

The Gypsies' story continues in:

Gypsy World—Beyond Broadway.

Here's a sneak preview:

Chapter 1 A Foreign Affair

"Oh my God, look at that line! It's humungous," shouted Catherine, pointing up 45th Street as they made way through the gridlock, Her sidekick, Julie, followed close behind trying to keep pace. Dozens of women were waiting at the Royal Theater where *Centipede*, the biggest hit on Broadway, was playing. "Let's cross here," she said, jaywalking between cars and trucks, Julie in tow. They joined the line-up to audition.

The previous week, the trades announced a remount of director-choreographer Owen Matthews' greatest hit, to go international for a two-month engagement in Tokyo. The project was rumored for weeks but, today, was the day for both union and open calls for dancers. Hundreds of hopeful women would be put to the test for places in the new production and replacements in New York.

Catherine and Julie waited in line, discouragement rearing its ugly head with each passing minute; oppressive heat, nerves and competition, made passing muster seem impossible.

Catherine Andrews, from Milwaukee, was new to New York. With solid technique, great look, young and determined, she hoped to convince Mr. Matthews she was ready. Julie Jansen, a Detroit native, was quite pretty, a different physical type from Catherine. She, too, was new to the city, hoping to land her first big job. Her technique was strong and she had an affable presence.

The line moved slowly, the wait seemed endless. "I don't know why I'm such a wreck," said Julie, re-combing her hair. "Have you ever auditioned for Owen Matthews?" Catherine smiled. Secretly, there was more on her mind than the audition. She met the famous director

one night at the Taft Hotel Bar. Owen, always the canny seducer, had taken her to bed, now insisting she audition. Proving herself worthy as a dancer was a bonus. What better way to be with him?

Twenty-five minutes passed before the girls were given audition cards to complete. Dick Landry was at the stage door, replacing Griff Edwards, who was now organizing the Japanese remount. Having been trained by Griff for months, he was ready to take the reins.

"Please fill this out and return it to me. You'll dance in order of the number on the card. You may change downstairs, just follow the signs. Thanks."

The girls felt instant relief as they entered the air-cooled theater. Descending in dim light, they passed others hurrying upstairs, nods of encouragement from some and cool stares from others. It would be a rumble of sorts—only the most attractive and technically best would survive the cuts.

"God, I'm nervous! I didn't eat breakfast and now my stomach is protesting," declared Julie, undressing. Her jeans and blouse stuck like glue, as she pulled with great effort. Bringing a small hand towel was an asset.

Catherine wore a light sundress, which allowed air to move under her skirt. She unbuttoned and slipped out. Peeling off her panties, she put on flesh-toned tights, followed by high cut trunks. Normally braless, she added one for comfort and support. A tight t-shirt followed, held in place by a wide belt. Slipping into socks and jazz shoes, she tied the laces with a double knot. A long or loose shoe lace could prove a disaster! The last step was to fix her long hair in a ponytail. When ready, they returned to the stage, quickly filled out their cards and returned them to Dick.

Jonas Martin, Owen's assistant and male dance lead, was conducting the audition. Owen observed from the house, taking notes. He was reputed for clarifying his style nuances once the group was taught the combination.

"Good morning, ladies! Welcome to *Centipede*! You are auditioning for the international company. There are a few spots open in the New York show as well. We are looking for those with solid dance technique who can act. We will be learning in groups of twelve and dancing in groups of three. Let's begin." The women took staggered positions, spaced so they could observe Jonas.

"Starting on the right foot, four single turns to stage right, step on right foot, *relevé*, left leg extended in *arabesque*, arms developed and extended up at angles to the sides. The counts are 1 and 2, 3 and 4, step 5, *relevé* 6, hold 7, *développé* of arms on 7 and 8. Repeat to the left. Third set of eight begins with right leg down on 1, joining left to *relevé* and turning on 2, step out on 3, *pas de bourrée* on 4, step on right, cross with left on 5, *battement* on 6, with right leg, double *pirouette* inside on left leg 7 and 8. Hold. Last set begins on 1 with scoop leg forward from inside out with parallel leg landing in *plié* in jazz second on the right, repeating with left on 2, right on 3, and left on 4. Impulse up on 5 with a shrug, impulse on six with a shrug, step 7 and 8 are step right, step left ending in a parallel *plié*. Arms

are relaxed at your side during the jazz portion with a shrug of shoulders on after beat of 8. Then repeat the whole combination of 4 counts of 8. Let's run through it again. Ready, 5, 6, 7, 8!" The group, clearly overwhelmed, followed him, as he danced under tempo for their benefit.

"What's this bullshit?" A tall brunette in the front line was frustrated and vocal. Jonas noticed and stopped. "Is there something I can clarify?"

Caught, she stammered, "It's a weird combination with so many ridiculous switches." Jonas glanced out, aware of Owen, who suddenly rose. There were murmurs, eyes glued on him, as he moved down the aisle and up the stairs. "What is your name?" "Carol Cramer, Mr. Matthews."

"Why are you here?" The air was thick as he waited. "I need a job, Mr. Matthews. Why does anyone put themselves through this crap?"

"Please don't put yourself through this crap another second, Miss Cramer. Thanks for stopping by." He gestured to Griff. "Mr. Edwards, please show Miss Cramer out. We have many other dancers to see this morning. Jonas, let's continue."

Carol Cramer was shocked, rigid, as Griff approached. "Thank you for your time. Please remember to take your personal items and follow me. I'll show you the way out." But she had just begun. With fists raised, she rushed toward Owen. "You fucker, I know about you! Everyone knows," she yelled. Jonas watched horrified.

"Owen, look out!" Owen tried to duck as she took a swipe. Caught on the chin, his cigarette was airborne. Griff grabbed her, assisted by Phillippe, Jonas' assistant. Carol let out a piercing scream in the scuffle. "You degrade and disregard women, you asshole!" "Get this harridan out of here," yelled Owen.

"Let me go, you God damned bullies!" Miss Cramer was strong, trying to break Griff and Phillippe's hold. Forcing her off stage, she was totally out of control as they carried her up the aisle. The screams continued. Security was called. Those on stage were shaken. Owen quickly regained his composure. "Ladies, please excuse the interruption. Jonas, keep going." Jonas picked up where he left off. For the rest of the morning, scores of dancers passed through, Owen's scrutiny in high gear. By noon, most dancers had been cut with the exception of Catherine, Julie and four others. The Equity call for female dancers was at 2:00.

The girls hugged with enthusiasm. "Oh my God, we made it through the first cut," said Julie with relief. "Wait until the final callback. You haven't seen anything yet, my friend," declared Catherine. "Personally, I'd rather have all my wisdom teeth pulled at once." Julie shrugged, happy to have passed the first elimination. "When do the men audition? Do you know?"

"Same deal. The open men's call is at 10:00 tomorrow with the Equity call at 2:00. Then everyone is called the next day; women in the morning, men in the afternoon." They changed and left the theatre. The heat hit them with a jolt as they walked to 8th Avenue.

Julie suggested lunch, her blood sugar seriously plummeting. "Where do you want to eat? How about trying Mulfetta's? I hear they have the best Greek food in town."

"Sure, why not?" The girls headed north looking for the restaurant. Spotting a sign, they crossed at the light and headed inside. The contrast of air-conditioning to the sultry air outside was encouraging. A host seated them by a window, handing menus and filling water glasses.

"Wow, does this cool air feel good," sighed Julie. "I hate heat and humidity. It was never this bad in Detroit during the summer." "It could get bad in Milwaukee, near Lake Michigan and all. Downtown Chicago was worse, though. No escaping those skyscrapers holding the heat," said Catherine, swallowing half a glass of water. "God, I'm thirsty!" They looked the menus over for specials. An attractive waiter approached.

"Good afternoon, ladies. Our lunch special is Mousaka. It comes with oven-roasted potatoes and a small Greek salad for \$4.95. We also offer a choice of beef, chicken, or lamb gyros, with a side of fries for \$3.95."

"I'd like a glass of Retsina to start," said Julie. "And for you, Miss?" "I'll take a large Coke with extra ice, please." "Certainly, would you care to order now or later?" "I'd like a small Greek salad," said Catherine, never overly hungry right after dancing. "And you?" "I'll take the chicken gyros special with the fries, please." "Thank you, ladies." As he left, he turned and smiled at Julie. "God, he's adorable! Did you notice those beautiful brown eyes and all that dark, wavy hair?" Catherine played with her fork, thinking only of Owen.

"I wonder if he's available. He's really sexy," whispered Julie. "Shouldn't you be thinking about nailing the callback and not getting laid?" Julie shrugged. "I guess so, but I'm kind of horny. Say, what was that harangue about at the audition? It was pretty upsetting." "I have no idea," said Catherine, tossing it off. "Yes, but those accusations," insisted Julie. Catherine was uncomfortable, defensive.

"Look, Mr. Matthews is the most important director-choreographer on Broadway and extremely attractive. Women will fight for his favors. She was an exception, a total bitch and obviously twisted!" "Well, I hope he hires us. We need jobs and doing *Centipede* would be a tremendous credit."

"We'll know in a couple of days, so be prepared. It's going to be the toughest audition ever. Imagine going to Japan! I hear the Japanese revere American artists. What an honor it would be," said Catherine.

The waiter returned with their orders. "Will there be anything else?" Julie smiled and winked, "We're fine for now, I think. We just need the check, please." The waiter tore the bill from his pad and placed it on the table. "Come again, ladies. It's been my pleasure serving you." Julie couldn't resist. "What is your name?" Catherine gave her a kick under the table.

"I'm Nicholas. Stop in any time Monday-Thursday between 11:00 and 6:00. I hope to see you again." "God, Julie, how obvious can you

get?" Julie giggled as she took a large bite of her Gyros.

'Obvious when I care to be,' she thought, chewing happily. Catherine shrugged and picked up her fork, suddenly hungry. "Well, let's eat and take the next 24 hours to recover, okay?" "I agree. Whatever happens from now on is anyone's guess." Lunch continued.

During the break, Owen and his team huddled, sorting through dance cards. Pulling Carol Cramer's information, Jonas shuddered. "Where did that piece of work come from?"

"She looked familiar," remarked Dick, who had worked with many gypsies over the years.

"Boy, she is trouble on the hoof for sure," added Jonas. "Relax, gentleman. On occasion, we stumble across a crazy," said Owen untruffled. Sorting through the cards, he spotted Catherine's name. Smiling, he pulled hers.

"I think we should strongly consider Catherine Andrews. She's an obvious replacement for Mally, while she's in Japan." "Which one is she?" Jonas had looked at so many dancers that morning, he was numb.

"The striking redhead with amazing extension, long legs, crisp technique. She's perfect for us," said Owen, obviously pleased and secretly prejudiced. "The others were good, but she's exceptional."

"We still have the union women this afternoon. I imagine we'll get some veterans to check out," said Jonas. Griff continued sorting, pulling those kept for callbacks. "We'll need seven women and seven men, plus two swings to cover for Japan. Most of our original cast is staying put. We'll have to temporarily replace Mally, Chad, Nora, and Jeff."

"Keep in mind that Kaplan and Maggli are strongly considering the first national company of *Centipede* some time next spring. If that happens, we will need dancers for that production also, so we should be on the lookout for potentials from this audition."

"What is the status with Miss Byrne?" "She has decided to stay on until the end of her contract, January 15th," said Griff.

"Well, it's a perfect opportunity to observe Miss Andrews during the fall. She might likely replace Miss Byrne if she proves herself," said Owen, charting his course. Catherine would soon be his, 24/7.

Following lunch, the group returned to the stage for the Equity call. Dick was again at his stage door post, admitting only those dancers showing union cards. Owen and Griff conferred in the house while Jonas and Phillippe warmed up. It would be a long afternoon as the line of women at the door and down the block waited eagerly to take a crack at the demanding work awaiting them.