no, I like Fridays. It's just...

SAMAR: Ahh, maybe you want something more Egyptian?

INTISAR: Well maybe. It is my first day.

SAMAR: *(Imitating tour guide.)* Taban! You want see pyramids, Madame! Ride camel! See Sphinx, yes? You want to see the "real" Egypt!

INTISAR: I'm sorry, total tourist, right?

SAMAR: No! I love the pyramids. They're amazing. Yanni, this is also the best place in Cairo to get Baskin Robbins. *(We hear Dahlia honking horn repeatedly.)*
There she is! *(Waving.)* Yalla. *(Grabs Inti's bag, starts across traffic.)*

INTISAR: Wait, wait!

SAMAR: What?

INTISAR: There's no crosswalk?

SAMAR: What is this?

INTISAR: Oh my god.

SAMAR: Ma-a-lisch, Cairo rules...don't stop, don't run, don't
make eye contact.

INTISAR: You're serious.

(Samar looks for an opening in the traffic.)

SAMAR: Yalla!

(They rush off, horns blaring. Lights down.)

END SCENE

SAMPLE ONLY

TRANSITION TO SCENE 2

(Leaving the airport, Samar drags Inti through a short whirlwind tour of the pyramids, Sphinx, camel riding, etc. Both girls snapping photos as they whirl across the stage, having fun, goofing around. Inti takes photos of the things she sees, Samar mostly takes photos of herself and Inti.)

SCENE 2

(Samar and Inti collapse into their dorm room, with suitcase. Exhausted, dirty, smelly, happy.)

SAMAR: Welcome to the American Egyptian University! Our very humble abode.

INTISAR: Wow. I can't believe I'm finally here.

SAMAR: Il ham du lilah!

(Inti sits, takes a breath. Takes off her veil.)

INTISAR: I'm totally, absolutely, completely exhausted.

(Samar falls back onto a bed and immediately starts thumbing buttons on her cell.)

SAMAR: You had fun?

INTISAR: Seriously? Oh my god. Thank you.

(Samar looks at today's photos and laughs.)

SAMAR: Mish ma-ool!

INTISAR: Twitter?

SAMAR: Facebook. I'm posting the photos.

(Inti looks at her own cell photos.)

INTISAR: Dear Mom and Dad, my first day in Cairo, riding camels next to the great pyramid.

SAMAR: Dear Mom and Dad, my first day in Cairo and I saw two camels doing it in front of the Baskin Robbins!

INTISAR: Oh my god! Could you believe that?

SAMAR: Thank god we weren't riding them.

INTISAR: I didn't know camels could spit like that.

SAMAR: Poor Tarek!

INTISAR: *(Sniffs self.)* I smell like a camel. This girl needs a shower.

SAMAR: Maybe this is why the camel guy wants to marry you. Tarek was so jealllous.

INTISAR: Please.

SAMAR: You have a boyfriend?

INTISAR: *(Pause.)* Ex. Recent.

SAMAR: Ah, he didn't want you to come?

INTISAR: Well, that and other things. Maybe we should save this for another day.

SAMAR: Taban. No worries, we'll find you the perfect guy. *(Referring to photos.)* Hey, maybe I can use these on my blog, "Sex and the Single Camel".

INTISAR: You have a blog?

SAMAR: [Www.ishta.com](http://www.ishta.com)! Look!

(Pulls it up on her cell to show Inti.)

INTISAR: What's ishta?

SAMAR: Yanni, cream. Egyptian slang for something, yanni, really cool. Really hip. Ishta.

INTISAR: And what's "yanni"?

SAMAR: More slang. Yanni is like..how Americans use the word "like." Try it.

INTISAR: So, like, having a blog..yanni..is..ishta..yes?

SAMAR: Bazzapt! Exactly.

(Inti looks at the blog on Samar's cell.)

INTISAR: Do you have a lot of followers?

SAMAR: Twelve, including my mother.

INTISAR: What do you write about?

SAMAR: Egypt. Women's issues.

INTISAR: Politics?

SAMAR: Ya nehar abyad! I'd rather live.

INTISAR: It's that bad?

SAMAR: Last month two students from AEU were arrested!
For criticizing the president on their blog.

INTISAR: You're kidding.

SAMAR: Aiwa! Them, their families!

INTISAR: They arrested their families?!

SAMAR: Fathers, brothers. To make others afraid.

INTISAR: Wow, I knew there was censorship but...

SAMAR: I think this is very different in America.

INTISAR: Seriously? Trashing presidents is like the national past time.

SAMAR: I want to work for the New York Times! You think this is possible?

INTISAR: Sure. You want to live in the States?

SAMAR: Anywhere. New York, London, Paris. Toledo.

INTISAR: Toledo?

SAMAR: You know Toledo?! I have a cousin in Toledo.

INTISAR: Wow. You're studying journalism?

SAMAR: Video-journalism. My masters. You?

INTISAR: Gap year here studying Arabic. Then, well, my Dad wants me to come home, get a credential, teach high school like him. He thinks we need "more good teachers". My Mom wants me to go to law school. "Know the rules, own the game."

SAMAR: I hate rules.

INTISAR: Me, I want to study Islam..here. The famous mosques. The teachers. Right at the heart of it.

SAMAR: Of course, Masr umm iddunya.

INTISAR: What's that?

SAMAR: This is what other Arab countries call Egypt. Mother of the world.

INTISAR: Exactly! You know today when I heard the call to prayer live, for real, in public, for the first time in my life, it was like coming home. So beautiful.

SAMAR: You don't have this at your mosque?

INTISAR: In the land of religious freedom? God forbid.

SAMAR: Seriously? Wow. I knew there was censorship but...

INTISAR: Right?! Hey, listen, I looked up the names of some teachers at Al Azhar Mosque.

SAMAR: Oh?

INTISAR: I want to try to study the Qur'an there.

SAMAR: They know you are coming?

INTISAR: No. I'll have to find them. I'm hoping maybe you can help me.

SAMAR: In shah Allah. *(Pause.)* You're not what I expected when I requested an American roommate.

INTISAR: No?

SAMAR: Dahlia and I had a bet you would be blond.

INTISAR: You wanted Barbi.

SAMAR: No! We didn't know.

INTISAR: You're not exactly what I expected either, Ms. Twitter and her Diesel jeans.

SAMAR: No?

INTISAR: I'm not sure what I was expecting.

SAMAR: Camels and pyramids.

INTISAR: Exactly.

SAMAR: King Tut, Cleopatra, Omar Sharif riding through the desert.

INTISAR: Well...

SAMAR: Pollution, poverty, women in abayas with ten children, men with beards and no teeth, burning American flags!

INTISAR: No, Samar!

SAMAR: I'm sorry. Asfa. Sometimes I am tired of these stereotypes.

INTISAR: No, you're right. It's true. Everyone in America has these crazy ideas about the Middle East, you know? Like I'm insane to come here. Like.. "Aren't you scared?" "What about how they treat women?" "What about the terrorists?" "What about the bombs?"

SAMAR: What about the dentists?

INTISAR: One of my friends even asked if I was bringing a gun!

SAMAR: You were afraid from Egypt?

INTISAR: Please, I'm from West Philly.

SAMAR: This is your first time away from home?

INTISAR: First time out of the country.

SAMAR: Cairo is a long way.

INTISAR: From Overbrook, P-A? Light years.

SAMAR: Your family? They won't miss you?

INTISAR: Oh my god! Talk about conflicted. In theory, they like the idea of me coming to a "Muslim" country but totally freaked when I said I wanted to come to Egypt for a whole year.

SAMAR: People don't know what to expect. Yanni, it's either Al-Qaeda or people watch too much *The English Patient*.

INTISAR: I love *The English Patient*!

SAMAR: See! We've had a civilization here for five thousand years. They should call us "First World" instead of "third world". Like we are not even on the same planet.

INTISAR: Believe me, I understand the whole stereotype thing.

SAMAR: Taban, of course. My god..American. (*Inti taking her veil off.*) Can I ask you a personal question?

INTISAR: Sure.

SAMAR: (*Indicating Inti's veil.*) Why do you wear this?

INTISAR: Why does anybody wear a veil?

SAMAR: You are Muslim, of course.

INTISAR: Born and raised.

SAMAR: But you have a choice. To wear this.

INTISAR: Wow, no kidding? You mean I don't have to wear this old thing?

SAMAR: I mean, maybe you thought you have to wear this in Egypt?

INTISAR: I choose to wear a veil because I'm a proud Muslim. Because Islam is a beautiful religion.

SAMAR: Il ham du lilah. But in America this is something foreign, yes? People stare at you?

(Inti dramatically hides the lower half of her face with the scarf.)

INTISAR: "Oh my god! She's wearing..(Whispers)..a veil!"
Red alert, red alert! Terrorist in the house! Check her shoes.
Or opprrrsssed. She's oopprreesssed! Call Oprah.

SAMAR: Did you know they are planning to ban the niqab on campus?!

INTISAR: What's the niqab?

SAMAR: Like wearing a big, black tent that covers everything?

INTISAR: Like a burka? No way!

SAMAR: Two other schools in Cairo have already ruled against them.

INTISAR: *(Touching her veil.)* They're banning veils at AEU?

SAMAR: Not all, just the niqab. *(Indicates Intisar's veil.)*
You'll be ok with your higab.

INTISAR: Why?

SAMAR: A man, a student, was caught wearing the niqab, to hide himself, in the women's locker room! Watching women undress!

INTISAR: That's messed up.

SAMAR: Plus I know students who wear them to take each other's tests.

INTISAR: So they ban veils and punish the women? Typical.

SAMAR: Hey! I've been planning to blog about this ban. Now with you here, we can show two sides! Oh my god, I'm so brilliant. One Egyptian woman, one American. The stereotypes, the misconceptions.

INTISAR: But you don't wear a veil.

SAMAR: Bazzapt. Both sides.

INTISAR: I don't know.

SAMAR: Plus I'm sure there will be protests at the school.

INTISAR: Wait a minute...

SAMAR: Marches, police, soldiers, students arrested! This will look great on my resume.

INTISAR: Maybe I should just take a shower, wash the camel off, and then we can think about it tomorrow?

SAMAR: Of course! Bukra. No worries. (*Sound of Samar's cell phone receiving a text.*)
Take your shower, relax.

INTISAR: If I can even get up.

SAMAR: (*Checking her cell.*) And then put on your face and pull out your tits, girl.

INTISAR: Excuse me?

SAMAR: This is not right? From Jersey Shore? To "party hearty"?

INTISAR: Oh my god.

SAMAR: There's a big party in Masr El-Gedida! DJs, dancing. Everybody wants to meet you.

(Samar puts on some music and starts dancing.)

INTISAR: This girl's taking a shower and a 24 hour cave sleep.

SAMAR: I thought you wanted to see the "real" Egypt?

INTISAR: Unh-uh, no way.

SAMAR: The real Egypt doesn't open its eyes until all the good little tourists have gone to bed.

INTISAR: Samar...

SAMAR: Dancing is good for jet-lag.

(Samar does a little belly dance shimmy.)

INTISAR: Whoa. You do that in public?

SAMAR: Come on, yalla, I teach you. The guys will go crazy for you.

INTISAR: With no blond hair?

SAMAR: Inti, when I saw you I thought, "Il ham du lilah! Now, I finally have a sister."

INTISAR: Oh, Samar, thank you. *(They hug.)* Ok, show me that belly thing again.

SAMAR: Yes!

INTISAR: Then I'll show you how we get down in Philly, girl.

(Inti does a Philly dance move, surprisingly sexy. Samar claps, laughs. They dance. Music rises as lights fade.)

END SCENE

SAMPLE ONLY

SCENE 3

(The AEU journalism editing room. A large video screen hangs to one side. Upbeat, modern Middle Eastern music. Inti is standing center stage, wearing an umta [underscarf] and holding a scarf in hand. Samar is focusing a video camera. She turns it on. We see Inti on the video screen. Inti clearly has a major case of stage fright. Samar points to Inti...)

INTISAR: Just start? *(Samar nods.)* What do I say?

SAMAR: *(Stage whisper, encouraging.)* Just talk. Be natural.

INTISAR: I'd feel better with a script.

SAMAR: La', la', la', we want it natural, unscripted.

INTISAR: What if I say something dumb?

SAMAR: Ma-a-lisch, we'll edit what we don't want. Ok...

INTISAR: *(Pause.)* You don't say action or anything?

SAMAR: What is this?

INTISAR: You know, take one, take two, action?

SAMAR: We don't need this.

(Inti fiddles with scarf...deep breath...)

INTISAR: I feel ridiculous.

SAMAR: Ok! Action! Go!

INTISAR: Uh..hi..hello. Ahlan wa sahlan. I'm now going to show you..that's sooo dumb.

SAMAR: Take a breath. (*Demonstrates big in and out breaths.*) Come on. (*Inti does deep breaths, both deep breathing.*) Ok, introduce yourself.

INTISAR: (*Inti takes breath.*) Hi. (*Big thumbs up from Samar.*) My name is Intisar and I'm here to show you, those of you who don't already know, how to wear a hijab, a veil.

SAMAR: (*Stage whisper*) Hi-geb!

INTISAR: What?

SAMAR: In Egypt we say "hi-geb".

INTISAR: In the States we say "hi-jab".

SAMAR: We are in Egypt.

INTISAR: Ok, ok. How to wear a "hi-geb". We thought that...

SAMAR: (*Stage whisper*) Who's we?

INTISAR: Samar, my roommate here at the American Egyptian University, and I thought that..any real conversation about veils should start with..the simple basic facts, right? (*Samar gives her a thumbs up.*) Like what are the different types of veils? How are they worn? Why are they worn? Why if God should take the time, go to all the trouble, to give us a simple fashion guide, we should...(Samar clears her throat meaningfully.) What?

SAMAR: No prostituting.

INTISAR: What?

SAMAR: No prost..this is not right.

INTISAR: Proselytising?

SAMAR: Bazzapt!

INTISAR: I thought the point was to make a point.

(Samar turns off camera.)

SAMAR: First start simple. We agreed.

INTISAR: Do we have to have this music?

SAMAR: The music is good background.

INTISAR: I feel like I'm in a Bollywood movie.

SAMAR: I like Bollywood! Maybe you can dance a little.

(Does a little shimmy.)

INTISAR: You can dance a little!

SAMAR: Inti, just show the scarf. Ok? Simple?

INTISAR: I'm not an actor.

SAMAR: For me? New York Times?

INTISAR: Ok, ok. *(Takes breath.)* But you owe me.

(Shakes her arms and legs, gets ready.)

SAMAR: Baskin Robbins!

(Inti nods. Samar starts the camera.)

INTISAR: Hi, My name is Intisar. My roommate, Samar, and I are making this short video to..examine and..address..the custom, no, the practice of veiling.

SAMAR: *(Stage whisper.)* Good!

INTISAR: There are many types of veiling ranging from a simple scarf like this (*Inti shows scarf.*) loosely wrapped around the head, (*She demonstrates.*) to a “hi-geb” which covers the neck, chest, and completely covers the hair. To an abaya, a long robe that covers all of your clothing. More conservative Muslimas might even wear the niqab or burka, which hides the face as well.

SAMAR: (*Like the title of a scary movie.*) The “Tent People”.

INTISAR: (*Holds up the scarf.*) This scarf, this veil, is a simple piece of cloth, right? So how come, for some reason, when I put it on my head, when it goes from here (*Indicates scarf in hands.*) to here, (*Indicates head.*) it becomes this whole other thing?

SAMAR: Good question.

INTISAR: I am an American Muslim and I normally wear the “hijab”. Samar, is an Egyptian Muslim and only wears a veil when she goes to the mosque or is praying. Even though the Qu’ran calls for the wearing of a veil, (*Samar clears throat threateningly.*) here in Egypt, as in America, it is a matter of personal preference.

SAMAR: In shah Allah. (*Pause*) That’s it?

INTISAR: Yes.

SAMAR: We need more. Show them a few different styles.

INTISAR: I don’t do runway.

SAMAR: Why not? Isn’t it better for people in America to think about how beautiful you are instead of the Taliban?

INTISAR: It would be better if they just saw it was me, Inti, and not throw a stressy fit about what I’m wearing.

SAMAR: You don't think about what you look like when you walk with Tarek? (*Makes kissing noises.*)

INTISAR: The point is God says to wear a veil. So you do it.

SAMAR: Inti, if covering was so important, it would be many times in the teachings.

INTISAR: You're saying it's not?

SAMAR: Many! Like giving alms to the poor and performing the Haj. There is one, maybe two references to modesty.

INTISAR: Girl, I cannot believe you're trying to school me about veils.

SAMAR: Fakart il-amrikan mutaqademoon aktar. [I thought Americans were more forward thinking.]

INTISAR: English, please!

SAMAR: Arabic, please!

INTISAR: Maybe I shouldn't be doing this.

SAMAR: What?

INTISAR: Making this video.

SAMAR: Why?!

INTISAR: I came to Egypt to fit in. Not get a fatwa slapped on me.

SAMAR: What fatwa?!

INTISAR: For making a video that trashes veiling.

SAMAR: Who is trashing? You want people to understand you, yes? To accept you. You told me this.

INTISAR: Sure but..

SAMAR: So, how many Americans even know what a “hijab” is?

INTISAR: Americans don’t know a hijab from a doo-rag.

SAMAR: So we tell them, yes?! This is the higeb. This is the abaya. This is the niqab. What is the doo-rag?

INTISAR: A doo-rag. Like in the hood, you know, for your hair. Doo-rag.

SAMAR: I know it! Like Will Smith.

INTISAR: Not like Will Smith.

SAMAR: Ok, whatever, you say it’s just a piece of cloth?

INTISAR: You know that’s not what I meant.

SAMAR: Then tell us what you mean! Take away the mystery.

INTISAR: It’s about commitment.

SAMAR: For some. For others, style is part of it. Culture is part of it. Respect is part of it.

INTISAR: It’s about commitment and faith.

SAMAR: Mrs. Obama wore a veil at the Vatican! To respect the Pope. This is not her faith.

INTISAR: Maybe not, but this is mine.

SAMAR: Ok, khalass, meshie. You want to do issues first? As you like, no problem, we do it.

INTISAR: Both sides?

SAMAR: Both sides! Come on, we show the world...that what?

INTISAR: That we're not freaks?

SAMAR: Yes! Muslimas, not freaks!

INTISAR: On one condition.

SAMAR: What?

INTISAR: You and me both. In front of the camera.

SAMAR: Oh my god.

INTISAR: Together.

SAMAR: I'm not an actor!

INTISAR: Samar!

SAMAR: I'm kidding, I'm kidding. Of course, we do it together. Muslimas unite, yes?

INTISAR: Muslimas unite.

SAMAR: Ok, aaaccction! I like this action.

(Lights down.)

END SCENE

SCENE 4

(Dorm room. Samar sitting on bed playing a game like Angry Birds on her cell. Inti enters behind Samar. She's steamed. She looks at Samar for a moment.)

INTISAR: Can I ask you something?

SAMAR: Eh ya Inti, amlah eh?

INTISAR: Do I look the eensiest, teeniest, weeniest, little bit like Michael Jackson?

SAMAR: Michael Jackson?

INTISAR: Ya Michael Jackson, hey Michael Jackson. I swear I hear that twenty times a day. Cause I'm black and American, they call me Michael Jackson? I could maybe see ya Mahalia or ya Janet but come on, Mr. Freaky? First twenty times I just smiled. Next twenty times, I ignored them. Next twenty times I was pissed and shouted back "Ya King Tut, ya Cleopatra!" *(Samar laughs)* Which just made them laugh.

SAMAR: Egyptians like to joke. They try to be friendly.

INTISAR: I'd accept that, if they weren't grabbing my breasts at the same time.

SAMAR: Someone grabbed you?

INTISAR: If I stand still for even five minutes, it's like I'm wearing a sign, "Loose American Woman, please grope". Dressed like this, muhajjaba, a good little Muslim and still no one respects me. I mean we are all Muslims, right?

SAMAR: I'm sorry, men grabbing women is a big problem in Egypt.

INTISAR: Men?! This dude's like thirteen. Grabs me and then stands there grinning like suddenly I'm gonna be so turned on I'll do him right there in the street.

SAMAR: I think maybe they watch too much American TV.

INTISAR: Hunh-unh. I don't think so. If too much Jersey Shore was the cause, then guys in America would be a lot worse and right now I've got a whole new appreciation for their gender sensitivity.

SAMAR: I should put this on my blog!

INTISAR: No! Down girl. I don't want my boobs on your blog. I'm serious. It just gets my goat is all.

SAMAR: Goat? What goat?

INTISAR: Never mind.

SAMAR: No, I like this goat. Get the goat?

INTISAR: My goat.

SAMAR: Your goat.

INTISAR: Oh my god.

SAMAR: My goat?

INTISAR: I thought, at least coming here, people would accept me.

SAMAR: Forget these guys!

INTISAR: I'm not talking just about the guys on the street.

SAMAR: Who?

INTISAR: This morning I decided to go to the mosque and find one of those teachers I told you about. One Mr. Sheikh Farid El Quahira.

SAMAR: Oh.

INTISAR: You already know don't you?

SAMAR: Some of them are very conservative there, I think.

INTISAR: Like in, he won't even look at a woman in the face? Let alone into his precious madrassa?

SAMAR: There are many like this. From the Stone Age.

INTISAR: First they make me go to the back door, right? Then this sneering, butt-head student shook me down for five pounds to "guide" me. Cause I look like what?

SAMAR: American.

INTISAR: Exactly. He thinks I'm some kind of wanna-be Muslim and proceeds to lecture me on proper mosque etiquette. Why aren't I in the women's section? Where is my husband? How can I expect to see the Sheikh? I start to explain and Mr. Holier-Than-Thou turns his back to me. Just like that. It wasn't like "Salaam alaykum" or "Have a nice day." Just turns his back.

SAMAR: You should have kicked him!

INTISAR: I wanted to. I thought "Whoa Jack! I'm all the way from America and you're not even going to let me talk to this guy?" Cause I'm a woman? Cause I'm black? American?

SAMAR: This is so wrong.

INTISAR: All I want is to study the words of God. Be a better Muslim. Not get all up in his shonky old galabeya!

SAMAR: This is so important to you?

INTISAR: *(Pause)* You're gonna think I'm crazy.

SAMAR: What?

INTISAR: Since I was a kid I've had this dream of some day doing the adhan.

SAMAR: The call to prayer?

INTISAR: Dumb I know.

SAMAR: You want to do the call to prayer? Be the muezzin?

INTISAR: There's nothing in the Qur'an that says a woman can't do it.

SAMAR: In America this happens?

INTISAR: No, but why not?

SAMAR: Oh my god, are you serious? There are imams who think that women shouldn't even talk on our mobiles! Let alone hear our voices in the mosque.

INTISAR: The Qur'an just says that women should not tempt men with their voices.

SAMAR: There are men tempted by sheep!

INTISAR: I just thought if maybe I could study here, right at the heart of it, you know? See how it's really done. Maybe it'd look good on my resume, right? So stupid.

SAMAR: No, not stupid. Crazy yes, insane yes, but beautiful, mish kida?

INTISAR: I wanted to be like Bilal, you know?

SAMAR: Bilal? Ibn Rabah Bilal?

INTISAR: If the very first Muslim muezzin could be a black slave, if Mohammed personally chose an Ethiopian slave to call the followers to prayer? Why not a woman? Why not me?

SAMAR: Why did I never think of this?

INTISAR: It must be incredible to stand way up there in the minaret, early morning. You know? Pure. Looking out over a city full of people who believe as you. Calling them to wake. That praying is better than sleeping. Being so close to God.

SAMAR: You would be perfect, yanni, some of these men sound like frogs.

INTISAR: Right?

SAMAR: The mosque next door uses only recorded voices.

INTISAR: With majorly socky speakers I might add.

SAMAR: This is awesocomme!

INTISAR: Men and women are sposed to be equal in the eyes of god, right? So why do women have to go in the back-door? That is not in the Qur'an, I looked. Or always be behind the men?

SAMAR: I was told because the men won't focus on God if they see the women bending over to pray.

INTISAR: I refuse to believe that my butt is so beautiful that it distracts people from God.

SAMAR: Il ham du lillah.

INTISAR: And what if we get distracted? Seeing all their skinny, little butts waving in the air!

SAMAR: Most women pray at home.

INTISAR: I wonder why. *(Pause.)* What's hysterical? Standing back outside the mosque, the call to prayer blaring over my head, feeling like it was calling everybody but me.

SAMAR: Inti, no.

INTISAR: Suddenly all I wanted was to find a McDonalds, don't laugh. Go in, sit down, and call my Mom.

SAMAR: You miss your family. It's culture shock. Cairo is very different.

INTISAR: Sure, but...

SAMAR: Ok, tayib, meshie! Yalla, we'll go now.

INTISAR: Where?

SAMAR: McDonalds. The real American embassy.

INTISAR: No, Samar, hot shower, crash and burn for this girl. And this time I mean it.

SAMAR: Mafeesh mushkillla. *(Grabs her phone.)* We'll order in.

INTISAR: McDonald's delivers?

SAMAR: Of course, why not?

INTISAR: Wow. That's dangerous. Double order of fries?

SAMAR: We supersize everything! Now, take the shower, then call your mother and tell her you are coming home with me to Alex, to meet my family. My mother invites you.

INTISAR: Seriously?

SAMAR: Yes! My family is very excited to see you.

INTISAR: That is so awesome. Samar, shukran.

SAMAR: Afwan habipty. *(They hug.)* You are ok?

INTISAR: *(Nods)* I'm ok. Starving.

SAMAR: Mumtez. For you, the halal Big Mac, America on a bun.

INTISAR: Or as my Mom would say "Life, liberty and the pursuit of heaviness".

(Lights down.)

END SCENE

SAMPLE ONLY

SCENE 5

(Late night, Intisar sitting on bed, reading, wearing an extra-large Philadelphia Phillies t-shirt nightie. After a moment. Samar comes slamming in. She's been out clubbing and is dressed stylishly with some kind of long jacket/cover-up over a party dress. She's drunk and raging.)

INTISAR: Hey...how was the club?

(Samar throws her purse on the bed, throws cover-up on floor, kicks off shoes.)

SAMAR: Khara b khara! Ahha, banat kalb! Ya retnee ma roht!
[Shit, shit. Daughters of a dog. I wish I never went!]

INTISAR: Wow, that good, unh? *(Samar gets down on hands and knees and searches under her bed, pulls out a bag/box.)* Are you ok?

SAMAR: I want to leave this country. Right now! Plane to Toledo!

INTISAR: Why? What happened? *(Samar triumphantly pulls out a hidden bottle of Malibu liquor.)* Where'd you get that?!

SAMAR: Dahlia, duty-free. *(Takes a big chug.)* Malibu! It's coconut!

(Holds bottle towards Inti.)

INTISAR: Hunh-unh!

SAMAR: It's good!

INTISAR: No, thank you.

SAMAR: It's not strong.

INTISAR: Obviously.

SAMAR: You think I'm drunk?

INTISAR: I think you're loud.

SAMAR: *(Loudly)* Who will hear? Saturday night! Everyone else is out partying!

INTISAR: I'm just saying slow down, girl.

SAMAR: Leyh, leyh ya-roobby? Why do I get the only American at AEU who doesn't drink?

INTISAR: Ok, what's wrong? What happened?

SAMAR: Look at me, I'm a slut, mish kida?

INTISAR: No! What are you talking about?

SAMAR: We went to the club, yes? At the Hilton. For the opening? I invited you

INTISAR: Right.

SAMAR: Everyone having fun. I went to the toilet and this witch in her black tent followed me. I was at the sink and she pulled my hair!

INTISAR: What?!

SAMAR: Calling me a bad Muslim. A whore!

INTISAR: No!

SAMAR: Why wasn't I covered, my father should beat me, my dress, showing my body, how many men was I with?!

INTISAR: What'd you do?

SAMAR: Nothing. I was too shocked. I just pushed her away and ran.

INTISAR: That's crazy.

SAMAR: (*Indicating dress.*) You think this is too short?!

INTISAR: Well, it's not something I would wear.

SAMAR: Now, you too! Maybe we should all bow down to the Saudis, wear the niqab instead?

INTISAR: I didn't say that.

SAMAR: My aunt married a Saudi and now she looks like Omar the tentmaker's wife!

INTISAR: They're just trying to be good Muslims.

SAMAR: So, I should dress like I'm in the tenth century?

INTISAR: No, but you shouldn't prance around like Paris Hilton either.

SAMAR: So, I am the bad Muslim?

INTISAR: If the dress fits, wear it.

SAMAR: Now you tell me to wear it?

INTISAR: No, it's a saying. Slang.

SAMAR: What?

INTISAR: If the shoe fits, wear it.

SAMAR: What shoe?!

INTISAR: Dang, Samar. Get drunk. Wear the dress. Do what you gotta do. It's none of my business.

(Inti and Samar's cell phones buzz, indicating simultaneous texts. Samar searches for her purse/phone. Inti picks hers up, looks at text.)

INTISAR: Something in Arabic. About AEU.

SAMAR: Let me see. *(Grabs Inti's phone. Reads.)* Yes, awesome, perfect!

INTISAR: What?

SAMAR: The protest! Tomorrow! The tent people are marching against AEU..and we're going!

(Samar starts texting using Inti's phone.)

INTISAR: Wow, not much warning.

SAMAR: To avoid the police.

INTISAR: What time?

SAMAR: They are saying eleven, so Egyptian time, maybe one o'clock. Outside the main campus gate.

INTISAR: I've got Islamic Studies.

SAMAR: This is big! We need to be there. It's perfect for the blog!

INTISAR: I need to pass my class.

SAMAR: No one will be in class! A protest at the American University?! *(Inti takes her phone back. Looks at texts. Samar searches for her own.)* My god, everyone will be there! The sheihks, the Muslim Brotherhood, the students, CNN, and us! We'll put you up on the steps for the over the top view. Plus you are safe there.

INTISAR: Safe from what?

SAMAR: From the police. The soldiers. Maybe they will try to stop this! Protests are illegal in Egypt.

INTISAR: Whoa, whoa, whoa, I don't want to get arrested.

SAMAR: Just show your passport, you are American.

INTISAR: What about you?

SAMAR: I'll run.

INTISAR: Samar!

SAMAR: I'm kidding! It's ok. I am a woman. A student. Maybe we should both be on the steps.

INTISAR: Maybe we should both be in the library.

SAMAR: Inti, all the AEU students will be there. To stand up to these fanatics! To stand up for Egyptian women!

INTISAR: So, these women, in their niquabs, aren't Egyptian?

SAMAR: Not their beliefs! This is backward tradition from the desert.

INTISAR: What happened to both sides?

SAMAR: You think this is about religious freedom but it's not. It's power, it's politics. It's sheikhs against the government.

INTISAR: Ms. Cynical!

SAMAR: Ms. Innocent.

INTISAR: This is about choice.

SAMAR: This is about voice! What does this..this "piece of cloth" show the world?

INTISAR: I don't know, Ms. Malibu, enlighten me.

SAMAR: That women are for sex, nothing more! Husbands and brothers think, ah, there is my sister, she is covered, there is my wife, she is covered. No one will see her. (*Crude hand gesture.*) No one will have sex with her!

INTISAR: That's bull. I see women who are proud of their religion.

SAMAR: Inti, there are Arabs who call the hymen the "wish al-bint"! The "face of the girl"! To these men, we are only a piece of cloth, a piece of skin.

INTISAR: Well, I'm sorry, but that's not how I see it.

SAMAR: Do you think these women will ever let you be the muezzin?

INTISAR: That's not what we're talking about.

SAMAR: Ok, ma-a-lisch. Go in the back door with the tent people.

INTISAR: Ok.

SAMAR: Wait for the men to tell you what to do.

INTISAR: Ok, all right!

SAMAR: Show us you're from West Philly.

INTISAR: I said all right!

SAMAR: You'll go?

INTISAR: What'd I say?

SAMAR: Yes?

INTISAR: Get the Malibu out of your ears.

SAMAR: Ishta!

(Samar gives Inti a big sloppy hug.)

INTISAR: Hey, hey!

SAMAR: You'll see how...how...they are. *(Suddenly she's not feeling so good.)*

Oh my god...

INTISAR: What? Are you ok? *(Samar waves her off. Feeling nauseous.)* I hope you're not going to throw up. *(Samar shakes her head.)* Are you sure? Cause I'm not cleaning it up. *(Samar does a slight dry heave, stands, very carefully walks out.)* Dang!

(Cell phones still buzzing. Lights down.)

END SCENE

END OF SAMPLE