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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **GANGSTER APPAREL**

**A Full-Length Comedy**

**by**

**RICHARD VETERE**



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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The world premiere of *GANGSTER APPAREL* was given at the Old Red Lion Theater in London by the Bristol Express on April 27, 1993. The cast was as follows:

LOUIE FALCO . . . . . Stephen Davies  
JOEY PUGG . . . . . Richard LeParmentier

Directed by . . . . . Daniel Slater  
Set by . . . . . Simon Elliott  
Lighting by . . . . . Simon Mills  
Sound Design by . . . . . Ken Bolam  
Stage Manager . . . . . Peter McCabe  
Produced by . . . . . Nick Pitt

*GANSTER APPAREL*'s U.S. premiere was held at the Penguin Repertory in Stony Point, New York City on September 14, 1994. The cast was as follows:

LOUIE FALCO . . . . . John Ventimiglia  
JOEY PUGG . . . . . Nick Sandow

Directed by . . . . . Joseph Brancato  
Set by . . . . . Thomas Stoner  
Lighting by . . . . . Glen Fasman  
Costumes by . . . . . Rosi Zingales  
Stage Manager . . . . . Kathleen J. Dooner  
Produced by . . . . . Andrew M. Horn

*GANSTER APPAREL* was also produced at H.E.R.E. Theatre Company in New York City by the Igloo Theatrical Group on June 9, 1995. The cast was a follows:

LOUIE FALCO ..... Christopher Peditto  
JOEY PUGG ..... Anthony De Sando

Directed by ..... Ethan Silverman  
Set by ..... Keith Ian Raywood  
Lighting Design ..... Stan Pressner  
Sound Design ..... Jason Krueger & Tony Meola  
Costume Design ..... April Bulla  
Production Stage Manager ..... Amy N. Hawkes  
Ass't. Stage Manager ..... Marta Espitia  
Producer ..... David Goldman  
Co-Producer ..... Catherine Eve Patterson

# GANGSTER APPAREL

A Play in Two Acts  
For Two Men

## CHARACTERS

LOUIE . . . .a small-time hood. He is slick, handsome, dresses well and believes that style is more important than substance

JOEY . . . .his partner. Wears sneakers and jeans. He doesn't like to think about too many things, but when he does—he finds the strength to change for the better

## PLACE:

A motel in Queens, New York City,  
a cell on Riker's Island Prison,  
and at a trailer camp somewhere in Arizona.

## TIME:

The present.

**For my uncle, Carmine Guiliano, and for my friends  
Mace Neufeld, Laurie Gladstein and Nick Hardin.**

# ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE

SETTING: *A drab motel room with a small lamp on a bureau, a mirror on the wall, a small bed in the corner and a TV which doesn't work.*

AT RISE: *Lights up on LOUIE who stands in the middle of the stage in his boxer shorts, a T-shirt and silk socks which come up to his knees. He is standing over a portable ironing board ironing a sock. Music: Sinatra's "The Way You Look Tonight." JOEY enters dressed in jeans and sneakers. He is wearing his hair just a little too long.*

LOUIE. Hey, where the hell you been? Another five minutes and I was going to call your mother!

JOEY. I'm sorry. I couldn't find the place so fast. It's in the middle of nowhere.

LOUIE. I know. The boss picked it. He wants us to be discreet. He says Frankie "Snails" owns it. *(Nodding to his socks.)*

JOEY. What are you doin', Louie?

LOUIE *(ironing pants)*. What does it look like I am doing? *(Nodding to his socks.)* Huh?

JOEY. What?

LOUIE. Silk.

JOEY. Silk? Wow.

LOUIE. The boxer shorts...NEW.

JOEY. Nice. Louie? We gotta talk.



LOUIE. About what?

JOEY. I don't know...I want to go to the beach. I want to see girls in bathing suits.

LOUIE. It's winter. Go to the beach. You see a girl in a bikini, let me know.

JOEY. I'm not talkin' Rockaway, I'm talkin' Miami. Let's get on a plane. That's what I want to do.

LOUIE. The last time I was on a beach I was five years old and I was burying some snot-nosed punk in seaweed 'cause he broke my sunglasses. I hate sand, I hate rocks in my toes, and I hate that smell that comes up from Jersey. And no matter what beach you are on, I don't care where you are, you are going to get hit with that smell that comes up from Jersey! Plus, you walk on a beach and you step on dead things. You know how I don't like to step on dead things. You want to go to the beach? Go ahead. I like asphalt. You know what to expect when you walk on it. *(LOUIE steps to the bed where an expensive suit lies spread across it. He picks up the pants and hands them gently to JOEY.)* Feel. *(JOEY touches the pants roughly.)* Make nice! *(JOEY touches the pants softly.)* Not any tailor. Guido on the corner near the deli. He makes the boss's suits.

JOEY. Wow, Louie. So, what do you say? We go to the airport, buy a couple of tickets and we are outa here. We'll go where they don't have sand. Pick a place.

LOUIE. I like Queens. What's the matter with you? Things are happening for us here. Why do you want to go someplace all of a sudden? *(LOUIE slowly gets into his pants making that act somewhat of a dramatic artist moment.)*

JOEY. Things are going...too fast.

LOUIE. See? You have to learn to ENJOY the WHOLE thing. Go ahead...touch the shirt. *(LOUIE nods to a shirt which is hanging on a hanger from a hook on the wall.)*

JOEY (*walks to the shirt and touches it gently*). Wow...

LOUIE. Giorgio Armani.

JOEY. But the money it costs?

LOUIE. We are talking about clothes here. Who cares about the money? You think the boss cares about the money?

JOEY. But he's GOT money.

LOUIE. You think he always had it? You know he didn't always have it. He was a guy just like you and me, Joey, workin' his ass off tryin' to make something of himself.

JOEY. Yea, sure, Louie. But I need...some time off.

LOUIE. You want a vacation? We'll take a vacation. But tonight, we have things to do. (*JOEY carefully carries the shirt to LOUIE who puts it on with the same dramatic flair he did the pants. JOEY watches every movement.*) The tie. On the bed. It took me a half an hour to pick the tie to match the shirt. (*JOEY brings LOUIE the tie.*) You see, they compliment each other and at the same time—contrast. Silk. All I could afford was one but that doesn't matter. Watch what a tie does. Check it out...(*LOUIE slowly puts on the tie and when the knot is complete, he stands in the middle of the room like a prima ballerina waiting for the applause.*) Ba da bing! See?

JOEY. Wow...

LOUIE. The shoes.

JOEY. We got enough dough for the tickets, what do you say? (*JOEY sees the shoes and runs to get them. He brings them to LOUIE.*)

LOUIE. Be careful! No creases! (*LOUIE takes the shoes and slowly puts them on after he reaches for a shoe horn. He puts on the shoes just as he did the other clothes enjoying the act itself.*) Bally. I'd have twenty-two pair if I could buy what I like. I will someday. (*Pause.*) Go ahead...touch them. (*JOEY gets on his hands and knees and touches the*

*shoes.*) They cry out to be touched, don't they? I mean, Joey, they shine so nice they cry out to be KISSED! Really kissed!

JOEY. They do?

LOUIE. Like you want to get down on your hands and knees and kiss them! I noticed that the other day with the boss. He was walking out of the club, right? And I was sittin' out in the car like always and I watched him get into the limo and saw how his shoes were shining from all the way over there! I mean, I was across the street and saw them shine!

JOEY. I was there! I was with you!

LOUIE. But you didn't see IT, Joey! You didn't see what I saw! Those shoes cried out to be KISSED! *(Pause.) Comb... (JOEY takes the comb off the drawer and hands it to LOUIE. LOUIE's hair is so short that a comb can hardly go through it but he manages to push it through, looking close to stream-lined perfection.)* Fifty bucks for the haircut. Got it at Marco's. It's cut so close to my head it makes me look like I'm doin' 80 miles an hour! I am a man on the move!

JOEY. Nice. Real nice.

LOUIE. Now, get over here. Look in the mirror.

JOEY. Shit...*(JOEY slowly walks to the mirror and looks.)*

LOUIE. That's what I mean, look at yourself, go ahead.

JOEY. I am.

LOUIE. And what are you thinking when you look? Huh?

JOEY. I don't look good.

LOUIE. You got it, pal. It's what I have been trying to tell you...but you don't SEE it and you don't listen. *(Pause.)* Just two hours in this dump and I already got dirt on my cuffs! What time is it?

JOEY. Just about eight.

LOUIE. How do you feel? You feel loose inside?

JOEY. I feel loose, Louie, I feel loose.

LOUIE. I am glad you feel loose but you don't look NEAT. You know what I mean by NEAT?...I mean, sharp...I mean, "a man in control of his wardrobe." Get me my gun. *(JOEY goes to a small bag on the chair in the corner and brings it to LOUIE.)* Go ahead...take it out.

JOEY *(takes out a brand new .38 pistol and places it on the bureau)*. Wow...

LOUIE. It's new. Nickel-plated. Did you hear me? New.

JOEY. It looks great.

LOUIE. Let's see your gun. Come on...*(JOEY places LOUIE's brand new gun on the bed and slowly takes out a worn .38 pistol from his belt and humbly places it on the bureau in front of LOUIE. LOUIE looks at it.)* What is that? What is THAT?

JOEY. My gun.

LOUIE. Look at it! LOOK!

JOEY. Come on, Louie...IT WORKS.

LOUIE. It works? So what, it works! How can you be seen with that piece of shit? How?

JOEY. But nobody sees it.

LOUIE. Nobody sees it! I'm SEEING it now! You SEE it. The cops who might bust you some day will see it! God forbid, Conchetta, your girlfriend sees it! What is she going to think? Huh? You think a piece like that will impress her? Come on, what's wrong with you?

JOEY. She did see it.

LOUIE. And what did she THINK?

JOEY. She didn't like it.

LOUIE. Can you blame her?

JOEY. You are right.

LOUIE (*holding his pistol*). Now, if she saw you with this, what do you think she would think? Huh?

JOEY. She would be impressed.

LOUIE. YES! So tell me, why don't you have a piece like this one?

JOEY. I don't know. I didn't think about it.

LOUIE. But these are the kinds of things you gotta think about!

JOEY. There are other things, maybe, like relaxin', you know? Gettin' away from it a while.

LOUIE. And where is that going to get ya? Busboy work at Abbracciamento's?

JOEY. I don't know...

LOUIE. Come on, Joey...we started out in the same place, you and I. Running numbers back and forth to Brooklyn... but now who gets the good jobs, huh? Who gets the big money? Who gets the important work? Huh?

JOEY. You.

LOUIE. And "why?"

JOEY. You are smarter.

LOUIE. And what else?

JOEY. ...You...DRESS better.

LOUIE. Yes!

JOEY. I KNEW that.

LOUIE. I always dressed better. Even when all I could afford was a Vidal Sassoon jumpsuit...I wore it! Every nickel in my pocket went for a pinky ring! And not just any pinky ring—diamond! If I had five dollars in my pocket it went for a haircut. Forget food! Maybe I was hungry but that's not important! I LOOKED GREAT! So sometimes I didn't sleep well...my clothes were pressed! The bottom of my shoes had holes in them but they were shiny on top! Do you understand me, Joey? You tell me who you want to

be? You want to be a bum or do you want to be somebody?

JOEY. I want to be somebody, Louie.

LOUIE. You want to be somebody and tonight you're going out to work dressed like that? What is that on your feet?

JOEY. Sneakers.

LOUIE. Sneakers? Huh? Who wears sneakers? You ever see the pope wearing sneakers? You ever see the boss, God forbid, wearing anything but Bally's? Huh?

JOEY. No.

LOUIE. You know who wears sneakers?

JOEY. Who?

LOUIE. People who have no respect for themselves, that's who wears sneakers! And what kind of pants are those?

JOEY. These are jeans, Louie.

LOUIE. Jeans? Who wears jeans? You ever see Sinatra in dungarees? Okay, you want to go casual, go SLACKS. A nice pair of black-grey slacks but still with the Bally shoes. Pleated, pressed, neat. A nice button-down shirt...matching socks and a nice belt. The whole nine yards. The trick to casual is to LOOK like you feel comfortable. So what you feel like you're lying down on a bed of nails! Make people think you treat yourself good and they will treat you good. Huh? And that jacket? What are you, a low-life? A low-life off the street wears sneakers, jeans, and a leather jacket with a hole in the elbow! Nobody important dresses like some kind of low-life even in his own house! At home? Try a robe with a silk lining...good slippers! And p.j.'s? Silk. Always silk. And try black. Black is right. The cops bust in on you and see you dressed in a nice robe with silk lining, a silk pair of p.j.'s and good slippers and they will treat you like SOMEBODY! You understand me, Joey?

JOEY. I am not a low-life.

LOUIE. I know you are NOT. That is why I am taking the time out to tell you all this. I am going up in the Club and I want you around me, Joey. We have done some THINGS you and I. You know that. Some THINGS together and I want you on top with me when it happens. Guys who do THINGS together should stay together. To keep an "eye" out for each other. We got a HISTORY together, pal, and you know that. Like they say—"if the walls could talk." (*Gives JOEY a long, hard look and JOEY returns it.*)

JOEY. I would never talk. Are you sayin' I would talk? Come on, Louie, I don't believe you—you insult me. I should walk home right now.

LOUIE. I didn't say a word to that effect. What are you talking about?

JOEY. I did one to five for you when I got busted on the bar job and I never said a word.

LOUIE. No, you are right, Joey. Of course you are. You did that one to five for us. You did. (*LOUIE walks over to a suit hanging on the closet door and tosses it on the bed.*) There. That is for you.

JOEY. Huh?

LOUIE. Go ahead, try it on. We ain't got time. (*JOEY slowly approaches the suit in awe.*) Yo! Joey, you don't examine it—you wear it! It's a suit. Had it made for you. Special.

JOEY. You had it made for me?

LOUIE. Tailor made. You owe me \$1,200.00...

JOEY. WHAT?

LOUIE. What are you getting for tonight?

JOEY. I'm gettin'...five thou...

LOUIE. With that money you can afford to look your best. Joey, listen to me...tonight I change your life. You got that? One day you will look back on THIS NIGHT and say to yourself..."I recall the NIGHT...Louie changed my life

for me.” Now, put it on...hurry. (*JOEY takes off his jacket, pants and shirt. As he does, LOUIE looks at his own gun, and at JOEY's gun, and shakes his head. LOUIE hands him the pants, the socks, the shirt and tie.*) Now go over IT all with me.

JOEY (*dressing*). I park the car on Bleeker.

LOUIE. Right. Bleeker faces east...You sit in the car...good.

JOEY. Then I wait and at nine-fifteen you come walking down Bleeker toward my car.

LOUIE. Good. Then what?

JOEY. He comes out of the restaurant at nine-fifteen...

LOUIE. Because we know he's got a meeting in Jersey at ten-thirty and he is never late.

JOEY. And that's it.

LOUIE. No! That is not IT! There is something else!

JOEY. Right! If he's got one bodyguard I blink the lights once...if he's got two bodyguards I blink the lights twice.

LOUIE. Twice for two. (*JOEY is half-dressed as LOUIE takes his brand new pistol and puts it in his belt.*) I will then walk up behind him like THIS...Ba ba bing! (*LOUIE holds his pistol in one hand and aims it as if he is aiming to shoot at the back of someone's head. Acting it out.*) And pop him twice in the back of the head. I know his bald head like I know the palm of my hand. I am behind him so I go BAM! Then when the first bodyguard turns around I go BAM twice right through the heart! Now, if the other bodyguard is there ready to pounce on me, what happens?

JOEY (*acting it out*). I am right there with you, Louie. I put two slugs into him. Bam! Bam!

LOUIE (*watching JOEY*). Good. Very good. Then what?

JOEY. Back to the car we go. Nonchalant-like. Then we drive right on Broadway and left on Delancy...

LOUIE. Then over the bridge and back to Queens.



JOEY. Safe and sound.

LOUIE (*flings imaginary dice*). Then a nice drive down to Atlantic City. I guarantee they open the gold gates of the Taj for us! The best food! The best broads! (*JOEY is now dressed. LOUIE looks him over. JOEY does not seem comfortable in the expensive clothes.*) You got to look comfortable in them. You just don't wear clothes, you become the clothes you got on. You understand me? It's a mental attitude. You are a SOMEBODY so walk like a somebody. You know? Look, tell me how you are gonna walk up to this bodyguard when you got to POP him tonight? Tell me.

JOEY. Like I always walk.

LOUIE. Show me. Go ahead. Hurry, we ain't got no time. (*JOEY "bops" instead of walks across the room.*) NO! No! You walk like that and the whole street will know you are a hood who's gonna pop some big shot!

JOEY. Then how should I walk? I want to know.

LOUIE (*walking gracefully*). Like this...see? I am a man who enjoys WALKING...see? (*Slowly takes out his gun.*) Then, take out your piece like this...with finesse...style...then you aim at his head and pop the bastard. Like that. Look GOOD doin' it. Come on, pal, you don't have to go to college to know how to look good when you are shootin' somebody! Don't you watch TV?

JOEY. I'll do it right, Louie.

LOUIE. And this gun, man, Joey. How the hell can you shoot such a big man...a man who is so famous...so important with a gun like that? Aren't you embarrassed?

JOEY. I didn't think of it, I really didn't.

LOUIE. You're only shooting his bodyguard, true...but it's the principal of the thing! If the boss saw what you carry he would be insulted.

JOEY. I'll get a better gun.