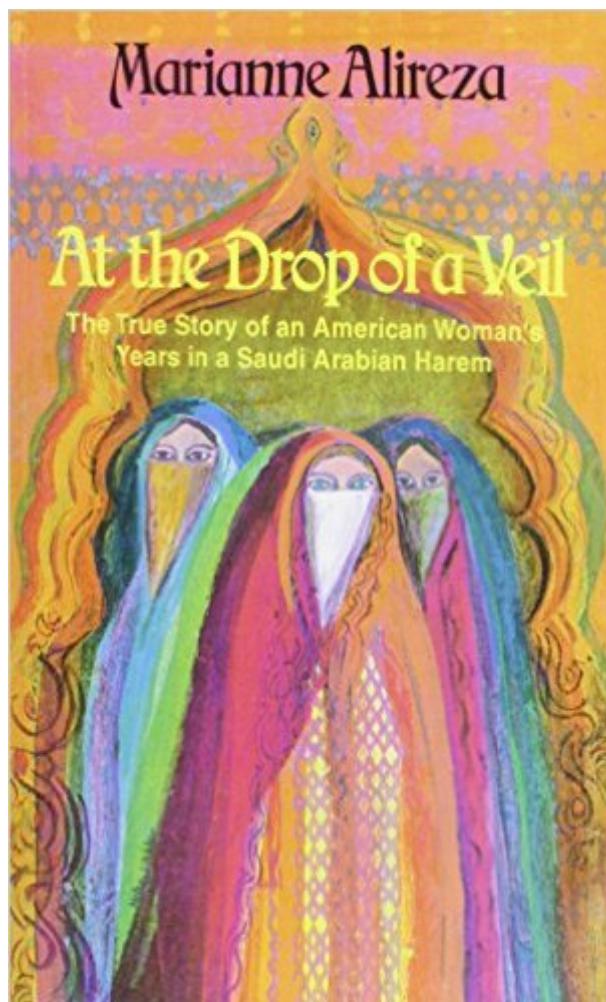


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# At The Drop Of A Veil: Marianne Alireza



## **Synopsis**

A true story of an American woman living in a Saudi Arabian harem

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 275 pages

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## **Customer Reviews**

This book tells the tale of Marianne Alireza, an American college student who married a Saudi citizen in 1943. In 1945, Alireza moved to Jeddah with her husband and infant daughter, and from there witnessed Arabian lifestyle firsthand for 12 years. She describes her experiences as part of the Alireza harem, composed of her mother-in-law, 2 sisters-in-law and their various children, of which Marianne herself eventually had 5. Alireza discusses how the family traveled to the mountains of Ethiopia to escape the summer heat in Jeddah, and how development changed all of their lives. She also details the events that led to the end of her marriage, and how she abducted her children from their school in Switzerland. The details of this book make it invaluable for anyone wanting to learn about living conditions for women in affluent Saudi Arabia in the 1940s and 50s. The story of Alireza's marriage and its demise should also serve as a warning to any Western woman considering marrying a Muslim. Under Islamic law, a Muslim man is usually granted sole custody of his (weaned) children following divorce and a Western woman who is divorced from a Middle Eastern Muslim man stands a very high chance of never being allowed to see her children again. From the man's point of view, his child custody rights are guaranteed by God, and he would be devastated to lose his children. It was exactly this sort of situation which put Marianne in the position where she felt she had no choice but to abduct her children and try to escape back to the States. All marriages these days face a relatively high risk of divorce, but cross-cultural marriages bring added

stress and tend to have even higher divorce rates than marriages within a culture.

During my tenure working for The Arabian American Oil company (ARAMCO), now the Saudi American Oil company, I had the opportunity, along with a staff member of the Ras Tanura hospital, to hear her speak about her book and her experience in the Kingdom. She autographed my copy of her book which has since been lost. How did she get back into the Kingdom after what she wrote in her book and how was she able to speak so freely at these lecture? For several reason this was possible for only her. She was very friendly with the old King and he apparently liked her a good deal and was more than willing to allow her to travel to the kingdome several times. Each time she wanted to travel to the kingdom she contacted the king direct. She was also speaking at a movie theater in an ARAMCO facility, and in fact I belive she spoke at three or four ARAMCO facilities, where the Kingom allowed westerners to act like westerners, for the most part etc. She would never have been able to speak at any other location in Saudi Arabia. She told of here infatuation with this young dark and handsome suitor and, to the dismay of her family decided to marry him and move to Saudi Arabis. (I recommended this book to a young lady who had a child by a Saudi student while he was going to college in the US and was thinking about doing the same thing. Her family, after reading this book went ballistic and she decied not to go.) While in Saudi Arabia I met several American women who had decided to marry and live in Saudi Arabia, most seemed satisfied, at least on the surface. In any event, back to her book. I recall her tale of her being introduced to his second wife and how embarrassed he was at the meeting. She spoke of her son who is a successful businessman and that he was well ajusted to that society etc.

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