

Trapped: A Story of a Transexual

by Janel Bladow

Section 1: Dog Day Afternoon

Chapter 1--This Has To Be a Bad Dream

Hospitalized for an overdose, a suicide attempt, Ernest Aron, a drag queen and the best known figure on Christopher Street learns that John Wojtowicz, his current lover, is holding nine hostages in a Brooklyn bank. "Oh, god, what is that idiot doing now?" The crime unfolds. Television cameras, reporters, gays, straights, neighbors, everyone in Brooklyn is there, including thousands of police. Our recount of the story is assembled from daily newspapers, gay publications, television coverage and eyewitness accounts.

Chapter 2--Cruising St. Anthony's Festival

Return to the hospital where doctors calm Ernie by injecting more tranquilizers. Ernie drifts off and remembers the June, 1971, meeting at St. Anthony's Festival on Sullivan Street. Ernie procured boys for priests of a gay religious sect. He brushed off John, left him with a priest in his apartment and headed to the trucks for some passion with a cooperative stranger. On returning home, he found the two men still making it in his apartment. John blew Ernie and was invited to visit again. Snap back to the main event--John asks for Ernie at the bank.

Chapter 3--Tripping Back to Christopher Street and Rego Park

When Ernie arrives at the bank, he and John talk; more drama develops. John has captured the bank, the hostages, the crowd, the police, the media, the FBI, but not Ernie. He floats away on a cloud of drugged memories--their affair, talks on the stoop, gifts, walks, bars and sex. The scene was hysterical, thinly painted in pathetic. He recalls John's dislike of his going in drag. Ernie's mind wanders farther back--he and a drag queen visited a wig shop in Queens. He was fitted with a wig, his first and went to the Dasee Dees Drag Ball. Liz Eden bloomed.

Chapter 4--Another Twist in the Female Mystique

John's mother appears, talks to Ernie, John, the police. Ernie is so buzzed on drugs he can't keep his mind on what's taking place. He flashes through his childhood to his mother, who he lived with, often slept with and was very spoiled by. One halloween 8-year old Ernie dressed as a girl. The beginnings of a sex change? Maybe. "This is the first time that I really felt real, like me." Ernie's mother died when he was 14, after that, he lived with his older sister, then on his own.

Chapter 5--"I'll Do Anything For That Wedding Dress in the Window!"

Father John, the priest who married Ernie and John on Dec. 4, 1972, interrupts Ernie's interludes and brings him back to the robbery. Littlejohn carries on for the crowd; Ernie's not back for long before the sight of the ex-priest stirs up images of his wedding to John. While walking along Grand Street

on the Lower East Side, ironically on their way to St. Anthony's Festival a year after they met, Ernie spotted the bridal dress of his dreams. John offered to buy it, on the condition that Ernie wore it to marry him. Ernie accepted the proposal eagerly, thinking that he'd do anything for that dress. "He remembers the wedding.

Chapter 6--Here Comes the Bride

Ernie is no where near Brooklyn, the hold-up or August 1972. It's Dec. 4, 1971, in his mind, and Ernie and his bridesmaids, three men dressed in as women, primed in Ernie's little studio apartment. Guests arrived, he finished dressing after he learned that his father, who he didn't expect, came. His father--the dinners with Lee (Ernie's roommate and oldest friend), the hate the anger, Ernie's homosexuality, the arguments over the length of his hair, all these memories speed through Ernie's head. This wealthy, successful businessman's only son of 10 children behaves, dresses and looks like a girl! At the reception, crashed by hundreds of gays, Ernie played the naive bride. When two lone shark types entered, John sent Ernie home to pretty up.

Chapter 7--Why Would A Nice Kid From Brooklyn Do Something Like This?

The motive for the robbery becomes clear. John wants his wife, Ernie Aron, to officially become Liz Eden. Ernie glides off to the fights over this. John was set against the operation. Other hassles between them zip through is his thoughts, it was a relationship that went to the pits the wedding night. It

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began with the kiss at the reception. Then the ride, the tour of the gay bar circuit and dances at the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse. That night John wanted to be tied to the bed. Ernie tried, but realized he couldn't stand him. John was possessive, he wanted to own Ernie, control him totally. Ernie tried to leave; John repeatedly tried to kill him as a result.

Chapter 8--The Big Payoff

John is in prison with a twenty year federal sentence, and though the romance is in it's final stages, Ernie writes often. "I pitied him, he's really crazy." In the meantime, Marty Alfont, an independent film producer wants to make a movie based on the robbery. John signs over his story for \$7500, of which \$2500 is given to Ernie; the remaining \$5000 goes to his lawyer. Ernie has his change in March, 1973.

Section 2--The Change

Chapter 9--First, the Hormones....

Before the actual operation, Ernie must undergo medical and psychological tests, take a variety of pills and receive hormone injections. He picks up womanly mannerisms. The preliminaries, Ernie's feelings and some documentation by doctors is included here.

Chapter 10--The Operation

The medical step-by-step. Ernie changes to Liz. We thoroughly discuss what happens, how the operation is performed and the effects. How do they make a vagina? Does it work? what about Liz's breasts? Today she sports a size 40 double D. No one would know on seeing them that they're two teflon water bags.

Chapter 11--Thinking Female

Liz, a woman, is portrayed. Several well-known psychologists and psychiatrists who have worked with transsexuals will be quoted and interviewed.

Section 3--From Dog Day Afternoon Through Many Dog Nights

John is in jail; letters continued between them until November, 1975, when Liz stopped writing. "He's really messed up; I didn't want him around anyway, I just felt sorry for him. Besides, I don't have time to write letters, I have enough to think about and keep me busy." Liz is officially a woman and now beginning a new life. Liz is happier, in love and even plans to marry in the next year though it certainly won't be what most of America conceives as a 'normal' marriage. Picture her life as it is in a dingy two-rooms-for-\$50-a-week hotel on Manhattan's westside. Her old man, Tony, a 16-year old she invited to her place for a smoke one afternoon several months ago, also lives there while studying airconditioning and refrigeration repairs. To support them, Liz gets Social Security benefits and works as a topless dancer. She also prostitutes. Tony knows she hooks and dances and hates it, but doesn't dislike it enough to have her stop bringing 'johns' to their sleaze suite. Currently, Liz is signing a contract to perform on the burlesque circuit. A career break? A future?