

## Mystery Month #3 - 2024

### The Case of the Walking Sweater By Ken Weber in Five-Minute Mysteries

LENA JONES HAD ALREADY concluded for the tenth time that today was not the day to be a store manager, when the head store detective ushered in a very red-faced young man.

"This kid just walked out with this," the detective said, and he threw a crumpled sweater onto Lena's desk. "I got him down the street. He was at least a hundred yards away. And he's admitted it. Open and shut."

"Very well." Lena sighed and looked at the young man. "We'll take your name and address. You realize that the police will be involved too, don't you?" She began to get angry. "What's the matter with you people? Don't you realize that shoplifters are so easy to catch?"

The young man reddened even more, and fought to keep back the tear that was beginning to roll down his cheek.

"It wasn't like that . . . I mean. . . I didn't steal it! Well, no, I stole it, but that's not why I came here. Like I wasn't gonna take it. It just, well . . . sort of . . . like, happened!"

"That's a new one," Lena retorted. "I suppose the sweater just stuck to you as you walked out of the store. Let's see." She picked up the sweater. "Grey, long sleeved, V-neck, all wool. Yes, they always stick to people." Her comment made the young man wince.

"No!" he almost shouted. "I was like . . . trying it on in the dressing room, and got it on all inside out and back to front. I mean, here it was on wrong, and the tags were inside and all, and I thought nobody would see it was from the store so I just, I mean, I just . . . like walked out! I didn't plan it! Nobody saw it either . . . I mean . . . until this guy stopped me."

Lena looked at the detective. "Who tipped you off?" she asked.

"That's part of the problem," the detective answered. "The security light went on when he went out the door so I just followed him. But the problem is that there are two different clerks claiming the store reward. They both say they saw him leave, and each of them says she turned on the alarm light." Lena looked at the detective carefully. "This is getting more tiresome by the minute," she said. "Who are they?"

"Borelli's one," he said. "Tina Borelli, the new one in notions. She claims she saw the kid coming toward her and when she saw the label of the sweater, she figured out what he was doing and hit the light as soon as he got to the door."

Lena pondered a moment. "And the other story?"

"That's Singh," the detective replied. "She's a part-timer. Her story is that she saw him stop at the door for a minute and check the street. That's when she saw the sweater label, and she too figured it was a lift and hit the light." The detective leaned on Lena's desk. "Both her and Borelli work right beside the exit door," he offered, "so really, both their stories check."

"In all but one respect," Lena said. "It looks like we've not only got a lifter here, we may have a liar too!"

What made Lena suspicious? And whom does she suspect?

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