

**JUST ONE MORE TIME**

Written

by

Stanley B. Gill

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

- The Players -

Uma Thurman as 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 - WHITE  
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**JUST ONE MORE TIME**

In a world...

**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 40s, '40s in attire, smoking a CIGAR, holding a CLIPBOARD...

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

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.

**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?

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.

(MORE)

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)

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.*

**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.")  
(MORE)

M. DIETRICH/BAG LADY (cont'd)

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.

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?

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."

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

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