



[VIRGIL TIBBS] African-American male. Late 20s – mid 30s. Sydney Portiere with stage fight skills. Brilliant Pasadena homicide detective and forensic expert working a murder case in the racially bigoted atmosphere of 1960 Alabama. Articulate, mentally astute, physically fit and statuesque. Dogged determination. Self-confident. Stays focused and keeps his emotions in check. LEAD...

[START]

GILLESPIE. This how fast you catch murderers in your neck of the woods?

TIBBS. Might need to dig a little deeper.

GILLESPIE. Excuse me?

TIBBS. Don't think he's your man, Chief.

GILLESPIE. You bought that kid's story? Shit, I thought you were supposed to be the hotshot cop? *(sneers)* Maybe you should take notes for your people on the coast. Not sure how they do it out there, but I'll tell you one thing: I ain't impressed.

TIBBS. You want the results of my examinations?

GILLESPIE. I know all I need about the body.

TIBBS. You know Oberst's left handed?

GILLESPIE. So what if he is?

TIBBS. The fatal blow was with a blunt instrument.

GILLESPIE. I know.

TIBBS. And delivered at an angle of about seventeen degrees from the right and from behind. That makes it almost certain the assailant was right-handed.

GILLESPIE. Maybe he is, maybe he ain't, but –

TIBBS. When Oberst thumped himself in the chest he did it with his left hand.

GILLESPIE. That's thin, Tibbs.

TIBBS. Then there's his shoes. And the fact he needs a shave.

*(GILLESPIE just stares at Tibbs, refusing to ask why, not willing to concede more territory to this man.)*

Tatum was hit from behind. Means he was either assaulted by someone he knew and trusted, who stepped behind him for a moment, or, more likely, someone sneaked up quietly enough to hit him without warning. If Tatum had been warned, even by a second, he'd've turned his head and the blow would've landed at a different angle.

*(beat)*

*Continue...*

Your suspect's wearing hard leather heels and has steel plates to make them last longer. In those shoes every step is noisy. He couldn't possibly've made a surprise attack with them on.

**GILLESPIE.** Have you considered a man might, oh, I don't know, **CHANGE HIS FUCKING SHOES?**

**TIBBS.** But you mentioned this man is poor white trash, which suggests he has only a limited number of shoes and doesn't change often...

*(GILLESPIE laughs, shakes his head. TIBBS continues, undeterred:)*

Judging by the stubble on his chin, I'd guess he was up all night. If he went home to change his shoes, he'd probably shave.

**GILLESPIE.** So fucking what? Maybe he didn't! I didn't shave last night!

**TIBBS.** But we know he does so regularly. There're razor nicks under this chin that showed that.

*(GILLESPIE, keeping his rage deep inside, just stares at TIBBS for a good, long moment.)*

**GILLESPIE.** *(sarcastic)* Pretty sure of yourself, ain'tcha, Virgil?

**TIBBS.** I just do the job in front of me.

*(As if Gillespie doesn't?)*

**GILLESPIE.** *(seething)* Virgil's a pretty fancy name for a black boy.

**TIBBS.** *(sharp)* Not really.

**GILLESPIE.** What do they call you where you're from?

*(pause)*

**TIBBS.** They call me Mr. Tibbs.

[End Side #1]

Side #2

**SAM WOOD.** Virgil.

**TIBBS.** Yeah, Sam.

**SAM WOOD.** I wanna ask you something you ain't gonna like. But I wanna know.

**TIBBS.** Go ahead.

**SAM WOOD.** How'd they take you as a cop? How a colored man get all those advantages? If you wanna get mad, go ahead...

**TIBBS.** You've always lived in the South?

**SAM WOOD.** Born, raised, and damn proud of it.

**TIBBS.** There are places where I go weeks without anyone bringing up the color of my skin. Here, I can't go fifteen minutes. If you went somewhere and people despised you because your southern accent, and you were just speaking naturally you might have an idea what it's like being hated for something shouldn't make any difference anyhow.

**SAM WOOD.** Some guys down here'd kill you for saying a thing like that.

**TIBBS.** You've made my point.

*(They drive.)*

**SAM WOOD.** Got yourself a girl?

**TIBBS.** Had one.

**SAM WOOD.** What happened?

**TIBBS.** Probably the same things you've encountered.

**SAM WOOD.** What d'you mean?

**TIBBS.** You're single.

**SAM WOOD.** Yeah... So?

**TIBBS.** This job eats up a lot of time, but more than that, a lot of your thinking.

A lotta other parts as well. She found herself someone where that wasn't a problem.

**SAM WOOD.** What's the new guy do? If you don't mind me askin'?

**TIBBS.** Milkman.

**SAM WOOD.** Milkman?

**TIBBS.** Got dumped for a milkman.

*(A beat, then they both smile.)*

[End Side #2]

End All Sides