

# **THE STICKY FINGERS THEFT CASE**

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**BY**

**JAMES PAUL ELLISON**



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To Priscilla Naughton, A private investigator in Sarasota, Florida.

To all **the honest** and hardworking employees out there.

To Dan Gibson, owner of GardensongBnB.com in Natchez, MS.

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## CHAPTER

### 1

Henry Diz, is a good looking white male about 42 years of age. He locks his third floor private investigative office and looks at his cheap Timex watch while waiting for the elevator. His dental appointment is in an hour and he doesn't want to be late again.

In the lobby of the Bagwell Building he stops to speak to a very cute receptionist. Her name is Loy Riveiro and she was born in Spain. The woman is about 40 years of age, has long blonde hair and a warm smile.

“Good Morning, Loy, I am headed to my dental appointment. How are you doing today?”

“I am well, thank you. Any cases come in yet?”

“Nope. The day and week are still young.”

“You said the same thing last week, Henry.”

“I know I did but this week it will be different?”

“Why do you say that?”

“I found this lucky dime in the parking lot when I parked my car earlier,” Henry says holding up the dime for her to see.

Loy asks, “Want to come to my roommate's surprise birthday party tonight? Cindy thinks you are cute. She told me so when you exited the elevator last week with your box of surveillance brochures.”

“Nope.”

Loy asks, “Why not?”

“Because I really want to spend my free time with you.”

“To make that lucky dime of yours truly lucky I will go out with you. Maybe a new case will come in as well.”

“Fantastic news. I only asked you out ten times.”

“Eight times to be exact, Henry. My mom told me growing up, ‘Keep asking and someday the no will be a maybe and the maybe will be a yes’.”

Henry replies, “When I met your mother in the lobby 2 weeks ago she told me, ‘Keep asking her out. If you do, my daughter will go out with you’. That’s why I kept it up. Your mother gave me hope.”

“Where are you going again? I forgot what you said.”

“I have a dental appointment in forty five minutes. I need a few cavities filled.”

“I hate going to the dentist.”

“I do too, Loy, but my teeth bother me.”

“When you return from your dental appointment you can officially ask me out.”

“I will rush back then.”

Henry runs out of the Bagwell Building, dashes to his red in color Mazda Miata and departs the area. His radio is not working, neither is the air conditioning, so he rolls down his driver’s window on this hot July day and begins singing out loud to a song he wrote.

“Everyone is running to catch the bus, everyone except for us, because we are already on the bus. Here comes the baseball player with his ball and glove. Running alongside is his new found love. Yes, everyone is



running to catch the bus, everyone except for us, because we are already on the bus.”

Henry stops to buy The Miami Herald newspaper from a magazine stand and enters the crowded dental office.

The private investigator reads the sports page while waiting for his name to be called. Ten minutes later, Henry has his mouth wide open and a chubby dental assistant is injecting a needle into his front left gum.

“This may hurt a little,” she says as she injects a local anesthesia.

“What is the anesthesia called?”

“Lidocaine. It will take effect in a few minutes. Then the dentist will be in to take care of your cavities.”

Henry just smiles and nods his head up and down.

Ten minutes later, Doctor Loring walks in and places a yellow note in Henry’s shirt pocket.

“Hello, Henry. I need you to call my cousin Bob. He needs to hire you. His accountant just did an audit and he is missing \$750,000 worth of inventory.”

Henry signals for a piece of paper and a pen. The middle-aged assistant hands him both. Henry writes something down and hands the pad to the dentist.

He mumbles, “Read this, please.”

Doctor Loring reads the written message and replies, “Bob and his younger brother own one of Florida’s largest manufacturing companies. I think they employ over four hundred workers.”

Henry motions for the pad and pen again. He writes another message and hands the pad to the dentist.

“Your handwriting is hard to read, Henry. What do they manufacture?”

Henry nods his head up and down.

“My cousins own a large orthopedic company located in Miami’s Industrial Park. They make all types and sizes of braces as well as cervical collars, wrist splints and back supports. Their products are ideal for physical therapists and sport teams across the nation.”

The dentist puts the note pad down and starts to drill.

An hour later, Henry walks out of the dental office with a sore mouth and a possible new case. His first one since opening his investigative agency.

Loy smiles when she views her future date returning to the lobby of the Bagwell Building.

Henry’s mouth is all numb so he gives Loy the thumbs up, catches an elevator and rides it to the third floor. He opens a small office door with ‘Diz Investigative Group’ written in big letters. Inside are a desk, a new computer, a small fridge and an old couch his mother gave him.

Henry was a policeman for 12 years in New York City and obtained his business degree at Hard Knocks University. He looks at his ‘officer of the month’ awards hanging on the wall and wonders if he did the right thing, by quitting the force with a steady pay check, moving to Miami and opening his own pi agency.

Two weeks ago, Henry had placed a small ad in the Miami Herald that read, ‘Is your spouse really working late? Find out’. The ad cost \$300 to run for a month. It has been 2 weeks already and not a single call has come in requesting his services.

Henry opens his cost and expense ledger and reviews what he has spent so far to start his company. He likes being his own boss but is

worried, as he has the one lead only and possible case he just received from his dentist.

The ledger shows a cash loan of \$20,000 from his mother was now down to \$14,500. Some of his expenses listed were for: office rent of \$500, car payment of \$250, gas for running around for 2 weeks visiting new business leads and dropping off his marketing material was \$75, making brochures and business cards cost \$400, his laptop was \$900 and his website was an additional \$1,500.

The numbness in his sore mouth finally wears off, so Henry calls the number on the yellow sheet of paper given to him by the dentist.

He asks for Mr. Bob Davis when the receptionist answers, “B&B Manufacturing, Joan speaking.”

Henry waits on the telephone line about 2 minutes. “Hello, this is Bob.”

“Afternoon, Sir. Doctor Loring gave me your number and asked me to call you. My name is Henry Diz. I am a private investigator.”

“Thanks for calling me. We need to hire you right away.”

“No problem, Sir. I understand you recently had an audit done and you are missing \$750,000 worth of inventory?”

“That is correct. When can you come in to discuss this matter with me and my brother?”

“How about right now?”

“We can do that. I do not want any of my employees to know you are a private investigator.”

“No problem. My name will be Henry Gibson and I will say I am a sales rep.”

“How far away are you?”

“Where are you located?”

“We are in Miami’s industrial complex, use exit 9 off Highway 95.”

“I can be there in 30 minutes. Just make sure it is only with owners that I am meeting with. Loose lips sinks ships.”

“Good advice. Will do. See you in a little while.”

Henry hangs up, grabs a notepad, a few ink pens, places them in his briefcase, adds a few brochures, locks his office and waits for the elevator. Once in the lobby, he stops at Loy’s reception desk.

He waits for her to finish talking to a visitor and says, “How about tomorrow night I take you to Red Lobster?”

“I love Red Lobster.”

“I know you do. Your mother told me so.”

“What else did my talkative mother say about me?”

“I will pick you up after work and tell you everything I know about you.”

“Deal. Where are you going with that smile on your face?”

Henry pulls out the yellow note and shows her. “Between us, my dentist asked me to call his cousins who own a large orthopedic manufacturing company in Miami. Their accountant did an audit and discovered \$750,000 of inventory missing. I am on my way over there now to meet with the owners.”

“Wow. That is great news. Hang on to that lucky dime. Good luck.”

“Thanks, Loy. I will update you in the morning.”

At a traffic light, Henry calls someone special. “Hi, Mother. I just received possible my first case. I am on the way over there now for an interview.”

“Are you pulling my leg, Son?”

“Nope. I will be investigating a \$750,000 theft in orthopedic material that an audit shows is missing. I am driving to meet the owners now. I will call you with more details in the morning.”

“I know you will do a good job. Thanks for your call. I love you.”

“I love you too, Mother.”

Thirty minutes later, Henry pulls up to a security booth and a black male in uniform approaches with a clipboard. “Can I help you, Sir?”

“Yes. I have an appointment with Bob Davis. My name is Henry Gibson. I am a sales rep. He is expecting me.”

The guard checks his clipboard and replies, “Yes, Sir, Mr. Gibson, I have you down on his list. You can park in our executive office visitor parking lot up the road to the right. Please announce yourself to the receptionist in the lobby.”

Henry says to the overweight, elderly guard, “How long have you been working here?”

“Why do you want to know?”

Henry has to think fast as he realizes that he just asked a private investigator type question. He lies and says, “My father, age 69, is looking for a part-time job. If you have been here a few years then this would be a good place for him to apply. Long term employment means a good working environment.”

“I see. I have been here 2 years now.”

“Thank you for telling me that. I will speak to you on my way out.”

The guard pushes a remote control button inside the guard shack and a metal bar raises to let Henry's vehicle in.

The investigator parks, grabs his briefcase, locks his vehicle and enters the executive office building.

A female receptionist walks Henry into a large conference room with a long, oak table.

Sitting in plush leather chairs are 3 people. They all stand when Henry walks in.

The receptionist says, "Mr. Henry Gibson." She then closes the conference room door on her way out.

A middle-aged, white male with a small pot belly walks over and extends his hand. "Mr. Diz, I am Bob Davis. Let me introduce you to my younger brother and our manager."

Both walk over to meet the others.

Bob points to the younger looking man and says, "This is Ryan. Both men shake hands.

Bob turns to the middle-aged, black female with short, black hair and says, "May I introduce you to our manager, Tina Turner."

Both shake hands.

Henry asks her, "Are you named after the famous singer?"

"Yes, I am. My mama loved her and knew the words to every song she ever sang."

They all sit around the oak table.

Henry removes from his briefcase a yellow note pad, a silver in color ink pen and 3 brochures. He reaches into his shirt pocket of his blue suit and removes 3 business cards. He hands each of them his material.

“My cell phone number is on the back of each. Please call me at any time if you have any information that may help me in my investigation. I understand that your accountant conducted an audit and discovered you are missing \$750,000 of inventory.”

Ryan speaks up. “Yes, that is true. Our long term CPA, a Mr. Paul Silverman of Weinstein and Silverman did the audit last week.”

“You must have been in shock when he reported that size of a lost?”

“Yes, very much so,” says Bob.

“How many audits have you had over the years and how many losses before this one?”

“This was our first audit. Our accountant noticed we were spending too much buying denim and other materials and wanted to know why,” says Bob. “Our CPA thinks the total losses have been spread-out over the years we have been open.”

Ryan speaks next. “We treat all the employees here like they are family. We have strong feelings of responsibility toward our workers. We try to be supportive with a good salary and medical benefits.”

“Well, Ryan, for some workers that is not enough. You think you have happy employees but in reality you have thieves picking your pockets and laughing all the way to the bank. Drugs will somehow play into this when I uncover the truth to your missing material.”

“So sad to know that we have thieves taking advantage of our trust,” says Bob.

“Makes me mad,” says Tina.

“Any idea from you 3 on how this loss occurred?”

They all shake their heads from side to side and shrug their shoulders.

“Who else knows the real reason I am meeting with you 3 today?”

Bob and Ryan look over at Tina and she says, “Besides us 3 I told our security director and our cargo warehouse manager and no one else.”

“Their names please.”

“Mike Green is the security director and Joseph Thomas is our cargo manager.”

“How long have they been employed here at B&B?”

“I hired both about 10 years ago.”

“Thank you for the information. I will need to speak with both of them.”

Tina looks at Henry and says, “No problem. They both work Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to about 5 p.m.”

“How long has B&B been in business?”

Tina replies. “We all started this company together 13 years ago.”

“We should have had an audit every year,” says Bob.

“I wonder over the last 13 years how much material and finished product you have lost,” says Henry.

“Me too,” replies Ryan. “Guess we will never know. Can you investigate this massive \$750,000 loss for us?”

“Yes I can. You might have an inside employee that aids and abets the thief or is working on his own. Employees can falsify records or distract others from being aware the theft is taking place. Scary thought, right?”



All three look at each other and nod their heads in agreement.

“And if you think just because your facility is not handling high-end items you are immune? Wrong. Once stolen, almost everything is traded or resold on the open market. Thieves can sell almost anything they steal these days.”

“That is scary,” replies Bob.

Henry asks, “Have any of you heard of the 10/10/80 rule?”

“No,” says Ryan.

“10 percent of your employees will never steal from you, 10 percent will steal if they can and the remaining 80 percent can be motivated to steal or not steal from you. The 90 percent will always steal if the theft is easy and the risk are low.”

Tina asks, “Why do people steal?”

“I will tell you why, Tina. If a person is facing monetary problems, has a drug issue, or has marriage problems, things like that will just escalate the risk. Besides, too many employees think they are owed more than their compensation they receive now.”

“You seem to know a lot about all this,” replies Bob.

“I do. Let me tell you about my own background.”

“Please do,” says Tina.

“I have a degree from Hard Knocks University. I was a police officer in New York City for 12 years. I then moved over to homicide for 5 years. I moved here to take care of my elderly mother after my father passed away. I have been a private investigator for 3 weeks now.”

They all laugh at Henry’s ‘3 weeks’ comment.

“I know what I am doing. I will prove it by solving this crime caper which I am naming ‘The Sticky Fingers Theft Case’. I charge \$100 an hour and request a retainer fee up front of \$5,000.”

Bob turns to Tina and says, “Go write Henry a check for the amount he just asked for please.”

As Tina slides her leather chair back from the long conference table Henry says, “Please return with hiring files of your last 12 terminated employees.”

Tina looks at Bob and Ryan, turns to Henry and asks, “Why do you need those 12 files?”

“Sometimes ex-employees will provide me with names of current employees that are stealing, taking or selling drugs, in need of money and maybe to whom the thieves are selling your material products to.”

Bob looks at Tina and replies, “Give Henry whatever he asks for.”

After Tina leaves the room, Henry stands up and closes the conference room door.

“Gentlemen, I asked to meet with only the owners of the business. Tina is just a manager. Why is Tina in this meeting?”

“Tina is our right arm and has been since we started,” says Bob.

Henry asks, “You trust her that much! Why?”

Bob says, “Tina, Ryan and I all left our last employer together and started B&B Manufacturing from the beginning. We treat Tina like family. We do not worry about her. She has always been loyal and is a very hard working woman.”

“Does Tina have any ownership in B&B?”

“No,” says Ryan. “My brother and I are 50-50 partners. We were the ones that came up with the seed money required to open our doors.”

“The more people that know I am here as your investigator the worse it will be for you. They will clam up. No one wants to be known as a snitch. They have a saying on the streets, ‘If you snitch you end up hurt or dead in the ditch’.”

“I will tell Tina to keep quiet about us hiring you,” replies Bob.

“Good to hear. The theft of your missing material might have occurred over many years or in the last year or so.”

“Can you share with us your plan to investigate our loss?”

“Yes, Ryan, I can. Keep it between us 3. I want to make up a tip line card with my cell phone number on it. We will offer a \$5,000 dollar reward for any information regarding illegal activity.”

Bob looks at the private investigator and asks, “Do employees call?”

“Yes, they do. A private investigator I know in California did it recently. He developed many leads that helped him reveal the criminal gang working in the trucking company he was hired by, to solve their cargo thefts.”

“What will you write on the tip line cards?” asks Ryan.

“We will say on the tip line cards that they do not have to give their name or contact information. I will assign them a tip code if and when they call.”

Bob asks, “Why a tip code?”

“When someone calls we assign them a code. This way when they call back to check on any reward money they might receive, all they have to do is provide me with is the code number issued to them to collect.”

“How do you pay the reward money if they want to remain in the dark?”

“Well, Bob, we ask for a bank manager they trust. We just hand the money over to the manager and say, ‘Someone will come in to claim this money. The person will give you a secret tip code which we will provide you with’. That is how the tipster can stay in the dark.”

“But we have almost 400 employees, mostly female seamstresses.” says Ryan.

“That is good to hear. Loose lips is what I am looking for. Someone knows what is going on. I hope the \$5,000 reward you will offer for information will get them talking.”

“I can have the tip cards printed and issued soon,” says Bob.

“The sooner the better. You have a theft ring working right under your noses and you don’t even have a clue who they are.”

“That is true,” replies Bob looking over at his younger brother.

Henry asks, “Can you provide me with a list of your missing inventory?”

Tina walks back in with the retainer check and the 12 files Henry asked for and says, “These 12 ex-employees worked here from last week to 8 months ago.”

Henry takes the files from her and says, “Perfect.”

Bob tells Tina to contact the printer they plan to use and have them print up 500 tip line cards right away.

Henry hands her the information he wants printed on the cards along with instructions on how to collect any reward money.

Tina says nothing as she takes the information from him.

Henry says, “Please issue the tip line cards to all your staff with their paychecks. Insert this letter too on company stationary from Bob Davis saying the company needs the thefts to stop or layoffs will

begin. That threat alone should get the honest workers to rat on the dishonest ones.”

Henry hands Bob a copy of the letter he wants enclosed.

Bob reads out loud what is on the letter. “To all employees. We request your help. Attached to your paycheck is a tip line card. We had an audit performed on the company and B&B is missing a great deal of inventory. Continued losses will result in layoffs.”

Ryan says, “That sounds good.”

Bob replies, “There is more info in the letter. Please call the special tip line number and report any information you have on fellow employees regarding thefts, drug use and where we can recover our missing material. There is a large reward set up for this vital information. Every employee is getting a tip line card, so no one will know who called in with tips. Thank you. Mr. Bob Davis. CEO.”

Ryan says, “Nice letter.”

Henry looks over at Bob and says, “I need that missing inventory list and can I get a tour of your operation please?”

“Just you and I?”

“No, I would like to have Tina walk us around. This way, if and when I have to question your staff, they will know it is alright to speak with me.”

All 3 exit the executive office and enter the larger warehouse style building next door. It is huge. Bob hands Henry ear plugs and says, “You might want to use these when we reach the cargo department.”

While walking around the huge football size building, Tina stops now and then and explains to the private investigator what is going on in the different departments.

Tina says, “The seamstresses are stitching together the material needed to build the different braces and collars we sell to orthopedic and rehab offices across the nation. We have 2 shifts. Either the women will work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. or 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. We have about 310 seamstresses working between both shifts.”

Henry sees an open time clock with hundreds of time cards in slots marked ‘A to Z’. He turns to Tina and asks. “What is stopping one employee from punching in or out an employee who is not here, is coming in late or leaving early?”

Tina smiles, points to a security camera mounted on a wall that covers the time card racks and says. “This camera does, plus, that sign on the wall.”

Henry reads the posted sign out loud. “Punch in and out your own time card only. No exceptions. Is the camera on 24/7 and where do you store the recording tapes?”

“The camera does not work. It is a dummy one. The employees think it is real and recording them so they stay honest.”

Henry writes down on his notepad ‘Recommend better time clock security to prevent abuse.’

They stop next at the loading docks. Men are busy loading and unloading crates and boxes. Trucks are coming and going as the group stands on the dock watching it all unfold. Two FedEx trucks are being loaded with many cargo boxes. The 3 stand there wearing their earplugs.

Tina shouts, “We have our most worker’s comp injury claims in this department.”

Bob stands next to Henry and shouts, “This area is very busy and as you can hear, very loud with all the fork lifts operating at one time. We have about 30 men working in this area during the week and about 6 on weekends.”

Tina calls over to a black male in a hard hat and motions for him to come over. “Henry, this is Joseph Thomas. He is in charge of the cargo department.”

Both men shake hands.

Tina says to Joseph, “Keep this between us. Henry is the private investigator we hired to investigate our audit loss.”

“Will do, Boss.”

“Give Henry anything he needs and answer any of his questions.”

“Will do, Boss.”

Henry says to Joseph, “I will be by to talk to you soon.”

Joseph nods his head in agreement, climbs back on board a fork lift and continues to load crates onto a FedEx truck.

The group stops at a large storage room. There are many shelves. They are all stacked with rolls of fabrics or finished medical devices.

Bob says, “Our most expensive fabric is denim. The audit showed we are missing \$350,000 worth. The rolls are long and heavy. It takes 2 men to carry one roll to our seamstresses. After being cut to size then anyone can take the material.”

Henry says, “This area is wide open. Please install a sliding chain link gate and control the access by posting a security guard. In my final report I will make a list of security recommendations that need to be addressed.”

They next stop in the administrative offices. About a dozen women are busy at their desk working on their computers or talking on the telephone. None of the staff look-up as they walk around inspecting their work area.

Henry asks, “What goes on in here?”

Tina says, “Bookkeeping staff will process invoices from vendors, will issue employee payroll checks, pay our suppliers and will oversee our expenses. My office is in the corner.”

“I will stop by and speak with you when I can,” says Henry.

“I look forward to it. Just give me an hour’s notice so I can make time for you,” replies Tina.

Once back in the executive conference room, Henry asks, “Can someone take me to your security department?”

Bob looks at Tina and says, “Please introduce Henry to our security manager and have Mr. Green give Henry whatever he requires?”

“Alright. Follow me please.”

Once back in the large warehouse, Tina looks at the private investigator and says, “To my right is our cafeteria. Please wait there a few minutes. I have to make a phone call. Then I will introduce you to our security manager.”

“Alright.”

Ten minutes later, at the very back of the large building, Tina and Henry walk into the security office. Tina introduces Henry to Tom Green and says, “We hired Mr. Diz to investigate our material losses. So whatever Henry needs or asks for he is cleared by Bob Davis to have. I will leave you two alone now.”

Mr. Green says, “Care for a cup of coffee? I just made a fresh pot.”

“Yes, with cream and sugar please.”

Tom is a black male in his late fifties. He looks in shape and stands 6 feet 3 inches.

“Tell me, Tom, about your background?”



“I was a cook in the Navy 8 years, I was a Tampa fireman for 5 years and have been head of security here for 10 years. Wow, 11 years next week. How time flies. And you, Sir?”

“I am a private investigator. Before that I was a policeman in New York City. Has anyone in management explained what has been going on regarding their audit?”

“Yes. Tina filled me in the other day. We are missing \$750,000 worth of material. She informed me that you were hired to recover the stolen or misplaced goods.”

“That is mostly correct. I do not know if the thefts occurred over what period of time. I suspect it has been happening since day one when B&B opened for business. Here is my business card with my phone number on the back. How many guards do you have and how many are working per shift?”

“I have about 20 men on payroll. Five men work days, which is 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. I have 4 working afternoons till 10 in the evening and 3 on midnights.”

“What are the duties of your guards?”

“In the cargo area they are to inspect the delivery trucks and make sure the items are all there. Same thing when the trucks depart with loaded material. We have a few guards roaming the sewing floor to make sure the women are working and not talking. One guard is always at the front gate checking in visitors.”

“What about staff using illegal drugs?”

“Like any big operation we have our share. If we spot anyone using or selling illegal drugs we fire them on the spot. We have classes once a month to educate our employees on safety. At the meetings I will speak about the dangers of working high on drugs.”

“How do you think your company lost so much material?”

“With 400 employees working here I bet in each department we have a few dishonest ones removing finished medical products. There are at least 6 exits the thieves can use.”

“I will recommend to the owners that they hire a few individuals as undercover operatives.”

“Does that really work?”

Henry says, “Yes, it does but takes time. You can place the undercovers in different departments. They can have lunch and take smoke breaks with the employees. This way they can eavesdrop on the employees talking.”

“How long does it take to get results?”

“My friend and fellow investigator in California told me it takes weeks. You have to earn the trust of the workers before they start bragging.”

Tom replies, “Please tell the owners your suggestion. If it comes from me, then Bob, Ryan and Tina will say they will look into it but do nothing.”

“Tell me about Bob, Ryan and Tina will you?”

“You have to keep what I am about to say between us?”

Henry says, “You have my word.”

“Bob and Ryan are cool owners to work for. They just do not walk the floor and meet with the workers. They are either in their offices or on the road meeting with suppliers. They are hardly here.”

“And Tina?”

“Tina is the one owner that the employees relate to. She is well liked.”