Acting Edition

Widows

by Ariel Dorfman

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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WIDOWS premiered at the Mark Taper Forum, Artistic Director/ Producer Gordon Davidson, in Los Angeles in July of 1991. It was directed by Robert Egan, with set design by Douglas Stein, lighting design by Natasha Katz, costumes design by Dunya Ramicova, original music and sound by Jan A.P. Kaczmarek. The sound consultant was Jon Gottlieb, the stage manager was Tami Toon, and the production stage manager was Mary Michele Miner, with the following cast:

SOFIA FUENTES . . . . . Novella Nelson
ALEXANDRA . . . . . Ivonne Coll
YANINA . . . . . Natsuko Ohama
FIDELIA . . . . . Luchy Carcia
ALEXIS . . . . . Robert Ray Jimenez
ALONSO, THE ARMY DOCTOR . . . . . Robert Glaudini
TERESA SALAS . . . . . Lilian Hurst
KATHERINA . . . . . Tantoo Cardinal
ROSA, BEATRICE KASTORIA . . . . . Cordelia Gonzalez
MARILUZ . . . . . Akuyoe
AMANDA . . . . . Laurie Souza
LUCIA . . . . . Elizabeth Fong Sung
RAMONA . . . . . Margaret Medina
CECILIA SANJINES . . . . . Lorraine Toussaint
THE CAPTAIN . . . . . Tony Plana
THE LIEUTENANT . . . . . Robert Beltran
EMMANUEL, THE ORDERLY . . . . . Luis Antonio Ramos
FATHER GABRIEL . . . . . Carlos Gomez
PHILIP KASTORIA . . . . . Ruben Sierra
KASTORIA'S BROTHER . . . . . Winston Jose Rocha-Castillo
THE PRISONER . . . . . Nelson Mashita

CHARACTERS

THE FUENTES FAMILY
SOFIA FUENTES, the Grandmother
ALEXANDRA, married to her son Emiliano
YANINA, married to her son Alonso
FIDELIA, daughter of Alexandra
ALEXIS, son of Alexandra
ALONSO, son of Sofia

THE WOMEN OF THE VALLEY
TERESA SALAS
KATHERINA
ROSA
MARILUZ
AMANDA
LUCIA
RAMONA

CECILIA SANJINES, girlfriend of Emmanuel, the Orderly

PHILIP KASTORIA
BEATRICE KASTORIA, his wife
KASTORIA'S BROTHER

FATHER GABRIEL, the parish priest

THE ARMY
THE CAPTAIN
THE LIEUTENANT
EMMANUEL, the Orderly
THE DOCTOR
SOLDIERS

CASTING NOTE

There can be fewer valley women, and there can be many more. The minimum number is three. The minimum number of non-speaking soldiers is two. Some parts may be doubled: Beatrice Kastoria can be played by a valley woman, as can the Brother, since he isn't seen. One actor can play The Doctor, Father Gabriel and Philip Kastoria – and perhaps Alonso.

ACT I

Scene 1

The **WOMEN** *by the river, washing clothes.*

TERESA. The baby won't speak?

YANINA. Not a word.

TERESA. He's how old?

YANINA. Old enough to talk.

KATHERINA. Good that he's quiet, he'll stay out of trouble.

TERESA. He has to talk sometime . . .

KATHERINA. Not if he knows what's good for him.

ROSA. There's something wrong with the water today.

ALEXANDRA. You say that every day.

ROSA. Nothing's coming clean.

MARILUZ. Whisper to him.

ALEXANDRA (*to* **ROSA**). You just don't scrub hard enough.

MARILUZ. Whisper. Right in his ear.

KATHERINA. That baby misses his papa.

YANINA. He never saw his papa.

Little pause.

FIDELIA. I'll whisper to him.

TERESA. Work his tongue with your fingers, a little each day.

YANINA. Fidelia tells him stories.

ALEXANDRA. Instead of doing her chores.

FIDELIA. Mama . . .

ROSA. There is. There's something strange about the water today.

YANINA. He's a sad baby.

KATHERINA. You think he knows that his papa is . . .

TERESA. Ssshhhh . . .

YANINA. He knows what I know.

A little pause, then **FATHER GABRIEL** *enters, breathlessly.*

FATHER GABRIEL. Everyone come, it's time, it's time!

He exits.

CECILIA (*entering*). The jeep just pulled up. The new captain's here . . .

The **WOMEN** *stare at* **CECILIA**. *An icy silence.*

CECILIA. It's a big jeep.

She exits.

The **WOMEN** *put down their washing, wring dry wet things, load everything into baskets and, whispering to each other, exit.* **SOFIA** *is left alone, sitting by the river.* **FIDELIA** *re-enters.*

FIDELIA. Grandma, don't you want to see . . . ?

ALEXANDRA *re-enters dragging* **ALEXIS**.

ALEXANDRA (*to* **ALEXIS**). Stay with your Grandma.

ALEXIS. I want to see the new Captain. I want to see what he looks like.

ALEXANDRA. I don't want him to see what you look like. I'm a smart woman. Why did I have such stupid children?

Fidelia . . .

FIDELIA. Grandma, they said this Captain – he's bringing news. Don't you . . .

ALEXANDRA. Fidelia, come. (*To* **SOFIA**). You've turned everything upside down. The others think you've gone crazy and my children don't listen to me now.

ALEXANDRA *and* **FIDELIA** *exit. A little pause.* **ALEXIS** *looks at the silent OLD WOMAN, who watches the river expectantly.*

ALEXIS. Grandma . . . ?

Are you crazy?

SOFIA. Yes.

ALEXIS. When did you go crazy?

SOFIA. Do I scare you?

ALEXIS. No.

SOFIA. Little rabbit.

ALEXIS. I'm not. I'm a man.

SOFIA. Not yet. Lucky.

The **CAPTAIN** *enters, on foot, following a surveyor's map; under his arm, plans and designs in plastic tubes.*

CAPTAIN (*to* **ALEXIS**). You, boy, can you tell me if . . .

ALEXIS *runs away.*

Come back here, I . . . damn.

(*To* **SOFIA**). Excuse me, Mrs . . . uh . . . I'm trying to . . .

SOFIA *shows no sign of being aware of his presence.*

Is this the bend where the women do their washing?

(*Picks up a piece of clothing.*) Must be.

I thought it would be greener.

We're going to build here. Big plant. For fertiliser manufacturing.

The OLD WOMAN mutters, shifts her skirts.

What? Did you . . . Are you from around here, your husband, does he ever talk about fertiliser? Well, I think you just have to look at how arid it all is, to see . . . it's poor soil nutrients, that's why . . . Does your husband ever express the need for modern fertilisers for his land?

SOFIA. No.

CAPTAIN. Oh. Well I think fertiliser would . . . help. The army's going to build a plant here, then he'll see what he's missing. Your husband. Bigger crops. Exports. Are you . . . What are you doing here? Are you waiting for someone?

SOFIA. Yes.

CAPTAIN (*introducing himself*). I'm . . .

SOFIA. I'm waiting for my father.

CAPTAIN. Your father.

SOFIA. And my husband.

CAPTAIN. How old is your father?

SOFIA. And my sons.

CAPTAIN. Your father must be at least . . .

SOFIA. Old.

CAPTAIN. Been waiting long?

Little pause. She looks at him.

SOFIA. The others. They all ran off to the village. To have a look at you.

She laughs, a small, dry, sly laugh. It makes him uncomfortable at first, then he gets it, and he laughs too. Then she stops laughing.

All of us. We have all been waiting a long time.

Scene 2

The **CAPTAIN** *and* **EMMANUEL**.

EMMANUEL. Did you find the bend in the river, sir?

CAPTAIN. Of course I did. I can read a map. And the river's not exactly a mystery to follow.

EMMANUEL. I'm supposed to drive you, sir, that's my job.

CAPTAIN. I'll let you know what your job is, Orderly.

EMMANUEL. Yes sir.

CAPTAIN. When I want to walk, I'll walk. Understood?

EMMANUEL. As you say, sir.

CAPTAIN. Good. You're from around here, aren't you?

EMMANUEL. On the other side of the hill, Captain. Forty miles from here.

CAPTAIN. So you understand these people?

EMMANUEL. Sort of, Captain.

CAPTAIN. Sort of. Captain Urqueta said you knew your way around.

EMMANUEL. I'm different from them, Captain. I was employed by Mr. Kastoria, I know better. With your permission, sir, I don't think I'll stay here my whole

life. I'd like to . . .

CAPTAIN. I met an old woman. Tough old bitch. By the river. I got the impression she was expecting someone on a . . . raft, or something . . .

EMMANUEL. Old Sofia. The Fuentes woman.

CAPTAIN. You know her?

EMMANUEL. She sits by the river all day, sir. Has for months. Probably a little . . . (*Indicates 'crazy'.*) She told you she was waiting for her men?

CAPTAIN. I could barely get a word out of her. Her father and her husband and . . .

EMMANUEL. Her sons. A lot of the men in the valley are . . . they're gone, sir.

CAPTAIN. Gone.

EMMANUEL. Disappeared.

CAPTAIN. Arrested?

How many men in all are missing?

EMMANUEL. All, sir.

CAPTAIN. All? *All* the men?

EMMANUEL. I . . . think you should speak to the Lieutenant, sir.

CAPTAIN. *All* the men? That wasn't mentioned in the briefing. (*Pause.*) In my other jurisdictions I kept a lid on that – making men vanish like that – it's no good. It drives the women out of their minds. Even if you give them a finger to bury, but when there's just nothing . . . They go crazy. And then the world does.

Hard times.

EMMANUEL. Yes sir.

CAPTAIN. She has a little moustache.

EMMANUEL. Sir?

CAPTAIN. I hate women with moustaches. *(Looking out the window.)* Her whole family?

EMMANUEL. All the men.

CAPTAIN. I suppose then we'll have to forgive her . . . her moustache. Won't we?

FATHER GABRIEL (*entering*). We're glad you finally made it, Captain. We'd heard you were lost.

CAPTAIN. Who told you that, Father?

FATHER GABRIEL. Oh, in Camacho we end up knowing everything, Captain. But the women are waiting.

CAPTAIN. Women waiting. We don't want that.

Scene 3

The **CAPTAIN** *is addressing the* **WOMEN**. *He is alone on stage and talks to the audience.*

CAPTAIN. The war is over: in the cities, in the mountains, in this valley. What remains is the national task of building a deep and true peace, the peace that brings prosperity. But in the memories of some, the war goes on.

Terrible, strict measures have been necessary; we have all suffered great loss, the people and its army.

Those of us with determination and courage, who believe in the future are ready to let go. We are ready to forgive your disobedience if you are willing to forget our stern response to it, if you learn to behave. If you join us, if you are prepared to forget the past, the

wounds may finally begin to heal. Democracy and technology will be brought to bear on your backwardness, fertiliser plants and animal husbandry, pesticides and . . . and libraries; a new land for a new people. And if you let us, we will bring your sorrow and great loneliness to an end.

Scene 4

SOFIA *at the river, alone.*

SOFIA (*to the river*). What are you bringing me? I'm an old woman. I can't be expected to wait much longer.

FIDELIA *enters running.*

FIDELIA. They're coming home, they're coming home!

ALEXANDRA (*entering*). Sofia, where's Alexis?

Little pause.

Sofia? Where's . . .

SOFIA (*dazed, looking about*). I don't know, he was here, he must have gone home.

ALEXANDRA. Oh Sofia, you were supposed to watch him.

FIDELIA. I thought he was supposed to watch her.

ALEXANDRA. Quiet. ALEXIS! (*She exits, calling his name.*) ALEXIS!

FIDELIA. Papa's coming back, grandma, everyone's excited, they . . .

TERESA *appears, shucking corn. She's there but not there.*

TERESA. Fidelia, don't tell lies.

FIDELIA *stops, looks at her, then:*

FIDELIA. I'm not lying, the new captain, he said the men are coming . . .

TERESA. He said maybe. If we behave . . .

KATHERINA (*appearing, mending clothes*). If we behave.

YANINA *enters.*

FIDELIA. But we behave already, all we do is behave, we . . .

TERESA. Sofia doesn't.

KATHERINA. Sitting by the river all day . . .

TERESA. She doesn't behave.

YANINA. Take the baby, my arms are tired.

YANINA *gives the baby to* **FIDELIA**.

ALEXANDRA (*calling off*). ALEXIS!

YANINA. You should have come, Sofia, the new captain met with us, he spoke to us, he said . . .

TERESA. Forget the past.

KATHERINA. Bury the past.

ROSA (*appearing, stirring a pot*). Let go the dead.

TERESA. He didn't say that.

KATHERINA. He never mentioned the dead.

YANINA. He promised us, Sofia, if we co-operate, he said . . . maybe we can't trust him, if you'd been there, you could tell us, if you'd seen him . . .

SOFIA. I saw him.

ROSA. Listen to her, she lies worse than her granddaughter.

SOFIA. Mind your business . . .

ROSA. It is my business, he said behave.

SOFIA. He said fertiliser plant. I know what he said.

YANINA. But you were here the whole time. How, how did you . . . ?

SOFIA. Go home, Yanina, it's almost dusk, put the nets on the baskets or the grasshoppers will crawl out of the ground and eat the grain.

YANINA. I did that already.

FIDELIA. I helped her, grandma, we . . .

SOFIA. You probably did it wrong. You put the nets on all anyhow and the grasshoppers slip through.

KATHERINA. Full of advice, criticising everyone, but she hasn't worked in a month. Give yourself some advice, Sofia, act your age . . .

TERESA. Sitting there . . .

ROSA. Like a river rock . . .

KATHERINA. Stubborn, bitter, a tombstone . . .

ROSA. Reproachful . . .

TERESA. As if to say that we've forgotten the . . .

ROSA (*crossing herself*). Sssshhh.

TERESA. That's why you can't brood. You'll lose your mind, you'll turn to stone.

ALEXANDRA (*still off*). ALEXIS!

ROSA. When they took the land away from us, and we had to watch the fences go up again, and . . . and smile. You whispered to me, like a promise, Sofia, life goes on, like the earth, no matter what. Now get up.

SOFIA. I can't. I'm carrying the weight of my four men. I have a father. Husband. Two sons. Where? Each one

is heavy. Each time I think of him, is he hungry, does he need water, is he cold, he gets heavier. I am a stone. Where are they? Where are my men? I remember the missing so sharply I've forgotten everything else, how to bake or plant or walk or even stand. I can't move. I'm waiting here because . . .

ALEXANDRA *enters, dragging* **ALEXIS**.

FIDELIA. Grandma? Because . . . ?

SOFIA. I'm waiting. Because I can't bear waiting anymore.

ALEXANDRA. I'm tired of this. We're going home.

FIDELIA. Grandma.

ALEXANDRA. Leave her. On the ground there like an animal. (*To* **SOFIA**.) They're watching and you know it. You call attention to yourself. To all of us.

ALEXANDRA *begins to exit with* **FIDELIA**. **ALEXIS** *tries to stay behind to talk with* **SOFIA**.

ALEXIS (to **SOFIA**). I had to run, mama told me not to let . . .

ALEXANDRA *pulls* **ALEXIS**, *they leave with* **YANINA** *and* **FIDELIA**. **SOFIA** *sits alone. All the* **WOMEN** *disappear except* **TERESA**.

SOFIA. Don't you feel something . . .

TERESA. Feel what?

SOFIA. Something is coming.

TERESA. No.

SOFIA. Something is.

Little pause.

TERESA. When my husband comes back, he'd better find me tending the fields and feeding the children and selling the crops at market. I wait too, but not like this, Sofia, not like this.

She exits.

SOFIA (*puts her hand in the river*). Something is. It's almost here.

Scene 5

CECILIA *and* **EMMANUEL** *by the river; he's trying to make love to her.*

CECILIA. Not here.

EMMANUEL. I love this place. Green.

CECILIA. I hate green.

EMMANUEL. Even before I knew you, this place reminded me of you. I knew someday I'd be here with you.

CECILIA. I used to come here with . . . (*She stops.*)

EMMANUEL. Say who.

CECILIA. Let's go.

EMMANUEL. Theo. (*Calling, teasing her.*) Hey, Theo!

CECILIA. Stop it.

He's coming back. Everybody says . . .

EMMANUEL. Stupid bitches.

CECILIA. The captain told them. I heard him.

EMMANUEL. He never said . . .

CECILIA. All the women, they're getting their beds ready . . .

EMMANUEL. Then there are going to be a lot of disappointed women in cold beds around here – except for one little sweet woman I know. She's luckier . . .

He gropes her, she pulls away.

CECILIA. Those witches. They hate me because we're in love. They'll tell Theo.

EMMANUEL. You're protected.

(*Grabbing his uniform.*) You know what this is?

(*Grabbing his pistol.*) You know what this is?

What's he got? Your husband? Even if he did come back he won't but say he did? See those trees?

CECILIA. Yes.

EMMANUEL. I love those trees. Try to touch the fruit on those trees someone you don't even see will shoot your hand off. Green Kastoria land. Protected. When I was a kid I'd come here, I'd walk six hours, I watched for. birds.

CECILIA. Did you climb over and steal the fruit?

EMMANUEL. Not me. I watched for the birds, if they tried to land in the fruit trees, I threw pebbles at them and scared them off. I knew even then I was supposed to protect his property – that that was what I was born for. Mr. Kastoria didn't know I was alive and if I'd climbed over the fence they'd've shot me but I was proud to be protecting what was his.

My father used to beat me. He knew where I'd been and when I got back he beat the shit out of me.

CECILIA. Poor baby.

EMMANUEL. Do you know what a war is?

CECILIA. I know what a war is. Yes.

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