

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Psycho (1960)

Alfred Hitchcock

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OVERVIEW

Director Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is a household name and perhaps the best-known British filmmaker. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. His best-known films include *The Birds*, *Vertigo*, and *Dial M for Murder*, all of which have 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 on Robert Bloch's 1959 novel of the same name, *Psycho* was said to be a departure for Hitchcock by critics. Unlike the large-budget color films he had been making—*To Catch a Thief*, *Vertigo*, and *North by Northwest*—*Psycho*'s production was relegated to Hitchcock's television crew after Paramount enforced budgetary limitations. Critics were also mixed upon release, but after an astounding \$50 million in box-office receipts they quickly changed their tune. The film earned Hitchcock another Academy nomination for Best Director, but he lost out to *The Apartment*, directed by Billy Wilder.

Background Being one of Hitchcock's most popular and financially successful films, there's almost too much to say about *Psycho*. Some notable points include the fact that Hitchcock wasn't supposed to direct this film in the first place. Hitchcock was working on a film called *No Bail for the Judge*, but its leading lady, Audrey Hepburn, had to bow out when she found out she was pregnant. It was only then that he was given the green light to film *Psycho*. However, Hitchcock was forced to finance and produce *Psycho* without assistance from Paramount, conducting most of the production at Revue Studios, the same location where he shot his television show. This was also the first film in which Hitchcock enforced a "no late admission" policy during the theatrical release. Critics say the film is fairly true to the novel, but some small changes, such as making Norman more sympathetic, did occur. While it cannot be proven, some say that the novel was inspired by the horrific acts of noted serial killer Ed Gein, who was tried and imprisoned in 1957, two years before publication.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

Despite its small budget, cast, and scope, *Psycho* remains one of Hitchcock's greatest films. Every moment drips with suspense and terror, leaning heavily on Hitchcock's trademark voyeuristic stylings to place the viewer exactly where they need to be. Of special note is the famed shower scene, which took at least 60 unique camera setups to produce. One included a specialized, water-proofed camera to get the well-known shot of the shower faucet straight on. While sexuality, violence, and other taboos are key to *Psycho*'s plot, there are some misconceptions about Norman's character that persist to this day. Many sources still wrongly call Norman a 'transvestite' even though it's explicitly stated at the end of the film

that he has no psychosexual tendencies. A psychotic breakdown based around his mother's persistent domineering and a guilt complex formed after killing her compels Norman to let his mother 'live on' through his macabre play-acting.

SYNOPSIS

Marion Crane steals \$40,000 and heads to Fairvale, California in a misguided attempt to help her lover, Sam, out of financial trouble. On the run from a highway patrol officer, she stops at the Bates Motel, run by Norman Bates. During her stay, she hears Norman arguing with his mother. Suddenly feeling guilty about the theft, Marion decides to return the money. However, before she can, she's brutally murdered in the shower by a shadowy figure. Norman discovers her body and, assuming his mother committed the killing, dutifully covers up the crime.

Worried about her disappearance, Marion's sister, Lila, goes to Sam's shop in Fairvale to look for her. There, she meets a private investigator named Arbogast who has been hired to bring back the \$40,000. Arbogast's inquiry leads him to the Bates Motel, where Norman's suspicious behavior raises concerns. Arbogast calls Marion and Sam from a payphone and promises to return to the motel to get to the bottom of the mystery. Upon his return, he is stabbed to death by the mysterious figure.

Unable to contact Arbogast, Sam visits the motel with Lila where they pose as a married couple. While Sam distracts Norman, Lila searches the house on the hill where she finds Norman's mother's corpse. Hearing her scream, Norman appears in a wig and his mother's clothes and attacks Lila, shouting, "I am Norma Bates." Sam subdues Norman, allowing Lila to escape and call the police. Later, a psychiatrist reveals Norman's split personality and the other causes of his strange and murderous behavior. Marion's car containing her remains and the stolen money is found in the swamp by the hotel.

CHARACTERS

Marion Crane – A real-estate worker who steals \$40,000 to help her financially-strained lover, Sam

Sam Loomis – A recent divorcee who owns and operates a hardware store and is in love with Marion

Norman Bates – Owner and operator of the Bates Motel

Mrs. Bates – Norman's sickly mother

Lila Crane – Marion's younger sister

Arbogast – The private investigator hired to track down Marion and the \$40,000

Sheriff Chambers – The deputy sheriff of Fairvale

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Norman Bates

Norman is a young man who owns and operates the Bates Motel outside of Fairvale. While he seems inconspicuous, he harbors several dark secrets and peculiar habits. It seems some check into his motel and never leave.

Spontaneous Norman doesn't plan his actions. He seems entirely reactive outside the day-to-day operation of the motel. We see this first when Norman quickly changes his mind about where to put Marion for the night, visibly pausing over another room key before putting her in room 1 so that he can peep at her. Likewise, despite its fame and international acclaim, Marion's murder seems completely unprompted, a true murder of passion. The Mrs. Bates personality takes over out of jealousy or fear and commits these murders, which Norman then discovers and hastily covers up. This pattern repeats until the film's end, when Sam is finally able to stop Norman's attack on Lila and she contacts the police.

Fearful Norman is incredibly fearful. His whole life, he's lived in fear of displeasing his domineering mother, and this makes him frightened and unpredictable around others. When he discovers Marion's body, his first thought is to cover up his mother's murder to keep the police from taking her away.

Someone who wasn't so afraid would contact the authorities even if it meant a family member facing jail time. When Arbogast begins poking around, Norman fearfully tells him to leave before killing him out of fear of being discovered, hiding his body in the swamp like he did Marion's. Norman's fear makes him unable to face the consequences of his actions, causing him to create a split personality and allowing him to believe that his mother is still alive.

Asocial This is one of Norman's most notable traits. He is not personable. He can pretend to be for short periods, but the moment someone makes him uncomfortable or even just a little angry, his entire demeanor changes, showing some of his true colors. It makes it hard for him to lie and keep track of his lies, trapping him in several awkward moments when he contradicts himself, especially in front of Arbogast. He also shows himself to be a peeping Tom as well as a psychotic murderer, some obviously anti-social traits.

Marion Crane

Marion works in a real estate office in Phoenix. Here, she is handed the opportunity of a lifetime when her boss asks her to take \$40,000 in cash to the bank. Instead, she steals the money to help her lover, Sam, with his debt, leading to her untimely demise at the Bates Motel.

Foolish Marion is shown to be just a little foolish. Perhaps it's her deep love for Sam or maybe just the temptation of the fat stack of bills in her hand, but she takes a major risk by running off with the \$40,000. She realizes her actions are foolish when she's spotted by her boss while she leaves town. From this moment on, she continues down the path she planned despite feeling that the police are right on her heels. Someone wiser would change their plan to avoid being caught. Her foolish behavior continues when she purchases a used car while the officer she's trying to avoid watches her closely. This happens again when she realizes that Norman's behavior is beyond strange, yet she decides to stay at the hotel he runs despite being only a few miles from Sam's home.

Anxious Marion's anxiety shows most in her flight from Phoenix. Here we see her fretting while she drives, imagining all the things people are saying about her. Through her anxiety, we get a glimpse of the investigation into the missing money. It also drives her to some blatantly strange behavior, such as stopping mid-trip to purchase a used vehicle to throw the police off her scent even though the highway patrol officer from before watches her and gets her new license plate number. Her anxiety about driving in the dark causes her to encounter the officer when she falls asleep at the side of the road, and it also leads her to the Bates Motel although she's just 15 miles from her destination.

Unconventional Marion is a bit unconventional. While this shows in her thievery, it also shows in her romance with Sam. She doesn't care that he's been divorced, an issue that was still seen as problematic around the time the film was released. She also has a heavily sexual relationship with him, something considered taboo during the period. Likewise, she is the one who asks him to marry her, a reversal of traditional gender roles.

Sam Loomis

Sam owns a hardware store in Fairvale. He is in love with Marion, but hesitant to make their relationship more serious given his recent divorce and substantial debts. He joins forces with Lila (Marion's sister) when Marion goes missing.

Frustrated Sam's frustration with life is clear from the film's first moments. He loves Marion deeply, but his frustrations with his recent divorce and failing business get in the way of their romance: he doesn't feel worthy of Marion. We see his frustration come up again when the sheriff doesn't want to investigate the Bates Motel, almost giving up when Chambers accuses him of 'seeing illusions.' Lila helps him through this moment and convinces him to join her in an investigation of Norman's strange activities. It's here that we see Sam's frustration a final time. Not getting answers quick enough, he chooses to confront Norman while he is trying to distract him. This gives Norman a chance to escape and attack Lila.

Determined Sam shows great determination. While he feels guilty about his divorce and debt, he still wants to marry Marion, hoping that he can be worthy of her. We see this trait in the way he still runs his hardware store despite his growing debt. His determination only falters once when the sheriff accuses him of 'seeing illusions,' but with Lila's help, he quickly pulls himself together and joins her in a private investigation of the Bates Motel. His determination gets the better of him when he's supposed to be distracting Norman. Instead of having a simple conversation with him, Sam demands answers about the missing \$40,000 and Norman's nervous behavior. While he's seeking answers, this pushes Norman too far and allows him to escape and attack Lila. Despite being hit on the head, Sam appears behind Norman and wrestles the knife away from him, keeping Lila safe.

Brave Despite everything, Sam shows great bravery throughout the film's second half. This trait really shines when he goes to the Bates Motel to look for Arbogast and again when he poses as a couple with Lila. When Lila concocts a plan to distract Norman so that one of them can poke around the house on the hill, Sam suggests that he take on the role of keeping Norman occupied. He can at least hope to fight him off if something goes wrong. Sam tells Lila to go straight to the police with whatever she finds, showing his intent to ensure that someone learns of what is going on at the isolated motel, even if it costs him his life. He taunts Norman while distracting him, triggering a panic in Norman and causing the motel owner to hit him over the head with an urn. At the film's end, Sam wrestles the butcher's knife away from Norman in the cellar, protecting Lila and ensuring that Norman's killing spree is finally brought to an end.

Lila Crane

Lila is Marion's younger sister. Using her sister's letters, she begins a personal investigation into Marion's disappearance and tracks down Sam, believing him to be responsible at first. Her demands for action lead her and Sam to the Bates Motel where they confront her sister's killer.

Inquisitive Lila seems naturally inquisitive. She beats Arbogast to Sam's hardware store, questioning her sister's lover before the professional detective even makes his introduction. Likewise, when Arbogast goes missing, Lila wants to get to the bottom of the mystery. While many, including Sam, are dissuaded from further action by the sheriff's lack of action, Lila is determined to figure out the mystery of the disappearances at the Bates Motel. She goes there and poses as a married couple with Sam to poke around the motel and Bates home. Inside Norman's house, we see her going through Mrs. Bates' things and reading Norman's journal before she finds her way to the fruit cellar, where she makes her final shocking discoveries.

Suspicious Lila suspects everyone it seems. While we are only introduced to her after her sister goes missing, we see just how much she doubts others and how her intuition leads her in the correct direction. She is first suspicious of Sam, believing him to be hiding her sister. These suspicions are allayed when Arbogast appears and makes no headway with Sam. Sam, too, seems genuine in his shock and concern when he learns about Marion's actions. One suspicion Marion can't shake is that something fishy is happening at the Bates Motel. Despite the sheriff's statements to the contrary, she, like Arbogast, doesn't see things adding up and decides to take the law into her own hands.

Prompt Lila demands action. She beats Arbogast to Sam's hardware store and is frustrated when she is told to stay put. It is Lila who wants to act quickly, finding more frustration in the sheriff's lack of desire and of ability to investigate the motel where her missing sister was last seen. In her mind, quick and decisive action is needed to find her missing sister. Lila shows this trait a final time when Sam distracts Norman: Lila acts without a second thought, entering the house on the hill and finding Mrs. Bates' corpse.

THEMES

Crime - Crime is the most obvious theme in *Psycho*. Throughout the film, we're shown theft, evasion of police officers, and murder, just to name a few. Marion's theft of the \$40,000 is the driving element behind the entire plot. This moment of weakness serves both to place Marion at the Bates Motel, a reason for Arbogast to even be in the area, and the final proof that Marion was at the Bates Motel. While Marion's crimes receive some of the most focus, it's Mrs. Bates and Norman's crimes which are the most

memorable. The murders of Marion and Arbogast still chill audiences today, and Norman's cover up of Marion's death is incredibly memorable. In their pursuit of justice, Lila and Sam trespass into Norman's home to find Mrs. Bates. Their relatively small crime exposes the litany of major crimes Norman has committed, from mishandling a corpse to multiple murders.

Investigation - Investigation is another key theme of this intense thriller. We see it appear first when Marion flees Arizona in the hopes of giving the \$40,000 to Sam in California. While she drives, she imagines what her boss and the police are saying about her, correctly guessing some of their actions in her absence. In this way, we can feel the pursuit without ever being shown it explicitly. Investigation comes up again when Lila and Arbogast make their appearances. Both have made their way to Sam's hardware store in an effort to track down Marion. Arbogast immediately takes his investigation to the next level, seeking out Marion at all the possible hotels around the area, eventually ending up at the Bates Motel. Norman dislikes the private detective's attentions and tells him to leave, but Arbogast feels like he's found a solid lead in Mrs. Bates. He phones Lila to tell her about this shortly before his death. After not hearing back from Arbogast and finding no help with the police, Lila and Sam take the investigation into their own hands. They travel to the Bates Motel, where they pose as a married couple to uncover Norman's dark secret.

Psychology - Psychology plays a small but important role in *Psycho*. We see this mostly at the film's end, when a psychiatrist explains what he's discovered about Norman's fragile psyche. The psychiatrist finds that Mrs. Bates was such a domineering force in Norman's life that he never really developed a sense of self. Because this made Norman jealous of his mother's confidence, he projected an inverse jealousy onto his mother about him, leading to him killing Mrs. Bates and her lover a decade before the film takes place. Because of his guilt for killing his mother, Norman allows her to live through him, developing a split personality—talking, thinking, and eventually acting for her. After his final line, "I am Norma Bates," Norman ceases speaking. From then on, we only hear Mrs. Bates, signifying that her dominant personality has entirely engulfed Norman's weaker personality. Psychology also comes up in Marion's internal monologue while her anxious thoughts race, allowing her to imagine what kind of investigation is following hot on her heels.

Love - Love is a minor yet potent theme in this film. The first on-screen conversation between Marion and Sam shows that they have a great love for each other, with Marion wishing to marry Sam. While he has to be talked into it, it's only because he is so recently divorced and feels guilty for having so much debt. Marion loves Sam, so she steals the \$40,000 to help pay his outstanding debts. Marion has a loving connection with her younger sister, Lila, who she speaks with almost daily and always communicates her movements. When Marion goes missing, Lila drives all the way to Sam's hardware store in California to confront him. Sam is shocked to learn that Marion is missing, and quickly joins forces with Lila to find out what happened to his lover. In Hitchcock's other films, this may have led to a second romance, but in *Psycho*, Sam remains deeply in love with Marion, even after finding out she has been killed. In a macabre way, it's Norman's love for his mother that drives him to his bizarre behavior such as preserving her corpse and developing a split personality to let her live after death.

Guilt - Guilt is a major theme of *Psycho* that is quickly overshadowed by the film's violent and thrilling elements. We see Marion's guilt plain as day from the moment she begins packing until her dying breath. Despite wanting to help Sam with the money and going through with the theft, she is highly anxious that she will be caught. Marion often thinks about how her actions have impacted others, such as her boss and the rich man who provided the cash. It's these and other similar thoughts that lead her to change her mind about going through with the crime while staying at the Bates Motel. Before she can return to Phoenix, however, she is murdered. In her final moments, we see her reaching out desperately for the money, showing that her guilt was on her mind even as she was dying. Norman's guilt is much more complex, literally giving him a complex that evolves into his strange split personality. This is both out of love for his mother and guilt for killing her, and gives him the illusion that she is still alive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does the subject matter and portrayal of violence in this film compare to Hitchcock's earlier thrillers?

List several ways in which the Hays Code was ignored in *Psycho*.

How does the soundtrack interplay with the film's suspenseful elements? Did you notice the moments of silence? How did they add or detract from your experience?

In the novel, Marion was only present for two chapters. Do you think it was a good decision to expand her story into nearly half the film? Explain.

SCENES

Lunch break - The camera pans around Phoenix, Arizona, with a few title graphics telling us the location and that the time is 2:43 PM on Friday, December 11th before the camera squeezes between some window blinds. Inside the small hotel room, a woman lies on the bed in her underclothes while a man dresses. She smiles up at him when he says, "You never did eat your lunch, did you?" The woman stands and begins dressing after mentioning she needs to get back to the office. The man tries to convince the woman to call in for the afternoon, pulling her back down to the bed and kissing her. Not only is checkout time 3 o'clock, she resents that she has to meet her lover in a seedy hotel, calling him, 'Sam.' Sam tries to convince her that it's not all that bad, but she argues back, saying that she loves him enough to see him "respectably." It takes a little convincing, but Sam changes his tune, saying, "Marion, whenever it's possible, I want to see you. And under any circumstances, even respectability." Sam mentions his debt, and Marion begs him to marry her before they part.



Headache - A bit later, Marion rushes into the real estate office where she works, asking her co-worker if the boss made it back from lunch yet. To her relief, the woman says their boss is still out dining with a rich client. Marion sits at her desk, complaining of a headache and touching up her make-up. Suddenly, the door opens, and their boss enters with a man wearing 'western' clothes, who begins flirting with Marion as she begins preparing his deed. Bragging about his wealth, he flashes a wad of cash, \$40,000 worth, making Marion's boss nervous. When the rich man walks into the boss' office to seal the deal, Marion is instructed to take the cash straight to the bank. Marion dutifully puts the money into her purse before giving the deed to her boss and requesting the rest of the day off for her headache, which he grants her.



Packing - Marion enters her bedroom and searches for a new blouse to wear. While she rummages through her closet and changes, the camera focuses down on the \$40,000 lying on her bed. When it rises and zooms out, we see that Marion has been filling a suitcase. She looks down at the money and throws the last few things in her luggage. Satisfied that she has everything, she sits down and hastily jams the envelope of money into her purse before leaving.



Crosswalk - Marion thinks to herself while she drives, the camera focused on her face while she imagines Sam's happy reaction to her sudden appearance with so much money. She comes to a halt at a crosswalk, where she sees her boss and the rich man pass. Her boss doesn't recognize her at first, but he looks back before she can drive away, surprised to see her. Stressful music plays while Marion drives, her panic obvious. Sometime later, Marion drives along a dark highway, the headlights of oncoming cars flashing across her face. She seems to have trouble keeping her eyes open, and her head droops when the music comes to a sudden end.



"Is anything wrong?" - Sometime the next morning, Marion's car sits by the side of the road. A highway patrolman takes notice and steps out of his car to investigate. Finding Marion asleep in the front seat, he knocks on the window, startling her awake. She tries to start her car, but the officer stops her, saying she's "in quite a hurry." "I didn't mean to sleep so long," Marion explains brusquely. "I almost had an accident last night from sleepiness, so I decided to pull over." The officer chastises her for not staying in a motel before asking, "Is anything wrong?" Marion does a bad job of acting normal to the point that the officer asks to see her license. Marion hands him the card, and he notes her license plate before heading back to his car. Her nerve slipping completely, Marion takes off, the policeman following close behind until he seems to take a different exit.



Used car- Nervous and seeking to keep the police from tracking her down once the theft of the money is reported, Marion pulls into a used car lot and attempts to trade her car for another model. As she does this, the policeman pulls up and parks across the road, watching Marion closely. The salesman is amused when Marion tries to hasten the sale, saying, "It's the first time the customer ever high-pressured the salesman!" He offers to trade in her car for another she's selected for just the additional fee of \$700. Marion asks to use the restroom, and while she's gone, the policeman pulls into the car lot. In the bathroom, Marion pulls out the cash she needs to pay for her new car and stows the money again. When she emerges, she panics upon seeing the cop and drives away quickly in her new car. Marion almost forgets her luggage, which the mechanic notices and transfers to her new car after stopping her from driving onto the highway.



Voices - The camera faces Marion, who drives her car down the highway, biting her lip while she thinks to herself, scored by stressful string music. Voices fly through her head as she imagines what people are saying about her and her theft of \$40,000. In her mind, the police are right on her heels. She hears their conversation and that of her boss. She feels guilty, realizing she'll be causing her sister to worry by dropping off the map like she has. She concludes that her boss saw her the day she left with the money and that he will rightly contact the police as soon as he puts two and two together. Inside her mind, the rich man accuses her of flirting with him as the scene comes to a close.



Dark and stormy night - The stressful music continues while rain pours down, obscuring the many headlights rushing toward Marion's car. She activates the wiper, but the blade can barely keep up with the deluge. Tired and barely able to see the road, Marion begins looking for a place to stop. In the distance, she sees some lights and a sign reading "Bates Motel, Vacancy." She pulls her car into the small lot near the cabins and hurries into the office, looking for the owner. There's no one there, but when she looks up at the nearby house on the hill, she sees a woman walk by a lit window. Rushing back to her car, she begins to lay on the horn, and a man quickly emerges from the home and runs down the hill, hunched in an attempt to keep the rain off his head.



Proprietor - Marion hops out of her car when the man approaches, and he apologizes for not being in the office, inviting her inside. He soon explains that when they put the new highway in, most of his business left with it. She fills out her information in the book, leaving a false name, and saying all she wants to do is eat and sleep. The proprietor says there's a diner down the road and mentions Fairvale, the town Marion is headed for. She stopped just fifteen miles out. Ever the gentleman, the proprietor fetches her bags and shows her into her room. Before he leaves, he introduces himself as Norman and offers to share his simple dinner. Marion accepts, and Norman leaves to fetch the food from the house.



The Money - The stressful music resumes while Marion hastily unpacks, picking out a dry dress. She begins fretting about what to do with the money. She moves from the dresser to the nightstand before deciding to wrap the stack of bills inside a newspaper and placing it beside the bed. She turns her attention back to her dress when suddenly, she hears someone yelling through her open window.



Mrs. Bates - "I won't have you bringing strange young girls in for supper!" A woman yells from up the hill. Marion creeps closer to the window, listening through the steady rainfall. "Mother," Norman says, "please." "And then what?" Mrs. Bates continues yelling, "After supper? Music? Whispers?" Norman tries to reason with her, saying he's just being helpful for a late-night guest, but his mother doesn't relent, saying loose women disgust her: "Go tell her she'll not be appeasing her ugly appetite with my food or my son!" After more taunting, Norman yells back that she should shut up before he leaves the house and heads back to the motel.



Dinner - Norman rounds the corner with a tray containing sandwiches and milk, and Marion meets him on the motel's long front porch. "I caused you some trouble," Marion begins, but Norman says she hasn't. "My mother..." he begins, struggling to find the right words, "she isn't quite herself today." Marion invites him into her room, but he offers to eat with her in the office instead. Inside, Marion is struck by the strangeness of Norman's collection of taxidermy birds. Marion begins to eat, and Norman chuckles, saying, "You eat like a bird." "You'd know, of course," Marion jokes back. Norman awkwardly stumbles through a conversation with her, saying he doesn't know anything about birds aside from stuffing them. Marion tries to be polite, but her discomfort shows on her face and in her body language. He outlines his day-to-day life before asking Marion what she's "running away from." She wonders why he asks, and he responds, "We're all in our private traps, clamped in them, and none of us can ever get out."



"Someplace" - The conversation turns again to Norman's life, and he reveals that his father died while he was young and that his mother is all he has. "A few years ago, Mother met this man," he continues, "and he talked her into building this motel. He could have talked her into anything, and when he died, too, it was just too great a shock for her... She had nothing left." "Except you," Marion replies through a bite of food. Norman responds with a blank expression: "A son is a poor substitute for a lover." Marion then asks why he puts up with the abuse, and Norman replies that no one would look after her. "Wouldn't it be better if you put her someplace?" Marion asks, and Norman's face grows dark. "You mean an institution?" he asks in a caustic tone. "A madhouse? People always call a madhouse 'someplace,' don't they?" Marion apologizes, but Norman continues on his tirade: "People always mean well. They cluck their thick tongues and shake their heads and suggest, oh, so very delicately."



Peeping - Unnerved by her interaction with Norman, Marion excuses herself and returns to her room for the night, saying she plans to drive to Phoenix to get out of her "private trap" at dawn. She forgets her false name when Norman asks how he should address her when he brings her breakfast the next morning. After she's gone, Norman confirms this by looking in the registry book before returning to the back office. There, he pulls a picture off the wall and looks through a little peephole behind it, watching Marion undress before she takes a shower. He replaces the picture and rushes back up to the house on the hill. Inside, he deliberates for a moment, wanting to confront his mother, but ultimately heading to the kitchen.



Shower - Marion does some sums in her notebook before giving up and tearing up the piece of paper. She flushes it down the toilet to hide the evidence before stepping into the shower and washing herself. The camera jumps around, catching her washing her hair and limbs and focusing on the shower head before seeing a figure entering the bathroom behind the translucent shower curtain. Stressful music plays while the figure begins stabbing Marion. She screams and struggles, fighting back, but it's no use. The figure rushes away, leaving her to bleed out in the shower. Marion slumps down and tries to get out of the shower, where she falls, her face hitting the bathroom floor with a dull smack. Her blood washes away from her wounds and down the shower drain, as the camera follows its path into the darkness before fading back to Marion's lifeless eye. Judging by the target of her motionless eye, her final thought was about the money hidden in the newspaper on the bedside table.



Cover-up - The camera pans through the open hotel room window and gazes up the hill at the Bates home where Norman can be heard crying, "Oh God! Mother! Blood! Blood!" He rushes down the hill accompanied by chilling music. In the hotel room, he discovers Marion's corpse. Norman whips away, covering his mouth as if to stifle his screams. After composing himself, he closes the window and thinks for a moment. After turning off the lights, he moves outside, looking from Marion's car to her room. He then goes into the office, turning off the lights and retrieving a mop. Back in Marion's room, suspenseful music plays while Norman begins cleaning the murder scene. He places Marion's body on the shower curtain before mopping up the blood in the bathroom. He collects all of Marion's things, throwing them into her luggage before bundling up her body and stowing them all in the trunk of her car.



NFB 418 - Norman returns to the room and double checks that all of Marion's belongings are removed, throwing what he missed into the trunk of her car, also stowing the mop and bucket he used to clean up the blood. Still unsure that he's finished the job, he returns to the room once more and discovers the newspaper containing the \$40,000 still beside the bed. He picks it up and throws it on top of everything else inside the trunk before hopping into Marion's car and driving away. He doesn't drive very far. The camera focuses on the license plate (NFB 418) of Marion's car while it slowly rolls toward a nearby swamp. The camera pulls back and watches Norman step out and roll the car into the mire. He watches nervously, putting something into his mouth and chewing while the car sinks. When it stops, he begins to panic, but after a few more moments, the car disappears into the murky water. Norman grins to himself while the screen fades to black.



Hardware Store - The scene fades in on Sam writing a letter to Marion at a desk in the back office of his hardware store. In the front of the store, a woman discusses the finer points of pest control with the clerk, who tries unsuccessfully to stifle his yawns. Outside, a woman hurriedly exits a car and enters the store looking for Sam. He hurries out to meet her, and he recognizes her as Marion's sister, Lila. Lila asks after her sister, and Sam expects her to be back home in Phoenix and is surprised to hear from Lila that Marion left town a couple of days before. A man watches the two talk from outside. Realizing the personal nature of the conversation when Lila bursts into tears, Sam tells his clerk to break early for lunch, and the man outside enters, introducing himself as a private detective by the name of Arbogast. He's been hired by the man who lost the \$40,000 to track down the money. Getting nowhere with Lila, he decides to hit the pavement, shown to us in a montage of Arbogast entering hotels and talking to people across the city.



Arbogast and Norman- Sometime later, we see Norman sitting on the motel porch reading a magazine and eating candy. He looks up, surprised to see a car rolling to a stop in front of the office. Arbogast steps out and chuckles that he almost drove past the motel. Norman apologizes for forgetting to turn on the sign. Arbogast thinks this is strange and wonders what he's trying to hide. Norman laughs this off, saying it's barely worth the effort to run the place anymore. Arbogast asks if he can ask Norman a few questions, and the motel owner leads him into the office. "I've been trying to trace a girl that's been missing for, oh, about a week now from Phoenix." When Norman looks concerned, Arbogast assures him that the woman isn't a troublemaker and the police aren't involved. Norman swears that they haven't had a check-in in weeks. Arbogast insists that he look at Marion's photo before "committing himself".



Strange behavior - Norman begins to panic when Arbogast asks to look at the registry book, turning on the vacancy sign and contradicting himself by saying, "We had a couple last week, said if the thing hadn't been on, they would've thought this was an old, deserted..." Arbogast interrupts him to tell him about the contradiction before asking to see the registry again. Norman relents, and Arbogast matches Marion's handwriting sample to the alias she left in the book. Arbogast presses Norman to look at the picture again, and Norman pretends to remember her, claiming she went right to bed after showing up late one rainy night. As Arbogast continues asking questions, Norman grows more nervous, repeatedly answering no before giving another rundown of the night Marion stayed. Arbogast isn't pleased, saying, "If it doesn't jell, it isn't aspic, and this ain't jelling." Norman keeps playing dumb and offers to show him around. Outside, Arbogast notices Mrs. Bates' shadow in the window of the house and asks to speak with her. Norman becomes angry and demands that Arbogast leave, telling him he needs a warrant. He grins to himself after the private eye drives away.



Phone booth - From a phone booth somewhere down the road, Arbogast calls Lila. He tells her that Marion had been at the Bates Motel and reports what Norman said. "I think I got all there was to get," the detective says. "I'll just have to pick up the pieces from here... I don't feel entirely satisfied. See, this boy had a sick old mother. I think she saw Marion and talked to her." Lila says something we can't hear, and Arbogast replies that he's going back to the hotel to see if he can talk to the old woman, promising to call back in an hour with a new report.



Return to the Bates Motel - Outside the Bates Motel, Norman creeps along the porch with something under his arm. He disappears into the shadows when Arbogast returns and exits his car. The detective peeks into the office looking for Norman. Not finding him, he looks into a nearby open safe and around the office before heading up the hill to the house. Suspenseful music plays while the private eye decides what to do. Not seeing Norman, he enters the house and slowly climbs the stairs, having seen the woman's shadow on the second floor. While he climbs the stairs, a door somewhere slowly opens. At the landing, a woman appears holding a knife. She attacks Arbogast while frightful strings scream out pizzicato notes, and a bloody Arbogast falls back down the stairs with a frightened look frozen in his eyes. The woman races down the stairs after him and plunges the knife into his chest while he screams in pain. The scene fades to black.



"An hour or less" - "Sometimes Saturday night has a lonesome sound," Sam says, leaning against a desk in his office. "Ever notice that, Lila?" "Sam," Lila replies with a hint of fear in her voice, "he said an hour or less." "It's been three," Sam says with a sigh. "Are we just going to sit here and wait?" demands Lila. "How far is the old highway?" Sam quickly guesses her plan, telling her going out to the Bates Motel is a bad idea. "Patience doesn't run in my family," Lila says. "I'm going out there." Unable to dissuade her, Sam offers to go by himself, as he knows where the motel is, and says, "One of us has to be here in case he's on the way."



Searching for Arbogast - Norman stands by the swamp. Back at the motel, Sam looks around for Arbogast, calling his name. In the swamp, Norman hears this and looks slowly in the direction of the motel with a frightened look on his face. Sometime later, Sam returns to his hardware store to report that he didn't see anyone but a woman's silhouette in the window. Lila asks where Arbogast could have gone, and Sam supposes that he could have found a "definite lead." "Sam," Lila says, her concern barely contained, "he called when he had nothing. Nothing but a dissatisfied feeling. Don't you think he'd have called if he had anything at all?" Sam reluctantly agrees and says they should go see Al Chambers. "Who's he?" Lila asks. "Our deputy sheriff around here," Sam replies, and Lila agrees to go with him.



Al Chambers - Sheriff Al Chambers descends the stairs of his home, wrapping a nightgown around his waist. Sam introduces Lila and quickly gets him up to speed about the situation: "We got a call from this detective saying that he'd traced [Marion] to that motel out on the old highway." Sheriff Chambers knows the place and seems to be acquainted with the owner. "He traced her there and called us to say he was going to question Mrs. Bates," Sam continues. Chambers' wife looks confused, asking, "Norman took a wife?" "An old woman," Sam clarifies, "his mother." The sheriff asks a few more clarifying questions and concludes that there's nothing he can do but make a phone call unless they have evidence of foul play. He calls up Norman for a quick conversation. The sheriff seems satisfied with his answers and hangs up, telling Sam and Lila, "Norman Bates' mother has been dead and buried in Green Lawn Cemetery for the past 10 years." Lila and Sam insist that there is an old woman out at the Bates Motel that Norman wouldn't let anyone see. "Well, if the woman up there is Mrs. Bates," the sheriff finally asks, "who's that woman buried out in Green Lawn Cemetery?"



Argument with Mother- Back at the Bates Motel office, Norman sets aside the telephone and climbs up the stairs to the house. Inside the home, he quickly climbs the stairs and enters his mother's room. The camera creeps slowly up the stairs while Norman speaks off-screen. "Now Mother," he begins, "I'm going to bring something up..." Mrs. Bates' laughter interrupts him: "I am sorry, boy, but you do manage to look ludicrous when you give me orders." "Please, Mother," Norman says firmly. "No!" Mrs. Bates cries out. "I will not hide in the fruit cellar. You think I'm fruity, huh? I'm staying right here." "They'll come now, Mother," Norman says, unable to hide his concern. "He came after the girl, and now someone will come after him. Mother, please, it's just for a few days." The camera takes the position where it watched Mrs. Bates murder Arbogast. "I'll carry you, Mother," Norman says. Norman then exits the room with his mother bundled in his arms while she shouts at him to put her down.

Seeing illusions - Outside the Fariview church, Lila and Sam meet Sheriff Chambers and his wife after they leave the Sunday morning service. Sam asks the sheriff to drive out to the Bates Motel with him, and Chambers says that he's already been. "You didn't find anything?" Sam asks, confused. Sheriff Chambers says that Norman gave him the same information he'd given to Arbogast and that there was no Mrs. Bates to be found: "You must have seen an illusion, Sam." Lila speaks up to say she's still suspicious, and the sheriff interrupts her, saying he's sorry he couldn't help her feel better before advising them, "You want to come around to my office this afternoon and report a missing person and a theft... The sooner you drop this in the lap of the law, that's the sooner you stand a chance of seeing your sister being picked up." The sheriff and his wife leave, and Sam doubts his senses, but Lila is steadfast; she knows that something is going on at the motel. Sam reluctantly leaves with Lila, heading for the Bates Motel.



Checking in - On the drive to the motel, Lila and Sam come up with a hasty but fairly straightforward plan: They'll pose as a married couple, and search the hotel. Norman watches Sam pull his truck to a stop in front of the office from the upper story of his home and makes his way quickly down to the pair of visitors. Sam makes up a quick story that they were on their way to San Francisco, but they're worried about getting caught in a storm later that night. Norman tries to put them in a room straight away, but Sam insists on getting a receipt 'for his boss.' Sam pays for the room and receives the receipt while Lila says she's going on to the cabin alone and peeks into cabin 1 before Sam and Norman follow her out of the office. Norman stands at the door and watches the couple enter their room. Inside cabin 10, Lila tells Sam that they need a new plan. She insists that there must be some proof of Marion or the \$40,000 seeing as Arbogast disappeared. "He wouldn't have gone anywhere without telling us unless he was stopped," Lila says firmly. "And he was stopped. So he must have found something." Sam agrees, saying, "We'll start with cabin 1."



Room 1 - Lila and Sam creep out of their room, searching quietly for Norman before entering the first cabin. Inside, the two begin digging around in the drawers. Finding nothing, Lila moves to the bathroom, where she finds a clue: a scrap of paper Marion tried to flush down the toilet with the figure \$40,000 on it. Sam also notices the missing shower curtain before putting the scrap of paper into his wallet for safekeeping. Lila says she has to speak to the 'old lady,' but Sam stops her, saying she can't just barge into Norman's house. Sam agrees to "find Bates and keep him occupied" while Lila searches the house for Mrs. Bates. "If you get anything out of the mother," Sam asks Lila, "can you find your way back to town?" Lila says she can, stammering at the unexpected question. "If you do get anything," Sam says, "don't stop to tell me."



Talking to Mrs. Bates - Lila and Sam leave the first cabin and split up. Sam walks toward the office, where he finds Bates and begins his distraction, asking him some questions about motel ownership. Lila quickly doubles back and makes her way up the hill to the house. Tense music plays while Lila goes inside. Back in the motel office, Sam guides the conversation towards Norman's personal life, asking if he lives alone, gently wheedling him about the need to "get away," but Norman doesn't take the bait. Lila searches the upstairs for Mrs. Bates and is surprised to find her room spotless yet empty. She startles herself when an array of mirrors reflects her image behind her. Lila composes herself and continues her search. The deep crevice in the mattress where someone must lie all the time catches her attention.



A slip of the tongue - "I'm not saying you shouldn't be contented here," Sam says to Norman in the office. "I think if you saw a chance to get out from under, you'd unload this place." Norman takes offense, saying, "This place happens to be my only world. I grew up in that house up there... My mother and I were more than happy." Back in the house, Lila searches Norman's childhood room and is disturbed to find that he is still living there. In one of the dressers, she finds his journal and begins flipping through it. Back in the office, Sam accuses Norman of hiding his mother, and Norman tells him to leave. Sam then accuses him of stealing \$40,000 from Marion, and Norman storms away, deeper into the office. Sam then mentions that Norman's mother will tell them all about the money, and Norman realizes that Lila isn't with him. Norman quickly figures that she is in the house and hits Sam over the head with a nearby urn, rendering him unconscious.



The cellar - Lila makes her way downstairs when she sees Norman running up the hill. She makes a quick decision, running into the stairwell leading to the cellar. She enters the basement after Norman runs up the stairs. It doesn't take her long to find an old woman sitting by herself, her back to the door. "Mrs. Bates," Lila says gently, approaching the woman. When she puts her hand on Mrs. Bates' shoulder, the old woman swings around, revealing a shriveled corpse. Lila can't help but scream, striking the single lightbulb while she rushes away from the dead body. The shrill music begins again when Norman appears, dressed in his mother's clothes and a wig, holding a knife. "I'm Norma Bates!" he screams while lunging at Lila, but Sam appears behind him, struggling for control of the long butcher's knife. Finally, Sam seems to wrestle the knife out of Norman's grip. The camera swings around to Mrs. Bates' eyeless face, her teeth permanently stuck in a toothy grin.



Psychiatrist - The scene fades in on a courthouse with a television van parked out front. People mill around denied entry by a few police officers. Inside, the camera finds Sheriff Chambers speaking to Sam and Lila in the Police Chief's office: "If anyone gets any answers, it'll be the psychiatrist. Even I couldn't get to Norman, and he knows me." The psychiatrist in question enters and reveals his findings, saying, "I got the whole story, but not from Norman. I got it from his mother." Over the next several minutes, he explains to the others that Norman killed his mother and her suitor in a fit of jealousy and couldn't deal with the guilt. Over the years since that murder, he has slowly allowed his mother's personality to overtake his own, and to permit her to live on through him. It was this split personality that killed Marion and Arbogast along with several missing people over the last decade. Norman reveals himself after 'his mother' kills them to protect her from the consequences of her actions. After all that has happened, Norman no longer exists, his mother's dominant personality taking his place. An officer pokes his head into the Police Chief's office, asking if he can bring Norman a blanket. After receiving permission, the camera follows the officer down the hall and into the holding cell. "Thank you," Mrs. Bates says after receiving the blanket, and the officer leaves.



"Wouldn't even hurt a fly" - Inside the holding cell, Norman wraps himself in the blanket. Mrs. Bates speaks in Norman's mind: "It's sad when a mother has to speak the words that condemn her own son, but I couldn't allow them to believe that I would commit murder. They'll put him away now, as I should have years ago. He was always bad, and in the end, he intended to tell them I killed those girls and that man, as if I could do anything except just sit and stare, like one of his stuffed birds. They know I can't even move a finger, and I won't. I'll just sit here and be quiet, just in case they do suspect me. They're probably watching me. Well, let them. Let them see what kind of a person I am." A fly crawls across Norman's hand, and Mrs. Bates continues speaking in his mind, "I'm not even gonna swat that fly. I hope they are watching. They'll see. They'll see and they'll know, and they'll say, 'Why, she wouldn't even harm a fly.'" Norman smiles to himself, his mother's corpse's teeth cross-fading over his mouth for a moment. The film ends as Marion's car is pulled from the swamp.

