

MY MARLENE,
I want you to keep your illusions

A one woman show based on a true story of Marlene Dietrich

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SETTING: We're in the barracks somewhere in France, on the front. Marlene is entertaining the troops. This interior of a barrack looks like an improvised stage. In the beginning, it looks pretty plain but slowly more magic starts creeping in and revealing more aesthetic, fantastic set and costume pieces.

TIME: around Christmas 1944

Soundscape: Bombs falling to emphasise the story

Costume suggestion: in the beginning some kind of military uniform, then layers peeling off revealing more Cabaret-ish costume, and later on full on costume changes

Sporadic projections: documentary footage, created videos and silent movies

INTRO

Lights up on Marlene.

MARLENE:

Hello boys. It's me Marlene. And yes, (*looks around*) hello ladies too, of course. And Sie sind herzlich willkommen here an diesem sehr schonen Abend, on such a lovely night.

Tonight you and I will have some fun. (with determination) We will talk a bit. (secretive smile) Because you are my fan, ja? Because you are interested in Marlene, ja? Jaa. Und du have some illusions... ja natuerlich, of course. Don't we all. I want you to keep them. Let's *all* keep our illusions and good manners. We need them if we want to stay alive! Everybody has ups and downs, I show only my ups. That's what I mean by good manners.

Do you know me from my movies? Ja? Gut!

You know me from stage? Ja das ist auch gut! If you know me from war, that is the best, because only in the extreme situations one truly shows her character. So you are in luck!

But if you know me from press, "on the rack" let me tell you that that is all made up Quatsch what they say about me. Good only for old junk. Throw it away! There's a basket at the door!

Living or dying with lies is the worst! We have to live everyday like it's the last day of our lives, which isn't that hard if you are here on the front: we have to come clean. Find the truth and tell the truth.

Tonight I will entrust you my personal recipe for a stew, iron your shirts,
and sing my songs. Some for boys and some girls. They are sentimental
because I am sentimental. That's my truth.

What is tragic is not death, but that we cannot love all the time. But I would
like to love all the time, not to lose a day. Not one day.

ACT 1

SCENE ONE

SPOTLIGHT on stage, Marlene Dietrich dressed as a Cabaret German star

I'M A VAMP

My bed belonged to Pompadour
Like Lulu I have bright red hair
I dance as well as Salome
And treat my Baptists just as fair
I wear Mata Hari's dress
The ring of Marie Antoinette
The fairest Helen wore this corset
To a gala Trojan fête
I am the poison of the Borgias
I'm a witch like Joan of Arc
I wear the stockings of Dubarry
Bathe in coffins for a lark

I am a vamp, I am a vamp
Half woman, half beast
I bite my men and suck them dry
And then I bake them in a pie
I am a vamp, I am a vamp
That's all I can do
I'm not mild-mannered like you
And oh no and oh no
My passion takes over and off I go
I should really be kept in a zoo...

Piano keeps playing, she is doing parlando with underscore.

Aparté. She confides.

Perhaps Joseph von Sternberg is in the audience tonight-I'm in a play! He has been looking all over Berlin for the *whore* in his film. I'm wearing *my best waterfront whore outfit!*

Lulu-LULU OR Lola-Lola or Hupsi-Poopsi, or whatever they say he is going to call her is a cheap tart! Margo told me she heard someone at UFA said I was right for the part because I have a "juicy" behind.

(Marlene looks the other way, cocks her head)

Do you think that's him? Short? Jewish? With a mustache? Stocky?

(In performance): Three, three and three. Three cheers for the gentleman who has drawn the first price! *(end of performance)*

At the party after the performance:

Oh, Joseph? (he kisses her hand) You want a screen test mit mir? Nah, I don't believe it. There's no small part in the movie.

I was right, there was no small part. I received the sheet music in the mail for the Blue Angel-the leading part.

In the studio.

Klapper: Screen Test for The Blue Angel: Marlene Dietrich for Lola, take 3. Action!

MARLENE:

Nooo, I don't know your songs, I forgot them at home.
What do I like? I like American songs. OKAY.

First leans onto the piano, then climbs on it.

Cream in my coffee

You're the cream in my coffee,
You're the salt in my stew;
You will always be my necessity--
I'd be lost without you.

You're the starch in my collar,
You're the lace in...

(To pianist) You know how to read music? Again...

You're the cream in my coffee,
You're the salt in my stew;

You will always be my necessity--
I'd be lost without you.

(To the pianist) What's wrong with you? Didn't you go to music school?
One more time!

(Gets on top of piano and sings)

You're the cream in my coffee,
You're the salt in my stew;
You will always be my necessity--
I'd be lost without you.

You're the starch in my collar,
You're the lace in...

To the pianist: I can't believe it, what a piano Klimperer! You are dumb as
a donkey!

MARLENE as JOSEPH:

Great, great, beautiful. Now Marlene, can you walk toward stage left, *(Gets off the piano starts pacing back and forth..)* there yeah there, great, now turn come back, all the way to the right again, excellent!

MARLENE:

WHY MUST I PARADE LIKE A HORSE? UP AND DOWN? IS THIS
ALL WHAT A HOLLYWOOD ACTRESS MUST KNOW?
Joseph I photograph terribly, my nose sticks up like a duck's behind and I
think you should not look at all the terrible films they made of me... I
forbid you! No... watch them... see right away what they do to me on film!
My hair always looks like it was just licked by a cat...

JOSEPH: Marlene, I think I can work with you.

MARLENE: Me?

JO: The Blue Angel.

MARLENE: I will do my best not to disappoint you.

JO: We'll do it in English and German!

M: Quatsch! *(gets "mad" at him)* This is madness!

Steps out of the scene.

Josef von Stenberg came over to dinner once before we started shooting. To my Berlin apartment, where I lived with...

I have not told you about my child yet! I got married when I was 21 to Rudolf Sieber, he was so beautiful, so blond, looking like an English lord! Papi! We were engaged for a year, never left alone, I don't know where he got this patience to wait for me, but he did and we had a small wedding and sentimental and sensitive I cried when this beautiful man took me for his wife. Our daughter was born on December 13th 1924, Maria Elizabeth. She changed my life.

Anyway, Joe at the dinner, while eating my schnitzel was so serious, so intense, so passionate about making the first feature-length German full-talkie. He said:

"I want immediate sound. Swamp the audience immediately. Envelop them with raw sound... early morning sounds...hard heels on cobblestone streets, rattle of thick breakfast dishes... SOUNDS... The German word for it is so much better KLANG! A KLANG FILM. You feel how it vibrates? That's what we must do!"

What a wonderful little man! He made a pure Berliner Hure out of me with a high nasal sound. "Marlene, Marlene, he kept tugging at me, tell me more about the "typical Berlin sense of humor"?" gallows humor.

(Grins) "The worst won't happen more than once." "May you get what you want." "A child of five could understand this. Fetch me a child of five." *(Smirks again)*

Jumps up to her feet. Turns to the side, to Papi (who is upstairs):

PAPIIIII, help me! Come down! Alles falsch! Everything is wrong! You can't imagine what they want me to wear!

PAPI: Is it vulgar?

M: Of course it's vulgar, it has to be! But it's *stupid!* The look is so stupid-boring, uninteresting, nothing to catch the eye.

She looks up as if PAPI just walked in:

Papi! Don't take your hat off! We have to go out right away, drive around the streets and look for whores. Remember that one who always wore a garter belt with a white satin top hat? We have to find him- I want his panties...

She rushes off stage.

MARLENE returns on stage dressed as Lola and does her LOLA NUMBER (from Blue Angel)

Falling in love again

I often stop and wonder why I appeal to men.
How many times I blunder in love and out again
They offer me devotion, I like it I confess
When I reflect emotion, there's no need to guess.

Falling in love again
Never wanted to
What am I to do?
Can't help it

Love's always been my game
Play it how I may
I was made that way
Can't help it

Männer umschwirr'n mich,
Wie Motten um das Licht.
Und wenn sie verbrennen,
Ja dafür kann ich nicht.

Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß
Auf Liebe eingestellt,
Ich kann halt lieben nur
Und sonst gar nichts.

Marlene joyfully laughs.

Pianist throws an airplane note at her; she reads it out loud

MARLENE:
Oh! A telegram für mich?

(reads the telegram)

HAVE PLEASURE TO INVITE YOU TO JOIN BRILLIANT ROSTER
OF PLAYERS AT PARAMOUNT PUBLIX STOP OFFER YOU SEVEN
YEAR CONTRACT BEGINNING AT FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS PER
WEEK ESCALATING TO THREE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED IN
SEVENTH YEAR. CONGRATULATIONS. PLEASE CONFIRM BY
CABLE. BERLIN OFFICER WILL ARRANGE FIRST CLASS TRAVEL.
BP SCHULBERG
VICE PRESIDENT
PARAMOUNT PUBLIX CORPORATION

What vain people. They just assume I couldn't possibly say no. They
congratulate me even! Nebbish!

She angrily walks it off, looks at her audience of soldiers, chooses one.

Look at you! Look at your uniform. Don't you have a wife or mother? *SHE WALKS
UP TO A MAN SITTING IN THE AUDIENCE*
Oh, I'll show you a woman's touch... Take off your jacket. *Starts ironing his
shirt/jacket if he lets her.*

Before I went to Hollywood my child said: "Mutti, if you go away in America like
Papi says, may I have a dog then, please?"

"Mutti, will you get scalped by the Indians in America?"

"Mutti, will you have a house slave in America?"

MARLENE:

Nein, nein, nein! I will not go to America! What about Maria? Schlep the child across
the ocean? It can't be good for her, she is Deutch!

*Flips the jacket over her shoulders like a cape and walks back to the audience
member.*

Jo said: As for the child nothing but sunshine all day and her own swimming pool-
what's bad about that? *Delivers the jacket.*

-Nein, I'm not going!

-Aber Marlene, Papi said, das ist a great opportunity, you can't say no, go make one
movie, see if you like it and then you can decide.

Hmm, Papi is always right!

For the gala opening of Der Blaue Engel at Gloriapalast Theatre, where the whole cast had to take a bow with the *star* of the film Emil Jannings, my child was sick...*(in the moment)* The moment I can I will telephone to see how the child is, in two hours take her temperature again and tell me, I can sneak out during the film. If the boat to America wasn't sailing tonight after the premiere I wouldn't go to the damned thing at all!

To The audience:

We will see three telegrams. You read the first one, you the second one and you will read the one from Jo. I have to change!

Staging/light design that shows we are on the boat

PROJECTION: A film showing some old footage of a voyage on the sea, perhaps Manhattan skyline from a boat's perspective.

Marlene sending cables.

MARLENE:

APRIL 1ST 1930

PAPILEIN, MISS YOU LONELY REGRET THE TRIP ALREADY STOP
TELL MY ANGEL THAT I NEVER SAW THE FILM THAT I WAS
ONLY THINKING OF HER ADORABLE SELF STOP

RUDI:

April 5th 1930

MUTTI, CRITICS AT YOUR FEET STOP. JANNINGS GETS GOOD
MENTIONS BUT IT IS NOT AN EMIL JANNINGS FILM ANYMORE
STOP MARLENE DIETRICH RUNS AWAY WITH IT.
REICHSFILMBLATT QUOTE IS: ONE IS ALMOST STUNNED BY
MISS DIETRICH'S PERFORMANCE STOP HER ABILITY TO TAKE
OVER SCENES EFFORTLESSLY BUT WITH SIMPLE AND TOTAL
COMMAND IS SOMETHING WE HAVE UNTIL NOW NEVER
EXPERIENCED!

MARLENE:

From Hollywood I was able to put my voice on a gramophone tape!

SWEETHEART ARE YOU LISTENING?... MY ANGEL... DO YOU
KNOW WHAT I HAVE IN MY MOUTH? YOUR TOOTH, THE ONE
YOU LOST THAT PAPI SENT ME... THAT'S HOW I KEEP YOU
CLOSE, INSIDE OF ME. A PART OF YOU. SWEETHEART... I WALK

AROUND THIS BEAUTIFUL HOUSE AND YOU ARE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND. ARE YOU ALRIGHT? ARE YOU EATING? I CRY BECAUSE I CAN'T COOK FOR YOU, AND SMELL YOUR WONDERFUL SMELL AND BRUSH YOUR HAIR AND SEE YOUR SLEEPING FACE. I MISS YOU... I MISS YOU...MISS YOU. MY LIFE IS EMPTY WITHOUT YOU. I WILL COME BACK TO YOU... SOON MY LOVE...

The end of projection.

Piano plays beginning of falling in love again

Telegram from Joseph:

MANY THANKS FOR YOUR EFFUSIVE CABLE EXPRESSING YOUR PROFOUND GRATITUDE TO ME FOR LIFTING YOU INTO THE STRATOSPHERE DESPITE YOUR TEDIOUS RESISTANCE STOP DO NOT KISS MY HAND MADAME STOP YOU HAVE PERMITTED MY CAMERA TO WORSHIP YOU AND IN RETURN YOU HAVE WORSHIPED YOURSELF.

MARLENE:

JO, YOU KNOW I ADORE YOU. I WOULD DO EVERYTHING FOR YOU. You are my Master and The Lord of Light!

The first movie JO and I filmed in Hollywood was called Marokko. The best part of Marokko is when I am in my own tails. The audience is of course expecting the legs- but you see her in trousers first! Good idea? Jo's, of course. You know for some reason Garbo looks terrible in men's clothes-which is strange because everyone says she is one of the girls.

JOSEPH STERNBERG DIRECTING Marlene

Marlene behind the Spanish wall obeys his orders, says the lines with him

JOSEPH:

MISS DIETRICH, DO EXACTLY AS I SAY: LOOK AT HIM, COUNT ONE-TWO, SAY: "YOU BETTER GO NOW..." MOVE TO THE DOOR, COUNT ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR, SLOWLY! TURN, DON'T LOOK AT HIM, SAY: I'm...stop... COUNT ONE-TWO-THREE-FOUR. KEEP YOUR EYES ON HIS FACE. DON'T BLINK. THEN SAY-SLOWLY-"BEGINNING TO LIKE YOU"

MARLENE comes from behind the Spanish wall onto the stage dressed as Amy Jolly

Jo is more capable of bringing out of me the emotion I feel inside than I am. He tells me what to do and how to do it. I am his soldier, he is my leader, and he carries me over each inch of film. I am his product, all of his making.

PRACTICING DIFFERENT ENGLISH WORDS FROM MAROKKO

“Victor says Warsaw is very wet in the winter” (on repeat)
The country was crumbling around him.
A gust of summer wind reached the street.”

But the beginning was hard... my English was disaster. I was an immigrant. I shattered every illusion of the beautiful visual poetry Jo was making when I opened my mouth. They wanted to disguise all my German sounds with a foghorn, horses’ hooves, pistol shot, traffic noises... but von Sternberg knew that I had to reinvent myself and seduce the world with my voice and my eyes.

Marlene is giving out apples to the audience...

What am I bid for my apple

What am I bid for my apple?
The fruit that made Adam so wise.
On the historic night when he took a bite
They discovered a new paradise.
An apple a day
Keeps a doctor away.
While his pretty young wife
Has the time of her life
With the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker
What am I bid for my apple.

At the end stopping at a beautiful woman:

You know what I do in the tails? I go over to a pretty woman (GOES TO A RANDOM AUDIENCE MEMBER AND KISSES HER)... then I take the gardenia she is wearing (INHALES IT) Mmmm. Well you know what that means, ja? Then I flick the flower to Cooper who sticks it behind his ear like my girlfriend. The audience goes wild. Can you imagine what happened once the film opened in Europe if even Americans got that scene?

MARLENE:

After Morocco was shot and released I went to Berlin, Germany, Europe to pick up my child and bring her to America, the land of sun, oranges and swimming pools. I left my husband at home with his girlfriend Tamara. (wink) When we got off the transatlantic boat Bremen Von Sternberg's wife was waiting for me on the gangplank shouting.

VOICE OF MS. VON STERNBERG:

Homewrecker! Homewrecker look me in the eye if you dare!! She stole my husband! My husband! Look at her everybody, for European tarts like this American family values are going down! I'm suing! I'm suing! Wait till you hear from my lawyers!

MARLENE: (to daughter)

Cover your ears sweetheart. (to wife) QUATSCH! You never had him in the first place!!!

With one fell swoop of a Paramount's magic wand she and her suit were removed! (*giggles*)

Shanghai Express was our next stop! A spy love tale.

Looks at herself:

I'm fat! I DON'T BELIEVE IN DIETING, I stop eating! Who wants chocolates, truffles, pumpernickel, liverwurst, Genovese salami, Camembert?! (*Joyfully shouting the items and throwing them into the audience*)

All I need is COFFEE, TEA, EPSOM SALT melt in HOT WATER (*she pours some hot water from a teapot, puts in a spoonful of Epsom salt, stirs it and chugs it down*) and my finger foods! Dill pickles, raw sauerkraut, pickled herring, uncooked frankfurters and salami.

(looks around) AND BOAS! These Americans are crazy about my legs. They insured them for 1 million dollars, but I'm so fat! BOAS, BOAS to cover them AT ONCE! But Jo is smart, he knows how to tempt his audience, in this film Shanghai Lily never shows her legs, just arms and hands!

See, me and my Jo like to challenge each other, he wants me to act impossible things and I put black auf black and tell him now shoot it! (*smiles*) For Shanghai Express I put on black dress, black cock feather coat, black crystal beads, a boa and a black veil!... he said: "If you believe I'm skilled enough to photograph this, then all I can offer you is to do the impossible!" Faith can move mountains. This was our biggest box office success.

A sound of a bomb falling near. She receives a letter from kidnappers. THE LETTER IS PROJECTED ON THE WALL, A ROBOTIC VOICE READING THE THREAT. VERY MATRIX LOOKING THING.

Miss Dietrich, listen carefully. We are going to kidnap your daughter Maria. If you want to see her alive and untouched, then you must not call security, police or anyone else and cooperate with us. We will be in touch with further demands.

MARLENE:

My child! Maria! My child is in danger! All my lovers unite! Papi, Jo, Maurice-my new lover, arm up! "Child listen to me, as long as you're with your mother you are safe!" I have to call up my men, police, FBI, Paramount Pictures publicity, security guards, secretaries, parrot and a dog-a German Shepherd! Bring me a zoo! We have to build in grids and become a fortress!

Soldiers prepare. Soldier salute! Get up for god's sake, it's my daughter! March, march, march. *(she is doing a military routine, maybe the audience joins her. Keeps marching till the song)*

Jo said he had enough of me, but I threatened to leave back to Germany if he doesn't come back and work with me! So he did... Hollywood had a hard time accepting the idea that a movie star has a child but soon they "embraced it" and used it as the idea of Madonna with a child because it brought viewers even from the Bible belt! What a country! I was just shooting BLONDE VENUS when this was happening... Shooting was great, there was a small child Dicky Moore on the set who played my son-when I bathed him I started to cry because I remembered that my child wasn't there with me but in a prison guarded by guards because of the kidnapers! My husband was played by a man with a wooden leg, sweet charming Cary Grant was selling shirts on the set to make more money, and May West often visited me and on one occasion she lifted her breast out of the corset and shook it like punctuating with a finger!

(Stops marching)

There was no other letter! Not today, not tomorrow, not the day after! It was a prank. Soldiers at ease. You may sit down. *(they sit down)*
(beat) We defeated them, but I know that dogs never sleep, so we should remain alert!

Pours herself a drink

Mrs. Gladys-Marie delivered some gin and whiskey in her baby carriage every Sunday as the world out there was starting to go crazy; gangsters and prohibition in America und Nazis in Germany. Terrible! No safe place to go! Can you feel it?

LOVERS! I don't like to talk about lovers, you know... But I will tell *you* because I like you. You know, I'm always in love, or out of love or in the process of falling in love...

I come from a good German home, I'm a daughter of an officer and my mother was jet set! I have my manners you know... and I grew up surrounded by love throughout my childhood...

So when I fall in love I know how to take care of you, how to please you. I cook, clean, buy you presents and I do what you tell me! No task is too small for me!

Intercourse? Hmmm, I don't like it! It's not comfortable! But I do it, because if I don't they would all go somewhere else! I never do it naked, I do it in nice brassiere, in the dark at night, not just like Americans all the time and during the day! Terrible! Like dogs!

Protection? (*in whisper*) Heinz vinegar and ice water! In a pink douchebag! This one is the best! I take it with me everywhere!

You know... I wanted to be born as a man. I can't think of one advantage of a woman that would counterpart man's superiority. At the best of times gender is difficult to determine.

Jo thought that a woman is no different than a man apart from the fact that she can conceive. He said that all his female characters were modeled on him and that he would react exactly the same under the same circumstances... Amy Jolly from Morocco was the first example on screen of this "gender-bending"... and as in professional life also in private I never wanted to limit myself... The market was wide open... It is easier for the unattractive girl to live a life of modesty...

THREE SWEETHEARTS HAVE I
From the film "The Devil Is A Woman" (1935)
(Ralph Rainger / Leo Robin)

I'm romantic, so romantic
That I often wish I had a more discreet heart
But believe me, please believe me
When I tell you that I haven't got a sweetheart
(Do you mean to say that you have none?)
Did you hear me say that I had none?
No, I only said I haven't one

Three sweethearts have I

Three handsome sweethearts
 And one is a son of a...
 (One is a son of a...)
 One is a son of a...
 (One is a son of...Ooooooh!)
 A gardener
 (A gardener? A gardener)

He gives me daisies and roses
 And orchids regardless of the price
 And other things that are so nice

Three handsome sweethearts
 And one is the son of a...
 (One is a son of a...)
 One is a son of a...
 (One is a son of ...Ooooooh!)
 A farmer
 (A farmer? A farmer)

He gives me butter and carrots
 And onions no other farmer would
 And other things that are so good

Three handsome sweethearts
 And one is a son of a...
 (One is a son of a...)
 One is a son of a...
 (One is son of a.....Ooooooh!)
 A baker
 (A baker? A baker)

He gives me biscuits and cookies
 And pastries a queen could even eat
 And other things that are so sweet

(Sweethearts, all three)
 To all three I'm true
 (Sweethearts, all three)
 And I could be as true to you

Ja, ja I loved JO! He had a self imposed mission to photograph me, make me laugh, dress me up, comfort me, advise me, guide me, cuddle me, explain things to me! But he wanted to do it all the time. I respected him, I adored him but he couldn't be the only one.... One is never enough. Papi

and I knew that well, he lives happily in Paris with his girlfriend Tami. He works as an assistant director at Paramount Pictures in France, sometimes visits me in Hollywood and we spend summers all together in Paris or French Riviera, husbands, wives, lovers and Maria. I like to tell him all about it... he is my greatest confidant in matters of the heart...

My first lover in Hollywood (after Jo) was Maurice Chavalier- great European charm...A French man! And he was impotent!

Gary Cooper- gorgeous but not a good actor and they both (knocks on her head) had a peanut instead of brains compared to JO.

Mercedes De Acosta-now SHE was a screenwriter, poet and a feminist! A story about her is interesting because she was GARBO's-my rival, her lover and when Garbo went on a holiday to Europe I thought maybe I... I sent her a note: "You are the first person here to whom I felt drawn. I want to ask you if you will let me cook for you". (smile) We went swimming the next evening and after that the poor smitten lover sent me sometimes five love letters a day!

Papi, Papi! Listen, this just got in:

For Marlene, Your face is lit by moonlight breaking through your skin soft, pale, radiant. No suntan for your glow. For you are the essence of the stars and the moon and the mystery of the night.

AH-then tennis got very popular. I often dined with FRED PERRY- a tennis champion. He taught me how to play... you know with racquet and balls... tennis balls (*naughty*)

Brian Aherne-we met on Songs of Songs- my first Hollywood film without Jo! It was a terrible experience, remind me to tell you more about it later! But *Brian* was a perfect aristocrat, British and a great actor, also in theatres! He was a noble knight, so romantic... for the last scene of the film we had to run up the hill in a mossy, wet grass that made us totally dirty between each take, until in one take Brian saw a SNAKE! He started sprinting and pulling me behind him so strongly that I lost my shoe... and of course that was the take that went into print! Mamulian-the director- was in tears of happiness that we finally got it right!

Listen to me; always refuse anything second rate. It's better to be alone than in bad company. One must make the choice. But I was lucky. I met so many brilliant people. Absolutely brilliant, who let me adore them. A day

without love is a lost day. But here lies the human tragedy, it's impossible to love all the time.

Costume change suggestion: don an apron.

Orders at the bar.

Two hamburgers please. Medium rare, please. (*turns to us*)

When my child and I first came to Hollywood we ate at pharmacies, because I was new and didn't yet know where to buy certain foods. I always order hamburgers since you don't have to wait too long for them but God how bad and tasteless they are! (*she shoots a look at the bar maid*) (*Moves away*) So I ordered an Austrian cuisine cookbook from my mother in law and learned how to cook! I discovered that this is my talent, much more than acting- that is just fulfilling my duties and following directors- so I spend most of my idle days in Hollywood bent over a kitchen stove! Cooking demands a feeling, an eye for it! You must forget how many spoons of this or how many cups of that, it's a talent.

Nurses perk up your ears. I'll entrust you a recipe on how to keep a man happy... Cook him a beef tea!

(Physical action)

Cut beef into small pieces. Put into fruit jar; add cold water and allow to stand for 15 to 20 minutes to draw out juice. Put in a pan of cold water and heat very slowly for about 2 hours. The water must not boil. Season, strain, cool and remove fat. You'll be left with beef tea. Serve hot.

I have a special fondness for stews- they are my specialty. Von Sternberg adored my BEEF TEA, beef stroganoff, and Hungarian goulash-beef too and my Rudi loved my borscht!

Jo abandoned me. He went to New York and I had to give in to shoot a movie with another director! A Viking movie that is. And I play a homewrecker! WONDERFUL! My first movie with another director since I came to Hollywood.

Mamulian, a perfectly *nice man*... I got a script, memorized lines like *every other actor* and he wouldn't say a damned thing about how to act! For the first time in Hollywood I got a script! Until now, Joe always dictated my lines and I repeated them.

The first day I came on the set and my Spiegel, mirror wasn't there! A full length mirror on wheels to fully view myself. That was always there on all my film sets. Mamulian apparently wanted to instill his sense of order but I demanded my spiegel or I wouldn't work! Finally they *found* it and pulled it out of the dark. And then I saw it. The lights were shit!

I locked myself up in the other studio and watched Morocco twice and Shanghai Lily for the rest of the day. I didn't take any notes! Only fools need notes to remember!

The next morning I was ready. On the set before eight, with perfect makeup and hair, I grabbed the lighting designer and told him what to move and how. I set up the lights exactly as Jo would have, a key light eight feet above me and little to the right. To create butterfly shadows under my nose and *this is how* I became my own star. I was finally on my own.

But shooting was painful so I jumped off the horse during a horseback ride and wept. And the big director came back to town!

JOHNNY SONG

Johnny, when will your birthday be?
 reserve that night for me, just me and you
 Johnny, we'll disconnect the phone
 And when we're all alone,
 we'll have a lot to do.

Johnny, We've got to celebrate
 And I can hardly wait
 Until we do.

Johnny, I hope you realize
 That there's a big surprise in store for you.

Johnny, I need your sympathy,
 There something wrong with me,
 I can't say no.

Johnny, all night I long for you
 I'm so strong for you
 You make me feel so weak.

Johnny, you know I can't refuse what have I got to lose
 Come on let's go.

Johnny what are you waiting for,
 I need a kiss or two or maybe more...

In the summer 1933 I went to France, pompously, gloriously and banned from public showing of my manly attire. One Paris magistrate suggested I would be arrested for impersonating a man!
Hahaha

Papi settled us in a French *chateae* *The Trianon Palace Hotel*, a little bit outside of Paris, where we composed my next record in German and French. Those Nazis's were atrocious and Jews were flying from Germany like rats abandoning a sinking ship! My Jewish friends ran exactly into my nurturing hands and while my French chef tore his hair I cooked the best Jewish food in France. Our suite became little Berlin where my friends were fed with bagels, chicken liver, smoked white fish, and given emotional sanctuary. I was die Hausfrau and everybody that fled Germany and meant something came to visit *me!* We were eating, loving and making music twenty-four hours a day!

One time we went to a Russian dinner, vodka and caviar... My child saw us slung vodka, poured herself some water in a shot glass and perfectly did it herself. *She does it.* Bravo Maria! *Wunderbar! Einmal bitte, fur deine Mutti!* She heard my plea and did it again. (*she takes the shot*) *Sehr gut meine Kleine!* and we got an audience. People thought I really let my eight year old child drink real vodka. This time we did it together for the headlines in newspapers. "Movie star and her child take vodka shots in synch" HAHA!

Do you know this story?

Once upon a time there was a poor fool who loved a young girl. But she pushed him away and said to him "bring me I tell you, your mother's heart and give it to my dog." He went and slew his mother. He took the heart, it was burning red, he carried it, but he stumbled and fell, the heart rolled away and let out a cry "Did you hurt yourself, my son?"

I always thought that being a mother was the most important part of me. Nothing was ever more important to me than the wellbeing of my child. If she ever felt uncomfortable in America, I would immediately pack up my suitcase and leave. But she loved America, Americans and hamburgers and everything that came with it.

That summer in Paris I found out I had to renew my German passport if I wanted to apply for American citizenship. By that time I had already gotten some offers from Hitler that if only I return to Germany, my fatherland, I

can become the queen of the German movie- so I knew it was a trial before me!

I gingerly ventured into a lion's den, German Embassy in Paris. Count Welzeck welcomed me in, surrounded by four tall gentlemen introduced as Princes Reuss. A lineage of German nobility that named all of their male borns Heinrich. Creepy. They told me I'll be immediately granted my passport and that they have a message for me.

VOICE OF HITLER: "If Miss Dietrich comes back to Germany she will have a triumphal entry into Berlin through Brandenburg Gate, Miss Dietrich shall be able to work on any film with any director she wants!"

Marlene:

"Jaaa, aber ich habe ein contract that binds me to Mr. Von Sternberg but if you like I'd be more than willing to shoot a film with him in Germany!"

An icy silence fell on us.

"Do I rightly understand that you refuse to have Mr. Von Sternberg make a film in *-your country-* because he's Jewish?"

Then they all started mumbling at the same time: "Ah no, this is just American propaganda, you were naïve enough to believe Miss Dietrich, there is no such thing as Anti-Semitism in Germany...."

"Well then we're all agreed (I said, rising up). I'll wait for the result of your negotiations with my director and I hope that German press will change its tone towards Mr. Von Sternberg and me."

And I walked out, a little amused by the game. The next day I got my passport in the mail and a note that I pleased Adolf with my answer. That evil clown, a dud in the sack!

Meanwhile, jealous of Paris, Vienna and Salzburg Von Sternberg demanded me to immediately return to Hollywood to work on the next film Catherine the Great! But when I got there nothing was ready! He was still hammering out the damn script!

Although I had to do all the work by myself, this was his greatest movie, you should just hear the sounds of hooves by hundreds of horses mounting that stairwell as Catherine the Great, that is me, seizes the throne of Russia!

Jo was very difficult in this film, he was screaming, dictating and insulting everyone left and right, but geniuses must do what they must do to be

great! We took fifty takes of ringing the cathedral bell. Twenty pounds of dead weight, the end of rope in a shape of crucifix slamming against my legs till I started bleeding- in a white suit- and still when I saw the rough cut I thought he should have made me do it another fifty times to really get it!

“Miss Dietrich, what do you think you’re doing? Ringing for the butler at an elegant dinner party in Vienna? Miss Dietrich could you manage some expression of exaltation on that pretty face of yours? You are not an Austrian milkmaid calling in her cows, you are seizing a throne!”

It was our best movie! At the wrap party I showed my thanks to everyone by bringing presents and for Jo, I made a special announcement: “For my master! The only man who knows how to make me beautiful, how to light me, the genius that guides me, and makes me do what he wants, because he alone knows what is right. I SALUTE YOU!”

It was our best movie! After this we only made *The Devil is a Woman* a year after, now eight years ago and that was it! Jo and I were finished! He had to move on! Move on, he is like a fish out of water, he completely stopped working!

A copy of a German article is projected on the wall

MARLENE:

Goebbels gave a statement for the media?!! (*Reads*)

Applause for Marlene Dietrich who has finally dismissed the Jewish director Von Sternberg who has always cast her as a prostitute or a fallen woman but never in a role which would bring dignity to the great citizens of the Third Reich.

Now Marlene should come home to the Fatherland, assume her historical role as a leader of the German film industry and end allowing herself to be the tool of Hollywood Jews.

Marlene is in a state of shock.

If that’s how Germany was feeling about Jews, then I don’t want to have anything to do with it! The films that Von Sternberg made with me speak for themselves. There is nothing, and there will be nothing in the future that could surpass them. Filmmakers are forever condemned to imitate them. There’s plenty a well cooked crispy schnitzel can make up for but not this time... Johnny decided...to separate from me... And I decided to separate from Germany.

Lone piano chords of the song “Johnny”

When USA entered the war, two years ago, I started entertaining the army training camps. I wanted to help! I want to help, that's why I'm here! Second World War is against everything I have ever believed in. Started by that toy dictator misleading poor Germans to believing they are the superior race! Bah! I am against!

Orson Welles bought a Hollywood lot, erected a tent and started with daily shows of his magic tricks. He needed a magician's assistant and because Rita Hayworth was busy I quickly jumped in to substitute. I sat there *every night* watching his entire arsenal of tricks and absorbed as much as I could. I was the girl that climbs into a box and he saws me apart. That's what I did for Orson at that time and every time I say his name you should cross! Cross yourself please!

I started a fund with Billy Wilder to help Jews and dissidents escape from Germany. I put the entire salary from *Knight Without Armor*, every penny of \$450,000 into an escrow for refugees. Nazi Germany got themselves an enemy. I'm not going to let them get away with it.

I wanted to get more involved. We started selling "bonds", a kind of loan for government to finance the war. With the zeal of a super-salesman I raised a million dollars just by myself!- thinking that it will help end the war sooner. After 8 hours of performing at camps during the day I would perform at nightclubs in the evenings. After the performance I would sit in the donor's lap until one of the boys from the Treasury Department gave me a nod that the donor's check was covered. "Your country thanks you, sweetheart." I was so good at selling bonds that I was summoned to the White House!

(Gets on her knees at some point during this speech)

I arrived at two in the morning. Roosevelt stood up as I bowed down to this man! He said: "I've heard all about what you're doing to sell bonds. We are very grateful to you for this. But I expressly forbid you to confuse acquisition with prostitution. From now on you will no longer give any performances in these night spots. That's an order."

Copy, general! I was so honored that I was willing to spend the night on the cots spread on the floor just to be near him... but I was sent home.

(Party mode! Marlene goes around the audience and tries to cheers them up and make them sing with her)

Everybody I cared about was drafted to Europe. I wanted to go too! I was waiting for my clearance from FBI as a loyal American and to finish a

picture at Garbo's studio MGM. The picture I'd rather not talk about. Something came in the mail today:

Order accepted! Copy! I'm heading to Europe. To my soldier's loving arms! Even though it wasn't an easy choice. Fighting against my own people, fighting against the country where I grew up. Whatever happened to my sister?!

I was put in the entertainment troop, (*points backstage, like all the other performers are hiding somewhere in the back ready to perform*) with Danny Thomas and our Texan Lyn. We perform on trucks, tanks, four to five times a day!

Do you know how I got here today? The general commanded us: "When you come to the other side of the hill, you'll be safe. One of our boys should be there, near a shed I think. But be careful, everything is camouflaged. If you go too far, you'll run into the Germans. Get going now, lower your heads"

We paced down the hill at a neck-breaking speed, then the breaks screeched and someone commanded: "Crawl out! Open your eyes dammit! Crawl out, get going, head for the shed!" on all fours through the mud I crawled into the shed.

"Are you alright? Ten minutes of distraction, that's all girlie, they want from you... Do you think you can do it?"

I was never more sure of what I'm doing. I'm a general's daughter! Blood is not water.

Lights start dimming through the song

No love, no nothin'
 Until my baby comes home.
The earth quakes, a thunder claps
 No sir, no nothin'
 As long as baby must roam...
next time will be a direct hit

I promised him I'd wait for him
 Till even Hades froze.
What now? Follow orders?
 I'm lonesome, heaven knows,
 But what I said still goes.

I'm a silly little girl, they were right

No love, no nothin'
 And that's a promise I'll keep.
More thunderclaps
 No fun with no one,
 I'm getting plenty of sleep
Hiding here and singing stupid songs

My heart's on strike,
 And tho' it's like
 An empty honeycomb,
Stupid little girl
 No love, no sir, no nothin'
 Till my baby comes home.
What was I thinking? To save the world with singing

No love, no sir, no nothin'
 Till my baby comes home.

It's all about eating, sleeping and taking cover, isn't it? Do you think I'm not afraid? I'm afraid. Period. Afraid to be here and afraid to leave. I don't want to hear any: "Yeah, yeah we told you so. We knew you wouldn't last." I want the war to be over soon, but I know I will stay to the end. On one end war brings out all the worst in people but on the other also all the best. You can know true friendship, loyalty, altruism and comradeship in war. War is also the best lie detector, when bombs start dropping you'll know who is truly brave and who a coward. *(she laughs)*

How many of you here are from Texas? *(looks around)* Your pants fit you well! *(smile)* Texans are awe inspiring as GI-s. You are fearless, loud and charming and you teach European children that the USA is a part of Texas.

The only thing that keeps us going is optimism, the hope that the war will be over once and that things will go back to normal. That's an illusion right there.

Let me let you in on a little secret, all who keep themselves safe in the US are blindfolded about what is happening, they don't understand. They won't understand! War is loss, loss of lives, loss of hope, loss of innocence. Nobody will come innocent out of this war! But we must keep going... until the end.

There is only one faint lamp on, hanging directly over Marlene.

I told you to keep your illusions. Illusions are like tools, you use one when you need it and when you're done you put it back in the toolbox. Now it's time, pull them back out, take them from your empty pockets onto your palms and look at them. They will keep you alive and warm. They might look like disappearing sand castles carried away by the ocean, but sometimes that's more than enough.

A soft white angelic light comes on

ILLUSIONS

Want to buy some illusions,
Slightly used, second hand?
They were lovely illusions,
Reaching high, built on sand.
They had a touch of paradise,
A spell you can't explain:
For in this crazy paradise,
You are in love with pain.

Want to buy some illusions,
Slightly used, almost new?
Such romantic illusions -
And they're all for you.
I sell them all for a penny,
They'll make pretty souvenirs.
Take my lovely illusions -
Some for laughs, some for tears

Ready? Put on your coats and helmets. The time is up. They are waiting for us. (*bomb explodes near*) (*she buckles up*)

Lights out.

THE END