Charming Beauregarde

Beauregarde Fitzwalters had a stylish name, but that was the only thing about him that was stylish. He was ill-mannered and oafish. A lazy, self-centred boy, he was a worry to his parents and a nuisance to the community.

If he wanted something, he wouldn’t set his sights on working hard to save the money needed to buy it. Beauregarde would try to steal it. He would often be seen wearing his trademark baseball cap, tracksuit and joggers around the shopping centres of Sharp City.

When old Mrs Plum left her handbag unattended for just a brief moment in Lloyd’s Megastore one afternoon, Beauregarde couldn’t resist rummaging inside it and pulling out her purse. This done, he quickly placed it under his baseball cap. Even if he was stopped and searched, no-one would ever think of looking there. He’d been frisked once before and all the searchers found in his pockets was a packet of gum that he’d lifted earlier in the day. Beauregarde managed to take home a wealthy businessman’s wallet that day.

When she came to the checkout, Mrs Plum soon found out that her purse was missing. The store security guard was called.

‘Did you notice anyone near you acting suspiciously?’ he asked.

‘I did catch a glimpse of a young fellow wearing a cap. He seemed to hurry away oddly when I returned to my shopping trolley from the aisle I went into. I only wanted to put back a tin of cat food as I’m short of money this week. Unfortunately I caught just a glimpse of him and I can’t really tell you what he looked like or what else he was wearing. I just remember the cap.’

Off duty policeman, Graeme Jenkinson, noticed the fuss and soon became involved. He suggested closing the store and asked Mrs Plum if she may be able to identify the culprit in a line-up. Several young men wearing caps agreed to participate in the line-up.

Rather than be seen to be acting suspiciously, Beauregarde agreed to participate. After all, he’d had on a pair of sunglasses from the display rack at the time. They hadn’t appealed to him so he replaced them after deliberately bending the frames out of shape. And besides, he’d be so nice, so charming, that she’d think such a ‘nice boy’ wouldn’t be capable of doing such a mean-spirited thing.

‘Good afternoon,’ said Beauregarde with a warm, sympathetic smile. To further display his manners he lifted his cap to her. ‘I heard what happened. It’s just dreadful.’

Poor Mrs Plum was unable to recognise any of the young men as the culprit.

‘I’m sorry, I didn’t get a good enough look at him. Besides these boys are all much too nice to have done such an awful thing anyway,’ she said.

‘Except one,’ said Officer Jenkinson, walking over to Beauregarde and arresting him.

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Can you, the comprehension detective, tell how Officer Jenkinson knew that Beauregarde was the thief?
1. Use a dictionary to write the meaning of the word 'frisk'. There are a number of meanings. Choose the one meant in the story.

2. Write short answers to the questions below.
   (a) List four words that describe Beauregarde.

   (b) What wouldn't Beauregarde do to get something he wanted?

   (c) What would he try to do instead?

   (d) Describe how Beauregarde was usually dressed.

   (e) Where had Mrs Plum left her handbag?

   (f) What did Beauregarde steal from her?

   (g) Where did he hide the stolen item?

   (h) What did Officer Jenkinson suggest?

   (i) Why did Beauregarde agree to join the line-up?

   (j) Why did Beauregarde act in such an uncharacteristically pleasant manner?

   (k) What did Beauregarde do as a mark of respect when he spoke to Mrs Plum in the line-up?

   (l) Why was Mrs Plum unable to say who the probable thief was?

3. Now that you’ve asked and answered the important questions and gathered vital evidence, you should know why Officer Jenkinson arrested charming Beauregarde.