

Case #: FL24010909

On Saturday, 10/19/2024, around 11am I got a call from a man registering as a "restricted" number asking for XXXXXX -a name I haven't gone by for 10 years- said he was calling about jury duty. I told him I've been called to jury many times and everything is done through the mail and hung up on him. He called back from the "ISANTI CNTY OFC" and told me his name was Sergeant Tom Leatham from sheriff's department. He encouraged me to look up the number on my caller ID and also shared with me the address of the Isanti County Sheriff's Office (2440 Main St S, Cambridge) to verify that my caller ID matched the number look-up on google.

He then proceeded to ask me why I failed to show up to jury duty on a federal murder case. I told him that I was never summoned. He continued by saying the papers were delivered to my address and signed by me upon delivery. I told him that did not happen and he asked for my email so he could send me the documentation. I gave him my email: He said that I would then need to come into the office to verify signature. I asked about the office being open and his response was that in these types of cases people are on the clock all the time -"crime never stops." He told me that I have 2 warrants. Failure to Appear FTA-CV-2237 and Contempt of Court COC-CV-7628. The trial has now been put on hold due to the fact that I did not show up. I told him that was impossible, how would someone be assigned to a jury without having been through the sorting process?

He asked if I received the documents he sent (text1/doc1/doc2 that I previously sent to the evidence link) - I did ...he asked if that was my signature. I replied, no - he asked have you ever been arrested, I again said no. He said it was crucial that I come into the office to clear this up right away and deal with the 2 warrants under my name. He said I would need two forms of ID and that Judge Laura T. Beyer has me on a "gag order" as to not talk about the murder case or any of my legal issues at present until I'm able to clear myself of said warrants. I vaguely remember him saying it shouldn't take long, maybe 30 minutes or so - I told I would be on my way after I talked to my husband. He told me that I was now on a mobile escort and had to stay on the phone with him until I arrived. That I may not make calls or text because of the recording system. He reminded me of the gag order as I asked my son to call my husband. I talked to my husband on my son's phone to let him know I was going to the sheriff's office (which I kept calling the courthouse for some reason) to fix a mistake and that I'm under a gag order so I can't share much with him other than it isn't about him or the family and it is nothing that is a personal

about me. I kissed my kids goodbye and let them know I was going to run to the Cambridge courthouse and left.

He asked me to let him know when I got into my car and when I did he said to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so ...as I was heading towards Cambridge a sheriff's squad car passed me going the opposite direction. I notified Sergeant Tom and he claimed that it was no big deal just part of the mobile escort. He then told me he was sending more documents and that he wanted me to pull over to go over documents with me safely. I pulled into the Wayside Prairie Park where I received more documents (text2 & text2details that I previously sent to the evidence link). This is when he asked if I've ever been a part of a federal jury proceeding before - I told him no only state. He then informed me that these warrants had fees attached to them (\$4500ea) and if I show up at the office without payment receipts that I would be put into custody. My other option would be to turn myself in and sit in a holding cell until my signature went through the verification process which could be 2 to 3 weeks - emotions took over at this point and everything seemed like madness. During this time the sheriff's squad car that passed me earlier came back around and parked by where I was parked. I glanced over my shoulder crying with fear, frustration, and bewilderment ...I couldn't see through the dark tint on the sheriff's windows but I just waved my phone at whoever was in there and told Sergeant Tom that the sheriff was parked next to me. He attempted to calm me and told me it was part of the mobile escort. The squad car eventually left but I'm unaware of when since I was in hysterics.

At some point he made a comment about this being really sh\*tty and that he sees I'm a law abiding person. He said he believed me that it's a terrible mistake and hopes it can be cleared up quickly.

I divulged to Sergeant Tom that I don't have \$9000, that all I have is \$100 cash in my bag. I asked if I could call my parents about the money and he said that could potentially put me in a situation to break the gag order and as a law abiding citizen I wouldn't want to get into more trouble than I already am. I believe this is when I asked about a payment by check and he proceeded to tell me that I can't just walk in and slap money down on his desk. I told him that I can't be in jail for 3 weeks. My husband is disabled and doesn't work so my family depends on my income. I'm not at work - I don't get paid. He communicated in such a way that he was taking notes about this information and asking about me being the primary income earner for the family that the judge might take that into consideration.

He went back and forth with me about what the government would be willing to take (like he kept putting me on hold to verify with court money people or bail bond people). He was telling me if I'm lying about how much money I have, the government will be granted access to my accounts in order to pay the excess amount that I was claiming I couldn't pay. I informed him that I was not lying, that my checking account has \$200 and my savings has \$300 ...that I simply do not have access to \$9000. I said something about not even having access to that kind of money on my credit card. He then went into a spiel about how he is not allowed to take any

credit card information over the phone and that no payments can ever be made over the phone. Eventually, he came to the amount of \$2000 to defer the warrants into pending while the signatures went through the verification process and I could stay at home while that was being done.

Throughout the above conversation and several more to come he would often say things like "I see you're a law abiding citizen" "I see here you have a clean record" "you don't want to add anymore trouble to what you already have" " just because you're on the phone with sheriff's office does not mean you don't need to follow traffic laws" He would often ask if I had any question, if I understood what he was saying, and that I should listen carefully - I often said I don't really understand what is happening and that I was truly confused by all of this.

It was decided I would try to get \$2000 from the bank off my bank credit card. He said it was best not to tell him where I banked. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

Sergeant Tom said he had to go to a meeting and that he would be transferring me to another officer....the other officer - Deputy Erik Collins

Deputy Erik Collins definitely had an American accent. It could have been the same guy for all I know but it did seem like they had slightly different timbres. I'm just not sure.

Deputy Erik said something similar to the conversation Sergeant Tom and I just had but wanted me to fill him in on the next step I was taking. I filled him in and he told me to proceed (while obeying the law) and often did check-ins asking where I was and what the new ETA was - I was to tell him when I arrived at places and before I exited my car he would remind me of the gag order and to take my phone with me as part of the mobile escort - and then tell him when I was back in the car.

Even though I brought my phone with me everywhere with him still on the line I was told to check in with him before I leave the car and when I get back into the car.

I arrived at the bank around 1pm (Cambridge Wells Fargo) ...after checking in with Deputy Erik I was told to proceed into the bank keeping my phone with me - my credit card didn't work at the ATM (bank closed) I attempted to pull the cash from my credit card two times.

Deputy Erik asked me several questions ...I don't really remember any of them except he brought up me saying something about writing a check and how I would have done that. I told him I didn't know I was thinking out loud about maybe transferring money or something ...which is what led me to the idea of transferring the \$2000 from my credit card to my checking account. Then attempting to pull it out of my checking account from the ATM - everytime I left my car I

was reminded of the gag order and that I didn't want to get into any more trouble than I already was. I was only able to get \$1000 from the ATM.

I would go in and out of hysterics throughout this mobile escorted drive - felt nauseous and had a pounding headache. At one point I told him that if I had been selected to be on this jury panel the judge would know who I am then. All I have to do is come in and the judge would say that I'm not the Melissa that has been appointed to this jury panel. Deputy Erik just explained it away about how even if that is true it doesn't erase the warrants on my name and that they have to be dealt with, financially or time served.

He suggested I get a money order from Walmart or Krogers. I asked if I could pay with the money order and he said no that I would have to cash it out - which I would be able to also do at Walmart. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

I arrived at Walmart and after checking in with Deputy Erik I was told to proceed into the establishment keeping my phone with me. I was also reminded of the gag order and that I didn't want to get into any more trouble than I already was.... I purchased the money order but Walmart could not cash it. They suggested Walgreens. I checked back in once in the car and He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

Went through the whole routine again at Walgreens - they would not cash my money order either. They suggested Coborns.... Upon my check in, back in the car Deputy Erik said we should proceed with what I had. He would look into places that would be able to cash my money order. He sent more documents and explained where and how to make payments before making my way to the sheriff's office (QR & doc3 that I previously sent to the evidence link). He then proceeded to explain how and where to make payment at a kiosk. I asked about why they are at gas stations and that I'd rather deal with an actual person but he said that they do it this way to keep the privacy of citizens as warrants can be embarrassing and because people can become scared of being arrested if they have to deal with an actual person. On doc3 there are three options - I was to pick which was closest and proceed to that kiosk. None were close. I told him that and said the Oak Grove was the closest yet still a half an hour away. I told him I pass Coborns on the way to the kiosk so I would stop and try to cash my money order. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

He checked in often and when I arrived at Coborns I checked in with Deputy Erik. He told me to proceed into the establishment reminding me of the gag order and to keep my phone with me. Coborns would not cash my money order. I checked back in once in the car and told him I didn't know where else to look to cash my money order. He said just to deposit what I had at the kiosk and make sure to get a receipt. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

At some point the phone disconnected and I didn't know what to do so I called the ISANTI CNTY OFC and the same time a call came into my phone I was going to conference them together but Deputy Erik said not too. He asked if I hung up and I told him no, that it just beeped and disconnected. He chalked it up to poor reception.

Around 3pm I made it to the CoinFlip kiosk where he told me that there are cameras at this establishment (speedway gas station) for my safety, reminded me of my gag order, and that the people that work there are to report any suspicious activity. To keep my privacy, I need to take him off speaker phone when I enter. Once at the kiosk he will walk me through each transaction and give me all the number codes I need to match up with the FDIC accounts. He said to make sure to get a receipt or take a picture of the receipt from the screen if it has run out of paper to print one. I did exactly what he told me -no receipt so I took a picture of the screen. He told me that he saw the transaction and I told him no receipt. He reminded me that I will need that at the Sheriff's office to defer the warrants and that I should take a picture. I told him I already did. Once back in the car Deputy Erik said they found a place I can cash my money order in Blaine. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

At some point Sergeant Tom came back on the line and checked in, often asking where I was and what the new ETA was - I was to tell him when I arrived at the Money Exchange. I arrived at the Money Exchange around 4pm. I checked in with Sergeant Tom and he told me to proceed into the establishment reminding me of the gag order and to keep my phone with me. I remember barely being able to hold it together while the woman at the counter assisted me - she even commented about how my tears were breaking her heart. She wished for my day to get better as I left the building. I checked in and informed Sergeant Tom that I was charged to cash the money order so I no longer had the full \$1000. He said it was ok for now and that there was a kiosk in the money exchange where I could send the money and to make sure I get that receipt. I was reminded of my gag order and that I needed to take him off speaker phone for my privacy. I discovered the kiosk would not take any bills smaller than \$20 so all I could send was \$940. Sergeant Tom told me he could see the payment and to take the receipt because I will need that at the office. Again, there was no receipt so I took a picture of the kiosk screen.

I returned to the car checked in with Sergeant Tom and he said that the payments are being flagged. That I was supposed to make the deposit all at once to defer both warrants. I lost my mind - I told him I did everything exactly as they asked me too. He tried to throw Deputy Erik under the bus but I wasn't having it. I told him how f\*cked up this is. He told me that I needed to use respectful language and that sent me another document (doc4 that I previously sent to the evidence link). He tried to tell me that I lied about how much money I had because I originally said I only had \$100 and I let loose - I told him I did not lie. He needs to go back and listen to the recording. I never had this \$2000 to begin with. It came from a credit card that I have now maxed out. He brought up the jail time and the lack of receipts for the bonds collector to defer the warrants. He explained how the document he sent explains how to get the money I just sent in, returned. How it just covers partial of one the warrant fines and I now have to pay \$4500 because the red flags say I lied and deposited separately.

I was so exhausted at this point I asked straight up what my options were. He said turn myself in and stay in jail or pay the \$4500. I told him the only way I can get that kind of money is by calling my dad. He asked if I was sure about bringing in a 3rd party, that it could bring more trouble because family often put you in a position to break the gag order. I told him it was my only option right now. He agreed to conference call my dad but I was too emotional and he wanted me to calm down. I told him that it now 4:30pm I've been on the phone with him since 11, driving all over kingdom come. I needed to get gas, go to the bathroom, and get a snack. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

He reminded me when going into the gas station of the gag order - when I returned to the car I checked in with Sergeant Tom. I told him that it was getting late and asked how I was going to get into the sheriff's office. He assured me that even though the front office is closed, crime never quits and that there are side doors to make way to the warrant offices. He wanted to go over my plan when calling my dad. He made it very clear that if I break the gag order and say something out of line the judge would not be lenient and police would be dispatched. He said once conferenced he will not be saying a word but will be hearing everything that is said.

I called my dad around 5pm and conferenced him into the phone line with Sergeant Tom. I asked my dad if he was able to bring me \$4500. I told him it was a legal matter that I was physically ok (I was bawling) and that I was under a gag order so I can't share anything until it is all cleared up. I assured him I was safe and he said he needed to call me back in 5min because it was a lot of money. He hung up and Sergeant Tom said I could text him and let him know that the money would be returned after the legal matter was cleared. I text my dad.

I asked Sergeant Tom if he could locate a kiosk in Forest Lake because that is close to where my parents live and that way I can just deposit the money there. He said he would look and wanted to clarify the plan of where I was going to meet my dad. I told him probably in town someplace that my dad will be calling back. Sergeant Tom suggested I drive to the sheriff's

office and turn myself in but I said I should drive towards my parents so I can meet him quicker for the money. He asked if I was sure they would - I told him I hope so. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

As I drove on 109th towards Forest Lake my dad called back. Sergeant Tom advised me to pull over as to obey traffic laws and reminded me of the gag order before I was allowed to conference my dad in. My dad said he could get me the money, we decided to meet at Loves off 35w ...he asked me some questions -I answered as best I could not to violate the gag order. He basically wanted to know if I was by myself and physically safe. He did make some sideways statements knowing he was conferenced about things being on the upside and threatened lawyers. I told my dad ok. After my dad hung up. Sergeant Tom wanted to verify the plan and asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

My dad called back and Sergeant Tom reminded me of the gag order before I was allowed to conference my dad in. My dad informed me that was going to be late because he had to go get more cash from my uncle and asked if I could just come to his house. I told him I wasn't sure I wanted to drive that far because I still needed to get to the sheriff's office. My dad said he may be up to a half an hour later than expected. I said I would check back with him once I got to Loves.

Once he hung up Sergeant Tom said that if I went to my parents house I would be breaking the gag order. Family has a way of assisting in poor decisions, like running away and leaving the country. I told him I didn't want to get into more trouble. I will just tell my dad I can't meet him there. I will wait at Loves until he can get there. He told me I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination and obey all traffic laws.

I notified Sergeant Tom when I got to Loves. I told him I needed to call my dad about not going to his house. The phone disconnected again and I just waited for Sergeant Tom to call me back. He asked if I hung up and I told him no, that it just beeped and disconnected.

Sergeant Tom had me conference the call. I told my dad that going to his house violates the gag order so I will just wait for him at Loves. He said that he had someone go down to my uncle's and is on his way back already. That they will meet me at the Kwik trip 3min down the road. I told him ok. He again asked if I was safe and I assured him I was by myself. When I hung up Sergeant Tom asked for a check in on what was happening next. I told him that my dad is bringing the money and I am meeting him at Kwik Trip just down the road after I use the bathroom. I asked him if there was a kiosk near me and he said I will have to go back to the one

in Oak Grove. I told him ok. He reminded me when going into the gas station to take my phone and that the gag order is still in effect - when I return to the car I need to check in.

When I returned I checked in with Sergeant Tom. He asked me to let him know when I was ready to proceed and that I needed to state my name, where I was going, and the ETA of my arrival time for the mobile escort recording. He told me to proceed to the destination, buckle up and obey all traffic laws and that he would be checking in every 3 minutes or so

When I got to Kwik Trip I tried to find a place out of the way of all the traffic to wait for my dad. I checked in with Sergeant Tom and he wanted to go over the plan for meeting my dad one more time. As we were talking an officer parked across the gas station parking lot. I told Sergeant Tom he was there and that it looked like he was walking over. He said not to worry he was part of the mobile escort. The officer knows who I am because he flagged me in the system. I waved my phone at the officer as he approached. He asked if I was Mellissa. I said yes and started crying - I was feeling so embarrassed with the idea of these ridiculous warrants. He asked who I was talking to - I said Sergeant Tom Leatham. He told me to give him my phone. I complied. As soon as the officer started talking Sergeant Tom hung up.

Around 6pm Officer Tim VanGrinsven told me I was being scammed and that my dad was on the other side of the gas station and I can call him to come over. He took down some information and gave me his card to turn everything I had in.

Thank you Officer Tim!