

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Jason Zimmerman, MA

Sabotage (1936)

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 Hitchcock saw no end to his casting woes in preproduction. Following the success of *The 39 Steps* (1935), the director wanted to sign Robert Donat for the role of Ted Spencer, but Donat was seeking treatment for chronic asthma, forcing Hitchcock to cast John Loder. Similarly, Hitchcock wanted to cast the young Robert Rietti as Stevie but was unable to close on a contract. Most critics had praise for *Sabotage* upon release. *The New York Times* called the film "a masterly exercise in suspense." Hitchcock, however, was dismissive of the film in his famous interviews with French director François Truffaut, saying he broke all of his rules of suspense during the bus scene.

Background Joseph Conrad's 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* was liberally adapted to create *Sabotage*. Charles Bennett, who wrote the screenplay, took great steps to depoliticize the shadowy terrorist organization, removing all references to the Tsarist agents in the novel. Characters changed as well. In the novel, Mr. Verloc's name is 'Adolf' and, given the political climate of 1936, the more neutral name 'Karl Anton' was chosen. Stevie is mentally disabled in the novel, but not in the film. *Sabotage* was originally released as *The Woman Alone* in the US. A classic Disney cartoon - *Who Killed Cock Robin?* - can be seen during one of the later movie theater scenes. Some viewers may recognize the scene where Stevie tries to board a bus with film canisters from the Quentin Tarantino film *Inglorious Basterds*, where it is used to back up the claim that celluloid film is highly flammable.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

Sabotage contains a number of Hitchcock's trademarks. The first we see during the blackout: Hitchcock often begins his films with the hustle and bustle of city streets, utilizing dozens of expertly choreographed extras to set the scene. We see this in both the Underground as subway passengers laugh and light candles and in front of the Bijou theater where patrons angrily demand a refund. Much like in *Alice White* in *Blackmail*, Mrs. Verloc stabs and kills a man in a panic and is unable to confess despite her great remorse. There are several somewhat experimental sequences towards the end when Stevie is carrying the bomb. Crossfades show us the internal mechanism of the bomb ticking away and time running out through a number of clocks progressing closer to 1:45. This experimentation continues as Mrs. Verloc starts seeing Stevie everywhere. Such experimentation would become one of Hitchcock's favored storytelling tools.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Mrs. Verloc - The wife of Karl Verloc
Karl Anton Verloc - Terrorist and owner of a small London cinema
Stevie - Mrs. Verloc's younger brother
Ted Spencer - An undercover detective using a greengrocer as his cover
Hollingshead - An undercover detective, Ted's partner

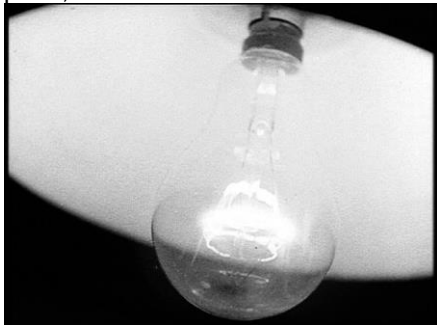
SYNOPSIS

Across London, the lights go out. At a movie theater, patrons complain to the woman in the ticket booth, Mrs. Verloc, that they want a refund. She is soon joined by one of her workers whom she delegates to deal with the angry patrons as she seeks out her husband. She finds him lying in bed, and thinks it odd: She could swear he hadn't been home when she awoke earlier that morning. He asks her to refund the patrons' money and when she does so, the power returns. The next day, Mrs. Verloc and her younger brother, Stevie, are invited to an expensive lunch by the greengrocer, Ted, next door. He claims never to have been to the restaurant, but a waiter recognizes him, nearly compromising his ruse. Another policeman follows Mr. Verloc to an aquarium where he has a coded conversation with another foreign man. Then, Mr. Verloc makes his way to a pet store. Inside, he has a conversation with the owner that, while coded, is obviously about buying a bomb.

The next day, a bird cage is delivered to the Verloc house. In a secret compartment, Mr. Verloc finds the bomb he requested with a note saying, "The birds will sing at 1:45." Unable to leave due to Ted's close observation, Mr. Verloc trusts Stevie to deliver the bomb to the London Palladium before 1:45. London traffic and a parade make Stevie late, causing the bomb to explode on a bus, killing the boy and all its occupants. Ted and Mrs. Verloc are stunned to learn Stevie is dead, but in private, Mr. Verloc admits his fault to his wife. Distraught from losing her brother and feeling threatened by her husband, Mrs. Verloc stabs and kills him. Ted discovers her and the corpse, promising to do everything in his power to protect her. Mrs. Verloc disagrees, attempting to turn herself in to the police. The police, however, pay her no mind as they attempt to solve the bus bombing case. The bomb maker visits Mr. Verloc and finds his dead body. With police about to arrest him, he sets off a small bomb, killing himself and several officers. The police chief closes the investigation and Mrs. Verloc is never considered a suspect in her husband's murder.

PLOT

Blackout- A lightbulb glows brightly. Cars and trucks bustle along the busy streets of London, illuminated by streetlights and signs from nearby businesses. Suddenly, the bulb flickers and dies as does every other light in the city. Somewhere, a voltmeter dips toward zero. We hear the cries of the Londoners as they find themselves lost in the darkness. At the power plant, a group of technicians kneel beside a huge generator. One of them removes his hand from inside one of the machines, clutching a handful of something. "Sand," he says. "Sabotage," says another man. "Who did it?" asks a third. Outside the power plant, Mr. Verloc walks into the darkness.



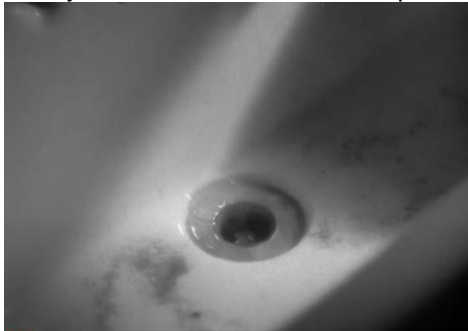
The Underground- The situation in the Tube station is surprisingly jovial. By matchlight, business goes on as usual in the underground. Led by stationmasters and those with matches, travelers disembark from their carriages and head above ground, laughing and joking despite the darkness. On the pavement, hawkers appear selling boxes of matches. The laughter continues as many people pass the camera.



Ticket booth- The large, Romanesque facade of a movie theater appears. Although its lights no longer shine, its sign reads 'Bijou.' A fairly large crowd has gathered in front of the theater. These people, unlike those from the Underground, seem quite displeased. "You broke a contract," one man says to the ticket seller. "Therefore, you broke the law." "But it's everywhere," says the ticket taker, Mrs. Verloc. A nearby butcher sings to himself as he lights his display with candles, and the greengrocer next to the theater does the same to his outdoor stalls. The patrons are fervent in their demand for a refund. One of Mrs. Verloc's workers appears, apologizing for being late. Mrs. Verloc complains that the customers want their money back, wishing Mr. Verloc was home.



Washing up- Using the darkness and the cover of the crowd, Mr. Verloc sneaks into the theater. He passes through a small corridor and into his home where he makes for the bathroom. Then, he fills the basin and washes his hands. As he pulls the drain plug, the same sediment seen at the power plant rests in the sink. Checking his nails, he makes his way up the stairs and into a bedroom. There, Mr. Verloc attempts to turn on the light, making a face at his stupidity when it doesn't work. He then undresses hastily and lies down on the bed, placing a newspaper over his face.



Restless crowd- The crowd at the ticket booth remains, still demanding a refund. "They're getting nasty," says Mrs. Verloc. "Nasty?" responds her employee with a chuckle, "You leave them to me." As she mans the booth, Mrs. Verloc borrows a flashlight from an usher and heads inside, looking for her husband. The woman at the booth addresses a man in the crowd, asking what the problem is. They quip back and forth for a moment before the man says, "I paid for my seat!" "Yeah," she responds, "and what about the one you put your feet on?"



Caught napping- Making her way into the house by torchlight, Mrs. Verloc notices her husband's hat and coat hanging by the door. She moves quickly to the bedroom, shining the light on her husband who pretends to be startled by the flashlight. "Karl," she says, surprised, "When did you get home?" "I haven't been out," he lies. When she says she called for him not half an hour before, he claims to have been asleep. He asks about the flashlight and feigns surprise when his wife says the power's out all over. When she tell him about the customers demanding their money back, he says that she should refund them. Mrs. Verloc is shocked. They can barely pay their overhead as it is: a refund could bankrupt them. He comforts her by saying there's "some money coming" before laying back down.



"An act of providence"- Outside the theater, the greengrocer from next door addresses the crowd. "What do you call an act of God?" asks one of the theatergoers. "I call your face one," says the greengrocer, "and you won't get your money back on that." He continues, explaining the legal difference between an act and an accident. Several in the crowd protest loudly that they still expect their money back. As the greengrocer dives into another legal tirade, Mrs. Verloc exits the theater, smiling at his antics. "What do you think you're doing," she challenges him as he tells the crowd to clear out. "I thought I told you not to interfere." Mrs. Verloc addresses the crowd and promises repayment despite the greengrocer's argument.



Lights back on- The moviegoers are quite excited at the prospect of getting their money back. They surge around the ticket booth, clamoring for their refund as the lights flicker back to life. The ticket taker slides her window shut, shrugging her shoulders and pointing at the lights. The busy streets roar with movement once more as trolleys and cars pass. Chewing on a toothpick, the greengrocer watches as the patrons file back into the movie theater once more. Mrs. Verloc approaches and thanks him for his trouble. "Not at all," he replies. "I like trouble."



"There you are, ma'am"- In the bedroom, Mr. Verloc looks in shock at the bulb hanging from the ceiling. It seems whatever he's done to the power plant has been repaired. The door thuds shut and a short, older woman enters the home. She checks her appearance in the mirror before exiting the home via the theater, laughing at the comedy playing on screen as she walks by. The ticket-taker asks the woman if she'd like a seat but realizes her mistake. The woman asks her to tell Mrs. Verloc that the cooking is done when she sees her approach. "Oh! There you are, ma'am" the woman says, repeating her message and excusing herself to care for her husband and his "bad kidneys."



Kitchen- Mrs. Verloc's young brother is busy in the kitchen. Comically dressed in an oversized apron, he removes a roast from the oven. As he turns, he trips on the apron, ripping it, and stumbles into a hanging dishcloth that momentarily blindfolds him. The boy drops the roast onto the table, breaking a plate. Removing the dishcloth from his face, he meekly examines the broken plate before hiding its pieces in the drawer under the table. He burns his mouth tasting something from a pot when his sister enters. "Oh, Stevie!" she coos, "Have you done all this by yourself?"



Dinner Table- A black cat grooms itself in a dining room chair as Mr. Verloc leans against the mantle, picking at his nails with his penknife. He hears movement from the kitchen and throws himself into a stuffed chair, trying to look relaxed. Mrs. Verloc and Stevie enter carrying trays, and Mrs. Verloc expresses how glad she is they didn't have to repay any of their customers. As the other two set the table, Mr. Verloc complains about the maid, saying, "She always manages to make the cabbage brown." Mrs. Verloc sympathizes and asks Stevie to run to the greengrocer's for some lettuce.



"I don't like attention"- Mrs. Verloc muses happily that they wouldn't have had the money for lettuce if they'd repaid the customers earlier as she serves a dish at the table. Her mood shifts as she asks Mr. Verloc why he didn't seem to want to repay the customers earlier. "Anything for quiet," he says, "I don't like attention being thrown to us like that." Stevie returns with the greengrocer in tow. "Forgive me for butting into your private affairs," he says, explaining the boy couldn't decide what lettuce to buy. Stevie denies this, but the greengrocer turns his attention to Mr. Verloc, asking if he got home "just in time to see the trouble." Verloc claims to have been home all afternoon and his wife confirms this. As the greengrocer moves to leave, a window swings open, making a shrieking noise that startles them all.



Ted off early- The greengrocer glances at the movie playing in the theater as he heads for the exit. Outside, he thrusts the oblong lettuce into the usher's hands as he walks to the produce stall. The greengrocer's boss is speaking to a customer when he enters the market stall but when she leaves, he asks the older man if he can head home early. Ted thanks him before wandering into the small room behind the storefront. He dons his hat and coat before bidding his co-workers good night. "That fellow seems to get off whenever he likes," one complains as Ted disappears.



Scotland Yard- Ted boards a taxi and disembarks outside Scotland Yard. A clock tower chimes as he walks through the building's halls and into an office. The chief inspector sits behind his desk, speaking orders to an intercom as a clerk hands him a newspaper. As he reads, Ted approaches the desk. The inspector asks him if he has anything to report. Ted replies that he saw Mr. Verloc entering his home soon after the blackout. He wasn't able to prove this as Mrs. Verloc confirmed her husband's alibi. The chief inspector tells him to find a way to speak with Mrs. Verloc, telling Ted that military intelligence believes something bigger than a blackout is coming. Ted asks what would motivate such actions and the inspector replies, "One man steps on your toe, the other picks your pocket."



Thursday- A title card reading 'Thursday' fades in and out as the sound of heavy traffic bleeds in. Ted is stacking fruit in the grocer's stand, shooting quick glances towards the adjoining theater. A police officer approaches Ted and scolds him for the lettuce leaves littering the ground in front of the produce stall. Ted responds sarcastically, cloaking his insults in a bizarre sales pitch for oranges. The officer leaves and Ted sees Mr. Verloc exiting the theater. He approaches the older man with a smile, asking where he's heading. Mr. Verloc explains he's on his way to a trade show. Ted suggests he pick up a movie with a lot of murders because "this love stuff makes me sick." They both chuckle, but Mr. Verloc says those films are very popular with women.



"Pineapples! Penny each!"- Stevie stands outside a nearby shop, whittling. He spots Mr. Verloc and informs his older sister, who asks the boy to tell him not to come back too late. He does as his sister asked and Mr. Verloc pats him on the shoulder warmly, saying he'll be back as soon as possible. Verloc crosses the street under the watchful eye of Ted, who starts belting out a sales pitch: "Pineapples! Penny each! Penny each, pineapples!" This seems to be code for another undercover officer, who nods toward Ted and begins following Mr. Verloc as he boards a passing tram.



Aquarium- The tram stops at a bus terminal and Mr. Verloc disembarks, walking quickly. He pays for a ticket and enters an aquarium. Children shout excitedly inside as Mr. Verloc makes a beeline for a tank containing a pair of sea turtles. A man wearing a monocle joins him. "Funny-looking things," he says to Verloc, who agrees. They meander to another tank where Verloc says, "I hope you were satisfied with last night's show." He complains mildly that it was a tough thing to do, but he got away clean and it was a worthwhile effort. "I think you'll agree I've earned my money," he says. The other man turns and hands Mr. Verloc a scrap of paper, a newspaper clipping reading "London Laughs at Black-out."



A new plot- "When one sets out to put the fear of death into people," the man with the monocle says, "it's not helpful to make them laugh." Verloc defends his actions but the other man says, "They were right to laugh." He continues, saying that Mr. Verloc will be paid when he has "earned it." Through a lengthy and coded conversation, they cook up a scheme to bomb Piccadilly Circus. Verloc doesn't want to kill, but the man with the monocle says he won't get his money otherwise. He then hands him an address of a bombmaker and instructs him to complete his task on the day of the Lord Mayor's Show, when Piccadilly Circus will be packed.

"I don't blame her"-The man with the monocle leaves and the camera follows him, landing on a young couple. The young man states that a certain species of fish lays millions of eggs and then changes sex. "I don't blame her," his date says. Verloc looks past the couple at an aquarium tank that turns into Piccadilly Circus. The image twists and melts like a film cell caught in a fire before disappearing. Mr. Verloc collects himself and leaves the aquarium with the undercover policeman hot on his tail.



Ted appears- Mrs. Verloc and Stevie enjoy an afternoon at the park when Ted approaches them. “Why isn’t it Stevie and Mrs. Verloc,” he grins, pretending he hasn’t been following them. Stevie complains that Ted’s fruit is all they’ve eaten today, and the undercover policeman invites them to a steak lunch. Stevie excitedly accepts despite his sister’s scolding. Ted asks where they’d like to go and Stevie replies that he’d like to try Simpson’s, near Piccadilly Circus. Mrs. Verloc keeps up her scolding, saying they should go to a corner restaurant or tea shop. Despite this, Ted accepts the boy’s wish, and they leave together, smiling.



Simpson’s- The trio climb the stairs in front of the posh restaurant. As the maitre d’ finds them a seat, Mrs. Verloc asks Ted if he’s ever been to this restaurant before. He claims he hasn’t. As they take their seats in a booth, Stevie clumsily tugs at the tablecloth. After his sister scolds him, Stevie jumps into his seat to avoid the tablecloth, saying he’d seen a film where a man pulled the tablecloth off a table and left the dishes and silverware unmoved on top. “You ought to try that at home one day,” Ted jokes. “He did,” Mrs. Verloc sighs. They look at their menus and Mrs. Verloc expresses concern about the cost, but Ted assures her he has enough money. This concern continues as the waiter approaches, but Ted orders them all steaks instead of the egg on toast and simple salad Mrs. Verloc requested.



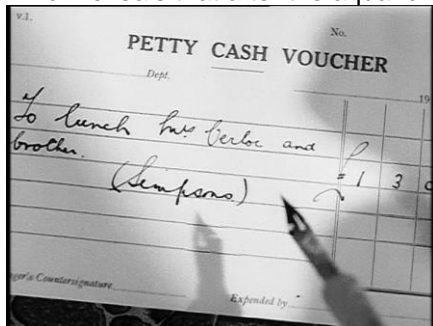
“When did you come over?”- Ted turns to Mrs. Verloc, asking, “When did you come over from America?” She replies that poor business brought them to England about a year before. “People used to go over to the States because business wasn’t too good over here,” Ted replies. Their money troubles persist, however, Mrs. Verloc says. Ted notes how hard it is to run a business, “Unless you run a sideline.” Mrs. Verloc seems to grow uncomfortable with the questioning, saying how kind Mr. Verloc is to Stevie and how important that is to her.



Recognized- Stevie alerts the others excitedly that their steaks have arrived as a chef pulls a cart up tableside. The chef begins carving. “No fat for you, as usual?” he asks Ted, “Haven’t seen you for a long time.” Ted shakes his head quickly before smiling at Mrs. Verloc: “Do I look as though I don’t like fat?” Mrs. Verloc calls him out on his little lie and states her suspicion that he could afford such an expensive meal on a greengrocer’s pay. Ted tries to deflect her suspicion, asking, “Haven’t you got some terrible secret? What goes on in that cinema after hours?” “Deeds of darkness,” Mrs. Verloc responds sarcastically. Ted continues to joke that there’s another woman in Mr. Verloc’s life when Mrs. Verloc breaks out laughing. It’s apparent she truly loves her husband and thinks he’s harmless.



Hollingshead’s report- Back at Scotland Yard, Ted fills out a petty cash voucher with the cost of the meal at Simpson’s. He begins to leave the room but hesitates, deciding to throw the voucher away. He enters the chief inspector’s office, where the inspector seems to be waiting for him. Ted tells him that Mrs. Verloc doesn’t know anything about her husband’s activities. The chief inspector accuses Ted of falling for the beautiful young woman, though he doesn’t blame him. They begin speaking about Hollingshead, Ted’s partner, who followed Mr. Verloc earlier that day. The chief inspector reads Hollingshead’s report which reveals that after the aquarium, Verloc made his way to a bird shop.



Bird Shop- The camera pans down from a street sign reading “Liverpool Road” and settles on a pet store specializing in songbirds. Hollingshead stands across the street, turning his head from a cobbler’s workshop to look at bird shop. Inside, the proprietor is talking with a customer whose bird won’t sing. After some discussion, the man says he’ll make the bird sing for her. He whistles and every bird in the shop begins singing. “You sure it was him?” the customer asks, unsure if her bird made any noise. The shop owner assures her that the problem has been solved and ushers her from the shop, turning his attention to Mr. Verloc, who has been waiting impatiently. “Yes, of course,” he says to Verloc, “You want something from my other department.”



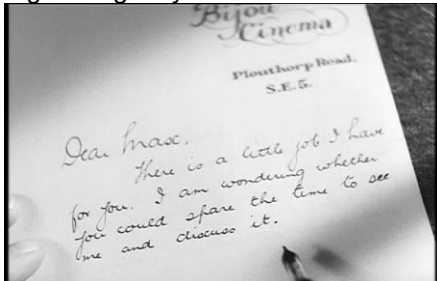
The other department- Led by the bird shop owner, Mr. Verloc passes a long line of chickens and other fowl in cages that squawk and chirp. Much like the theater Verloc runs, the bird shop has an apartment in the rear. The shop owner quickly introduces his daughter and leads Mr. Verloc into the kitchen. The shop owner complains of his daughter's lack of a husband and lack of discipline as he searches for his key. Upon opening the top cabinet, Mr. Verloc says, "Everything up there looks pretty harmless." Speaking in code, the shop owner jokes about the poisons and explosives in the unassuming boxes, jars, and bottles. Still speaking in code, they agree on a delivery time and sort out some other details. The shop owner says he's jealous of Mr. Verloc: He used to be on the 'front lines' but is now too old.



Policeman- Back in the storefront, Mr. Verloc flies into a panic when he notices a policeman snooping around. "They probably know too much already," Verloc says. The store owner does his best to calm him, but paranoia takes hold of Mr. Verloc. The policeman passes, obviously more interested in the birds and puppies than the men inside the shop. As another patron enters the shop, the store owner ushers Mr. Verloc out, reminding him of the delivery he has planned for the upcoming Saturday. Outside, obscured by a sign in the window, Verloc nervously wipes his hands on a handkerchief.



Letter writing- Back home, Mr. Verloc is hard at work writing letters asking friends and relations for help "with a job". Mrs. Verloc and Stevie sit nearby, working on a model boat. Mrs. Verloc gossips to her husband about their strange lunch at Simpson's. Ted told her that he was quite rich and learning the grocery business so he could help his father run a chain of such stores. It seems she believed him. Stevie talks about steak, saying he'd eat it "three times a day" if he could. When his sister says he'd get sick, he says he couldn't be sick of any food other than poached eggs. The conversation moves from food to Ted. It's obvious Stevie admires the man, saying he "knows about all sorts of things, gangsters and burglars and everything!" The camera zooms in on Mr. Verloc as Stevie continues: "Gangsters are not nearly as frightening as you'd think. Some of them are quite ordinary looking, like you and me and Mr. Verloc."



Friday- A title card reading 'Friday' appears before fading to Mrs. Verloc hard at work selling tickets. Several men inquire if Mr. Verloc is in. Ted takes notice from the greengrocer's stand and smiles broadly when he makes eye contact with Mrs. Verloc. Mrs. Verloc asks each visitor in turn if they know the way through before letting them inside. The undercover detective whispers to Ted, "I have to slip away in a moment. Maybe I won't be bothering you anymore again after tonight."



Little bribe- After the men have entered the theater, Ted locks eyes with Mrs. Verloc, motioning to the sign advertising the film playing inside, making it clear, with facial expressions, that he'd like to see it. Mrs. Verloc makes dramatic faces back, nodding when he offers an apple in exchange for a ticket. She chuckles as Ted places the apple on the counter. "Pass one, Jack," she says to the usher as Ted makes his way into the theater, placing another apple in the man's hand. Ted watches the film for a moment, slowly making his way back toward the Verloc's apartment. The moviegoers erupt in laughter several times as he passes by them.



Behind the screen- In the little entryway to the apartment, Ted hesitates. He opens the door to his right but realizes it doesn't lead anywhere. At that moment, Stevie exits the Verloc home, surprised and excited to find Ted standing there. Ted feigns interest in the loudspeakers and the area behind the screen, and Stevie is more than willing to give Ted a tour. Ever attentive, Ted notices a bunch of windows and asks where they lead. When Stevie responds that the windows open into their living room, Ted grins and says, "I'll give old Mr. V a surprise," before climbing up to the window.



“You don’t follow Arsenal”- Inside the Verloc’s front room, a meeting is going on. It seems Mr. Verloc has found someone willing to do the ‘job’ he has planned for Saturday. As Mr. Verloc pours drinks in celebration, the man who said he’d take the job notices Ted’s hand sticking out through the window. He changes course quickly, bringing up an upcoming sports match that could change his plans. The others seem confused, Mr. Verloc saying he doesn’t follow. “No, no. I know you don’t follow Arsenal, but they’re a good team,” the man says as he sidesteps his way toward Ted, pulling the detective through the window and onto the living room floor.



Spencer identified- Calamity erupts as the men argue about Ted’s sudden appearance. Mr. Verloc says he knows Ted as a worker in the greengrocer next door. When another man asks why Ted was up there, Stevie sticks his head through the window and explains he was showing Ted the innards of the movie screen. One of Verloc’s comrades stares down Ted, who apologizes and exits quickly. The man who’d stared at him says, “That is Detective Sergeant Spencer of Scotland Yard.” The criminals quickly decide to flee, leaving Mr. Verloc without anyone to carry out his plans for Piccadilly Circus.



Ticket Booth- The usher watches the criminals scatter, a bit confused. Mr. Verloc follows them though much more slowly. He is conflicted. Outside the theater, he joins his wife in the ticket booth, asking about what she and Ted talked about yesterday at lunch. Mrs. Verloc says she doesn’t recall and is shocked when Mr. Verloc reveals that Ted is a detective. When his wife wonders why Scotland Yard would be investigating them, Mr. Verloc says they must be interested in one of the men he was meeting with. Mrs. Verloc sympathizes with her husband, saying she’ll have a talk with “Detective Ted.” Mr. Verloc stops her, saying he’ll do it himself.



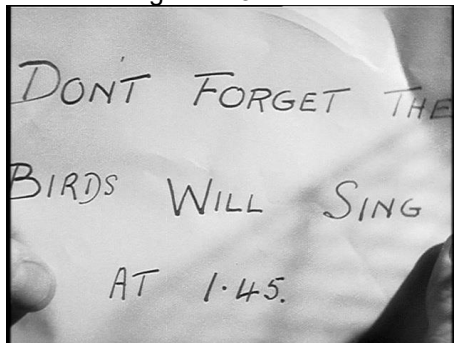
“Where’s Ted?”- At the greengrocer’s stall, Mr. Verloc approaches the owner and asks about Ted. The owner says that he’s gone. “Has he gone to Scotland Yard?” Mr. Verloc continues. The owner apologizes for playing a part in the ruse, but he couldn’t refuse since it was official police business. Mr. Verloc asks if the greengrocer knows what it’s about and is told that he doesn’t. Mr. Verloc meanders back to the ticket booth, and Mrs. Verloc asks if he’d found Ted before giving him the mail, with a cold, distrustful look on her face. The letter Mr. Verloc opens reads “London must not laugh on Saturday.”



Lord Mayor’s Show- A title card reading “Lord Mayor’s Show Day” fades into Mr. Verloc speaking angrily into the phone: “I was trying to get ahold of him since first thing this morning!” The bird shop owner’s daughter on the other end says, “It’s too late to stop him,” before Mrs. Verloc enters with a canary cage wrapped in brown paper. “An old man just delivered this,” she says. “It’s just a pair of birds for Stevie,” he replies when she asks if it’s a mistake. When she asks another question, he tells her to find Stevie.



“The birds will sing”- Alone with the cage, Mr. Verloc begins looking for the bomb hidden in its deep tray. The canaries remain quiet as he tears back the brown paper concealing them. Inside is a nondescript package, about as large as a coffee table book, with a letter. “Don’t forget,” it reads, “the birds will sing at 1:45.” Mr. Verloc looks at the clock on the mantle nervously. It reads nearly 11 o’clock.



On business- "Stevie!" Mrs. Verloc calls, searching for her younger brother. His head appears high up between the curtains in the theater. "What are you doing up there?" she asks, amused. Then Ted steps through the curtain, with Stevie on his shoulders. She tells Stevie there's a surprise for him inside and the boy rushes off excitedly. Ted apologizes for "busting in" as no one was at the door. Mrs. Verloc asks why he's there and he replies he's at the theater "on business." "The same business as last night?" Mrs. Verloc asks. Ted reveals that he is no longer working the case as he got too close to Mrs. Verloc. Ever faithful, Mrs. Verloc defends her husband, saying he hasn't done anything wrong. "I hope you're right," says Ted.



Errand boy- Mr. Verloc prepares to leave with the bomb, but he panics and backtracks upon seeing Ted with his wife. If Ted sees him leaving before the blast, he'll be linked to the terrorist act. Quickly, Mr. Verloc sits and pretends to read the paper as Stevie enters the living room with his new birds. The boy jostles the concealed bomb when he sets down the birdcage, putting Mr. Verloc on edge. Stevie asks which bird is the hen, to which Mr. Verloc says he'll have to wait and see if they lay any eggs. Mr. Verloc asks Stevie to run a couple of errands to "kill two birds with one stone." "Not my birds!" jokes Stevie before agreeing. Mr. Verloc gives the boy his instructions and Stevie turns back to his birds. Then Mr. Verloc reminds Stevie that time is short and he'll have to walk because it's illegal to carry flammable celluloid film on public transit. To conceal the bomb, he places two film canisters on top of the package.



"I can look after myself"- "Heads I wash, tails I don't," says Stevie, flipping a coin as he prepares to leave, "Tails it is." Despite this, he runs a comb through his hair and straightens his clothes, trying Mr. Verloc's patience. Eventually, the man explodes, "For God's sake! Why don't you go?!" He sees Stevie's hurt expression and calms down, explaining the package has to be there by 1:30 "at the latest." Meekly, Stevie takes the film canisters (and, unwittingly, the bomb) and leaves. On his way out, he says hello to Ted, explaining he's on an errand. Mrs. Verloc tells him to be careful crossing the street to which the boy replies, "I can look after myself, can't I?"



Police interview- Ted and Mrs. Verloc make their way to the apartment in the back of the theater. "I'm afraid I've had to impose on you, Mr. Verloc," he says as the man invites him to sit. The detective asks Mr. Verloc for his help with identifying the men who were at his home the past evening. Although he rubs his hands together nervously, Mr. Verloc puts on a pleasant face and tries to be a good host, offering Ted a drink before they continue. Ted asks Mr. Verloc how long he's been in the country then asks him to put it on paper to "make it official."



Snake oil salesman- Stevie navigates the busy London streets made all the busier by Lord Mayor's Show. In the middle of a market, Stevie finds himself watching a traveling salesman advertising his products. "What is it causes teeth to fall out?" the salesman asks the crowd. "Why a punch in the jaw," comes one reply. The salesman continues his pitch, eventually seeking a volunteer. He singles out Stevie who is pushed to the center of the crowd. Then, he demonstrates two of his products with Stevie's unwilling assistance. Stevie eventually escapes from this distraction and continues on his way. The music swells as the camera zooms in on the package under Stevie's arm, cross-fading into the note from before: "The birds will sing at 1:45."



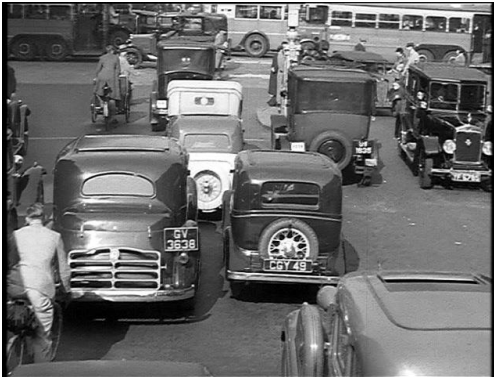
Parade- "Gather 'round for the Lord Mayor's Show!" cries a barker to a crowd of people as Stevie elbows his way forward. The police, some mounted on horseback, prepare for the coming parade. One stops Stevie as the boy tries to cross the street, sending him back whence he came. He looks nervously at a clock mounted on a nearby building. It reads 1:00. As he tries to push back through the crowd to find another route, the parade begins. The boy watches joyfully, but the camera focuses on the package under his arm. Crossfades show us the timing mechanism inside ticking away as Stevie watches horsemen and soldiers march past.



“Those are film canisters”- The parade ends with a massive press of people trying to move in all directions. Stevie gets caught in the crush. To escape, he quickly jumps onto the back of a passing double-decker bus and asks the ticket taker if the bus can get to Piccadilly Circus by 1:30. The man responds sarcastically before noting that Stevie can't bring flammable film on public transit, but changes his mind when seeing the film he's delivering is one he enjoyed himself. Stevie finds a seat beside an old woman with a puppy.



Traffic- Stevie turns his attention from the puppy to look at a clock: 1:31. He's already late, but he doesn't seem too bothered, believing his delivery can be delayed by a few minutes. A montage shows the bus navigating busy streets, Stevie playing with the puppy, clocks getting closer and closer to 1:45, and Stevie sitting beside the bomb/canisters. The music takes a stressful tone as the clocks reach 1:45. The minute hand on one of the clocks moves to 1:46, and the bus is torn apart by an explosion.



“Everything seems to be alright”- Ted Spencer and the Verlocs laugh among themselves in the Verloc's apartment. “Everything seems to be alright,” Mr. Verloc says. Based on Ted's mood, it seems his police interview is over and he managed not to arouse suspicion. A greengrocer from next door interrupts them to tell Ted a call has come for him from Scotland Yard. The detective asks to use the Verloc's phone and picks up the receiver. After a few tense moments, he contacts his superior. While he listens, his eyes lock on Verloc, who tries not to look too nervous. Without a word, Ted hangs up the phone. His eyes still locked on Verloc, he says, “A whole busload of people have been blown up in the West End.” “What Time?” Mr. Verloc asks, deflecting Ted's question by declaring he “can't be in two places at once.” Ted leaves, saying, “I might be back later on.”



Scene of the crime- Policemen and detectives mill around the burnt-out remains of the bus. Some form a perimeter, keeping lookie-loos from entering the area, while others examine the wreckage or work to douse the still-burning flames. Ted Spencer leans over and picks up a bent circle of metal. It has a label that reads "Bartholomew the Strangler." At that moment, he realizes Stevie is dead. Greif and anger surge over his face, but he contains his emotions as the chief inspector addresses him. The chief inspector asks Ted to go back to Verloc's to confirm the film canister in his hands isn't theirs and instructs another officer to join Hollingshead at the bird shop. The police seem ready to make a move on both men. As he leaves a nosy reporter eyes the film canister in Ted's hands, noting the title in shorthand.



"I want to see Mr. Verloc"- A newsboy belts out a headline as the camera travels back to the Bijou theater. Mrs. Verloc and one of her employees stand in the ticket booth. The employee comforts Mrs. Verloc, saying Stevie can take care of himself and she shouldn't worry. The newsboy passes and she leaves the booth for a moment to buy a paper. The story leaves her in shock: "Bartholomew the Strangler' clue in bus disaster." She feints and then opens her eyes, seeing Stevie appear among the crowd wherever she looks. Back on her feet, she speaks shakily, "I want Mr. Verloc. I want to see Mr. Verloc."



"What's done can't be undone"- Inside the Verloc's home, Mr. Verloc looks ashamed. "I didn't mean any harm to come to the boy," he says. He tries to comfort her, saying she'll need all her wits about her if the police continue their investigation. Mr. Verloc becomes irritated as Mrs. Verloc remains unresponsive. He rants for a minute about the stupidity of the whole plan before leaning against the mantle. "What's done can't be undone," he says, bumping into the model ship Stevie and Mrs. Verloc built just a few days before. "You think I set it up so he would be killed?" he continues as Mrs. Verloc looks on icily. Then Mr. Verloc shifts the blame to Ted: His criminal friends were scattered to the wind by Ted's intrusion, so Mr. Verloc was forced to use Stevie to carry out the plan.



Cartoon- Unable to stand being in the same room as her husband, Mrs. Verloc leaves and enters the theater. A crowd gleefully watches a cartoon. Slowly, Mrs. Verloc begins to smile and sits among the crowd. The crowd laughs as the antics on-screen continue. Mrs. Verloc laughs with them for a time, but her smile fades as the singing bird suffers a comic death. Her maid whispers that she's done for the night and Stevie still isn't in. Mrs. Verloc heads back into the apartment.



Dinner- Inside the dining room, Mrs. Verloc begins cutting the roast as usual. Mr. Verloc watches from his chair, smiling. "Pull yourself together a bit," he says, "Let's back up." He samples the dishes, opens a ceramic dish with a tight-fitting lid and complains about the color of the cabbage. Mrs. Verloc gives him a strange look, continuing to cut the meat. She looks down at the knife, throwing it away from her as if it's sprouted a head. She continues dishing with a spoon. Mr. Verloc asks if they could send for some new greens when both pause, remembering Stevie's death. The camera zooms in on their faces. Mrs. Verloc shakily reaches for the knife, pulling her hand back as it touches the handle.



Vengeance- Mr. Verloc notices the strange way his wife treats the knife. Slowly, he rises from his chair. Mrs. Verloc looks fearful as he approaches. When he moves to pick up the knife, she snaps it and clutches it to her chest. He moves to touch her shoulder and she cries out. "Don't!" he shouts before falling suddenly silent. The handle of the carving knife protrudes from his chest, and he falls as the canaries sing in their cage. "Stevie... Stevie..." Mrs. Verloc cries as she stumbles toward the front door. She sways, leaning on a nearby cabinet for support. Slowly, she sinks to a chair.



“Before I take him along”- Ted enters without knocking and goes to Mrs. Verloc. “You’ve heard?” he asks, and she nods. “You know why I’m here?” he continues, and she nods once more. “I’ll have to arrest him,” Ted apologizes. He says he’ll try to help Mr. Verloc and then says to her, “I’d do anything for you. You know that, don’t you?” “There isn’t anything you can do for either of them,” says Mrs. Verloc. “Before I take him along,” says Ted, “I want you to know what happens to you means a lot to me.”



Prime suspect deceased- Mrs. Verloc remains somber and Ted follows her line of sight, looking shocked as he notices Mr. Verloc’s legs beside the kitchen table. He moves to the body, checking for a pulse. The detective quickly takes in the scene, looking back to Mrs. Verloc as he rises. “I guess I’d better get my coat,” she says. “For God’s sake,” cries Ted, “what happened!?” Mrs. Verloc replies simply, “He killed Stevie.” She begins to walk away and Ted calls after her, pausing to close the door to the dining room. They pass quickly through the theater and onto the damp streets of London.



London streets- Traffic rumbles and honks on busy streets as Mrs. Verloc walks away from the theater. Ted walks right behind her, a worried look on his face. As the crowd swarms past them, Mrs. Verloc sees Stevie running towards her and reaches out for him. The boy in her arms looks confused and is obviously not Stevie, though he is a similar size. Ted pulls the mourning woman aside in a nearby alley: “Listen to me. You can’t go through with this.”



A plan- “Ted,” Mrs. Verloc says through tears, “let me go.” “You only did the hangman’s job for him,” he says. Mrs. Verloc says she doesn’t care what happens to her. “You’re telling me you have nothing left to live for?” Ted asks. He holds her tight as she collapses into him. “We’re going to get out of this,” he says. “You’ll just ruin yourself,” she responds. “To hell with that,” says Ted. “It’s Saturday night. We don’t need passports for the continent if we ask for weekend tickets.” It’s a simple plan that could work, just disappear and leave the body for the maid to find.



“You shut up”- In the rear of the bird shop, the owner’s daughter tells him to shut up. She demands that he go get the birdcage from the Verloc’s home before the police find it. The old man tries to make an excuse, but his daughter forces his hat and coat into his hands. “What of the risk?” he complains. “Who to?” she asks. “You? What about me and the child?” She orders him into a waiting taxi and reminds him of his task. He jumps into the car under Hollingshead’s watchful eye. The detective jogs off to a waiting flying squad van, telling the driver to “follow that taxi” before climbing into the back.



Flying squad van- Inside the van, several officers sit. One operates a mobile telegraph. Hollingshead asks him to send a message that they’re in pursuit of the bird shop owner and he appears to be headed to the theater. The bird shop owner looks nervous in the back of the taxi, while in the flying squad van, there’s a reply with instructions: They are to arrest the man and await the arrival of the chief inspector. In the alley, Ted holds Mrs. Verloc, who dries her eyes and assures him she’s alright. “Whatever happens,” she begins but is interrupted by a kiss.



“Is Mr. Verloc in?”- The taxi carrying the bird shop owner pulls up before the theater. “Is Mr. Verloc in?” he asks the woman at the ticket booth. Ted and Mrs. Verloc walk away as they notice the flying squad van pull up and several men pile out of the back. Mrs. Verloc realizes it's the police and tries to walk toward them but Ted pulls her away. She manages to slip away and run towards the van just as the chief inspector's car pulls up. “No time now,” the chief inspector says as Mrs. Verloc introduces herself. She almost has a chance to confess when another officer interrupts her and reports that they're ready to take Mr. Verloc and the old man into custody. The chief inspector entrusts Mrs. Verloc to Ted, telling him to “stay with the car” as he walks away.



The old man- The bird shop owner walks down the stairs in the Verloc home, clutching his hat. He's confused that he can't find Mr. Verloc. He peeks through a curtain and sees several police officers circling around the back of the building. “Mr. Verloc,” he calls softly, knocking on the dining room door. He returns to the passageway leading to the theater, parting the curtain and seeing the ticket seller instructing policemen how to enter the apartment. Realizing he's surrounded, the old man backs into the apartment, closing and locking the door behind him.



Theater bomb- The police begin pounding on the door as the old man continues his search for Mr. Verloc. “Come on, Grandpa,” Hollingshead says through the door, “Open up. It'll save a lot of trouble.” “You open that door,” comes his muffled reply, “and I'll blow the place sky high.” An officer volunteers to go after the man while Hollingshead clears the theater as the man may have a bomb. The movie-goers notice the commotion and are shocked when the house lights come on. Inside the apartment, the old man breaks down the dining room door only to discover Verloc's corpse lying on the floor. The police continue pounding on the door as he reaches into his pocket.



Back in the alley- Ted and Mrs. Verloc stand beside the chief inspector's car as the chief inspector returns to question Mrs. Verloc. When he questions her, he becomes annoyed with Ted's interjections that she doesn't know anything. "How's your husband's nerve," he asks, planning on how to deal with the old man. "Can he control him [the old man]?" "He can't," says Mrs. Verloc, "He's dead." At that moment, an explosion shakes the theater, blowing out its windows. People flee in all directions. Someone emerges from the apartment, scampering over the flaming rubble.



Breaking the news- The one person to escape the blast is Hollingshead. He nearly stumbles past the chief inspector, still wracked by shell shock. He reports that the "whole back of the building is blown off" and that the remains of the others are too damaged to even identify. The chief inspector approaches Ted, who comforts the sobbing Mrs. Verloc. "Her husband's dead," he says after pulling him aside. "You can break it to her. There's nothing against her so far as I can gather." Ted wraps an arm around Mrs. Verloc and they push through the crowd. Every head seems to follow them as the screen fades to black.



THEMES

POLITICS

Terrorists- Terrorism plays a major role in *Sabotage*. The film begins with Mr. Verloc's first attempt at terrorism, disabling a major power plant. This plan only partially succeeds, as later his handler chastizes him for the press coverage about the incident: the handler wants to terrorize Londoners, not make them laugh. Verloc shows himself to be completely amateur in his role as a terrorist in his inability to plan effectively or obscure his actions from Ted's prying eyes. It's a bit confusing why he even chose to join them as he vocally denounces the organization's unstated motivations. While the money motive is understandable, it almost seems safer to rob a bank. The terrorists we're introduced to beyond Mr. Verloc don't seem very trustworthy. Would Mr. Verloc even get the money they promised? Some viewers may be confused or frustrated by the terrorist organization's apparent lack of motivation and ideological loyalty. This was a decision made by GB Studios and the BBC to depoliticize the film's source material to avoid public outcry.

RELATIONSHIPS

Love Love binds the characters in *Sabotage* together. It's easy to see that Mr. and Mrs. Verloc share a lot of love. While the film chronicles the unraveling of their marriage, based on Mr. Verloc's terrorist activity, we can imagine that the strength of their relationship at the film's beginning is based on a strong marriage as she traveled to Britain with him. Ted remarks that most people move *to America from* England, showing that some other reason must have guided Mrs. Verloc's decision to move with Mr. Verloc. We know part of that reason is her love for her little brother, Stevie. Mr. Verloc, too, shows Stevie great kindness, stoking the love Mrs. Verloc feels for him. Her love for her brother is, however, much stronger than her love for Mr. Verloc. We see this when she stabs her husband in a panic after he admits his part in Stevie's death. Ted reveals his love for Mrs. Verloc when he comes to question her and her husband, telling her she was the reason he was taken off the undercover case. When, in the end, he learns that she killed Mr. Verloc, he plans to escape with her, throwing away his life and career in Britain to protect her.

Trust/Betrayal Among the strongest theme is that of trust and betrayal. Mr. Verloc establishes this early on by accepting the terrorists' terms of employment to help his financial situation. He betrays his wife's trust, tricking her into being his alibi by pretending to nap in the bedroom and acting like he doesn't know about the power outage. It's clear through the majority of the film that Mrs. Verloc's love for Mr. Verloc is based on a deep trust: not only does she defer to his business decisions—such as refunding the customers during the blackout, despite their money problems—but she also moved from America with him because of his kindness to her and Stevie. Mrs. Verloc doesn't ask questions when Mr. Verloc mentions that money is coming and adamantly defends him every time Ted questions her about him. This trust, however, wains when Mr. Verloc admits to sending Stevie to his death, a betrayal leading Mrs. Verloc to stab her husband in a panic.

APPEARANCE (vs. REALITY)

Secrets All the main characters besides Mrs. Verloc and Stevie begin *Sabotage* with some great secret. Mr. Verloc shows himself as a suspicious character when he walks away from the sabotaged powerplant and feigns sleeping for an alibi. Ted begins as a pushy greengrocer but soon shows himself to be an unreasonably nosy man with an ulterior motive for his closeness to the Verlocs: he is an undercover detective, like Hollingshead. Ted also harbors a secret love for Mrs. Verloc. The bird shop owner has been running a secret explosives business in the rear of his store for at least half a year (if his daughter's comments towards the end of the film are true). Mr. Verloc kills Stevie with his secret errand to Piccadilly Square. Because he can't tell the boy about the explosive, the boy doesn't realize his situation is life-threatening. Partly due to the depoliticization of the source material, the terrorist cell with which Mr. Verloc works is shrouded in mystery. What are their motivations? Are they anarchists? Simple ne'er-do-wells? Were they paying Mr. Verloc or just stringing him along for his assistance in carrying out their plots?

QUEST

Investigation- As a crime thriller, investigation plays an obvious role in the story and unfolds mostly through Ted's actions. He sets up shop at the greengrocer's stand to have a view of the comings and goings at the theater Mr. Verloc owns, showing us that the police were quite aware of the terrorist group's members and associations even before Mr. Verloc's first act of sabotage. Ted takes a hands-on approach early on, taking Stevie and Mrs. Verloc to a ritzy luncheon to glean information from them and sneaking into the rear of the theater to listen in on Mr. Verloc and his co-conspirators. We also see his partner, Hollingshead, following and reporting on Mr. Verloc's movements. Mr. Verloc, though he fears the police, doesn't suspect that they could already be tracking him and does nothing to avoid their detection, taking public transportation and taxis directly to the destinations where he meets other terrorists. At the film's end, we see how missing evidence can throw off an entire investigation as Mrs. Verloc goes free after murdering her husband. Despite her repeated attempts to admit her guilt, the police are much more consumed by their investigation of the bus bombing and Mr. Verloc's involvement in it. By the time the chief inspector realizes that Mrs. Verloc's statement about her husband being dead before the blast is

significant, there's nothing he can do as another bomb has destroyed the Verloc home and, with it, any evidence that she killed her husband.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Mr. Verloc

Anton Verloc is a man of vague European descent. We learn he immigrated to America where he met Mrs. Verloc and then moved to Britain. Having fallen into financial trouble, Mr. Verloc joins a mysterious terrorist organization in an attempt to make fast money.

Spontaneous Perhaps because of his financial woes, Mr. Verloc shows a penchant for spontaneity. While some of his actions are that of a planner (such as writing letters to criminals he knows to carry the bomb), when things don't go according to plan, he can act unpredictably. Many of his plans seem to be slapdash, such as his initial sabotage of the powerplant, which is easily fixed, or last moment, as when he tasks Stevie with delivering the bomb. We can easily assume his cooperation with the terrorist group is a spontaneous action given that he has distaste for their unspoken political aims. His final spur-of-the-moment act ends with his wife stabbing him. Had he followed his own advice of 'backing up' and continued speaking, perhaps he would not have met his end. Instead, he approaches his wife apprehensively while she clutches the knife, scared and confused.

Anxious There are many moments throughout the film that focus on Mr. Verloc's barely contained anxiety. We see him fiddling with papers and handkerchiefs, compulsively wiping his hands, and swallowing and licking his lips in nearly every scene. Unlike the other terrorists, it's obvious this is the first time Mr. Verloc has participated in illicit activity. He confides his anxiety multiple times to the bird shop owner, about handling an explosive and about police detection. Both of his fears are well-founded, as the use of explosives and police observation end with Stevie's death.

Careless There is a certain careless attitude around Mr. Verloc. While he tries to act carefully as we would expect a saboteur, he is always leaving little clues or making hasty decisions. We see this first when he washes his hands at the beginning of the film. Instead of rinsing away the sand from the bottom of the sink, he simply unplugs the drain and walks away, leaving evidence out in the open. He plays his cards a bit too early during the blackout, too, suspiciously telling his wife to refund the customers although they are barely covering costs with ticket sales. Never, save when Ted is on screen, does Mr. Verloc act like he is being followed. Repeatedly, he travels straight to the place he is heading to meet with the other terrorists, allowing police observation an easy chance to make connections. His most careless act in the film results in Stevie's death. Because he cannot leave with Ted in the building, he entrusts the bomb to Stevie, who, not knowing it is a timed explosive, dallies long past the delivery time because of the Lord Mayor's Show Day celebrations.

Mrs. Verloc

Mrs. Verloc is an American woman who married Mr. Verloc and then moved to Britain with him. She is devoted to both her husband and her younger brother, Stevie. Her love for her husband allows him to avoid police detection, but his betrayal of her brother has dire consequences.

Trusting While not so much as to be naïve, Mrs. Verloc is an incredibly trusting individual. Throughout the film, she defends her husband against Ted's inquiry, saying he's a gentle soul. This is based on Mr. Verloc's treatment of her little brother and the strength of their marriage. She is also quick to trust Ted, quickly becoming friends with the man she believes to be a greengrocer. Her trust falters when, at the expensive lunch at Simpson's, he lies about having been there. She does, however, believe the detective's cover story of being a rich heir and learning the grocery business. The only time her trust falters is when Mr. Verloc admits to sending Stevie to his death. She does not kill him out of malice or revenge but in simple panic, showing remorse and demanding that Ted help her turn herself in to the police where she trusts justice will be done.

Friendly Mrs. Verloc is incredibly friendly, and it shows in her face. She pulls more faces than most other Hitchcock leading ladies. Between playing with Stevie, talking with her employees, and mimed conversations from the ticket booth with Ted at the grocery stand, we can see how much she enjoys friendly interaction. Mrs. Verloc is quick to make friends with Ted, allowing him into the theater for the low price of an apple. She thinks twice about going to lunch at Simpson's; her idea is to go to a nearby tea house for a sandwich or something less expensive, still willing to share a friendly meal. When her husband complains about the cabbage cooked until it's brown, she smiles and sends her brother to the greengrocers for some lettuce. This shows us that she values people's happiness.

Sensitive Mrs. Verloc's sensitivity is showcased heavily towards the end of the film. We see her most sensitive side after Stevie's death when Mr. Verloc admits he had a hand in the explosion. Already distraught from the loss of her brother, Mr. Verloc's admission breaks her and she can hardly function. Not only has her younger brother died, but her loving husband has also transformed into a monster in her eyes. Her sensitivity continues after stabbing Mr. Verloc and demands that she turn herself in to the police, but Ted won't let her. She is still unable to bear the brunt of the bad news, saying she doesn't care what happens to her. Perhaps because of her sensitive nature, the chief inspector dismisses her odd comment about her husband being dead just before the explosion as a fluke.

Stevie

Stevie is a bright young lad. He is the younger brother of Mrs. Verloc, though his position in the Verloc household is like that of a son. He is fascinated with the greengrocer Ted, who knows all kinds of things, and trusts his sister and Mr. Verloc.

Playful Stevie is nothing if not playful. Being a child, it's a fairly common trait. Our introduction to the boy shows him wearing an oversized apron as he works in the kitchen, telling us that he is playing kitchen while trying to help. He catches pigeons in the square where Ted invites him and his sister to lunch. At the restaurant, Stevie jumps into the booth after disturbing the tablecloth when he first tries to sit. He then talks excitedly about a film he saw where a man pulls a tablecloth from a table without disturbing the table setting. Ted chuckles and says Stevie should try that at home, to which Mrs. Verloc replies, "He has." Just before Mr. Verloc gives the bomb to Stevie, the boy takes a ride on Ted's shoulders, appearing much taller than he is because he is behind the curtain. Stevie's playful nature makes his death all the more tragic.

Cooperative Stevie is a willing assistant and errand boy. In the kitchen at the beginning of the film, we see Mrs. Verloc praise him for helping her to finish the cooking and prepare their dinner. He helps set the table and runs off to the greengrocer's when Mr. Verloc requests a leafy green vegetable. Later, we see him and Mrs. Verloc building a model boat together. Stevie is happy to act as a messenger for Mrs. Verloc when Mr. Verloc leaves for the aquarium, and he acts as a message runner several other times throughout the film. His final act of cooperation ends tragically, as Mr. Verloc asks him to take the bomb to Piccadilly Circus. Despite his penchant for cooperation, he is slowed and distracted by several Lord Mayor's Show Day events and dies when the bomb explodes aboard a bus.

Ted

Detective Ted Spencer of Scotland Yard is introduced to us as Ted the greengrocer. Using this cover, he observes the Verlocs and attempts to find out Mr. Verloc's actions, connections, and motives. Eventually, he falls for Mrs. Verloc.

Careful Ted is incredibly careful. This is an excellent trait for an undercover detective to possess. Because he takes care in devising his cover job, not even the employees at the greengrocer's suspect that he isn't who he says he is. They're only jealous that he seems to get out of work whenever he asks. He does his best to keep his true identity secret from the Verlocs, maintaining the disguise of the greengrocer well into the film despite some of his odd behavior and questioning. There are moments when his carefulness wanes, such as when one of Mr. Verloc's co-conspirators spots his hand peeking out of the window behind the theater's screen. These moments are few and far between, however,

especially towards the end of the film. Closing and locking the Verloc's dining room door, for example, was a careful move that perhaps saved Mrs. Verloc's life. Unable to find Mr. Verloc, the bird shop owner dallies in the Verloc home until he is surrounded by police and is forced to detonate a bomb. Because the scene was destroyed, Mrs. Verloc is never suspected of killing her husband.

Confident When Ted's skill and calculating attitude aren't enough, his confidence saves him. He confidently assumes the guise of a greengrocer, talking almost endlessly about the virtues of different fruits and vegetables though he's also noted by Stevie as knowing everything about mobsters and criminals. Ted is confident in his disguise, having worked out a series of codes that alert Hollingshead to Verloc's activities without sounding out of place; one example is "Penny each! Pineapples!" meaning Hollingshead should follow Verloc. This confidence leads to Mrs. Verloc discovering Ted isn't a simple greengrocer when he lies about never having been to Simpson's before. He creates a cover story of being an heir to a grocery store chain and needing to learn the business a lie that he sells with his confidence. Mrs. Verloc reports this to her husband as if there could be no other explanation for Ted's behavior and wealth. When Verloc's co-conspirator pulls him into Verloc's living room through the window, he confidently assumes his guise of Ted the greengrocer although another one of the conspirators recognizes him as a detective. Finally, he is confident both in admitting his admiration for Mrs. Verloc—it takes some guts to tell a married woman you love her—and in planning to escape with her to Europe.

Love vs. Duty Ted faces a unique conundrum often used by Hitchcock. He is torn between his love for Mrs. Verloc and his duty as a law enforcement officer. When he learns of the manslaughter of Mr. Verloc, he does everything he can to keep Mrs. Verloc from facing consequences even though she wishes to face justice. He does this mostly by interrupting or contradicting Mrs. Verloc as she tries to admit her crime, but he also hatches a scheme to escape to the continent before Mr. Verloc's body can be discovered. It's another example in which Hitchcock turns a lawgiver into a lawbreaker by introducing a love interest.