

JUST ONE MORE TIME

Created and Written

by

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"What if actors were given one more chance at life
by Marlene Dietrich?"

- The Players -

Bag Lady/M. Dietrich
Stage Manager/Clarence
Homeless Guy/Male Dancer
Two Nazi Waffen-SS Soldiers
Male Actor
Female Actor

NEW ORLEANS MOVING PICTURES Co.

FIRST DRAFT
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JUST ONE MORE TIME

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY BUS STOP/CHRISTMAS/PRESENT DAY - DUSK

End of a cold, windy workday. Noisy city streets. We spy on a BAG LADY cloaked in shatters, slowly pushing - somewhere, anywhere - a tortured and bloated shopping cart, parting waves of PEDESTRIANS.

EXT. SANCTUARY THEATER/CHRISTMAS/PRESENT DAY - DUSK

Our Bag Lady parks her cart at the nostalgic, shuttered SANCTUARY THEATER of better years gone by. Coughing, wheezing, eerily humming a familiar tune we cannot recall, she opens a side door and shuffles inside.

INT. SANCTUARY THEATER/PRESENT DAY - DUSK

The door closes and silence echoes around the stage. She shuffles, wheezes, hums that tune, on her way to the stage proscenium. Her hunched-over posture refuses her to look to the lights above. A resident STAGE RAT crosses the stage.

INT. SANCTUARY THEATER/BACKSTAGE HALLWAY - DUSK

A light switch CLICKS. Half the lights scream. Half are dead. Half, flicker. Something is off. There is that familiar, vaguely familiar tune she hums. A door is reached. One of many which faithfully served actors of days gone by. She slides into the dressing room in front of the door closing.

MS: CAMERA PUSHES IN, DOWN AT BUSY SHADOWS ESCAPING UNDER THE DOOR

MS: TILTS UP TO SHINY BRASS-PLATED "M. DIETRICH" SIGN ON THE DOOR; THE 1940S POST-WAR ARE UPON US NOW

MS: HAND enters frame - KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK

Reveal our STAGE MANAGER, CLARENCE, baldheaded 40's, '40s in attire, smoking a CIGAR, holding a CLIPBOARD...

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE
Miss Dietrich? They're ready for
you now. Two minutes to curtain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY
(angelic, behind the door)
Thank you! Coming!

He turns, walks away, down the backstage hallway to DISSOLVE into old stage air. An apparition of players to come?

CU: CAMERA SEES TWO DISTINCT SHOES THROWING SHADOWS UNDER THE DRESSING ROOM DOOR

SFX: CLICK, CLICK GO THE HEELS

The door opens, pause - anticipation - a HIGH HEEL steps-out. Black. Shiny. Followed by the other, filled with a silk and sequin-draped body. She sashays with sex, confidence, down the hall, up to the stage, up to behind the curtain.

She looks down. PAUSE. Silence chokes the air still. Shhh.

WS: FRONT OF STAGE PROSCENIUM, ANTICIPATING THE CURTAIN RISE

LIGHTS FLASH! CURTAIN FLIES! The audience yells in applause! M. Dietrich glows and throws arms wide. She'll own the night.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)
(SINGS, slowly dances,
"Falling In Love Again")
*Falling in love again,
Never wanted to,
What am I to do?
I can't help it.
Love's always been my game,
Play it how I may,
I was made that way,
I can't help it.*

Our star dances over to our Stage Manager Clarence leaning on a broom. She caresses his face. He swoons.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)
*Men cluster to me,
Like moths around a flame,
And if their wings burn,
I know I'm not to blame.
Falling in love again,
Never wanted to,
What am I to do?
I can't help it.*

The apparitional Clarence fades away on stage. Ghosts?

She turns to the audience. Arms wide open. Smiling. Absorbing. Owning the night. The APPLAUSE is deafening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WS: FROM THE STAGE WE SEE... NO AUDIENCE, EMPTY SEATS, ALL

PAUSE. She turns, startled... A HOMELESS GUY, mid-30s ragged, is frozen on-stage, kneeling. Praying. Staring right at her.

HOMELESS GUY

(shivering)

Cold. I just want out of... I'm sorry.

M. Dietrich becomes our Bag Lady.

CU: HIS WORN FACE, HER CLAWED, DIRTY TOUCH

BAG LADY/M. DIETRICH

(hoarse)

It's okay, darlin'. Only lost souls come here now.

CU: M. DIETRICH LOVINGLY SMILES, CAMERA PULLS BACK

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

(angelic, softly)

Only souls looking for salvation.

Our Homeless Guy becomes our MALE DANCER in '40s ballroom black dance attire. Dressed to the nines. Magical.

CU: OUR MALE DANCER SMILES, CAMERA PULLS BACK

MALE DANCER/HOMELESS GUY

(bright, dances, rises up)

I used to dance... Dance all night on this very stage. I was...

(dark, pauses)

Before the war. I don't know where I went wrong.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

(consoling)

You did nothing wrong.

MALE DANCER/HOMELESS GUY

(resigned)

Dance and act in Hollywood. That's all I dreamed of...

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

Save for one thing.

MALE DANCER/HOMELESS GUY

What? What thing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

You broke Hollywood's Golden Rule,
darlin'.

MALE DANCER/HOMELESS GUY

Yes?

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

You gave up. You lost hope. Hope in
yourself. We all have demons to
fight. Just... You let your demons
win.

Dancing it is for these two hooper-souls.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)

(SINGS, slowly dances,
"I've Grown Accustomed To
His Face")

*But I'm so used to hear him say,
"Good morning" every day.*

*His joys, His woes,
His highs, His lows,
Are second nature to me now,
Like breathing out and breathing
in.*

*I'm very grateful he's a man,
And so easy to forget,
Rather like a habit,
One can always break,
And yet,
I've grown accustomed to the trace,
Of something in the air,
Accustomed to his face.*

She caresses his face. He smiles.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)

How can you expect others to
believe in you, if you don't
believe in yourself?

(pause, blesses)

Don't lose hope this time.

Our Male Dancer turns and walks off-stage. DISSOLVES into
thin stage air. A soul saved. Yet, another?

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)

(SINGS, sotto voce)

*Men cluster to me,
Like moths around a flame...*

(sighs, to the last soul)

Break a leg kid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SFX: STARTLING BOOTS STOMPING, STORM TROOPER BOOTS

Enter stage left TWO NAZI WAFFEN-SS SOLDIERS, early 30s, blonde, blue-eyed, fully uniformed in WWII hate.

CU: HER FACE GROWS FROM MELANCHOLY TO REVENGE, CAMERA PULLS BACK

We see M. Dietrich has changed for this Act into her classic black heels, tuxedo and top hat. It's her night to own.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)
 (sternly, in German "No!
 Never again.")
 Nein! Nie wieder.
 (SINGS, "Where Have All the
 Flowers Gone?")
*Where have all the soldiers gone,
 long time passing?
 Where have all the soldiers gone,
 long time ago?
 Where have all the soldiers gone?
 Gone to graveyards, everyone.*
 (boots one soldier off
 stage, then next one)
*Oh, when will they ever learn?
 Oh, when will they ever learn?*

WS: AGAIN FROM THE STAGE WE SEE... EMPTY SEATS, ALL

She stands in triumph. Again, the APPLAUSE is deafening--

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE
 (trying to bring her back)
 Miss Dietrich? Miss Dietrich?

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY
 (startled, staccato)
 Yes! Sorry.
 (sotto voce)
 Never, again.

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE
 It's time.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY
 But I have more work. I--

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE
 It's the Third Act, Miss Dietrich.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

I have more souls, Clarence. I have
to save--

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

(gesturing to "audience")

They love you.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

I know. Weren't they fabulous? But
I have more work.

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

(consoling)

You cannot save them all.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

(resigning, begging)

I... The show must... I have to.

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

There will be others, come right
behind you.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

I can't leave them.

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

The Sanctuary Theater holds many
souls. Many. Lost. Souls.

M. DIETRICH

Yes. Yes, you're right, Clarence.

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

Shall we bring the curtain down,
Miss Dietrich?

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

Yes. It's time. Thank you,
Clarence.

She turns to face the "audience" and takes a bow. Another. No
applause. Silence chokes the air. Still. The curtain comes
slowly down with the heavenly stage lights fading low. Behind
the curtain, Clarence escorts our star arm-in-arm backstage.

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

You were wonderful, Miss Dietrich.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

How long have you been here,
Clarence?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

I have always been here, Miss Dietrich. I'm the Stage Manager. I manage the Sanctuary.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

Will I see you again?

STAGE MANAGER/CLARENCE

You have saved all your burden, Miss Dietrich. It's time for your soul.

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY

Thank you, Clarence. I shall never forget you.

She walks back towards her dressing room to only DISSOLVE into the stage air. Clarence's apparition follows her.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANCTUARY THEATER/CHRISTMAS/PRESENT DAY - DUSK

Our Bag Lady once again is burdened with pushing her tortured and weathered shopping cart past, through Christmas pedestrians. She finds a safe haven to rest and parks.

As she sits down to rest next to the Sanctuary, TWO ACTORS, mid-20s, a man and a woman, are running lines with each other from scripts. He's animated. She's not.

MALE ACTOR

(reading lines, gesturing)
Don't worry Cricket, baby, we'll get out of here alive.

FEMALE ACTOR

(stops reading, frustrated)
Who wrote this crap? *Cricket, baby?*

MALE ACTOR

(quickly looks around)
No! Don't ever say that! They'll never cast you. Better hope no one heard you. Not even the Acting Gods.

Our Bag Lady looks up at them. She's "invisible."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FEMALE ACTOR

I don't care. It's like, this is my third audition today. Lost count of how many this month.

MALE ACTOR

You can't get cast if you don't audition. You know?

FEMALE ACTOR

(resigned)

Maybe I need to get out of town. I don't know. It's like...

(points to our Bag Lady)

She has a better chance at getting this part than me.

Her script flies out of her hand. She runs to grab the flying pages.

SFX: SCREECHING TIRES, THUD, SCREAMING, CAR HORNS, YELLING

BAG LADY/M. DIETRICH

(to camera as M. Dietrich)

Just one more time.

WS: PULLS BACK, SHE GOES TO WORK TO SAVE ANOTHER ACTING SOUL

FADE OUT.

THE END