

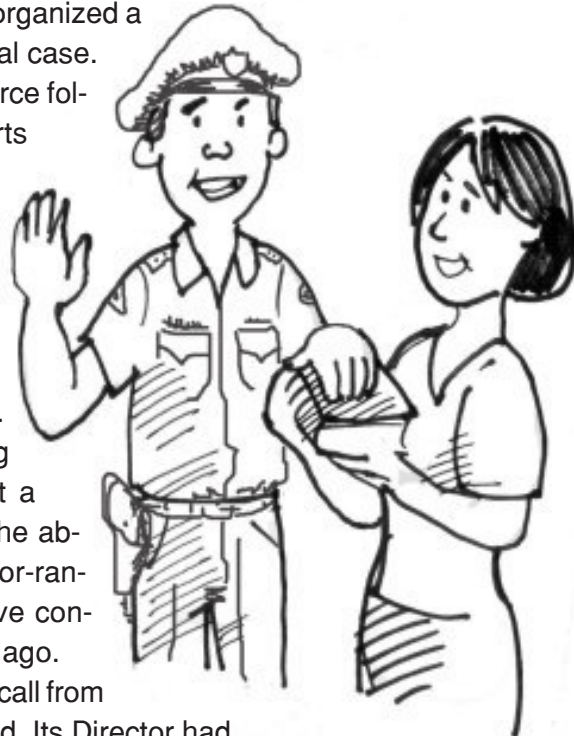
“My men are innocent...”

Two students from an exclusive university—children of rich families—had been kidnapped. The couple, Coco and Roxie, was abducted by armed men while having snacks in an eatery in Quezon City. Police Chief Superintendent Ricardo de Guzman, Chief of Police of Quezon City, immediately organized a task force to investigate the sensational case.

In the following weeks, the task force followed various leads. As if their efforts were not enough, other investigative bodies soon joined in the search for the missing couple, whose families and friends exerted pressure on the government to help find them.

With so many organizations and people involved, the case dragged on. The couple’s loved ones began losing hope of ever finding them alive. Not a single word had been received from the abductors. If this was a case of kidnap-for-ransom, surely the kidnappers would have contacted the victims’ families a long time ago.

One day, CSupt de Guzman got a call from one of the investigating bodies involved. Its Director had



called a press conference, tagging members of the Quezon City police as suspects in the kidnapping case, based on eyewitness accounts. The Chief was aghast at the accusation. He knew his men well. They worked hard to fulfill every mission given them. He was sure that they did not have the motive to kidnap two students. In fact, they were following a hot lead that pointed to members of the police force from a big province north of Manila as the masterminds of the abduction. How come the tables were being turned against them?

The next day, the Quezon City Police was ordered to desist from involving any further in the investigation. Four of Police Director de Guzman's men were charged and detained, along with other suspects who were tagged as their cohorts. The Chief was fuming mad over this development. Whoever insinuated the Quezon City Police Force's involvement in such a heinous crime surely wanted to destroy its image and credibility. CSupt de Guzman knew that he and his men have made a lot of enemies in the past because of their tough campaign against syndicated vices. Could it be that one of them was behind all this grand scheme of lies and deception?

Several days passed. CSupt de Guzman was called to the NAPOLCOM (National Police Commission) office. There, one of the NAPOLCOM commissioners warned him against showing or stating any support for his men, especially now that all the major dailies in the country had begun running stories of the possible involvement of the Quezon City Police in the kidnapping case.

"Everybody would take you for a coddler of scalawags in uniform if you show any support for them. You should call a press conference immediately to denounce the acts of these suspected criminals," barked the NAPOLCOM commissioner.

"With due respect, Sir, I believe that my men are innocent. Unless I have hard evidence against them, I will continue denouncing the act but not my men. In fact, Sir, they were following a hot lead that could lead us to the real masterminds just before they were thrown into prison," CSupt de Guzman answered firmly.

Enraged by the Chief's reply, the commissioner lost no time in threatening him with immediate relief as Chief of Police.

"If you do not follow my orders, then take this as the end of your career in the police force. Think about it, your career or your blind loyalty and concern for your men," muttered the angry commissioner under his breath.

There was a long silence as the two men stood facing each other, one waiting for the other's next move. The commissioner left the room unceremoniously, leaving the Chief to ponder on what op-

tion to consider. He could do as the NAPOLCOM commissioner ordered and keep his position as Chief of Police of Quezon City. His men, innocent though they may be, would languish in prison and their families would go hungry. If he refused to obey the Chairman's orders, he would surely lose his position, get bad publicity, but his men would forever be thankful for his unwavering support to them. "If only somebody, somewhere, could lead us to the real masterminds behind this crime..." he silently wished.

CSupt de Guzman closed his eyes and uttered a short prayer for guidance in solving his dilemma.



Just a Request

That's another call from the mayor. She's very persistent on her request to relieve SP04 Wilbert Cruz. It was really a small misunderstanding on the demolition of squatters but the Mayor wants him out of the town. I know my men – they are loyal to their duties as police officers, notwithstanding lapses in judgment. But even though I tried hard to explain and even apologize to the Mayor, she wants to hear none of it. It's true that the Mayor is always there whenever we need assistance for our operations. But is this reason enough to let a good cop down?



Summary Killings

I was then the Chief of the Criminal Investigation of the Northern Police District when I ordered the investigation of a barangay captain for alleged summary killings. The barangay captain was a protégé of a military supplier who was well-connected with Malacanang.

A top military official sent by a Malacanang functionary ordered me to stop the investigation, but I refused him outright. I told him that it was not the right thing to do. In addition, I said that my men would lose their respect for me – something that I worked so hard to get – if I stopped the investigation. If they forced me to, I would have to tell the media about it.

So we continued investigating until we recovered eight bodies inside the manholes of a bus station. The barangay captain was charged for eight counts of murder. The threats continued, but my Chief of Police assured me of his support.