

Three-Minute Story – solution

1. These changes took place in the office between 9:00 and 9:03a.m.: a potted plant appeared on the corner table; the tray of diamonds on the desk was cleaned off and dropped on the floor; the paperweight was dropped on the floor; a piece of fern appeared on the floor behind Brown's desk, desk drawers were pulled out. Aside from these changes inside the office, the view out the window changed, as one vehicle left.
2. Yes. The low-value diamonds on the desk were stolen.
3. No.
4. That Brown's visitor did not sit down indicates that it was not an old friend like Georgiou. This is further supported by the theft of low-value diamonds. The van outside is evidently a florist's, and the arrival of a potted plant points to a delivery man as a prime suspect. The use of the paperweight indicates that this was a 'walk-in' or opportunistic crime, not planned in advance. Finally, the piece of fern on the floor behind the desk shows that the delivery man did walk back there, probably to try the safe and desk drawers after killing Brown. The bare possibility that some other person—Mrs Dalloway, for instance—killed Brown after the departure of an innocent delivery man, can never be entirely eliminated, but the three-minute interval makes it extremely unlikely. Nor does it explain the piece of fern near the body.

Police following this line of reasoning, found the local florist who had sent a plant to Brown. After the stolen diamonds were found in a flowerpot under some azaleas, a delivery man confessed.