

Hitchcock's numerous parallels enhance character development and create narrative contrast. He dramatically contrasts L. B. Jeffries, a stubborn, rugged, matter-of-fact photographer who, while injured, spends his time alone escaping his temporary imprisonment by staring out the rear window, and his girlfriend, Lisa, a fashionable, materialistic socialite. Although both characters change later in the film, these initial disparities create much of the tension that troubles Jeffries.

Hitchcock also contrasts different types of romantic relationships, especially marriages, as insight into Jeffries' fears of commitment. By framing each tenant of the building across the street in their respective window, he creates different pictures of romantic life. Ms. Torso, a clever nickname since she pretty much IS her body/torso, is a beautiful, jovial dancer with men constantly swarming over her, while Ms. Lonelyhearts, another symbolic name, despairs alone and eventually turns suicidal. Likewise, Hitchcock compares the newlyweds, who are constantly honeymooning and seem romantically intimate because they're always framed in two-shots in one room, with the obviously troubled marital relationship of the salesman and his wife, who are rarely framed in two-shots or even in the same window together.

The motif of rectangular geometry pervades the film's setting, possibly because the audience follows the point of view of a photographer, who may see life as framed like a picture or, more likely, because the audience watches rectangular movie screens voyeuristically too. But it could also be about how precisely everything seems set up for display in this film. Even in Jeffries' apartment, everything is neat and exact, like it is supposed to be looked at. For that matter, so is his girlfriend, who is always carefully dressed; even when she adventures across the courtyard to investigate the murder, she has to climb the ladder in her fancy dress and high heels. (Lisa is always very pretty and on display.) Hitchcock seems to be saying that even though everything appears to be neat and "in its place," far more is actually out of place than it appears, like murder right next door and troubled romantic relationships.