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| 1  5  10  15  20  25 | Outside our apartment building, running straight on rising ground, was an avenue of plane trees just coming into leaf. As soon as I stepped out on to the pavement I saw Parry standing under a tree at the corner, a hundred yards away. When he saw me he took his hands out of his pockets, folded his arms, then let them droop. He began to come towards me, changed his mind and went back to his tree. I walked towards him slowly, and felt my anxiety dropping away.  As I came closer Parry retreated further under his tree, leaned back against its trunk and tried to look nonchalant by hooking a thumb into his trouser pocket. In fact he looked abject. He appeared smaller, all knobs and bones, no longer the sleek Indian brave, despite the pony-tail. He wouldn't meet my eye as I came up, or rather his eyes made a nervous pass across my face, and then turned down. As I put out my hand I was feeling quite relieved. Clarissa was right, he was a harmless fellow with a strange notion, a nuisance at most, hardly the threat I had made him out to be. He looked a sorry sight now, cringing under the fresh plane leaves. It was the accident, and the afterwaves of shock that had distorted my understanding. I had translated farce into indefinable menace. His hand, when it shook mine, exerted no pressure. I spoke to him firmly, but with a little kindness too. He was just about young enough to be my son. 'You'd better tell me what this is all about.'  He said, 'There's a coffee place . . .' and he nodded in the direction of the Edgware Road.  'We'll be fine right here,' I said. 'I don't have a lot of time.'  The wind had got up again, and seemed sharpened by the thin sunlight. I drew my coat around me and tightened its belt and as I did so I glanced at Parry's shoes. No trainers today. Soft brown leather shoes, handmade perhaps. I went and leaned against a nearby wall and folded my arms.  Parry came away from the tree and stood in front of me, staring at his feet. 'I'd rather we went inside,' he said, with a hint of a whine. |
| **Guiding Questions**  How does the imagery and descriptive detail used in this extract add to your understanding?  What do the characters actions tell us about them? | |