

The Lisa Sequence.

The sequence builds tension slowly at first as a high angle shot focuses our attention onto the garden where Lisa and Stella are looking for evidence in the flower bed. After finding nothing incriminating the camera tilts upwards, following Lisa as she makes her way up the ladder. We realise that she is about to indulge in some risky behaviour by making her way into Thorwald's apartment and we are worried for her safety. As she does this the film cuts to reaction shots of Jeff watching her. We see that he is obviously anxious about what she is doing and this fear is translated to us as the audience watching. We then see the action unfold from Jeff's point of view which is a long shot until Jeff picks up his telephoto lens. This allows Hitchcock to show us a closer shot of what Lisa is doing. We see her searching through Thorwald's apartment for his wife's jewellery in order to prove their theory that he has killed his wife. Again a reaction shot is used to show Jeff becoming increasingly unsettled by what Lisa is doing. Throughout this part of the sequence we start to become tense about what Lisa has planned as we know that Thorwald could return at any moment which would put Lisa in immense danger.

Hitchcock then sustains the tension by skilfully diverting our attention away from Thorwald's apartment momentarily as Jeff and Stella focus on events playing out in Miss Lonelyhearts apartment. A high-angle long shot from Jeff's point of view looks down through her blinds and appears to show her about to commit suicide. The diegetic music playing from a nearby apartment stops her from following through with her actions, however we have looked away from what is happening a couple of floors above. When we look back the long shot shows us two windows, one inside the apartment and one outside. From this perspective we can see that Thorwald is returning home whilst Lisa is still inside the apartment. Immediately we are on edge as we realise that Lisa is now in grave danger and could be discovered at any moment. A reaction shot of Jeff shows his increasing panic at what he can see unfolding across the courtyard, yet both he and the audience are powerless to do anything.

Again Hitchcock sustains the tension by ensuring that Lisa is not immediately discovered. A panning shot shows her running into the bedroom at the far end of the apartment whilst a reflection on the open window pane cleverly indicates that Thorwald has entered his home. With both characters now occupying the same space it is surely only a matter of time until Lisa is discovered. A low angle close up of Jeff shows his panicked face as he quickly makes a phone call to the police. As an audience we are left hoping that this call is made in time and that something can be done to save Lisa. However, a long shot shows us Thorwald moving around the apartment and discovering Lisa. They appear to be talking but since they are so far away their voices do not carry across the diegetic music coming from the other apartment. This makes us worry for Lisa as we do not know what is happening between the pair.

The tension is then brought to a climax as we hear Lisa shout 'Jeff' from across the courtyard. It now appears that she is in serious danger. A reaction shot again shows a close up of Jeff's face, worried and on the verge of tears as he realises he is powerless to help. The only thing that he and we can do is wait for the police to show up and we don't know if they will get there in time. All of a sudden the lights in Thorwald's apartment go out and all we can see through the use of low-key lighting are glimpses of her struggling with Thorwald. We now think that it is too late for Lisa to be saved and we wonder if Thorwald will claim his second victim.