



VANESSA SILVA on set
for the proof of concept:
PROBABLE CAUSE

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: VANESSA SILVA

by Geoffrey D. Calhoun
Photo by Cody Cook

Vanessa is breaking new ground and pushing boundaries with her filmmaking. It takes a unique person who has the resolve and courage to be able to do that. A person with vision who can look past the standard tropes and clichés of our craft. Perhaps someone who was writing screenplays as a child when the other kids were playing in sandboxes. Vanessa is that person. She is pushing herself and the industry with a fervor that will not be outmatched. This is why I am thrilled to introduce you to her. This is Vanessa Silva...

SS: How did you stumble upon screenwriting?

VS: First things first, I am nerd. And now that we got that out of the way, and as embarrassing as this is about to be, I actually wrote my first script when I was 11. I was a huge fan of BLOSSOM, and one day I was speaking with my twin friends about the show and came up with an amazing storyline. Which I'm ninety-nine percent positive, by the way, that we were the only ones that thought it was amazing. But nonetheless, I broke out the trusty old typewriter and over the next couple of

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weeks, wrote my first 20-something page spec script and sent it off. Probably to the same place that receives Santa letters, but I was hooked.

SS: Who or what inspired you into taking this path?

VS: I have been profoundly lucky to have a family that has always inspired me to pursue my creative passions. My first typewriter was given to me by my grandmother when I was 7 and my parents got me first camcorder. It was a PixelVision PXL2000 which looked like a super 8 and filmed in black and white, so I was hip young filmmaker at the tender age of 9. I was also super fortunate to be surrounded by friends who have been beyond supportive over the years.

SS: Who was the first person who believed in you?

VS: On the home-front, my parents, definitely. They never hindered my desire to be an artist and to pursue a career as one. Instead, they constantly gave me the support to grow as a storyteller. In school, it was my English teacher, Ms. Hannigan. She saw my love for writing and performing, and encouraged me to write anything, really, and to put my work out into the world. She entered me in poetry competitions and fostered my love for Shakespeare. When you have an educator that cares about what students are truly passionate about, and helps embolden that, it makes all the difference in the world as to what kids think are possible and attainable.

SS: When was the moment you knew you wanted to be a screenwriter?

VS: The moment I got frustrated at the fact that the characters I want to play – strong, resilient, complex women – are not easily found as a stand alone piece to a much larger puzzle. Usually those characters are created in support of a male character or placed as a best friend to a morally lost female character, sprinkled into a plot to fill gaps. These incredibly essential characters are the kind that need to step out of the shadows.

They aren't perfect and, most of the time, not prim or proper. They are messy, spirited, emotionally viable and real. And they need their time in the spotlight.

SS: How do you define success for yourself?

VS: Success is doing what we love and supporting what we believe in. The goal is to consistently bring the two together. To have a strong community of inclusive creatives, where female storytellers no longer have to worry about fighting for a seat at the table in order to tell the imperative stories that need to be told.

SS: What's been the most important skill you've developed on your path to screenwriting?

VS: The ability to be creatively flexible. And the best way to do that is with collaboration. My best work happens when my production partner, Heather Hentila, and I, develop projects together – which is pretty much all the time. We help refine each other's ideas and bring them together to create a cohesive project. And when we collaborate with other incredible filmmakers, we get perspectives we would not have otherwise had which opens a whole world of possibilities.

SS: What's been the greatest challenge in your writing so far?

VS: Heather and I just finished writing a series bible for the TV Series we created – PROBABLE CAUSE. It is a full-fledged bible and one of the most difficult yet rewarding processes you can go do. Through this process, we discovered so much about the characters and world we created and loved which is something that probably would not have happened otherwise. It pushed the confines of what we thought we could do as writers and creators and there's something undeniably empowering in that.

SS: What's been the greatest reward in the choices you've made?

VS: The greatest reward in this storytelling journey, has been working with an incredible community of peers, whose ultimate goal is to make something impactful with passion at

the forefront. It elevates us all to work with one another and we continue to grow as artists and people.

SS: What do you want to learn from a community of your peers?

VS: I'd love to know their processes from start to finish. I'm always looking for a way to grow and move forward career-wise, and having a wide array of knowledge about how other storytellers create, allows invaluable experience and insight to help us all rise up as artists.

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A TYPICAL DAY IN THE LIFE

ARE YOU AN EARLY BIRD OR A NIGHT OWL?

Definitely a night owl. Sometimes the best ideas happen at 2am.

WHEN DO YOU GET UP?

6:30a - my dog doesn't believe in sleep.

DO YOU HAVE A MORNING ROUTINE OR RITUAL?

I usually let the dog out, put on a pot of coffee, stretch, and get ready to tackle the day.

WHAT DO YOU DO DURING THE DAY?

During the day I work as a creative director, so I focus on video, audio, graphics, marketing and a slew of projects that depend on creativity.

WHAT DO YOU DO AT NIGHT?

It depends on the day, but typically at night, after my kids are tucked in, I write or develop, unless we're in production or post. In that case, I'm either filming or in the editing room.

DO YOU HAVE A PRE-BED RITUAL?

Definitely a skincare routine because...well, life, and then decompress by watching some of my favorite shows.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE A SUCCESSFUL DAY?

Any day that allows me to create and move forward.