

## 917A TO EXTORTION ARREST IN ONE LESSON\*

Dang Nguyen waited for just the right moment to push the chair into Quan Ngo's path. Glowering smugly, Dang threatened Quan, "Sit down. I want to talk to you."

Quan sat at the restaurant table as directed, next to Dang and his three fellow VG Boyz punks. Quan was scared—he knew other business owners who had been shaken down for "protection", and he knew what happened to the ones who resisted. He wasn't interested in getting burned out or beaten up, so he listened to the ominous proposition.

"We're VGB, and we want to help you. You're Vietnamese and we are. You need protection from other Asian gangs in this area. Without protection, you got problems."

"But we just opened this place a few weeks ago, and haven't made any profit yet."

"You're not hearing me right", countered Dang. "The Chinese gangs will charge you a lot more, and you DO need protection. How about \$1000 up front and \$500 a month from then on?"

Quan noticed that the other three "Boyz" were shooting him the evil eye as he again protested that he couldn't afford it. He knew then he was "in for it" somehow or other.

Dang gave him one more chance. "You really don't get it, do ya'? Bad things can happen here if you don't pay up. And don't get any ideas about the cops—I'm just one VG Boy. If I go to jail, there are plenty others to do the payback."

Dang then told one of his homeboys "Go into the kitchen and put some work in." Quan knew that he wasn't planning on helping the cooks. He wondered if it would be just harassment this time, or vandalism, theft or violence.

Dang passed Quan a piece of paper with some writing and a VGB symbol on it. "Here's my name and phone number. Anyone else offers you protection, you show 'em this paper and tell 'em you've already got VGB"

Meanwhile, Temple Rosemead Unit 53T1 was rolling to a radio call about an abandoned vehicle. Deputy Jim Farley was expecting little more than towing a car and then going back to writing tickets. But you never know in this job.

He swung into the parking lot of the Garden Restaurant, parked, got out, and looked around as he headed inside to talk to the informant, who happened to be the owner of the place. Once inside, he saw the usual situation for a restaurant at 1025 hours on a Sunday morning. A few people here and there, also lots of empty tables...

\*917A—Abandoned car

*Ah, this guy coming over must be the informant. Just point me to the car so I can help you out. Say, what's this guy look so stricken about. It's just an abandoned car.*

That one little obs (observation) changed Quan's day, and future, for way better. Because *he wasn't planning on telling* Jim anything about his visitors. He hadn't decided what he was going to do. He knew VGB could make good on the threats.

Jim noticed that at the table of people the informant had come from, all four guys got up. One went toward the kitchen, asking if his to-go order was ready. One went to the restroom. The other two were just leaving in normal fashion. Jim saw the informant get the guy's food, and three of them casually left as Jim asked the informant...

"Hi. I'm here about the abandoned car, but first, why do you seem so shaken? Anything to be afraid of, or anything I should know?"

Jim already had an idea what might have happened just by what little he'd seen so far, but it wouldn't matter unless the restaurant owner spilled the beans.

Quan thought the timing was eerie. *Four guys tell me not to rat or they'll "get me", and the next thing I know, there's a deputy in the restaurant, and he's like, reading my mind.*

"Sir, please tell me why you appear so fearful, especially if I have time to do anything about it now."

*There's something about this deputy that gives me confidence. Well here goes.*

**"THOSE GUYS WHO JUST LEFT THREATENED TO BURN ME OUT IF I DON'T PAY FOR PROTECTION!!!!"**

*Well ok, let's see what we can do about that.*

Jim knew that one guy was still in the restroom. He knew that there was only one entrance to the rear parking lot where the other three were headed. From the restaurant doorway he requested back-up, and 53A Deputy Angel Ramos started rolling immediately.

On L-Tac, (car-to-car radio frequency) Jim said, "Hey Angel, why don't you stop your car mid-driveway so we can block these guys in?"

Angel obliged, just when the fourth suspect was walking to the front door to leave. After courteously allowing the guy to go out the front door first, Jim walked up to Angel's car. "That's one of them," Jim told Angel as the suspect disappeared around the corner of the restaurant. From their position Jim and Angel couldn't see the suspects or their car, but they knew they couldn't get out.

Jim got another unit rolling, 53 Deputy Alan Liu and on the air told him “Alan, park on the street and walk up the driveway to meet Angel and me.”

Timing is everything. *Ideally, Alan will get here before these guys get rolling...oops, here comes the restroom guy back on foot.*

“Hi, Deputy. Hey, could you move your car so we can get out of here?”

Jim and Angel went into their “We’re just here to get egg rolls and jaw-jack” act.

“Sure, we’re sorry, no problem. We’ll move it right away. Have a nice day!”

As the suspect walked back around the corner, up walked Deputy Liu. Time for action.

Jim, Angel and Alan walked around the corner, spotted the suspects in their car just starting up, and went through a step-by-step “pedestrian” felony stop.

“Ok, guys, front seat—hands on dash. Back seat—hands on headrests...” And all that jazz. All four suspects went along with the program.

Deputy Chris Le was the next to arrive—mighty handy since he speaks Vietnamese. He assisted Jim with the investigation by translating and interviewing. First, he took the victim through field show-up instructions. (The victim was probably thinking *heck, maybe I won’t get burned out, if these deputies are so swift they can figure this out and catch these guys this fast. I’ll go ahead and “ID” these thugs.*) He did. Chris and Jim interviewed the suspects. Mainly they just heard baloney about how all four went to get food, know nuttin’ about any extortion, and belong to Vietnamese Gangster Boyz. They did trap the main suspect in a lie or two.

Meanwhile, Deputy Liu was searching the suspect’s car. The 19 Ecstasy pills were important to find, but the neat haul was the ten baggies of cocaine that Alan found hidden behind the gas cap!

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So let’s see--a deputy assigned to a traffic car gets a 917A call and presto, turns it into a an arrest with something not seen in many police reports-- 524PC (extortion), four in custody. End of story? How about if you knew that the main suspect pled out and got no prison time, and the other three hoods walked?

The discriminating reader has to wonder...*ok, fine, but did the restaurant go down the tubes? Did the owner get “whacked”? Any subsequent suspicious fire calls?*

NO! Rosemead deputies, particularly Chris Le and Jim Farley, recognized how gutsy the owner became with Jim's encouragement, so they patrol-checked the place like investors. Chris learned that one of the four actually lived next door to the restaurant. Chris did some Vietnamese whispering into that guy's ear, and he caused no further trouble. What with occasional code 5's (stake outs) and patrol checks, the restaurant thrived with no further trouble.

In other words, the restaurant got the *right* kind of protection.