



MY SISTER'S NAME IS TIM

Deputies Chris Stokes and Tom Martinez, working Altadena 71 EM's (graveyard shift), had been at it for four and a half hours one night in March, 2004. Contrary to outlander opinion, it's plenty cold enough in the dead of a March night in Southern California to wish you were inside by a fire somewhere. Nevertheless, Chris, bookman (passenger deputy who is "in charge" of the unit) tonight, and Tom had been looking *and* thinking, and in L.A. there is no end to what mischief a deputy can uncover when doing both.

The Thunderbird was facing them across an intersection at a red light. It had three guys in it. Nothing especially unusual about that, except that one of them looked mighty young for being out at 0340 hours. Chris and Tom noticed another invitation to dig further as the car passed by them through the intersection. No plates, front or rear.

The traffic stop was "routine" and the two deputies walked to the car to greet the occupants. A quickly noticed smashed-out right rear passenger window provided Chris with the next clue that the night could still be interesting that late in the shift.

Tom invited the driver to step out, whereupon the driver was checked for weapons. The pat-down netted a screwdriver from a pants pocket. Chris checked the juvenile—the one in the car who was apparently trying to set a new fashion trend by wearing one glove. *Aha! What's this? Feels like hard chunks in a front sweatshirt pocket. This calls for more looking into.*

Chris asked the juvie if he could check to see what was in his pocket, and the kid said yes, so Chris discovered shattered chunks of safety glass from a car. Tom invited the other passenger out—he too had some safety glass fragments in his jacket pocket. The plot was thickening.

The deputies wanted to know “whose car?” “Mine,” said the driver. There was no hit on the VIN in SVS (Stolen Vehicle System database), but the registration expired two years ago, and when Chris and Tom learned the driver was unlicensed, they knew they were at least going to take the car to “car jail”!

Now to find out what’s with all these chunks of glass. Chris did the inventory search of the car—a treasure trove of evidence consistent with capering—screwdriver, flashlight, a single glove, a stereo that’s barely balanced in its dashboard opening, a leather jacket with ID in someone else’s name. Chris noted where in the car each thing was found, thinking ahead to issues of figuring out which of the three would be heading to the famous annually haunted jail at Crescenta Valley Station.

Gotta know what’s in the trunk. Bingo—four car stereos, a chain saw (*burglary tool for a tree house?*) and four stereo face plates.

The driver used the old “I got them at a swap meet” story. The passenger’s stab at an explanation was “Huh, what stereos?” But Chris was also interested in the cell phone that the passenger had been packing. “I got it from my sister.” “No problem, pal. Say, how do you turn this thing on?” The passenger obliged, and up flashed the message “**HI, TIM!**” Another Bingo! “So, your sister’s name is ‘Tim’?” asked Chris as the passenger, caught red-handed in a lie, looked down sheepishly. *This job is such a kick.*

The deputies easily tied the juvie to the jacket that had a girl’s ID in it. They went 10-15 (arrested and booked prisoner(s)) with the whole kit and caboodle. And they would have had a great Reasonable Cause (unknown victim) Burglary arrest if it weren’t for the hand of fate.

No sooner had they commenced booking when Victim M.O. De Punsey called the station to report that today he woke up to the break-in of his car. He was not jazzed about the ripped off stereo, but he was really irked about the missing snazzy leather jacket. *Well, Mr. De Punsey, we just happen to have a leather jacket exactly your size!*

P.S. Chris and Tom had to change the classification of their report from Reasonable Cause to straight 459 PC with a known victim, and threw in Receiving Stolen Property as well (after all, maybe *some* of it *did* come from a swap meet!)