

Chapter 1

The Launch

“Crap! Crap! Crap! Same shit, different town,” muttered Pat Dorsey, observing a lengthy snake of competitors ahead of him. Having just arrived from Los Angeles, the California native hoped to land a dance job on the Great White Way. Shifting foot to foot, chilled to the bone, he was new to February in New York City. Was it the weather, nerves or both? Regardless, he was there and had to tough it out. Around him, a cacophony of New York sounds distracted and pressed against his senses, reminding him he was far from home. Pedestrians hurrying by, morning traffic backed up 45th Street, the rhythm of Manhattan closed in around him. Male dancers of every description arrived repeatedly, joining the line as it lengthened down the block. “Can you believe this shit?” Pat turned to see an attractive young man, eying him. “There are a lot of guys here,” observed Pat. “You know these open calls are murder. The chance of getting hired is next to nil. Hi, I’m Hank.” “Pat.” “Good

to meet you. You're not from here, are you?" "Afraid not, California." "Jeez, is there work out there?" "Actually, I just came off a film that wrapped in December." "Impressive." "Yeah, it worked out well." "What film?" "Bravo Business!" "Wow! No kidding, it's a fabulous film!" Pat started to relax. "Yes, we were all pleased with it." "Isn't it based on the original Broadway show, by Owen Matthews?" "Yes, Owen also directed the film." "Jeez, that had to be incredible. Owen Matthews! I tried out for him a couple of times, but no dice!" "Owen's demanding and tough. He can crush you with a look, but if you work hard, he appreciates effort." "I heard he was offered this one, but he passed on it." "Who's the director-choreographer?" "Martin, Jonas Martin." "You're shitting me, Jonas assisted Owen on the picture." "Then he knows you. That ups your chances!" "Hard to say, I hear New York dancers are tops." "You're not Equity?" "Nope, SAG-AFTRA. Remember I'm from filmland." "I have yet to join the union. It's a dichotomy. You can't work without the card, but you can't join unless you're hired," said Hank. "I see what you mean." The line began to move forward. "Well, Pat break a leg. I don't usually chat with competitors, but I like you." "Thanks!"

Finally, 45-minutes later, they reached the stage door entry. A uniformed attendant took names and gave instructions, as each dancer passed. "Take a left inside and go to the back wall. Follow the arrows to the staircase and go down one flight. The change area is in the basement." Pat, first in line, was given a card to fill out and told to keep moving. Hank joined him. "It feels better in here; I was freezing my ass off!" "California wimp," said Hank, with a giggle. 'Something special about this guy,' thought Pat, as they descended the stairs. Entering a large room with lockers on one side and showers on the other, there were several dancers in various stages of undress. "Nice view," said Pat. Hank caught on. "You'll see them all, kind of a smorgasbord," he murmured. Pat found a place to set his dance bag. The two removed their street clothes. Pat was still sporting a suntan, his short cropped hair tinged with highlights of sun. Hank was Mediterranean dark, thick black curls and obvious sensuality. 'I better keep my mind on the chore ahead,' he thought. The feelings were mutual. Hank was instantly attracted to this golden boy from the west. Changing into dance pants, tee-shirts and jazz shoes, they stuffed outerwear in their bags and filled the audition cards. "What number are you, Pat? "I'm 52, so you must

be 53!” “That means we’ll be in the same group,” said Hank, relieved to be working with someone friendly.

Dressed to dance, they ascended the stairs and found a large crowd lined up, waiting to dance. Moving forward for a glimpse, Hank felt a nudge. “See that dark-haired wonder?” “Who could miss him, he’s stunning!” “That’s Jonas Martin’s assistant and domestic partner, Phillipe.” “Some guys have it all,” whispered Hank, leaning in for a closer look. Pat caught a whiff of exotic scent on Hank. Setting down bags, they huddled with the rest, waiting for action.

“Gentlemen, welcome,” came the voice from the stage. “That’s Jonas there,” whispered Pat, gesturing. “God, he’s cute,” said Hank, straining to hear. “We’ll be teaching you the combination in groups of ten. This is Phillipe. He’ll be demonstrating what I want. Please pay close attention, we have many to see today!” Phillipe began teaching eight sections of eight counts each. The combination was smooth, jazzy, very controlled. The first ten followed, then were asked to repeat on their own. The second ten stepped up, learning the same choreography. Pat’s group was third, including Hank, who followed closely. “Patrick Dorsey?” Jonas stopped the action and headed toward Pat. “This is wild! Pat, how are you? What are you doing in New York?” “Hi Jonas!” The two shook hands while many gaped. “I decided to give Broadway a try, or at least audition,” he chuckled, affable as always. “Well, welcome, it’s great to have you here. Phillipe, please continue.” Once again the piano picked up, group three learning steps.

The choreography felt natural on Pat’s body. Technically, he was the best of the lot and was asked to stay. Hank was also kept and stood to the side, relieved to be safe, at least for the moment. “Unbelievable, I haven’t been cut,” he whispered to Pat, his eyes fixed on continuing groups of competitors. Every demographic was present; short, muscular, tall, lean, ethnic, white bread! They were all there, hungry for work. Pat watched carefully from the side, noting a distinct difference between east and west coast dancers. Style and technique-wise, the easterners appeared more versatile and fit. ‘Must be all the sun and surf that makes pussies of us by comparison,’ he thought, grinning.

As the morning wore on, each group went through the combination, until there were fewer than two dozen men left. Pat and Hank, along with the remaining guys were asked to return for final callback,

same time and place. As they left the stage, Pat glanced over at Jonas, conferring with Phillipe. He looked up, smiled and waved. "Jeez, that has to be feel good, knowing the choreographer," said Hank, toweling himself. "I guess. He liked my work in L.A., so maybe I'll have a chance on this one." "Do you want to grab lunch?" Pat stopped and gazed at Hank. His new friend was exceptionally attractive and seemed to be looking for action. "Yeah, sounds good. I need to dry off first. I'm not used to this east coast climate." The two headed downstairs, joining others changing, after an exhausting open call.

The Equity call was the following morning. Two hundred male dancers showed up outside the Royal. Among the throng were several, recently returned from the Chicago closing of *Centipede*. Jeff Jenkins, Terry Becker, his partner Jeff Boyd, Tom Sutton, Jim Jaris and Kent Freeman were seasoned and familiar with the routine. Fresh from a successful tour, their confidence was high, as they were handed audition cards. Danny Bartlett, lead dancer of Broadway *Centipede*, also showed up for a chance to do more. Fiancée, Catherine Andrews, his leading dance partner, would audition next day.

The line down 45th Street kept growing as more men joined the hopeful group. Showers had been predicted for the day but, so far, it was just cold and windy. At the stage door, Griff Edwards greeted the men, handing out audition cards and directions. The boys of *Centipede* had arrived early, knowing earlier was better. Their numbers were in the first one hundred to be seen!

On stage, Jonas demonstrated a classic jazz combination, adapted from his mentor, Owen. The style, brilliantly conceived, contained difficult technical elements to separate the best talent from the least. Handling Matthews' choreography was challenging even for the most experienced. Phillipe followed with group after group passing through while Jonas stood by scrutinizing each man. Some were kept, the majority cut. The painful process continued all morning until thirty remained. Those having worked for Owen and Jonas in the past had the best chance of returning. The next two days the process would be repeated for the women, open call first, Equity call last. Time would tell who would be the luckiest of the bunch, as hopes rose for a chance in the new show.

Feet, Feet, and Feet brought dancers in droves for open and Equity calls. Jonas and Phillipe had done their work auditioning more than 200 women of all demographics and skill levels. The right choices were critical for a new choreographer-director. Trained by Matthews, Jonas held the scepter and this new show was the first test of his talent. Having called back 50 female dancers, final selections would be made today. Of the finalists, only 16 men and women would be chosen for places in the forthcoming production, jubilation for some, heart break for most. Rejection was the norm in the world of the gypsy, ever-changing, ever-moving, always competitive on the Great White Way!