

PHOENIX RISES FROM
THE SONORAN DESERT

HOW TEAMS PREPARE
FOR THE SUPER BOWL

POETRY TRAVELS
FROM DALLAS TO DUBLIN

AMERICAN WAY

JANUARY 2016

SHADES OF SUCCESS

JENNIFER LOPEZ

ON HER NEW TV SERIES AND TAKING OVER
THE STAGE IN LAS VEGAS



By Adam Pitluk



Picking Up Where Our Interlude Left Off

Let's start with how we were dressed.

Justin wore a pair of nicely pressed black slacks, a black leather belt with a shiny gold buckle, a black lacelike button-down shirt and a black blazer. He was super buff, and he showcased his strapping physique by not buttoning too many buttons on his shirt.

I wore black pants that were made to look dressy but which were actually tapered sweatpants, a pair of black combat boots, a cream rayon shirt with a collar so big that a stiff breeze might well have given me lift and three necklaces. One was handmade from string that a friend gave me, one was made from cowrie shells that another friend gave me, and the focal point was a giant gold medallion that I bought on the street in Santa Monica, California.

And yet, we thought we looked awesome.

Justin looked like he was battle-ready for a pop-up Coppola audition. I looked like one of the fans at the Philadelphia Spectrum during the filming of *Rocky*.

But Justin and I were 2,700 miles and two decades away in Hollywood, California, USA, even though our attire looked like we'd gotten into the Paramount wardrobe room. Again.

I was an intern at a film company in L.A. in the late 1990s. Justin was an intern at a bank or with a broker or something totally un-Sunset Strip. As a reward for my unpaid-Hollywood-intern existence one June afternoon in 1998, my

boss gave me two passes to the premiere of *Out of Sight*, a new cop thriller starring George Clooney and Jennifer Lopez.

Back then, Clooney was the box-office draw, though this beautiful lady from the Bronx stole the show, cinematically and aesthetically. Justin and I wanted to date her. I mean meet her.

We started talking to the other hangers-on at the post-screening reception. Then we got courageous and approached the stars on-hand. "I really liked you on *Taxi*," Justin said to Danny DeVito, even though by this point, he'd done more than 50 other shows and flicks. Justin even called him Louie De Palma. The actor seemed appreciative. "Thanks a lot," he told Justin. "I really appreciate that."

I tried a similar tactic on Dennis Farina. He was holding court with a couple of guys who were curiously dressed like Justin.

"Excuse me," I interrupted in a short, Philly-slang burst. I was holding up my right hand and extending my pinkie. "Are you the guy they call 'Ray Bones?'" I asked in a nod to his role in the movie *Get Shorty*.

Farina looked me up and down in my clown costume, discerning instantaneously that I was more Latka Gravas than Bobby Wheeler. "Oh, you like that, huh?" he asked with an open-mouthed, toothy smile. Then he rolled his eyes. I bolted.

All the while, unbeknownst to us, we were being clocked by a sweet lady named Helen. She saw us earlier hamming it up next to Clooney — not actually speaking to him, mind you — and our ensemble

made her curious. "I have to ask," she said to us upon approaching, "who are you?"

"We're nobody," Justin replied. "Nope, not a soul," I added. Helen was friends with Jennifer. She introduced us to Jennifer, and my takeaway was how completely intriguing the actress was. I can't remember what we talked about, but she talked to us. And she didn't have to, because she was about to rocket to superstardom. Everyone who saw that movie knew it.

And that's why I'm so pleased to see that almost 18 years later, the person who would become J. Lo/Jenny from the Block is, at her roots, Jennifer (see the story on page 42). Senior Editor Jacquelyne Froeber, who wrote the piece, agrees.

"Sitting down with Jennifer, I was struck by her passion for the projects she is working on. She was very animated and thoughtful in our conversation — it felt like catching up with a girlfriend. (Side note: I totally wish we were girlfriends.)"

Actually, I remember wishing the same thing. I think I asked Jennifer out, if memory serves me. I'd like to think the only thing keeping her from saying yes was my attire.

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