

The Bossman Plan

Part Four of a Nine Part Series

by **Eric Heise**

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Two cops sat in an unmarked cruiser across the street from Ramon's second hand appliance store. Ramon hadn't opened for a week, having been in the car accident, but Detective Tony Morasutto and Sergeant Jack Bailey had it on good authority that Ramon was coming back to work today. And when he came back into work, Bailey and Morasutto had a few things to discuss with Ramon, namely why Ramon might think that Carlos Quimby had two kilos of coke on him just before he was used as a tackling dummy in an intersection. Oddly enough to add, Ramon was in a car accident in the vicinity of that area at the very same time.

A couple of black kids walked by the dark blue Crown Vic, pointing. Bailey, in the passenger seat saluted his coffee cup to them and then used it to wave them off again. The kids shook their heads and kept going. Morasutto sighed and rubbed the sweat out of his eyes.

"You think maybe this guy took another day off, Jack?" Morasutto asked his partner.

"Nah, he's coming to work today. Just give him a few more minutes." Bailey took another sip from his coffee, getting some drops on his dirty blonde mustache. Ramon walked around the corner and towards his shop. His left arm was in a sling, and he carried his briefcase with his right. "There's our boy. Must not have been able to get a rental," Bailey said turning his head to his partner who remained fixed on Ramon. "See, just needed to give him a few more minutes on a count that he walked to work." Morasutto nodded his thick chin, but didn't move his eyes from Ramon. "We'll give him a minute to turn the lights on."

Morasutto opened his door and got out of the car. The two black boys who taunted the undercover cops a few minutes before, were at the drug store a few feet up the block. Morasutto straightened out his shirt, running his hand flat down the buttons in the front. One of the kids let his mouth drop at the size of Morasutto, who played linebacker at Ole Miss before tearing an ACL in his junior year. Bailey got out with him, much smaller in size, lanky. He still wore a shirt and tie with a sports coat and he put that on while his coffee rested on the roof of the Crown.

"OK," Bailey said, "let's go to it." The two walked across the street and to the front of Ramon's store. Bailey peered in the front window, cupping his hand on the glass to cut out the glare. Morasutto opened the door and walked in, holding it open for Bailey. Bailey waltzed up the center aisle, second hand merchandise of air conditioners, televisions, stereo receivers and turntables and the occasional washer littered both sides of the store. Bailey stopped to finger through some Wilson golf clubs, whistling a nondescript tune. Morasutto stood next to him, looking around, towering over Bailey who still had his coffee cup in hand. Ramon came out from the back room, arm in a sling. He heard the bells rings on the door when Morasutto opened it and he noticed right away that these two weren't here for an air conditioner, like the seven messages on his machine were asking about. These two were cops, he could tell from the coffee cup. Thugs wouldn't have a coffee cup. He stepped to the cash register on the right side of the counter.

“Good morning,” Ramon started. “Can I help you gentlemen in someway?”

“How you doing today?” Bailey asked and turned his attention away from the clubs. “Say, you look just like that gymnastics coach I see on TV.” He was waving his finger at Ramon. “What’s his name?”

“Karolyi,” Ramon said.

“Karolyi, yeah that’s the guy. Karolyi. Anyone ever tell you that?”

“A few times, yes.”

“Yeah, Karolyi.” He opened his coat to show his badge on his belt. “Sergeant Bailey, this is my colleague Detective Morasutto.”

“The police department’s air conditioner broke. You want a new one?” Ramon offered. Bailey smiled wide.

“No, why do you say that?”

“I come back to my store, I was sick for a few days. Seven messages on the machine for air conditioners and the heat outside is unbearable. Why else would anyone come in here? No one has asked for a stereo in months.”

Bailey chuckled. “Not stereo season, huh?”

“Not much of anything season,” Ramon said taking the Windex in his right hand and spraying the glass case top. “Not with this economy and everyone out of work. You must know better than anyone that it is stereo stealing season, not stereo buying season.”

“Well, that may be true, but we’re not with Robbery,” Bailey admitted. “Were you sick?”

“Yes, I was in an accident and suffered a mild concussion. I got some dizzy spells for a few days and could not come into work,” Ramon said.

“No one to watch your store for you?” Bailey asked.

“No, I am a one-man gang, you could say.”

Bailey nodded, frowning.

“So I assumed you were here to run some leads on some stolen merchandise, but you’re not with Robbery. You must be here for a Zenith, then,” Ramon said.

“No, actually we’re Vice and we want to ask you a few questions about a Carlos Quimby.”

“I know no one by that name. Certainly I have no employee of that name.”

“I know, you told us. You’re a one-man gang.”

“One-man gang, that’s right,” Ramon said. “So who is this Quimby?”

“He *was* a street punk user dealer. A car slammed into him the other week.”

“I very sorry to hear that,” Ramon said.

“Why? He was a scumbag,” Morasutto said.

Ramon shrugged, throwing his right arm up in the air and turning around to pick through some stuff behind the counter. “What do I care? I didn’t know him. Why curse the dead.”

“He lived in this neighborhood,” Bailey said.

“A lot of people live in this neighborhood, Officer -.”

“Bailey, Sergeant Bailey.”

“Bailey, yes, right. As I say, a lot of people live in this neighborhood.”

“This neighbor dealt and used.”

“Sergeant Bailey, take a look around you. This whole neighborhood is a haven for users and dealers. I see this kid could not be more than ten years old. Just last week he asked me if I was buying. And you cops and the city don’t do a damned thing to fix the problem around here,” Ramon said. “Everyday, everyday someone gets shot and killed and overdoses and dies and deals and uses. After a while, who cares? You know? It is life. All I worry about is that they don’t steal from me, which they do, and I call you people and you never catch them. So what am I to do? Ah!” Ramon waved his hand at them. “You people do nothing to fix the problem around here. I live in this neighborhood all my life and all my life this place is the pits.”

“Sorry you don’t like our work, Ramon,” Bailey snapped. “Call the Mayor’s office and complain. I got nothing to do with Customer Service and Satisfaction. And I don’t know shit about doing a job like that. But what I’d like to know about is where you’ve been for the last week. Me and Tony here, we’ve been waiting for you to get back to work.”

“I told you, I wasn’t well,” Ramon said. “What is it to you? I don’t work for you.”

“No, but you were involved in a car accident last Thursday.”

“Big deal. I already told you that.”

“That’s the same day Carlos Quimby was used as a tackling dummy in the south end of town.”

“Again, what does that have anything to do with me?”

“Your accident was in the south end of town, the western end side, but still technically the south end.”

“Who cares?” Ramon asked. “There must have been a pile of accidents in town on that day. Are you interviewing everyone who was involved in a car accident on a Thursday in this city?”

“No, just the ones in the south end of town,” Bailey replied, smiling. “Especially those that happened around the same time.”

Ramon shrugged. “Mine was afternoon.”

“I know, that’s when Quimby got killed.”

“Again, two separate accidents,” Ramon said. “No relation whatsoever. Why don’t you question the people in that accident to find some fault.”

“It’s not fault we’re looking for, Mister Enriquez,” Morasutto said. “We’re looking for the person who sold Quimby two kilos of coke just before the cars slammed into him.”

Bailey smiled and winked. “That’s what we want to know and how much you know of it.”

“What do you think this is, random drug dealer checks?” Ramon snapped. “Get out the both of you, get out of my store.”

“We got it on good authority that the appliance business isn’t doing land office sales lately,” Bailey said. “I got a good idea that back room back there has much more than old radio parts.” Bailey was leaning the glass counter now, pointing to the back of the store that was divided by a wall and the doorway was curtained. He drank the last bit of coffee from his Styrofoam coffee cup and tossed it into a wastebasket on the other side of Ramon. Bailey flashed his brown eyebrows at Ramon and smiled behind the mustache that needed a trim.

“I think it is time that both of you left,” Ramon replied.

Bailey grimaced and raised his eyebrows. He reached inside his coat pocket and pulled out a business card, handing it to Ramon. Ramon did not accept it. Bailey shrugged and tossed it on the counter. “There are bigger fish in this city than you, Ramon. Helping us can help you. No help from you and you get no help from us.”

“Get out.”

Bailey smiled. “We’ll be talking to you, Ramon.” Bailey turned and walked out. Morasutto followed.

Out in the hot sun, Bailey pulled his sunglasses out of his coat pocket and put them on his head. He took a deep breath and looked around. “He’s the one.”

“Yup,” Morasutto replied. “Now, we just gotta get the evidence. Was Hinks getting that wire tap installed this morning?”

“It should already be installed,” Bailey said. “Anything he says on that phone line will get recorded. Did you get the bug in place?”

“It’s behind the washer in the front.”

Bailey nodded. “We’ll get him.”

The two walked back to the unmarked cruiser that stood out as an unmarked cruiser like a sore thumb and for Bailey he thought that was ideal. Everyone on the block paying attention saw both him and Morasutto get out of the car and go into Ramon’s. Maybe there was a chance that someone in the neighborhood knew that Ramon dealt in the back of his store and maybe they were sick of it enough to call the cops for a tip.

Just maybe.

Inside, Ramon watched the two cops stand out in front of his store and then cross the street, returning to the cruiser. How he could have missed it the first time, he couldn’t figure. It was probably that his mind was on other things, particularly whether he’d get visitors like Bailey and Morasutto today or not. As fate would have it, he did and he went into the back room to make his phone call.

Ramon grabbed an old beige and dusty rotary phone from a shelf. He reached behind his computer and unplugged the phone line going to the modem and plugged it into the phone. He had this line, a computer line, installed to keep the business line free. It only made local calls (his service provider had a local number) and it was unlisted. He dialed the number, literally, and waited for the connection. A voice came on the other end.

“Let me speak to the Man,” Ramon said. A moment later, another voice hit the line. “Yes, it is me. I had my visitors. Just now. Fine, I will meet you then.”

Ramon hung the phone up, unplugged it and returned the line to the computer and phone to the shelf before returning to his storefront to carry out a day’s work.

Ramon stood at the street corner. He had just got there when the black sedan’s bright headlights caught his attention and pulled up to the curb next to him. The passenger window opened halfway, showing Ramon who he needed to see. Ramon got into the car and it drove off. A few seconds later another car flipped their lights on and started to follow the sedan.

The Bossman’s palace was on the other side of town, in the richer section, but hidden from the street. He had his attorney purchase the property, an antique Victorian, several years ago to conceal ownership from the neighbors and the city. Inside had been renovated and decorated in crimson and gold, the colors of the Bossman.

The sedan carrying Ramon pulled through the front gates and to the carport on the side of the house. The house was set a quarter of a mile from the street. The property was lined with a brick wall and large, tall trees with surveillance cameras in the bushes. A man Ramon remembered from the neighborhood opened his door when the car came to a stop. He greeted Ramon with a nod and pointed to the door with his hand. Ramon went inside the house alone.

Gabriel, the Bossman's "public relations representative" met Ramon inside. There was a chill to the house and the sweat on Ramon's brow dried. Gabriel smiled to Ramon and shook his free hand. "Welcome to Avalon, Mister Enriquez. I trust your ride was pleasant and accommodating."

"Yes, yes, it was fine," Ramon said taken back. The staircase in front of him in the foyer was elegant and fantastic. The railing was mahogany, deeply stained and carved with angelic curves and ripples. The walls were all a dark crimson, with gold lamps dimly lit. Guards dressed in suits and trendy dress wear stood by doorways and off to the side of windows. All had wires hanging out of their ears. Ramon bit his lip and looked in amazement. "I have you to thank?"

Gabriel smiled, extending his neatly trimmed black goatee. "It was of no hassle." His voice matched the décor, speaking even and with elegance. He was dressed in a tan suit, trendy, but more conservative than the others. Ramon suddenly felt very out of place in his ten year old short sleeve button down and brown pants. "Come," he spoke smooth and pointed politely with his hand. "Let me show you to the main study. The Bossman waits for you there." Ramon thought that Gabriel would use another name for the Bossman except Bossman. The name was so slang and this guy wasn't. Hearing him say it didn't even seem right.

Gabriel led Ramon into the study on the other side of the foyer. The room was dimly lit with gold lamps, the walls covered with dark stained mahogany bookcases and the windows were covered with the crimson curtains. The Bossman sat behind a huge desk off to the right of the doorway. Sitting in front of the desk were two men dressed in suits. They were in the middle of a relaxed conversation when the Bossman stopped and looked up. He was leaning to his right, rubbing his chin. "We'll have to continue this later," he said to the other two, who got up from their chairs and moved out of the room. The Bossman stood and extended his hand to Ramon. Ramon approached the front of the desk.

"Mister Enriquez, a pleasure to have you at Avalon," Bossman said shaking Ramon's hand. Ramon nodded. The Bossman gestured for him to sit. Gabriel joined them. "I trust your ride here was adequate."

"Yes, thank you," Ramon said. He sat with his hands in his lap and his feet crossed one over the other.

"Good," the Bossman said. He wore a dark suit with a gold chain around his neck. On his head, he wore a multi colored cap with no brim. "Can I offer you a beverage, juice, espresso, glass of water?"

"Maybe just some water."

Bossman nodded. "Gabriel?"

“Theodore should be here in a moment with some refreshments,” Gabriel said in his even and smooth may. He rose from his seat. “I will see if I can give him a hand.” He left the room out another doorway.

“How’s your arm?”

“It’s healing,” Ramon said. “Should be OK in a few days.”

“Still getting dizzy?”

“Just a little sensitive to bright lights, but other than that I feel all right.”

“Good,” the Bossman said. “Now, Mister Enriquez, we have some issues to attend to. Since our friends at the police department haven’t been very friendly with you this week, I suggest that we turn this up a notch.”

“What did you have in mind?” Ramon asked.

“Well,” Bossman said standing. “This would be easy if Mister Quimby were still alive. We could kill him, dispose of the body and be done with him. But we cannot kill Mister Quimby because he is already dead. Presents a bit of a problem, doesn’t it?” Bossman walked around to the front of the desk and sat on the corner to Ramon’s right.

“Just a little one,” Ramon said.

“Yes,” Bossman said and took a deep breath. He spoke with even and smooth grace, such as Gabriel only with a thicker and deeper voice. He sounded more like the well-educated man he was underneath the gangster reality he really is. “And I don’t think killing his brother Julio would help us with keeping the police away, would it?”

“No, I don’t think so either.”

Bossman took another deep breath, looking up to the ceiling and thought for a moment. “We could always pay the police off,” he said. “But I don’t think Bailey and Morasutto are the bribing type, do you?”

“No, I don’t think they are,” Ramon replied. “And killing them would just get us a lot more attention.”

“Yes, killing them would generate a lot more attention than we have now,” he said. Gabriel led another black man in a traditional tuxedo into the room. Theodore carried a silver tray with glasses, cups, a couple of pictures and a plate of biscuits, placing it on a small table in the room. He then left the room as quick as he came. Gabriel stood behind the chair he was sitting on. Bossman gestured to the table. “Let’s get a drink and a snack.” Ramon got up and followed Bossman, who sat in one of the four crimson leather chairs near the table. Ramon sat across from him, Gabriel in between and poured Ramon a glass of water. “The evidence that Sergeant Bailey and Detective Morasutto have on you is purely circumstantial. They’re fishing. They know of your activities, they have for some time, but just as in the past, they do not have any evidence of your backroom sales.”

“But that doesn’t mean they will go away,” Ramon said.

“No, they won’t go away,” Bossman said. “But they don’t have to find anything either. My first suggestion is that we either suspend or move your distribution to a more isolated location. My feeling is that the sales cool for a while and then we can pick things back up at a later date.”

Ramon didn’t want to have to stop, but the Bossman was right. There was no reason to give the cops a reason. “Yes, I think you are right. For now, we cease. Later, we continue, but not necessarily in the store.”

“Don’t feel like this is a permanent stoppage, my friend,” Bossman said holding up his hands. “This is temporary. There are clients out there who still require your serves.”

“Such as Hu Jai,” Ramon said.

“Well, Mister Hu Jai is different matter for another time,” Bossman said. “My primary concerns are directly related to the sudden police activity in your neighborhood. I would like for the police to stop and go away, I think we all would, however, I don’t think they will do that too quickly anytime soon. But I do believe that we can help them in that direction.”

“How do you intend on doing that?” Ramon asked. “Bailey is no smarter a cop than any other cop, but cops tend to be lucky.”

“Yes, they are very resourceful,” Bossman said. “Which is why they will have a drug bust one of their own.” Ramon gave him a questioning look. “There has been quite a bit of police activity in the drug bust area lately. They have busted some of my people, some other people, people we do business with and it is all getting very tiresome.” Bossman got up from his seat. “The police are planning a drug bust tomorrow night. What they are going to bust is one a bit closer to home. Detective Morasutto has a brother. The detective’s brother is a CPA account with an accounting firm on the other side of town. It is a smaller firm, nothing very extravagant. But Mister Morasutto, the brother, does not make the wages of the big city account. CPA or not, bills are bills and to subsidize, he has made a few sales on the side to slide to by.”

“How true is all of this?” Ramon asked. “Does this brother really deal, and if so, why haven’t we ever known about it.”

Bossman gave a slight smile and raised a finger. “Brother Morasutto dealt a little in college, nothing crazy. He has continued to deal as a member of the work force. He is strictly small time, uses a distributor from up north. It is someone I venture to guess he has used since college. That is one reason why we have never heard of him. Another is that Detective Morasutto has never given us a problem until now. A third, and this is the important, is that we don’t and won’t ever know every dealer out there until they become a need to know. Now, we need to know.”

Ramon thought for a moment. “That sounds all very good, but that won’t guarantee that the police will stay out of our hair.”

“No, it won’t, but it will stir them up,” Bossman said. “Detective Morasutto will be questioned and probed no less. They will investigate briefly, but nothing career threatening. But in two

weeks there will be another raid and this time Sergeant Bailey will fall victim, not from a family member, but of himself.”

“You’re going to frame Bailey,” Ramon said.

“We think of it more as sudden confusion,” Gabriel said. “The evidence that they will find on Sergeant Bailey is enough to stick if Internal Affairs does their job, or it will become unresolved, again if Internal Affairs does their job. This is merely a smoke screen that can cause a car crash, or will be a mere diversion. Either way, it has no link to us.”

“After the police are in a flux of confusion, they will not be able to pay attention to anything else and we will be free to continue our business,” Bossman said.

“What if this doesn’t work?” Ramon asked.

“I intend for it to work,” Bossman said. “Most of my plans do. So, are we clear?” Ramon nodded. He wasn’t comfortable, but he was clear. “Good. I will have Gabriel get you home. If there is anything, you know how to contact me.” Ramon and Gabriel stood. The Bossman extended his massive hand to Ramon. Ramon shook it.

“Thank you for seeing me,” Ramon said.

“Please, it was of no bother.”

The black sedan pulled off the gated estate and headed back to the inner city. The same car that followed the sedan earlier flicked its headlights on again and followed the sedan with Ramon in it.

Bailey looked over to Morasutto. “What do you think he talked to the Bossman about?”

“Never can tell,” Morasutto said. “Probably a loan or a favor to get us off his back. It’s not usual for this guy to deal with anyone but his small client base. He must be shaking in his boots.”

“Well, I don’t give a shit how scared he is, I intend on busting the bastard,” Bailey said.

Morasutto followed the sedan back to the other side of town.

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