

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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BLACKMAIL (1929)

Alfred Hitchcock

OVERVIEW

Director Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is perhaps the best-known British filmmaker and a household name. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. *Blackmail* was the director's first 'talkie' picture. His best-known films include *The Birds*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*, which have all earned accolades, including preservation by the US Film Registry. In 1960, Hitchcock was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with two stars for his work in both film and television. He was also the first recipient of the BAFTA Academy Fellowship Award.

Film Based upon a popular 1928 stage play of the same name, *Blackmail* was the first Hitchcock thriller that actually feels like a Hitchcock thriller. Anny Ondra returns from *The Manxman* as leading lady. *Blackmail* received critical acclaim after its midsummer release in 1929. A public poll later that year named the film 'Best British Film.' Although billed as a talkie to modern audiences, there is a silent version of the film which was released simultaneously and contains several scenes that differ from the talkie version. Most movie theaters in 1929 weren't equipped with the proper sound equipment for what is often called 'the first successful European talkie.' *Blackmail* also includes the longest of any Hitchcock cameo. He can be easily spotted in the London tube, sitting to the far left of the screen, reading a paper and being disturbed by a boy.

Background Many critical pieces that make up a Hitchcock thriller fall into place in *Blackmail*. They include a blonde in distress, a 'MacGuffin' (a term coined by screenwriter Angus MacPhail and popularized by Hitchcock: An object which acts as a plot device), and a finale taking place in, on, or near a notable landmark. Principal photography for *Blackmail* started in 1928, and Hitchcock began shooting as a silent film. He was displeased when British International Pictures producer John Maxwell decided to rework the film into a talkie. At the time, Hitchcock believed that audio in film would be a short-lived fad. The movie's original ending was changed, as starting the film with the arrest of a felon and ending the film with the arrest of a young woman was deemed 'uncommercial.'

MAIN CHARACTERS

Alice White	A young woman who is dating Frank Webber.
Detective Frank Webber	A member of Scotland Yard's investigative force and dating Alice.
Mr. Crewe,	A young artist who is vying for the affection of Alice.
an artist	
Tracy	A Felon returns to blackmail Alice and Frank.
Mrs. White	Alice's mother.
Mr. White	Alice's father.

SYNOPSIS

In Scotland Yard, Detective Frank Webber cleans up after a hard day's work and meets Alice White for a night on the town. They make their way to a busy tea room and order dinner, discussing their plans. They begin to fight when Alice says she doesn't want to go to the movies. Frank leaves but lingers outside long enough to see Alice leave with another man, Mr. Crewe. The pair head for Alice's home, but Mr. Crewe points out his own apartment along the way and invites Alice up. They share a drink and some music while admiring Mr. Crewe's paintings. When Alice changes into a costume and suggests that she could be his new model, things take a turn: Mr. Crewe makes several unwanted advances and then tries to rape Alice. In self-defense, Alice stabs the artist and flees. The next morning, there is news of a murder in the neighborhood. Among the investigators is Frank Webber. He finds Alice's glove at the murder scene

and recognizes the man with whom she left the tea room. Concealing the evidence, he confronts Alice in the public phone booth inside her father's store. A man sees them, however, and takes his chance. Tracy, a career criminal, attempts to blackmail the duo as he had seen Alice enter the apartment with Mr. Crewe the previous night.

After some time, the duo turns the tide on Tracy when they learn that he is a felon, and it becomes his word against theirs. Tracy makes a break for it, but not before an all-points bulletin is made for a man matching his description: Mr. Crewe's landlady has singled him out of a photo lineup for loitering in front of her building on the night of the murder. First in a taxi, then on foot, Tracy makes a valiant attempt at escape before he is cornered in the British Museum. Inside, he winds his way through the exhibits, avoiding police officers. Eventually, he is spotted, and the police give chase. Through the reading room, the chase continues to the building's domed roof. At the top of the British Museum, Tracy turns to accuse Frank of misleading the investigators when he falls backward into the plate glass and down several stories to his death. Alice decides to confess and makes her way to Scotland Yard. The police assume repeat felon Tracy is the murderer, allowing Frank to remove Alice from the precinct before she confesses.

PLOT

Flying Squad Van 68- A police van flies across London. Inside, a handful of officers sit. One listens attentively to the radio, transcribing a transmission that asks the flying squad van to perform a raid at a nearby apartment block. The van pulls to a stop, and the rear gate opens as several officers disembark and continue on foot. Among playing children, loitering men, and women working on the wash, they find the domicile they seek: number six. Two officers enter and ascend the stairs as one detains a distraught woman on the ground floor.

Arrest- In the bedroom at the top of the stairs, Tracy lies in bed, reading his paper and smoking a cigarette. The two officers enter, unseen and unheard by the unsuspecting man. The officers stare at Tracy, weighing their options. This hesitation gives Tracy a chance to glimpse the pair in a mirror on a nearby shelf. The ashes drop from his cigarette to his chest. Slowly, giving no sign that he has seen them, he reaches towards his bedside table where a revolver sits, partly concealed. As he grabs the gun, the officers jump and disarm him, demanding that he get dressed and come with them as Tracy makes silent protest.

After being bundled away in the flying squad van, the officers lead Tracy into their commander's office and place him in a seat. An interrogation begins, and time passes, represented by an ashtray filled with cigarette butts. The once cordial police commander shouts and points at Tracy as the man nervously cowers. We see a paper advertising an 'identification parade' and then a woman walking down a lineup. She examines each man's face until placing her hand on Tracy's chest. In the charge room, an officer demands that the felon remove his hat and fills out the charge sheet. Tracy's face fades into his fingerprint as an officer finishes the fingerprinting process. Afterward, the officers unceremoniously shove Tracy into a cell and leave, chatting with one another with their backs toward the camera.



FRANK AND ALICE

“Good night, Frank”- After several shots of the officers in the washroom cleaning their hands and faces, Detective Frank Webber makes his way to the front lobby. There, Ms. Alice White awaits him. His partner shakes her hand and departs. Frank sits beside Alice, who complains that she’s been waiting half an hour. At the door, the officer on duty greets the couple and whispers some private joke into Alice’s ear. They laugh, and the officer says, “Good night, Frank.” Outside, Alice shies away from Frank’s touch, annoyed to have been kept waiting so long. They laugh together playfully as they nearly step in front of an impatient motorist. We see them seated in a subway car, traveling to the city’s center.



“Sorry, sir”- Frank and Alice force their way through the busy London streets into a building bustling with people. Unable to find seating in the ground floor tea room, they venture upstairs. There, another tea room awaits, but a very young doorman blocks their path. “Sorry, sir,” he says, “more room upstairs.” Frank protests and the young man repeats himself with more emphasis. When the doorman turns to shoo away another person seeking seating, Frank and Alice dash into the restaurant, the door swinging shut behind them. The doorman was right: the tea room is filled to bursting as servers in suits and waiters with trays crisscross the room taking orders and delivering dishes. The couple sees a table about to leave and positions themselves to take their seats, but another couple has the same idea. Alice stares at a strange man as his wife and Frank look around the room in unison. They grab their partners by the arm, rushing off in opposite directions. Frank and Alice find a table and sit.



The Tea Room- Finally seated together, Frank begins to read the menu, and Alice makes a realization. “Frank, I’ve lost one of my gloves,” she says, “I think I’ve left it at the other table.” Frank disappears and reappears with the glove in question. Alice thanks him, and he replies that her gloves have “holes in two fingers.” He teases her further, “Would you like a pair of nail scissors for Christmas?” When Frank shouts at a nearby server, Alice chastises him for impatience, saying they must wait their turn. Frank’s current impatience upsets her, given how he dismissed her concerns about being left waiting. They continue to fight, Alice saying she doesn’t want to go to the movies.

Fed up- Frank leaves to chase down a waitress, and Alice removes a note from her purse: “I’ll be here on Tuesday at 6:30. Will you?” She glances at her watch, which reads 6:35. When Frank returns, she says she’s changed her mind and will go with him to the movies. Frank makes requests of the waitress as Alice smiles at a man across the room. He smiles back, but it fades when he notices Frank. Alice shakes her head, and the man sits at a table with a free seat. “Frank,” says Alice, “I’ve changed my mind again.” The fight erupts once more and only ends as Frank storms off. “I’m fed up with you,” he says as he plunks some coins onto the table, “That’ll cover it.” Frank loiters in front of the tea room, looking frustrated. He smiles as if deciding to go in and apologize when he turns to see Alice leaving with another man.



CREWE AND ALICE

“Have you ever seen an artist’s studio?”- A lone man paces in front of a building beneath a streetlamp. He scampers off as we see Alice approaching with the artist, Mr. Crewe. He stops in front of the building and mentions that he lives there. “Then you needn’t come any further,” says Alice. Mr. Crewe insists that he walk her home, and she protests that she lives around the corner. We see Terry’s face as Mr. Crewe chuckles and says, “That means we’re neighbors.” He looks to the building’s front door and asks Alice, “Have you ever seen an artist’s studio.” After some goading, Alice agrees to accompany Mr. Crewe upstairs to his apartment.



Up the stairs- Inside, Mr. Crewe discovers a note left for him by the public telephone. He apologizes and asks Alice to begin climbing the stairs without him as he takes a moment to speak with his landlady. The landlady answers her door but can't answer Mr. Crewe's questions about the note. The man who called was a stranger and wouldn't leave more details. Alice and Mr. Crewe make their way up the stairs to the top landing. Upon entering the apartment, Alice exclaims, "What a lovely room!" Mr. Crewe busies himself, making a fire and playing host as Alice examines the decor and looks out the window.



Alice's masterpiece- Eventually, Alice's gaze falls on one of Mr. Crewe's paintings, an old clown who points and laughs. Alice laughs back before complimenting Mr. Crewe's work. The painter thanks her and whistles off-screen as Alice approaches a blank canvas. She picks up the palette and turns to Mr. Crewe, asking, "How do you hold this?" The painter shows her, and she proceeds to mime painting, blotting the pristine canvas. Mr. Crewe asks her to draw something, and she does; a silly face with shaggy hair. She smiles at Mr. Crewe, who smiles back and says, "It's rotten." He takes her hand and guides her in painting a female figure beneath. She signs the painting emphatically as Mr. Crewe returns to pouring drinks.



Not-so-charming Mr. Crewe- Alice notices the frilly dress hanging on a privacy screen. Mr. Crewe has set it aside for an upcoming painting. She holds the dress around her waist and asks Mr. Crewe, "how would I do for one of your models?" "Excellent idea," says the painter, asking to see her in the costume. At first, Alice declines. When Mr. Crewe says, "I would have sketched you," Alice changes her tune into the dress. Mr. Crewe plays the piano and sings before helping Alice with the final adjustments to the dress. He grasps her hair and pulls her into a kiss, which she rejects. She moves behind the privacy screen to change back into her clothes, which Mr. Crewe throws across the room. When Alice emerges to retrieve them, Mr. Crewe drags her to the bed obscured by a heavy curtain. The struggle continues until Alice grasps a nearby bread knife and stabs her assailant.



Alice's guilt- We see Mr. Crewe's lifeless hand hanging over the edge of the bed between the curtains. Alice soon follows, clutching a knife. Stunned, she stands momentarily before gently placing the blade next to the bread on a table. The shock begins to wear off, and Alice begins collecting her clothes. As she retrieves her dress, the clown points and laughs at her. In a fit, she punches the canvas, tearing a large hole. Alice dresses frantically before sweeping the room for potential evidence, painting over her signature on the painting and turning off the lights. She creeps from the apartment building and onto the street. Outside, we see the silhouette of a man cast by the streetlamp. Alice wanders the streets, the guilt of killing a man projected onto the shop displays, people, and signs she passes.



Discovery- After watching Alice wander the streets until morning, we see Mr. Crewe's landlady shriek as she discovers the painter's corpse. She calls the police. Frank Webber enters Mr. Crewe's apartment, joining a duo of senior investigators who ask him to scan the room for potential evidence. He wanders through the apartment, reaching for an object on a desk. Frank stops himself and pulls out a handkerchief to keep his fingerprints from contaminating any potential evidence. As the detective continues, he notices the hole in the painting of the clown, then the dress. Then, he discovers a woman's glove. He turns to alert his superiors but stops, recognizing Mr. Crewe as the man Alice left the tea room with. Frank looks up at the mocking clown as he wads up the glove, stashing it in his jacket pocket.



The White home- Alice makes it home just as the daily commute begins. Cars and pedestrians fly along the street in front of her father's store. She stealthily but quickly sneaks in, removes her hat and jacket, and flings herself under the cover. Alice's mother enters the room with a cup of tea as if on cue. She uncovers a caged songbird who begins to sing loudly and scolds her daughter for sleeping in before leaving the room. Frank's police portrait stares down at Alice as she steps out of bed and dresses. She stands at the top of the stairs for a moment, then hesitates at the bottom, adjusting her hair.

"Heard about the murder?"- In her father's shop, a neighbor speaks loudly about the police. "Good morning, Alice," she says, "Heard about the murder?" Alice says yes and asks her father if he can remember Frank's telephone number. He can't but says it should be in the phone book. Alice enters the phone booth and begins to look through the book but closes it upon seeing the word 'police.' The neighbor continues to gossip before Mrs. White calls the family to breakfast in the adjoining room. The neighbor follows, still jawing about the murder, knives, and stabbing. Alice can barely keep the guilty look off of her face. Her father asks her to cut some bread, and she grabs the knife shakily. It flies from her hand and onto the floor as the neighbor's tirade about stabbing and the shop's bell startle her.



“Hello, Frank”- Mr. White asks Alice to tend to the customer who just walked in, and she does. As she returns to the table when another customer enters, she returns to the counter. Frank stands before her and bids her good morning. “Here’s Frank,” says Mr. White from the other room, “Hello, Frank.” Everyone is anxious for news about the murder. Frank admits that he’s been put on the case and everyone wishes him luck. He asks to use the phone. He asks for Alice to join him for a moment. The neighbor and Alice’s parents leave the room.

The phone box- In the relative privacy of the phone box, Frank confronts Alice. “What happened last night?” he asks. When Alice refuses to speak, Frank pulls her glove from his pocket, asking if she knows where he found it. She nods, distraught. “It’s the only piece of evidence that you were there,” he says, “I’m keeping it back at present.” Frank begs her to speak as a knock comes on the door. Tracy opens the phone booth. “If you’re not using the phone,” He says, “May I? I want to get on to Scotland Yard.” Alice and Frank emerge, shocked.



Blackmail- Tracy walks to the counter, leaning upon it ostentatiously and asking for the best cigar in the shop. Mr. White helps him make a selection as Frank and Alice whisper to each other. Tracy walks back over to Frank and Alice, asking about the murder. Mr. White says there's no news, asking Frank if he's heard anything. After a moment, the detective says no. Tracy reaches into Frank's pocket, retrieving the glove as he asks, "Are you quite sure?" Frank snatches it back, "What the hell business of yours is it anyway?" Tracy pulls the matching glove from his jacket, saying, "I looked everywhere for that glove last night." Mr. White calls Tracy, having retrieved the cigar box. Tracy selects a cigar, making a show of unwrapping and biting the end off. He grins at Frank as he lights it. Mr. White asks for payment and, pretending that he can't find his billfold, Tracy asks Frank to pay. The detective does, much to Mr. White's surprise. "Is this man a friend of yours, Frank?" he asks. Tracy responds that they plan to do some business together. Alice convinces her father to go and finish his breakfast as Frank glowers at Tracy. "Do you know that some men who would make money out of a thing like that?" says Tracy, "What a chance for blackmail!"



Person of interest- After several customers enter and leave the shop, Tracy mentions he's hungry. Alice and Frank follow him to the adjoining room, where Mr. White finishes breakfast, and Alice invites him to breakfast. Tracy sits, smugly puffing on his cigar. We see the mocking clown once more, this time in Scotland Yard. An officer places the painting atop Alice's masterpiece as the chief inspector interviews Mr. Crewe's landlady. She neither saw nor heard anything during the night. The chief inspector asks the old woman if she recognizes a note found in Mr. Crewe's possession. While the landlady doesn't know the man who gave it to her, she gives the police a description. Satisfied, the chief inspector phones the records department. We see a montage of mugshots and wanted posters before landing on Tracy's mugshot. The chief inspector tells an officer to bring Tracy in for questioning.

"Don't tell me he'll be here till dinner"- Tracy sits beside Frank at the breakfast table, whistling as he finishes his meal. Frank lights a cigarette, pulls out some folded bills, throwing them on the table before Tracy. Tracy takes the pile of money, saying, "That will do to go on with." Then we see Mrs. White talking to Alice. "How much longer is that man going to stay?" she asks her daughter. Alice says having Tracy as a guest means much to her and Frank. Mrs. White leaves in a huff, saying that she doesn't like Tracy. Then, Mr. White interrupts the conversation in the parlor, telling Frank there's been a telephone call from Scotland Yard. Frank enters the phone booth, ready to explain his absence. Instead, the comments from the other end of the line confuse him. "Who?" he asks as he closes the phone booth. He then hangs up the receiver and leaves the booth hurriedly, ignoring Mr. White's probing for news.

Blackmail turnabout- Frank closes the parlor door behind him. "Alice," he says, "Lock that door." Tracy stands, stunned. Frank walks towards him, adopting the smug demeanor Tracy has worn up until now. He informs Tracy that it was a "bit of luck" that a criminal was seen loitering around Mr. Crewe's apartment the previous night. "Don't you try and swing this thing on me," says Tracy. With his status as a jailbird revealed and the police searching for him, Tracy can feel his control of the situation waning. When Frank says they will all be waiting for the squad van to arrive, he challenges him, saying, "When the squad van comes, the surprise won't be for me."



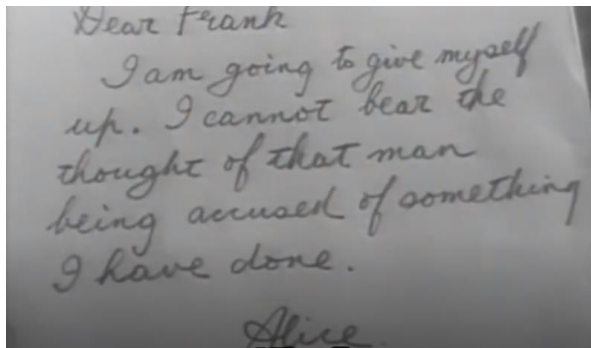
Tracy's plea- Suddenly guilty, Alice pleads with Frank not to turn Tracy in. The criminal sees a chance to drive a wedge between the couple when Frank doesn't want to listen, "Why don't you let her speak?" When that tactic fails, Tracy tries to apologize and return the money he took from Frank. The detective responds by silently lighting a cigarette, so Tracy tries to reason with Alice. "He's playing with fire," he says to her. When neither responds, he tries to appeal to their emotions: "I'm not bad, really," he says, "One's got to live, you know!" Backed into a corner, Tracy jumps out the parlor window as Frank's backup storms into the shop.



The British Museum- In a taxi, Tracy flees across London with police in hot pursuit. Alice sits at the parlor table, looking concerned. We are shown shots of her throughout this sequence. Tracy's taxi is forced to stop at an intersection and, spooked by the presence of a policeman, exits the car, running off on foot. Trying to look inconspicuous, Tracy looks around. He notices a patrolman walking in his direction and the flying squad van pulling to a stop behind him. Trying to blend in, Tracy enters the British Museum, stopping at a fountain for a drink. The police are just behind him, stopping at the museum's fence to regroup and coordinate. Inside, Tracy tries to avoid everyone but is eventually spotted by police. He descends a rope into the reading room of the museum archives, forcing his pursuers to turn around. Now atop the great dome of the museum, Tracy turns to face the police. As the officers reach the top, he points at Frank, saying, "It's not me you want! It's him!" Before he can finish his accusation, he tumbles backward through the plate glass.



Alice's confession- At the parlor table, Alice pens a letter to Frank. She says she's turning herself in to the police and cannot take the guilt of another person taking the fall for her. We see the young woman walk into the lobby of Scotland Yard. The officer from the beginning of the film greets her. He assumes she wants to see Frank, but she says that she'd like to meet with Inspector Walls. She fills out the proper paperwork and tells the officer that she will reveal who killed Mr. Crewe. He finds this funny but directs Alice to the inspector's office.



Saved by the bell- The inspector greets Alice as she enters the office. Frank is there. He nervously tries to dissuade the inspector from listening to Alice, but the inspector decides to hear the young woman out. The telephone rings just as she is about to confess that she killed Mr. Crewe. After a few short words, the inspector tells Frank, "You deal with this young lady. I shall be busy for a minute." Frank guides Alice back into the hallway. When they are alone, he asks, "Whatever made you come here?" "I did it," Alice replies before telling the story of Mr. Crewe's attempted sexual assault. Frank sympathizes with her, and they return to the lobby. "Did she tell you who did it?" the officer on duty chuckles. When Frank says yes, the officer laughs. "You ought a look out, as you'll be losing your job, my boy," says the officer. They laugh as the camera zooms in on Alice's pained face. She looks away and sees the painting of the laughing clown being carried down the hallway toward the evidence lockers.



THEMES

Crime- The themes of this film are hard to discern from the elements of suspense, but criminal behavior is a significant focus of *Blackmail*. This makes the film an exciting police romance, as Frank's corruption is integral to the plot. Alice, Tracy, and Frank all display different criminal behavior: Alice attempts to cover up any evidence of her presence at Mr. Crewe's apartment, Tracy commits blackmail, and Frank hampers a police investigation to help Alice. Frank and Tracy act as foils for one another. Frank is a detective, an agent of the law, yet he covers up evidence because it implicates his girlfriend. Similarly, Tracy explains that his economic situation is mostly to blame for his criminality while trying to reason with Frank and Alice in the parlor. Tracy and Frank are willing criminals for personal gain, but Alice's criminality comes out of sheer panic. The dual traumas of attempted rape and killing a man drive her to flee the artist's apartment and cover her tracks. While they are moral flaws, the crimes committed by the main characters throughout *Blackmail* are largely sympathetic. We can see and understand their motivations throughout the film.

Dishonesty- Lies and deceit drive this film. The first act of dishonesty we see in *Blackmail* comes from Alice. She meant to meet Mr. Crewe in the tea room instead of Frank but decided to hide this from the detective. Mr. Crewe shows himself capable of incredible duplicity when he tries to take advantage of Alice. For a moment, a shadow dancing across his face makes him appear to have a sickening grin, giving us a glimpse of his mind. Alice returns home after wandering the streets all night, tricking her mother into thinking she was in bed all night. Upon recognizing Mr. Crewe's corpse at the scene of the murder, Frank hides Alice's glove from his superiors, hampering the investigation. He and Alice hide Tracy's true nature from Mr. and Mrs. White, though this is an attempt to protect themselves and Alice's parents. Although Alice attempts to confess at the end of the film, Frank's presence and a well-timed telephone call keep her from telling the truth.

Class- While somewhat in the background, class plays a vital role in *Blackmail*. Using his class and charisma, Mr. Crewe lures Alice into his apartment. She doesn't suspect anything of the artist until it's too late. Alice and Frank seem to be fairly well-off. They use their economic status as a passive shield, flying under the radar despite Frank's odd behavior after investigating Mr. Crewe's apartment. Even as she goes to confess, Alice is seen as a joke because she is a middle-class woman. The officer in the lobby jokes with her and Frank about her potential to solve the mystery single-handed. Because of Tracy's felon status and shady behavior, he is thought of as a potential suspect before anyone can discover Alice's presence at Mr. Crewe's apartment.

Fear- Throughout *Blackmail*, fear gets the better of people. Fear first transforms Alice from a victim to a fugitive. Perhaps afraid of scandal, The young woman cannot face what Mr. Crewe did to her and what she did to stop him. Even though her boyfriend is a detective, she feels she will be labeled a murderer. His fear for Alice makes Frank hide Alice's glove from his superiors. It also makes him bend to Tracy's initial demands, although we see the shoe on the other foot once Frank learns that Tracy has become a person of interest. Fear makes Tracy beg and reason with Frank and Alice as he tries to worm his way out of blackmail gone wrong. It also causes him to bolt, leading to his demise atop the British Museum. We see Frank's fear for a final time when Alice appears in the chief inspector's office. He fears she will confess and knows how it could damage their reputations.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Alice White- (*Anxious, Controlled, Determined*)

Alice is a young woman living in London and the main character of *Blackmail*. She is in a relationship with Frank Webber, although it seems they have some issues. This shows in her clandestine meeting with Mr. Crewe, which eventually creates great strife for Alice.

Anxious While this trait may not be normal for Alice, she displays it often throughout *Blackmail*. We see her anxiety first when Mr. Crewe asks her to try on the dress. She is unwilling, but with the chance to be an artist's model dangling in front of her nose, she forgets her discomfort and changes. We see her

anxiety once more as Crewe toys with her, forcing her into kisses and tossing her clothes across the room. Her anxiety transforms into a fight for survival when the artist attempts to rape Alice. Her anxiety changes once more into guilt which we see as she wanders London's streets by night. Tracy's blackmail causes her grave anxiety, though she is able to disguise it in front of her parents. The moral anxiety of Tracy taking the blame for her crime forces her to confess, although she never gets to go through with her plan.

Controlled Despite great anxiety and trauma, Alice controls herself and her emotions throughout *Blackmail*. We see her pushed to her limits at the beginning of the film by Frank's behavior. His rudeness and lack of empathy after keeping her waiting drive her to meet with Mr. Crewe. She controls her annoyance with Frank, enacting a plan to press his buttons by changing her mind repeatedly, making him leave the tea room. Panic and fear cause a loss of control when the artist assaults her. After the initial shock, however, she acts quickly, covering her tracks as she flees. She is controlled enough to fool her mother and father into thinking she's been in bed all night. Despite great anxiety and fear surrounding Tracy's blackmail, Alice never cracks under pressure, keeping her parents from learning the truth. We see this control at the film's end as she first tries to confess to the chief inspector, then bites her tongue once more when the inspector gives Frank charge over Alice's statement.

Determined Alice is a woman of great determination. At the beginning of *Blackmail*, we can see this determination in her unwillingness to be treated poorly by Frank. This seems to be an ongoing problem, as she has agreed to meet with Mr. Crewe on the same night. Alice's determination shows again when she stabs Mr. Crewe during his attempted rape. She will go to great lengths to protect herself, including killing someone. This causes her tremendous guilt, but Alice is determined to cover up her involvement in the murder. Her determination continues as Tracy blackmails her and Frank. Although she doesn't want her involvement in Mr. Crewe's death revealed, she is determined that no one else will take the fall for her. She is determined to turn herself in and explain her involvement to the police as it is the correct moral choice.

Frank Webber- (Loyal, Spoiler, Prideful)

Frank is a young and promising detective for Scotland Yard. He is in a relationship with Alice. His love for the young woman leads to him ignoring police protocol and falling into Tracy's blackmail.

Loyal Throughout the film, Frank shows himself to be quite loyal, especially to Alice. Even though they fight in the tea room and Alice leaves with another man, Frank does his best to protect her from the police investigation, hiding her glove from his fellow investigators. He attempts to protect Alice from Tracy's blackmail, allowing himself to become ensnared in the criminal's plot. At the end of the film, He shows great loyalty and sympathy when Alice reveals the whole story of Mr. Crewe's murder. Despite being angry that she would attempt to confess after successfully covering up her involvement, Frank comforts her in the privacy of the hallway and misleads the officer on duty in the lobby.

Spoiler To keep his girlfriend out of court, Frank must become a crooked cop. He stands in the way of a lawful murder investigation, withholding evidence and suspects from his comrades on the police force. Frank's corruption intensifies as the film continues. When he learns that his blackmailer has become a person of interest in the murder case, he calls Tracy's bluff, asking for backup to arrest the criminal. In a final act of spoiling behavior, Frank removes Alice from the chief inspector's office before she can confess. The detective further solidifies his corruption as he jokes with the officer in the lobby of Scotland Yard. Frank's coverup of the murder is so thorough the officer thinks that Alice's involvement is nothing but a joke.

Prideful Pride seems to be a driving force for Frank Webber. He is vocally proud of his position in Scotland Yard, which appears to be a source of both pride and annoyance for Alice. We can also see that Frank is prideful about his appearance. He takes so long cleaning up before their date that Alice complains about being left waiting. We never see the young detective without his hat and flawless suit. As much as Tracy's blackmail is an attack on Alice, it is also an attack against Frank's pride. This pride comes up again when Frank challenges Tracy before and after his phone call to Scotland Yard. They

square off in the parlor, staring at each other like boxers at a weigh in. Both men are a match for each other in terms of wit, and this seems to injure the detective. That a criminal could be as intelligent as himself makes Frank angry.

Tracy- (*Aware, Spontaneous, Curious*)

A career criminal who is arrested at the beginning of the film. He is the film's main antagonist, appearing at the midpoint to blackmail Alice and Frank. He is conniving, quickly hatching a plan for blackmail when his unknown plans for Mr. Crewe fall through.

Aware Tracy is quite perceptive. This shows in his observation of Alice as she enters and leaves Mr. Crewe's apartment. Even though it is dark, he notes that Alice seems disturbed and walks away from where she mentioned she lived earlier. Awareness drives him to break into Mr. Crewe's apartment, where he discovers one of her forgotten gloves. Tracy makes another discovery upon entering Mr. White's shop and seeing the matching glove in the hands of Frank and Alice. While beginning his blackmail scheme, Tracy shows excellent awareness, adeptly plucking the glove out of Frank's pocket where it was stowed only moments ago. His powers of perception allow him to try and manipulate Frank and Alice as they fight about how to deal with the blackmailer. Tracy can see the cracks in their relationship and tries to further wedge them apart. When Frank returns from his phone call with Scotland Yard, Tracy's awareness shows. The criminal can see that the detective is acting differently, more prideful. He changes his tactics immediately, begging and pleading instead of doling out simple threats. Tracy's situational awareness serves him during the police chase through the British Museum. Although this chase ends in his death, he is able to avoid the police for a long time, hiding and taking risky paths that the crowd of officers cannot take together.

Spontaneous Spontaneity is a strength and a weakness for Tracy. Perceptive and curious, he is quick-witted and willing to act decisively based on little information. Much like a detective, he fills in the gaps of information with deduction. Seeing Alice stealthily flee Mr. Crewe's apartment, he spontaneously decides to break in, finding one of Alice's gloves to use for blackmail. Tracy's spontaneity drives him to include Frank in his blackmail scheme when he surmises that the detective is withholding evidence. While this is profitable at first, close association with an officer of the law acts against him when Frank learns that Tracy is a person of interest in the murder case. When Tracy spontaneously jumps out of the parlor window, he betrays his initial plan of telling the police everything. Perhaps it is fear of Frank's word being taken over his, or maybe it is simple panic over being taken back into police custody, but this spur-of-the-moment action leads to his demise.

Curious Tracy shows himself to have a curious mind. While many criminals would be frustrated by their plans falling through, Tracy sees opportunity. He wants to know why Alice is fleeing and finds a chance at blackmail. The criminal also shows curiosity in Frank and Alice's relationship. As Tracy gains bits of understanding, he quickly puts together that their relationship is strained and tries to use that to his advantage.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

One notable flaw of *Blackmail* is Anny Ondra's performance. Her awkwardness on screen and strange line delivery wasn't her fault: British International Pictures decided that she would lip-sync her lines spoken by actress Joan Barry offscreen to cover Ondra's strong Czech accent. Many notable critics and scholars forgive this casting error and the sloppy live-dub job. The film was well into production before John Maxwell decided to turn *Blackmail* into a talkie. Some unique cut-out sets -including a multi-story staircase featured in an early scene- were built at Elstree studios, where the soundstage was used for sound for the very first time. Filming at the soundstage took place behind a special screen to keep the camera's noisy machinery from interfering with the microphones. There is extended and notable use of the Schüfftan process in the British Museum during the film's climax. This added Hitchcock's trademark composition choices to the movie and it made filming in the museum's dark reading room possible without additional lighting. Modern viewers will notice that many sections of the film have unsynced overdubs and many lines delivered by people whose backs are turned. Although jarring today, it is important to

remember that this is the very first commercial British film with audio. Despite some amateurish mistakes, the story and cinematography make *Blackmail* a film with enduring watchability.