

# Vice Patrol

continued **▲** from Front

afraid to send them to detention. He knows the regulars along the strip. He knows which ones are drug users and prostitutes, and he wants to make his presence known.

"One of the main things we use is just our visibility," he says, as his gaze shifts from people walking on the street to his laptop attached to the console, which makes beeping noises as it scrolls out a feed of indecipherable police code.

Officers on this detail essentially drive around less-than-savory parts of town looking for women who suddenly jump into cars, loiter at bus stops, or people known for past offenses.

After doing two laps up and down the avenue, the officer makes an abrupt turn right-hand turn onto a side street, parking the car and springing from his seat.

He approaches a woman on the sidewalk. She's wearing a thick-down jacket with the hood pulled over her head, white Nike sneakers, and jeans. If she's a prostitute, she's not doing a very good job advertising.

The officer asks for her name, and where she's going. She re-

plies that she is going to a bar from a friend's place while keeping her arms close to her torso to keep warm. She seems confused as to why she's being stopped on such a cold night for no obvious reason.

After he's satisfied her story is true, he concludes the conversation with, "have a good night," before climbing back into the police car.

profile, you know," he says.

After making a trip down 122nd Avenue and a few more laps around 82nd, the officer makes an unannounced u-turn in the middle of an intersection and flicks on his lights.

There's trouble at an assisted living facility near Mt. Tabor. He's been there before, and seems very relaxed as he weaves in and out of traffic before speeding through a

emergency call, just as the woman hits the button for her floor.

"Do you understand that I'm on an emergency call?" says the officer, who is annoyed at being delayed.

"Oh, sorry," she replies.

On the fifth floor, a 93-year-old woman in a night gown with disheveled hair sits on a bed. She's already scared off her roommate, and has allegedly assaulted a staff member. Her son "isn't dealing with it," and staff and officers are trying to figure out what to do with her.

"I'm not going to go back to the hospital," she cries.

"You'll maybe like it better," says one of the officers.

congregated with another woman and two bearded men, one of them in a wheelchair, outside of a convenience store. The police cruiser quietly creeps up on the crowd. Everyone is completely oblivious to our presence, except for the man in his wheel chair who begins waving his hands and bobbing his head, as if to warn the others.

"Virginia," says the officer, whose firm voice pierces the cold air and the conversation the group is having.

"Yes sir," replies a woman, whose opens her eyes as wide as they will go, revealing an expression that looks almost like she's having a religious experience.

"You been using?" asks the officer.

"No, sir," she says.

"You been drinking?" he asks, who again receives a "no, sir."

"But you do use meth," states the officer.

The women, clearly rattled, launches into a story of how a friends bike was stolen and she has a cold.

"I'm going to suggest you go home," the officer says to the woman, who continues with her story nervously. He repeats his suggestion again, adding a firm "now."

Just after dispersing the crowd and returning to the strip, the officer quickly pulls over and leaps from his seat to confront another woman walking down 82nd Avenue.

He asks where she's going, and is told she's headed to a friend's house from a bar.

"I'm just really cold," she says.

"Why not take the bus?" he asks, a question she doesn't have a good answer for.

He asks if she's ever been arrested.

"I've never had a cop ask me if I've been arrested before," she says.

"Well, you never know," he replies.

After running her ID, it comes out she had. The woman says it's hard to explain and launches into a story of how she got involved with a car theft when she was 14.

The officer thinks he recognizes her and probes further before asking if she has condoms on her.

"I'm one of the ones out here that aren't doing that," states the woman emphatically.

That's enough for the officer.

"Have a good night," he says before climbing back into the car.

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The officer explains that he makes anywhere from one to six arrests on any shift. The prostitutes he encounters have different stores and backgrounds. Some have drug problems. Some have housing problems. Some are being trafficked. Some just think it's cool. Just yesterday, he cited a 60-year-old woman who just got out of a bad divorce.

"I'm not sure if there is one

residential area.

We get to the front entrance of the care home and are buzzed in through the lobby by a staff member. We board the elevator with a staff member wearing scrubs and tied back black hair. She seems almost amused at the sight of the officer.

"You're looking for Mr. who?" she asks.

The officer says that he's on an

"I wish they would have killed me right away," exclaims the woman, who looks like she's just woken from a deep sleep.

This is nothing new for the officer I'm with. The police have had calls in the past from the facility for things that usually don't require police presence, and the officer shows his annoyance while talking to a woman with ruby-red hair who's in charge.

"Well, I can't have my staff assaulted," she says finally.

Meanwhile the other officers have calmed the nursing home resident and are helping her into her coat while waiting for an ambulance. With the situation under control, it's back to cruising for hookers.

Back on the strip, two women are walking northbound. Against the faint glow of street lights the two look like an amorphous black blob.

But the officer recognizes them. He abruptly pulls into a parking lot on a side street. His fingers fly across the keyboard like a possessed spider, typing in commands into the keyboard. A mug shot of a woman with a battered face wearing a defeated expression instantly appears on the screen.

By now the two women have

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