

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Jason Zimmerman, MA

SUSPICION (1941)

Alfred Hitchcock

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*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*, 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 The screenplay for *Suspicion* is based on the 1932 novel *Before the Fact* by Anthony Berkeley Cox under the pen name Frances Iles. After the film's release, at least six notable adaptations were made, five before 1950. Although Cary Grant's role as Johnnie was usually played by another actor, Joan Fontaine and Nigel Bruce would often be seen in these adaptations as Lina and Beaky. *Suspicion* was a box-office hit, earning nearly half a million dollars in profit from box-office rentals. The film remains among the more popular of Hitchcock's films, maintaining a 97% on Rotten Tomatoes and appearing in lofty positions on lists of great thrillers or best Hitchcock films.

Background The source material and the film differ significantly in one aspect: The ending. RKO forced Hitchcock to abandon the faithful adaptation when focus groups refused to believe that Cary Grant was a killer. The film's ending is said to have been a constant source of complaint for Hitchcock throughout the rest of his life. Joan Fontaine's Oscar win for Best Actress would be the only Oscar-winning performance Hitchcock would direct. In a letter to Hitchcock, she said she was so enamored with the role of Lina she would play the character for free if need be. RKO's original plans for the film included a much smaller budget and different actors. When Hitchcock became involved, however, the B-movie became a feature with much more financial support.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

Most noticeable in *Suspicion* is the use of leitmotif – a recurring and symbolic musical phrase. We are introduced to this early on as Lina and Johnnie waltz to Johann Strauss' Wiener Blut. The well-known main melodic line repeats as Lina's doubt grows and wanes, letting us intimately experience her emotional state throughout the film. The use of contrast and practical effects creates many striking visuals during the film. One notable scene is when -accompanied by a foreboding version of Wiener Blut- Johnnie carries a glass of milk up the stairs to Lina's room that seems to glow an intense shade of white. This suspenseful effect was created by placing a light bulb inside the glass of milk and accentuated by the black suit Johnnie wears.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Lina McLaidlaw Aysgarth – A young but dowdy socialite who falls for Johnnie

Johnnie Aysgarth – An irresponsible playboy with an addiction to spending money and a distaste for work

Beaky Thwaite – Johnnie's closest friend and occasional business partner

General McLaidlaw – Lina's father

Martha McLaidlaw – Lina's mother

Isobel Sedbusk – A writer of crime thrillers and friend of Lina

Captain George Melbeck – Johnnie's cousin and employer

SYNOPSIS

After their first meeting on a train, the irresponsible playboy Johnnie convinces Lina McLaidlaw to join him on a walk. This first date turns into a whirlwind romance, and neither of Lina's parents approves. Despite this, the young couple marries quickly. Johnnie whisks Lina away to a beautiful mansion after a lengthy, expensive honeymoon. After meeting the new live-in maid and accepting a marriage gift from her parents -a pair of very old chairs, beloved to Lina- Johnnie reveals that he does not have a job, nor does he want to get one. Johnnie's friend from college, Beaky, comes to visit and stay at the house. He tells stories of Johnnie's gambling addiction which frightens Lina about the future of her marriage with Johnnie. Further doubt enters their relationship when Johnnie sells the antique chairs, a family heirloom, for a quick hundred pounds. Johnnie changes her mind quickly, however, when he returns the chairs and a stack of gifts for everyone in the house, saying he's found a job. It doesn't take long for another scandal to erupt when Johnnie is found embezzling money from the company he works for. Soon thereafter, he travels to France with Beaky to seek funding for a real estate scheme. Lina then learns that Beaky has died abroad, and begins to fear that Johnnie will kill her for life insurance money. These fears become overwhelming when Johnnie questions a pair of doctors at a dinner party about untraceable poisons. These fears are on her mind one night when Johnnie tries to care for Lina, bringing her a warm glass of milk to help her sleep. She refuses to drink it. The next day during a car ride, Johnnie drives recklessly along a seaside cliff. Lina's door swings open, and she fears this is yet another plot by Johnnie to kill her. Johnnie reveals that he was thinking about taking his own life to pay off his debts with a life insurance payoff. He's changed his mind, however. He vows to do the right thing, facing prison to do the right thing.

PLOT

First-class car- In total darkness, a man speaks: "I beg your pardon. Was that your leg? I had no idea we were going into a tunnel." Light flickers in as the train speeds through the other end of the tunnel. The man stows his luggage and finds a seat across from a well-dressed woman. "I thought the compartment was empty," he continues before complaining about a man's cigar in the next compartment. He looks her up and down quickly, cocking an eyebrow at the beautiful young woman's conservative dress. The conductor enters and asks for their tickets, finding that the man is supposed to be seated in 3rd class. Embarrassed, the man argues with the rail worker about his seat before scrounging for the money to pay for the 1st class seat, borrowing a postage stamp from the young woman to make up the last few pence. The conductor seems unsure but leaves after the man assures him the stamp is "legal tender." Flipping open a newspaper, the young woman recognizes the man sitting across from her as the newly available bachelor Johnnie Aysgarth.



The hunt- A horn calls as a crowd of people squeezes into a nearby inn. A car blows its horn at a couple of people on horseback as it tries to navigate the busy street and a chorus of hounds bark off-screen. The camera sifts through the crowd and finds a photographer lining up a shot of Johnnie and a couple of young women in hunting outfits. Before the photographer can take the picture, a gaggle of young women approaches Johnnie, beaming and trying to talk to him. The photographer motions to his camera, and the young women take the hint, leaving. Just as the photographer prepares to snap the shot, Johnnie is distracted by a young woman on an unruly horse. His smile fades to a look of admiration as she deftly brings her mount back under control. He recognizes her as the woman who sat across from him on the train. Asking one of his companions the young woman's name, she replies, "Yes, but lay off, Johnnie. You've enough on your hands for one day. Besides, she's not up your alley." The horns sound once more as the hunt begins, leaving Johnnie unable to introduce himself.



A knock on the window- From a large manor in the English countryside, the camera fades into an equally large sitting room. The young woman from the train sits on a couch near a window, engrossed in a book as church bells ring in the distance. The camera creeps closer still when a woman approaches the window and knocks excitedly, calling the young woman Lina. Joyful music plays as Lina smiles and greets her friends. "May I introduce Mr. Aysgarth?" the woman who knocked on the window asks as Johnnie enters the room, smiling. After exchanging their greetings, one of Lina's friends says that Johnnie insisted on meeting Lina. When Lina asks why, Johnnie responds, "I'm told the sight of a really eligible male is a rare treat in this part of the country." He quickly invites Lina to church, and Lina's friends encourage her to join them. Lina agrees and gathers her belongings. As she leaves to dress more appropriately for church, Johnnie asks that she put on the "saucy little hat" she wore on the train. Curious, Johnnie thumbs through the book Lina was reading, finding that she uses his picture ripped from a newspaper as a bookmark much to his delight and surprise.



Rushing to church- Upstairs, Lina encounters her mother who asks where she's rushing off to. "To church, Mother," Lina replies. Her mother offers to join her, but Lina says she's going with some local socialites they loathe before entering her room. Church bells ring as people quickly walk towards a small chapel in the countryside. As the group of churchgoers from Lina's house, Johnnie steps in front of Lina. "You're not really going to church?" Johnnie asks her. When she says she is, he flips a coin to decide whether or not they'll be going on a walk together instead. Lina's friends turn around to find the couple missing and smile to themselves as they enter the church.



“Nothing less than murder”- On a hilltop, Lina struggles with Johnnie. The man grins as the young woman calms down, saying, “Now what did you think I was trying to do, kill you? Nothing less than murder could justify such violent self-defense.” Lina responds that she thought he was trying to kiss her. He says that he was simply adjusting a loose strand of her hair before playing around with her hair as they talk, placing it into goofy positions. “I may seem provincial, but frankly, I can't understand men like you,” says Lina. “You always give me the feeling that you're laughing at me.” Despite her protests and shoves, she looks thrilled by the experience and unsure how to respond to Johnnie's teasing in her facial expressions. Johnnie continues his teasing, coining his insulting pet name for her: “Monkey-face.” They leave the countryside together soon thereafter.



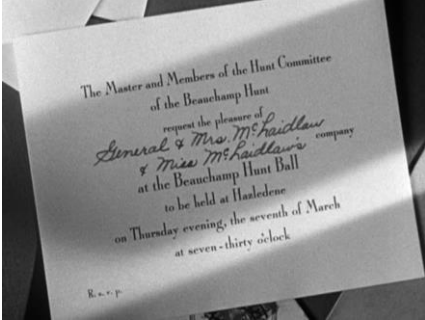
Farewell kiss- Back at Lina's home, Johnnie's teasing continues as he playfully refuses to return her coat when she tries to head inside. Only after saying that he'll pick her up for a date at 3:00 does he give her the coat. On the way inside, Lina overhears her parents talking about her: “Lina will never marry,” says her father. “She's not the marrying sort.” Her mother agrees, “I'm afraid she's rather spinsterish.” In an act of rebellion and passion, Lina throws her arm around Johnnie's neck and kisses him before running inside. In the dining room, she reports her recent involvement with Johnnie to her parents, perhaps to spite them, telling them about her plans for the evening. Her father is surprised, calling Johnnie ‘wild.’ When Lina asks why, her father responds with his mouth full, “He was turned out of some club for cheating at cards, wasn't he?” A maid enters and informs Lina she's wanted on the telephone.



Waiting- When Lina reaches the phone, she's excited to hear Johnnie on the other end. Her joy fades as he cancels their date for that evening. She states that she'd love to see him the next time he's in town. The scene fades out. When it fades back in, Lina's hand flips through a magazine. When she lands on a full-page picture of Johnnie, she takes off her glasses, lost in thought. The scene fades out and in again. Lina is on the phone, calling after Johnnie. When she gets nowhere, she says she'll call back. The scene fades once again. When it fades back in, Lina talks with a postmistress: “Nothing, Miss McLaidlaw.” Lina apologizes for being a nuisance and asks if there's any way her letters could have been sent to the wrong address. The postmistress responds that the letters would have been returned if that were to happen. After one last phone call, Lina wanders the windswept hills near her last excursion with Johnnie, dressed almost as if in mourning.



"Not in the mood"- Jaunty music plays as an invitation to a ball rests on screen for a moment. The scene fades to Lina seated in a chair in her room as her mother knocks on the door. "It's 7:00," her mother says after entering the room. "Aren't you going to wear your new dress?" "No, Mother," Lina responds, holding her head. "I'm not in the mood." Her mother rushes off to find aspirin for her daughter's headache, fearing a minor scandal if she weren't to appear at the ball. A maid enters with a telegram for Lina. It's from Johnnie, telling her to join him at the ball with her "ucipital mapillary," an anatomical joke about her conservative style of dress he made on their first outing. Lina is overjoyed, apparently forgetting her headache and telling her mother she'll be ready to leave for the ball shortly. She looks at the dress her mother had laid out for her and throws it to the floor, choosing a more revealing shoulder-less number from inside her bureau.



The Ball- The camera fades in behind Lina at the ball. She glances around the crowd before turning to face the camera, a worried look on her face. A man approaches Lina and gets her attention, asking for a dance. "Why, of course. Poor Reggie," Lina chuckles as she takes his hands and moves toward the dance floor. All the while, she still scans the crowd looking for Johnnie. A butler approaches Lina's father and the ball's host with a message for the general. "I beg your pardon, sir. There's a gentleman at the door who says he's with your party. He has no card, sir. The name is Aysgarth." With no one blocking his way, Johnnie enters the ballroom and tries to con his way into an invitation. General McLaidlaw is embarrassed but unable to reply before Lina catches sight of Johnnie.



Waltz- Lina rushes to Johnnie excitedly. They greet each other only to be bombarded by a handful of other women. Johnnie grabs Lina by the hands and whisks her away from the others toward the dance floor as Wiener Blut begins to play. Everyone by the door watches with stunned expressions while Johnnie and Lina spin across the floor, grinning at one another. They greet each other privately, Johnnie calling Lina 'Monkey-face.' once again. As the waltz continues, Johnnie steers them toward a door. Outside, Lina protests, "We can't do this. Where are we going?" While feigning reluctance, she points to her car and jumps in with Johnnie behind her. The car rolls away as romantic music swells.



“No good at joking”- Johnnie drives down the road, the two of them grinning at one another from time to time. “Have you ever been kissed in a car before?” Johnnie asks. “You mustn’t joke with me,” replies Lina. “I’m no good at joking.” Johnnie says he’s serious and reiterates the question. Lina answers, “Never.” After parking the car, Johnnie turns to face Lina: “Would you like to be?” Lina nods and they lean close, kissing passionately. As he leans back Johnnie grins, saying, “You’re the first woman I’ve ever met who said yes when she meant yes.” This brings up Johnnie’s past promiscuity, making Lina uncomfortable and self-conscious. He responds humorously but honestly, smiling at her. “Are you always frank with them like this?” asks Lina. Johnnie says no, but that he thinks honesty is the best way to get results. Lina then professes her love. Johnnie looks uncomfortable, but then says he’s afraid he’s falling in love with Lina and it makes him uncomfortable. They hurry to Lina’s house for a quick drink.



A drink- The car pulls to a stop in front of Lina’s house. The butler greets them at the front door, but Lina dismisses him as the couple enters a small parlor. “You must be made of iron,” Johnnie says as Lina pours him a drink. “How can you be so calm? Look at me. I’m shaking,” he says, flapping his hand comically. “I think it’s because,” Lina replies, “for the first time in my life... I know what I want.” Johnnie reaches up and pulls her into a deep kiss as the camera pans in a semicircle around them. Lina speaks happily about being alone with him in her favorite room in the house when Johnnie lays eyes on a portrait of her father looking down on them, his gaze disapproving.



“It’s all true”- “I say, old boy,” Johnnie says to the painting after walking closer to inspect it, “isn’t that going a bit too far?” Looking back to Lina, he gestures to the painting with his head: “He doesn’t like me.” Lina joins Johnnie by the painting. He continues for a while, speaking her father’s supposed thoughts out loud. “Tell her everything you’re thinking,” he goads the painting. “That I’m no good to her.” Johnnie asks if she can hear the painting, to which she replies, “Very distinctly.” “He’s not exaggerating a thing, dear,” Johnnie says earnestly. “It’s all true.” Lina turns to face the painting and says, “I love him, Father.” Johnnie continues the bit, holding Lina close and asking the painting for her hand in marriage. When the painting doesn’t answer, Johnnie jokingly jabs at the painting’s chest, knocking it from the wall. The couple waltz in the silent room as a quiet version of Wiener Blut begins to play, as if in Lina’s mind.



“Don’t be late for tea, dear”- The next morning, Lina descends the staircase with a bundle of things in one hand and a suitcase in the other. She tucks the suitcase out of sight before slowly making her way to the parlor where her parents busy themselves with cross stitching and reading. Lina gathers herself and acts inconspicuously, telling her parents she’s headed to the post office. Her mother asks her to pick up a new ball of green yarn while she’s out, and her father has no requests. Lina wants to linger, unsure about what the future holds. She leaves almost frantically after her mother calls from the parlor, “Don’t be late for tea, dear.”



European Honeymoon- Rain pours down outside the offices of a registrar. The camera pans to a window. Inside the building, Johnnie slips a ring onto Lina’s finger, and the two kiss. The scene fades into a montage of famous European vacation spots. Each is joined by a corresponding sticker placed on the top of a large trunk. The montage comes to an end as a porter lugs the heavy trunk up a staircase.



New Home- “How do you like it, Mrs. Aysgarth?” Johnnie asks Lina in the large foyer of their new home. He tells her if it’s not satisfactory, she can blame their real estate agent. The agent grins as Lina assures him that she adores the house and decor. The real estate agent excuses himself, leaving the unpaid bill for his services on the table. “Are you sure you can afford this?” Lina asks Johnnie as they begin exploring their new home. They run into their new live-in maid, Ethel. They ask for tea in the drawing room and retire there, listing off all the places they’ve danced together in the past months. Wiener Blut plays as they waltz together.



“Not a shilling”- Ethel enters with a letter for Johnnie. He reads it and makes a sour face. Lina asks what the matter is, Wiener Blut still playing softly. He explains that someone is asking him for money. When Lina asks why they would ask for money, Johnnie responds, “Probably because I borrowed it from him.” Lina is shocked, asking why he borrowed money. The music takes a somber tone. He explains that he wanted to give “the loveliest girl in the world” a perfect honeymoon. “A girl like you is going to come into plenty of money someday,” he says, grinning at Lina. Lina is confused about this statement and has to sit down.



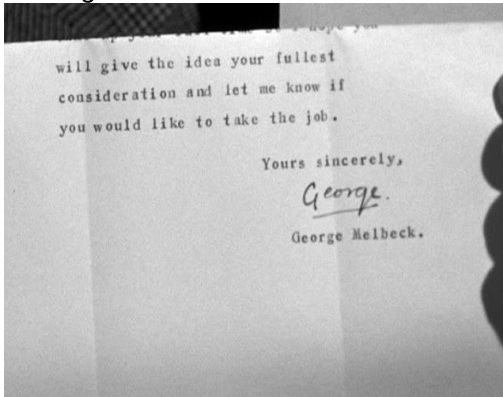
Employment- Johnnie sits with his wife, saying, “Isn't it silly to spend the best years of our lives waiting?” The music becomes romantic once more as Lina says she’s beginning to understand Johnnie: “You’re a baby.” They discuss their finances, Lina saying she can’t borrow from her parents or pay for their luxurious home with her income. Johnnie happily says that he’ll just have to borrow more. After Ethel arrives with the tea and cake, Lina leans over to Johnnie on the couch. “There's going to be no more borrowing,” she says. “You’ve got to go to work.” Johnnie is shocked by the prospect and protests. He does eventually promise to think about some jobs he could do.



Heirlooms- The phone rings, and Lina answers to hear her mother on the other end. Lina excitedly tells Johnnie that her parents have sent over a wedding present. Johnnie is excited and asks Lina to brown-nose her father for him. She says Johnnie should be ashamed before essentially doing what he’s asked when her father takes the phone to ask about Johnnie’s employment. Ethel announces that the gift has arrived and pulls two covered items into the room. Lina is elated to see a pair of antique chairs, some of her father’s most prized possessions. Johnnie, however, is disappointed.



The letter- Lina takes to the phone once more to thank her parents for the gift before passing the phone to Johnnie. He gives his thanks in a roundabout manner and reports that he has a promising position with a cousin of his, Captain Melbeck, working in finance. After he hangs up, Lina accuses him of lying. He grins, showing her the letter signed by his cousin. When Lina asks why he didn't tell her earlier, he says he hoped he wouldn't have to use it. As he continues talking, it's clear he doesn't like using his social status just as much as he doesn't like working.



Beaky Thwaite- Back from her daily ride, Lina enters her home to see a strange man smoking a pipe inside. "Nice place old Johnnie's got here," he says in greeting. "Who are you?" Lina asks, and he introduces himself as 'Beaky' Thwaite, an old school chum of Johnnie's. She laughs as she realizes she's heard stories about him from Johnnie. Beaky goes on about meeting Johnnie at the horse races recently. Lina doubts this, as Johnnie said he'd given up gambling, but Beaky insists that Johnnie was at the races when he should have been at work.



Heirlooms missing- Lina invites Beaky to sit. She looks shocked when she finds her father's antique chairs missing. "Were they expensive?" Beaky asks. "They were museum pieces," replies Lina. "I bet you 20-to-1 that Johnnie sold them," says Beaky. Lina refuses to believe him, but Beaky sows doubt in her mind about Johnnie's work ethic and honesty. They see Johnnie approaching from outside, and Beaky tells Lina to mention chairs to him if she wants to see "Johnnie at his best."



Avoidance- Johnnie is surprised to see Beaky, giving him a hearty greeting. “How’s my little monkey-face?” he asks Lina, but it’s apparent something is bothering her. “Your wife seems to be missing some chairs, old boy,” says Beaky. Johnnie notices his friend’s pipe isn’t lit and excuses himself to find a match. Beaky presses about the chairs again and Johnnie makes up a lie about ‘an American’ taking them. Lina is surprised. “Didn’t I tell you?” Johnnie asks before spinning a web about a collector offering two hundred pounds for the pair of chairs. Eventually, Beaky calls him a liar and Lina takes offense. They make up, however, and Lina invites Beaky to stay for dinner.



Antique Store- Sometime later, Lina runs into a woman she knows on the town’s main shopping street: Novelist Isobel Sedbusk. She admires a store display of her latest novel, “Murder on the Footbridge.” Lina joins her as they walk down the street, discussing crime novels and Johnnie’s love of them. Their conversation is interrupted when Lina spots a pair of chairs in the window of an antique shop. Lina says she’ll meet Isobel for dinner sometime soon and bids her farewell, staring at her father’s chairs in the display window.



Gifts- When Lina returns home, Beaky greets her from the back porch. “Mr. Thwaite, I owe you an apology,” says Lina. “Good,” replies Beaky. “I mean, what for?” She says she’ll explain later, and Beaky forgives her anyway. He worries about her anger, assuming it must be for Johnnie. Johnnie soon makes a noisy appearance, shouting for Ethel and everyone as he carries a massive stack of gift boxes tied with ribbons. He begins showering Lina with gifts including hats, jewelry, and a dog. Johnnie then reveals that he got the money from a gambling win. Lina is rightly upset, and nothing Johnnie or Beaky says seems to console her.



The real gifts- Teasing her momentarily, Beaky and Johnnie make silly noises and faces. Then Johnnie pulls a slip of paper from his pocket. "It's a receipt from a certain shop," says Johnnie, "for a certain pair of chairs." Lina is overjoyed, holding Johnnie close and crying. Beaky suggests a celebration, and they begin pouring drinks. Johnnie surprises everyone when he gives Ethel a stuffed fox. "What will my young man think?" she asks giddily when Johnnie says it's not a joke.



The last bet- Beaky serves the couple their martinis and begins to pour himself a large glass of brandy. Johnnie looks worried, warning his friend that it's bad for him. Beaky ignores him. Johnnie makes a toast, saying, "I drink to the last bet that will ever made by Johnnie Aysgarth." "Last bet, old bean," Beaky says before downing the glass. He looks pleased, but he begins to have some kind of medical episode. Lina is upset, but Johnnie stops her from fussing with Beaky, saying he's seen this before: "It will either kill him or it will go away by itself." Beaky recovers and apologizes for not listening to Johnnie.



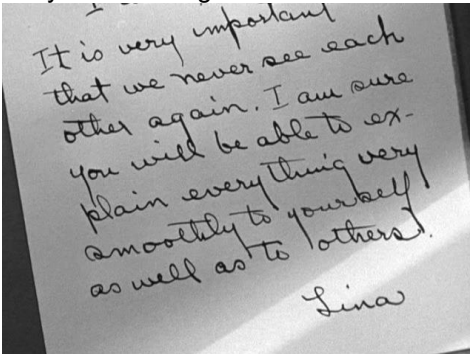
Vices- Outside the town bookstore, Lina runs into a woman she knows. The woman notices how many books Lina has, and Lina tells her that Johnnie adores detective stories. "Abandoned all his vices, has he?" the woman asks. "Vices? What vices?" Lina asks. The woman mentions the races. "He has no time for that," says Lina. "He's much too busy with his job." The woman then recalls seeing Johnnie at the racetrack recently. "How interesting. Good afternoon," says Lina as she turns and walks down the road. Her worry is clear on her face.



Captain Melbeck- Lina finds her way to the offices of Melbeck Estates. The secretary inside recognizes her and greets her. She's confused when Lina asks after her husband. "Perhaps you'd like to talk to Captain Melbeck," she suggests. Lina agrees and enters Melbeck's office. She confides in Captain Melbeck that she's worried about Johnnie. "I told him I wouldn't prosecute," says Melbeck. "What on earth are you talking about?" asks Lina. Captain Melbeck reveals that he laid Johnnie off six weeks before for embezzlement. Lina is shocked Johnnie hasn't told her, but she apologizes and promises to replace the money.



Goodbye letter- In her bedroom, Lina begins throwing clothing into a suitcase. She then decides she needs to write a letter to Johnnie. "I am leaving you," the letter begins while dramatic music swells. Lina looks unsure, yet she finishes her letter with determination. After taking the care to fold the letter, seal it in an envelope, and address it to Johnnie, Lina takes a long hard look at the letter in her hands. She tears it to shreds. Johnnie appears behind her, asking if she's heard. He approaches with a "telegram from the doctor" explaining the situation. Lina looks confused and concerned, turning her gaze to the telegram: "Deeply regret your father died early this morning from heart failure."



Reading of the will- Many gather in the McLaidlaw home to hear the reading of the will. A lawyer reads the will aloud as the black-clad relatives listen with their heads hung. All are seated, save Johnnie who leans against the wall. After all others have been named, Lina's name is read, saying her mother should continue to pay her 500 pounds yearly as an allowance.

"Also, to my daughter Lina and her husband John Aysgarth," says the lawyer, causing Johnnie to perk up, "I bequeath the portrait of myself." Johnnie, looking disappointed, excuses himself to get a drink. In the study, he pours a drink and walks towards General McLaidlaw's portrait. He faces the painting, raising his glass. "You win, old boy," Johnnie says, somberly.



Regrets- Johnnie and Lina drive along the coast. “Lina?” Johnnie asks. “Do you ever have any regrets that you married me?” When he mentions her inheritance, she turns the question around on him. “Monkey-face.,” Johnnie replies, “marrying you is the one thing I’d never changed my mind about.” Lina replies that she couldn’t stop loving Johnnie. “Have you tried?” he asks jokingly. “Yes,” Lina replies softly, telling him about the letter she ripped up. She also admits to knowing he lost his job. He asks how she learned and what Melbeck told her before he makes up a lie about not getting along and pulls the car over to look at the sea.



“The way to make money”- With the car stopped, the two look out toward the ocean. Lina asks about his conflict with Melbeck but Johnnie just deflects again, saying his ideas were too radical. “I’ve always had the notion that the secret of success is to start at the top,” he tells her. When she looks incredulous, he reveals a plan for the land they look down on, saying a development would be an easy thing to start there if he only had the capital. He begins telling a tale of how the land should be developed while his cost estimates soar.



Real estate- The scene fades in on a photograph of the cliffs Johnnie was dreaming of developing resting on a table. “This is the ground plan,” Johnnie says as he spreads a map over the photograph. Beaky speaks excitedly about where hotels and other amenities could go. Lina enters the room, asking what is going on. “We’re starting a real estate company,” says Johnnie. Beaky is behind him all the way, saying he’ll put up the starting capital. Johnnie seems to be unable to explain the idea, and Lina asks if Beaky understands. “Perfectly. I think,” comes Beaky’s unsure reply.



Call from Melbeck- Ethel enters the room, telling Johnnie that Captain Melbeck is on the phone. Johnnie looks concerned and thanks the maid, excusing himself to the study. Lina asks Beaky to explain the business and he looks pleased as he begins his spiel. The camera cuts to Johnnie on the phone in the other room. He tells Melbeck not to worry: "I can pay you back in a couple of weeks." The camera cuts back to Beaky and Lina. Beaky stumbles through his explanation, making it clear he doesn't understand the business plan. "Isn't it about time you grew up?" Lina asks him.



Johnnie's business- Beaky takes offense at Lina's comment, defending Johnnie and the plan. Johnnie appears behind Lina, stepping into the room. It's clear by the look on his face he's heard everything. After dismissing Beaky and informing Lina that Beaky will be staying with them for a few days, Johnnie confronts his wife about butting into his business plans. They argue quietly while they walk up the long staircase. "If I say it's good, it's good," Johnnie says to end the fight. "I'm going through with this deal. I don't want any interference from you or anyone else."



Gardening- Lina works in the back garden, trimming away at a bush with hedge clippers. A man walks into frame: "Hello, Monkey-face.!" "You frightened me," Lina says as her smiling husband joins her. "I'm calling off the real estate plan," he says. Lina asks if something happened and he says, "Nothing. Perhaps I don't like the idea of risking Beaky's money. Or perhaps it's a stiff job and I'm too lazy." Lina asks if Johnnie is still mad about their fight, and he replies that he isn't. She says she's afraid he stopped loving her. Johnnie comforts his wife, saying, "No, Monkey-face., I'm not angry. And I love you very much." Lina looks toward the camera as Johnnie walks off and romantic music plays. She looks conflicted.



Anagrams- Lina's doubtful look cross-fades into anagram tiles being arranged into the word 'doubt.' Out of shot, Beaky complains about his lack of luck with the game. The camera pulls back and we see Johnnie leaning over the back of the couch between Lina and Beaky playing their game. They discuss the canceling of the business deal, Beaky saying he'd still like to go through with it. Johnnie is convinced it's no good and insists that they go out to inspect the land. While her husband tries to convince his friend that the land needs to be inspected, Lina slowly spells out 'murder' and 'murderer' with her tiles. Imagining Johnnie pushing Beaky over the cliff, she begins to hyperventilate. She soon passes out as dramatic music swells.



Morning light- Lina awakens in bed the next morning, confused. She throws on a robe and leaves her room, running into Ethel. She asks where her husband has gone. The maid reports that Johnnie skipped breakfast and left with Beaky over two hours before. The soft suspenseful music becomes louder as Lina dresses and leaves quickly. She finds an address written on a real estate flyer downstairs.



The cliffs- Lina speeds along the cliffs in her car, her eyes locked on the road ahead in determination. She's worried when she reaches the cliffs and Beaky's car is nowhere to be seen. Getting out of her car, Lina notices tire tracks leading over a nearby cliff. She fears the worst, scanning the rocks below. She returns to her car and drives home, a worried look on her face.



Whistling- Lina enters her home tentatively. The camera coasts in front of Lina as all becomes silent. She slowly removes her driving gloves, looking tense as a sound emerges. In another room, unseen, Johnnie whistles Wiener Blut. Lina freezes for a moment as if stunned by terror. Then she walks slowly and silently towards the haunting sound. She sees Johnnie fiddling with a record player while he whistles, a disgusted look on her face. "That ought to do it," Says Johnnie. "Put the plug in now." Lina leans into the room to see Beaky bending down with the plug: "How's that, old bean?"



Beaky's tale- Beaky notices and greets Lina who slowly enters the room. The sunlight shines brighter when the record player begins blaring out Wiener Blut. Lina grins and clings to Johnnie. He chuckles and asks what's the matter: He's only been gone a couple of hours. "It seemed like a thousand years," Lina replies. Beaky speaks up about almost dying despite Johnnie's insistence that he keep quiet. After nearly backing his car over the cliff, Johnnie jumped in and saved his life by applying the break. Beaky suggests a celebration after Lina hugs her husband. Johnnie says that he can't up and leave his wife, but Lina permits him to go with Beaky to London.



Inspector- Lina arranges a bouquet from Johnnie. He sent them with a note saying he would be home later. The dog barks off-screen. Fretful music plays while Ethel seeks out Lina. "There's an Inspector Hodgson in the hall, ma'am," the maid says before leading her and the policemen to a nearby parlor and closing the door. Hodgson introduces himself and his partner before inquiring if Lina knew Mr. Thwaite. She says she knows Beaky, and the inspector apologetically passes her a newspaper. The stop press article reveals that Beaky died in Paris under suspicious causes. Lina is shocked. The inspector apologizes, but he must ask Lina some questions. after the Paris police found Beaky's real estate company papers, Johnnie became a suspect.



The cause of death- What do the French police believe caused the death?" Lina asks. The inspector retrieves a telegraph from his pocket and reads: "Thwaite's companion asked for the brandy to be served in large beakers. Apparently, as a result of a bet between the two men, Thwaite filled one of these beakers to the brim and drank it all." Lina takes the news as a further shock, but she answers the policeman's questions about Beaky's business in Paris and the real estate company. The inspector thanks her and Lina, still in a daze, leads them out of the house.



Suspicion- Dissonant music plays as Lina walks back into the study from the front door. The shadows cast by the windows above seem dark and weighty as she seems to grapple with the idea that Johnnie killed Beaky. Her eyes settle on the portrait of her father. "He didn't go to Paris," she says, confronting the portrait's disapproving stare. "He didn't go to Paris, I tell you." She moves quickly to the phone and calls the club Johnnie and Beaky were supposed to be visiting in London. Much to her dismay, Lina learns that Johnnie left earlier that morning. She sinks into a chair, despondent.



Johnnie's return- "Hello, monkey-face," Johnnie says entering the room. "You've read about Beaky, have you?" He begins lamenting the loss of his friend: "I loved that silly, generous, good-hearted fool." Johnnie continues talking about Beaky, soon realizing Lina's sadness and misplacing its source. "Here I am thinking only of myself and forgetting all about you," He says, sitting on the arm of Lina's chair and leaning close. "You liked him, too, didn't you?" Lina looks up at Johnnie, saying, "The police were here. They wanted you to help them"



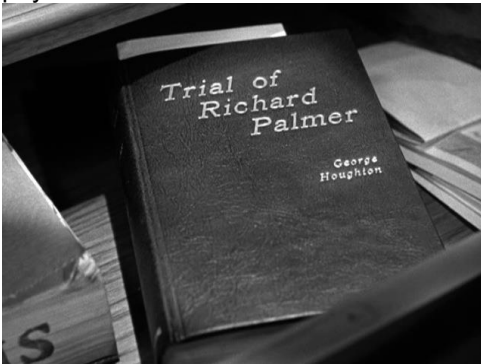
Cooperation- Hearing the news about the police, Johnnie gets a little nervous, pacing in front of the fireplace. He asks Lina if she told the police about the corporation, and she replies, "Naturally." Johnnie approaches the phone and calls the police station. He is very helpful to the inspector on the other end of the line, reporting his and Beaky's movements through London. "I stayed in London until this afternoon," Johnnie says. "At my club." Lina's eyes widen when she hears this. Johnnie offers his continued cooperation with the investigation as Lina looks down at the crime novel Johnnie laid on the table: Murder on the Footbridge by Isobel Sedbusk.



Visiting Isobel- Lina approaches the home of Isobel Sedbusk the next day, her dog in tow. She enters the cottage and greets Isobel who reads on a couch. Isobel is excited to see her, telling Lina, "I don't see half as much of you as I'd like." After saying she couldn't sleep all night, Lina tells Isobel, "I was so interested in your last book that I had to come over and talk to you about it." They begin discussing the novel's climax, Lina asking Isobel if she thinks the incident on the footbridge is murder. "That brandy business is just like my footbridge," Isobel says about Beaky's death. She goes on further, walking to her bookcase as she does, looking for a biography of a killer named Richard Palmer who murdered one of his victims with too much brandy.



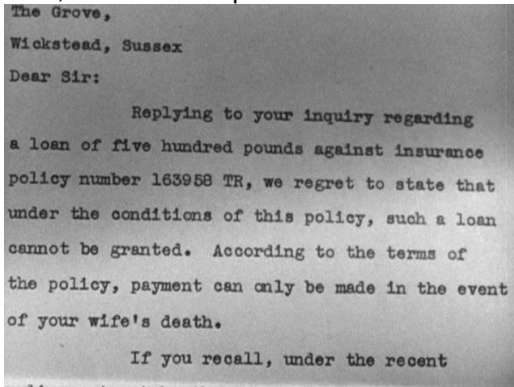
The Trial of Richard Palmer- "Was he hanged?" Lina asks as Isobel searches for the book, unable to find it. They talk for a moment about Isobel's cousin, a medical examiner who gives her good ideas for stories, and then Lina stands to excuse herself. Isobel then remembers giving the book she's looking for to Johnnie a week or two before. Lina bids Isobel farewell and heads home. In her study, she looks over the bookshelf for The Trial of Richard Palmer but it's nowhere to be seen. On a hunch, she looks in the lap drawer of Johnnie's desk, finding the volume inside. Inside the book, she finds a letter from Johnnie to Melbeck saying he has a sure-fire plan to pay him back.



First post- The phone rings and Lina answers. An insurance representative is calling for Johnnie. He asks Lina to inform Johnnie that there is a delay in his request, and he should receive a letter “by first post in the morning.” The next morning, Lina watches the postman ride his bike toward her house. Ethel enters the bedroom with Lina’s breakfast and reports that there are 3 letters for Johnnie. Lina looks at the letters, noting that two are from life insurance companies. The activity rouses Johnnie who was still sleeping in bed. He greets Ethel and asks Lina to bring him the letters which he reads quickly. He notes Lina’s sour mood as she brusquely hands him the letters.



Insurance letter- Lina asks if the letters are good news, and Johnnie tells her about the personal letter from his friend Spotty before asking if he can take a bath before her. When he leaves, Lina dashes over to where he stashed the letters and begins to read them. They say that the policy they have will only pay out in the event of Lina’s death. She’s shocked by this, but she doesn’t let it show to Johnnie who hugs and kisses her upon exiting the bath. He asks if they have plans for the evening, and Lina says, “We’re going to Isobel’s to dine.” “What a bore,” Johnnie complains.



Dinner party- At Isobel’s cottage later that evening, a dinner party is in full swing. Through all the chatter, Johnnie can be heard discussing one of the murders in Isobel’s latest book, asking questions about motive and method. Isobel is delighted to share her secrets, and Johnnie is equally delighted to hear them, though he doesn’t agree with the complexity of her killer’s method. “If you’re going to kill someone,” says Johnnie, “do it simply.” Isobel’s cousin agrees, adding, “Just as long as you don’t get caught.”



Macabre conversation- “How would you do it simply?” Lina asks. “Poison,” Johnnie replies. “Just use the first one that came to my mind. Say, arsenic.” Isobel’s cousin nods in morbid approval, saying that he remembers a case of arsenic poisoning from some years ago, mentioning that the killer had never been caught. Another guest mentions that hundreds or maybe thousands of murderers live perfectly normal lives without suspicion. Isobel muses about the power of forensic science, leading Johnnie to ask about undetectable poisons. Lina looks uncomfortable as he pursues this topic with fervor.



Catching cold- It’s dark when Lina and Johnnie get home. Suspenseful music plays as Lina lingers at the bottom of the staircase. Johnnie reaches down and takes her hand, guiding her up the stairs. In their bedroom, he notices Lina’s strange behavior and asks if she’s catching a cold. He urges Lina to undress and get under the covers, but she refuses, saying, “Johnnie, I’m in a state tonight. I don’t know why. I’d like to be alone.” He gets upset when she asks him to sleep in the dressing room, but eventually concedes since she says it will help her sleep. After Johnnie leaves, Lina feints.



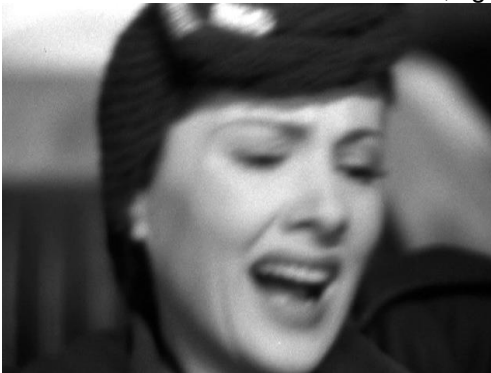
“One in a million”- Lina comes to in her bed with Johnnie sitting beside her. He asks if she feels better, and she thanks him. She turns her head to see Isobel seated on the other side of the bed. “I’ve been asleep all day, haven’t I?” Lina asks, and Johnnie tells her Isobel’s cousin gave her sleeping pills for her nerves. Then he excuses himself to get Ethel to make something for Lina to eat. “He’s one in a million,” Isobel says after Johnnie leaves. Isobel goes on to joke that Johnnie is worming all her writing secrets out of her. This concerns Lina, who sits up and asks what the secret is. After some suspenseful badgering, Isobel admits to telling Johnnie about the undetectable poison.



A glass of milk- A clock ticks on the wall. Lina sits in bed, seemingly dosing, but her eyes snap open and she looks toward the bedroom door. Downstairs, a door opens, shining bright light across the floor of the foyer. A shadow fills the void and reaches to turn off the light. Wiener Blut begins to play ominously as Johnnie walks across the foyer and up the stairs. He holds a glass of milk on a small tray before him. It seems to glow with ill intent as the music becomes ever more sinister. He places the tray on her nightstand and kisses Lina goodnight.



Long drive- The glass of milk rests on Lina's bedside table. "You're still annoyed with me, aren't you," Johnnie says as she packs her suitcase. Lina says she doesn't feel well, and her mother isn't coping well with the death of her father. Johnnie looks annoyed and doesn't believe Lina, but he insists on driving her. Their car races along the cliffs. Johnnie reaches across Lina and pushes her door open, slamming it back shut to make sure it's secure. Lina looks stressed. The music and Lina's expressions become more stressful as Johnnie seems to push the car to its limits, speeding down the winding path. "I think I'll take the shortcut," Johnnie says as he whips the car onto a side road. The music comes to a climax as Lina's door flies open and Johnnie reaches toward her. Lina shrieks and screams, fighting Johnnie's grasp.



"Won't bother you again"- Johnnie slams on the brakes, and the car screeches to a halt. Lina jumps from the car and begins to run away, still screaming. Johnnie is incensed, running after Lina. "You almost killed us both back there," he says after catching her. "You pulled away when I was reaching over to save you from falling out of the car." Lina asks what Johnnie intends to do. "First, I'm taking you to your mother's," he says. "And then what?" Lina asks. "Don't worry," replies Johnnie. "I won't bother you again." Lina connects the dots and asks Johnnie if he meant to kill himself.



Johnnie's plan- Johnnie says that he planned to use the undetectable poison to kill himself. He hoped that his life insurance would be enough to pay off his debts to Melbeck. After discussing things for a moment, Johnnie says he no longer wants to take the coward's way out and promises to face prison. "Johnnie, if I'd only known," Says Lina. "This is as much my fault as yours. I was only thinking of myself, not what you were going through." Lina insists there must be another way for them to live together, but Johnnie denies this. "I'm driving you on to your mother's," he says as they get back into the car. As they drive away, Johnnie drapes an arm around Lina.



THEMES

RELATIONSHIP

Love Lina and Johnnie's love is apparent throughout the film. While spontaneous and often glossed over, their admiration for each other is obvious to anyone watching. Even in her moments of doubt, we only ever see Lina give up on loving Johnnie once, and in that moment she changes her mind. Their love is teasing, kind, and physical. It does lack an element of trust and communication, however. Although his love proves to be strong and genuine throughout the film, Lina begins to doubt Johnnie's honesty because he is obsessed with easy money. At one point, she calls him a 'baby' because he dislikes work and his persistent effort to avoid anything that could resemble it. Because of his childishness about finding a job, Lina assumes he only married her for the money. Johnnie's frivolous spending and borrowing atop his love of appearances further cement this idea in her mind. This fuels the decline of their relationship: While they love each other, they lack a foundation of trust in their relationship. At the film's end, we learn that Johnnie planned to take his own life to collect the insurance money and pay off his debts. However, his love for Lina has changed him. Johnnie vows to face the charges and prison if it means he can keep living and loving Lina. As they drive away, Johnnie wraps his arm around Lina, showing that despite everything their love remains.

Marriage Many marriages in Hitchcock's films highlight the weakness of the couple's relationship. Much like the couple in *Rebecca*, the conflict between Lina and Johnnie emerges from a lack of communication and understanding. Johnnie, either from embarrassment or simply because he thinks he's charming enough to avoid it, declines to tell Lina about his financial issues, assuming her family will be able to help them live a lavish lifestyle. He only damages their relationship further by hiding other important information from Lina, such as when he is laid off from Melbeck's estate management company. Likewise, Lina damages their relationship by keeping her suspicions secret. She never confronts Johnnie about his behavior or the rumors she hears, instead waiting for something to confirm her suspicions. Even in the original source material where Johnnie attempts to murder Lina, many of his lies of omission and strange activities are completely innocent upon closer inspection. While there are many other reasons their relationship is rocky, above all, Johnnie and Lina's relationship lacks trust and cooperation.

PSYCHOLOGY

Doubt Doubt plays a substantial role in *Suspicion*. It morphs into rumor and judgment from seemingly all angles. We see doubt first when Lina leaves her home to elope with Johnnie. She doesn't tell her parents, doubtful they will accept her love after the way her father has treated him. It appears again, driven by jealous gossip from female townsfolk and Johnnie's lack of communication. When his gambling comes up after he swore off it, Lina goes as far as packing a suitcase and writing a farewell letter, although she does change her mind. Time and

time again, Lina doubts Johnnie's goodwill for her, eventually dreaming up multiple scenarios where he kills someone for financial gain. She comes to believe her doubt, though most of it seems to be generated by her love of detective and crime stories. Discussions with Isobel and others do little to quell Lina's doubt. She does her best to cover up her doubt with smiles and affection, but Johnnie and others see through her acting. They can tell she's scared or concerned about something. At the film's end, Johnnie's doubt comes to the surface when he tells Lina he doesn't believe she loves him. Her pulling away from him almost killed them both when the car door opened at the cliff's edge, and her emotional pulling away had been damaging their marriage.

Addiction Addiction is a minor theme in this film. Johnnie has issues kicking his gambling addiction. His first offense happens when he sells Lina's heirloom chairs for horse betting money. He lucks out, winning big, and buys the chairs back as an apology to Lina before swearing to never gamble again. It's not long before he's broken this promise, trying to win enough money on horse to pay back his cousin for embezzling two thousand pounds. Johnnie's gambling addiction makes a final appearance as his brief foray into land speculation. It's at this time he decides to turn a new leaf, telling Lina, "I don't like the idea of risking Beaky's money."

Fear Lina's fear changes how the viewer experiences the film. Her perception of Johnnie's action is the one Hitchcock gives to the viewer. The music, lighting, and staging all use elements of horror to allowing the viewer to feel as anxious as Lina does. While some of her fears are well founded in Johnnie's lack of communication and suspicious activity, others are pulled from crime stories. These are the ones that come to be obsessions: Johnnie's crimes and dishonesty are far from violent, yet Lina believes he is willing to kill for a quick buck. Her relationship with Isobel exposes Lina to crime stories, and this paints her view of the world, finding shadows to jump at wherever she looks.

SEARCH

Investigation Investigation is a core theme of this subtle thriller. Lina is driven to dig into her husband's activities when his lack of honesty and communication causes her imagination to run wild. As Johnnie's misdeeds and lies of omission escalate, so do Lina's investigative techniques. First, she simply gathers rumors and information from others, weighing them against her judgments and fears. Then she begins asking pointed questions of experts. Finally, she reads Johnnie's letters and rifles through his belongings to find evidence of his potential crimes. We also see several different forms of investigation in other characters. For example, Melbeck -perhaps out of family loyalty- decides to handle Johnnie's embezzlement without the aid of the police. Conversely, after Beaky dies in Paris, local police come to investigate Johnnie for any possible involvement. We see Johnnie investigate several things, most notably the "undetectable poison" at Isobel's dinner party. His questions about the poison drive Lina's paranoia to an all-time high. However, it's not investigation but honesty that ends Lina's investigations: Johnnie admits he had been planning to kill himself for the insurance money to pay off his embezzling debt. Perhaps commenting on the number of young women reading crime novels in the 30s and 40s, Lina's investigations are always hampered by her dark fears and apparent fascination with violent crime.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Lina McLaidlaw Aysgarth

Lina is the main character of *Suspicion*. She is the daughter of a wealthy general and is often thought of as 'dowdy' by her peers. She falls in love and marries Johnnie Aysgarth in a whirlwind romance. When appearances don't add up, she begins to suspect that Johnnie only married her for her inheritance and that he might be willing to do anything to get that money.

Imaginative Lina is incredibly imaginative. There are many scenes in the movie that take place entirely inside Lina's mind, often shown in cross-fades such as when Beaky falls off of the cliff. She also relies on her imagination when doing her investigation. While this can be a helpful skill for those trained in forensic science in certain situations, Lina's imaginative suppositions cause her to find the potential for murder in everything her husband does. The story may be trying to make some moral point about young women reading crime stories in the 1930s and 40s, as she believes any criminality is enough to show someone has the potential to kill. While often a positive trait, Lina shows us the dark side of the imagination and the effects it can have on a relationship.

Suspicious Lina's paranoia begins to take over her every thought as her suspicions about Johnnie grow. Perhaps it is her fascination with crime stories or friendship with Isobel, but she sees a sinister angle in everything Johnnie does, even from early on. Although thrilled to have his attention and attracted to him, Lina

believes that Johnnie wants to get her alone just to kiss her (or more.) While she publicly denies rumors, they weigh heavy on her. With gossip in mind, her investigative tendencies bring up a lot of confirmation bias for her as she looks into Johnnie's activities. While she is right to be suspicious of her husband when she learns about his lies and embezzlement, she takes things a step too far, equating financial criminality to the willingness to murder. Her suspicions give the film its Noir styling as shadows creep into the relationship between herself and Johnnie.

Curious Lina's curiosity is apparent from her introduction. She is seen with a book in her hand, a dense title about child psychology. She is shown deeply engrossed in many books throughout the film and has access to hundreds of books in both her parents and her own home. Her friendship with Isobel seems based on a mutual curiosity about crime and detective stories and the real-life inspirations for them. Her curiosity applies to her husband's activities and past life as well. While she publicly claims not to believe the rumors, her inquisitive mind and the mystery shrouding her husband's activities push her to investigate Johnnie. Although intelligent and well-read, Lina's curiosity is often overtaken by her imagination. Through this combination of wild imagination and lack of communication, Lina's curiosity leads her to believe her husband is plotting her death to make some quick cash.

Johnnie Aysgarth

Johnnie is a young socialite and an eligible bachelor. After bumping into her on a train and again at a hunt, Johnnie begins falling for Lina McLaidlaw. His issues with money and unwillingness to work lead him to formulate some strange get-rich-quick schemes, one of which backfires spectacularly.

Irresponsible Johnnie is often childish, especially in his financial decisions. This is one of his major traits. Others gossip about his spending habits, gambling, and general distaste for real work, and Lina finds truth in many of their statements. In her mind, Johnnie's irresponsibility becomes criminal. We learn, however, that almost all of his actions are innocent and have Lina's well-being in mind, though that consideration may be a bit twisted by his financial fears. Despite planning many elements of his schemes flawlessly, his irresponsible nature causes him to overlook some small details in each, namely his wife's perception of the situation. By the end of the film, Johnnie has changed his ways. He promises to face punishment for his crimes before driving off with his wife.

Planner Although he is financially irresponsible, Johnnie plans thoroughly for all of his "schemes" as he calls them. Sometimes this pays out, such as when he wins £1,000 at the racetrack, but other times it has unwanted effects on his wife. Lina becomes suspicious of his activities because of a lack of communication and she begins imagining him as a criminal. This is backed up by some of his more ill-planned schemes such as stealing and investing money from his cousin's estate management company and little lies about his activities and whereabouts. While he takes some of his plans to extremes, such as plotting his suicide to pay off his debt, some of his other plans are a bit more slapdash, relying on charm and the ignorance of others for their execution. While Johnnie plans out the financial and legal aspects of his schemes well, he often fails to take his wife's curiosity and imagination into account, leading to their prolonged conflict around trust.

Loyal Even though he betrays several people throughout the film, Johnnie is an incredibly loyal man. His desperation for money and distaste for work drive the conflict of the film. He would rather take risks on gambling or land speculation than simply work a well-paying job as an accountant or clerk. He utilizes his loyal friends and family in his various "schemes." Beaky is taken in with the real estate scheme, though he does believe it to be a worthwhile venture until they inspect the composition of the cliffs. Johnnie mourns deeply when Beaky dies, showing the strength of the bond between them. While Lina views Johnnie's secrecy and desperation as proof of his ill will, by the film's end, we learn that these actions were that of a desperate man who hasn't yet fully grown up. Even in his most desperate moments, he is thinking about Lina's financial comfort and societal standing, believing that ending his life for the insurance payout could save her a lot of grief.

Gordon 'Beaky' Thwaite

Beaky is Johnnie's old school chum and a very important minor character. He stays with the Aysgarths for several weeks throughout the film, planning a business venture with Johnnie that falls through. His tragic death in Paris leads Lina to believe Johnnie may be capable of killing for money.

Trusting Beaky trusts Johnnie implicitly. Despite talking about his past trickery and penchant for telling half-truths, Beaky follows Johnnie's leads in betting and financial investment. Perhaps because of the age of their

friendship or intimate knowledge of Johnnie's love for him, Beaky is a steadfast friend and ally. Even while Lina daydreams about Johnnie murdering Beaky by the cliffs, Johnnie and Beaky laugh together about their morbid jokes. Despite wanting to continue the real estate scheme, Beaky eventually agrees with Johnnie's judgment that the land is "no good." Their inspection proves fateful when Johnnie saves his life by leaping to apply the car's break just before it topples over the edge of a cliff. Beaky's death occurs because he trusted the wrong man and made a bet that resulted in his demise.

Isobel Sedbusk Isobel is a popular murder mystery writer living in the town near Lina's home. She and Lina are good friends. During several conversations, the crime writer partially confirms some of Lina's worst fears about Johnnie.

Playful Isobel is playful, though in a macabre fashion. She takes great pride in her writing and loves to talk to anyone about it. Although some may think her method of conversation rude, she loves to playfully interrupt and correct others talking about her writing or motivations. She loves to overthink and dream up complicated methods of murder as shown in the climax of her latest novel where an unsuspecting victim is drawn across a sabotaged footbridge and thrown into the water where they then drown. This comes up again when Johnnie argues that one of the other murders is too convoluted. While he is correct, there is something inherently playful about rigging a specific piano key to pull a revolver's trigger, almost like an edgy version of an old Loony Toons short.

Captain George Melbeck Melbeck is a minor but important character. He is Johnnie's cousin and for a time his employer. Johnnie fails to tell Lina that Melbeck laid him off for embezzling money, though his cousin attempts to save face by not seeking prosecution.

Loyal Captain Melbeck exudes loyalty toward his cousin, Johnnie. We see that, even after borrowing and not repaying a substantial amount of money, Melbeck offers Johnnie a job at his estate management company. During his short tenure as an accountant, Johnnie embezzles two thousand pounds (worth over £14,000,000 in 2023). Despite this, Melbeck agrees not to prosecute Johnnie, asking him to pay back the money. It takes immense loyalty to be manipulated and stolen from multiple times only to forgive the perpetrator, showing how much Melbeck values family ties.