The main theme of “The Way Up To Heaven” is the successful commission of a perfect crime, and supplementary themes are passive aggression, “the worm turns,” and "the biter bit."

In a story including "the biter bit," the aggressor is appropriately punished by being caught, so to speak, in his own trap. Mr Foster would not have gotten stuck in the elevator if he had not been pretending that he had to delay their departure in order to go back upstairs to look for a gift he wanted his wife to take to their daughter in Paris.

At this point, Mrs Foster suddenly spotted a corner of something white wedged down in the crack of the seat on the side where her husband had been sitting. She reached over and pulled out a small paper-wrapped box, and at the same time she couldn’t help noticing that it was wedged down firm and deep, as though with the help of a pushing hand.

Mr Foster’s trick costs him his life. His wife finally realizes the subtle sadist has been deliberately torturing her with his passive aggression for years, and thus she has the motive for letting him perish in the stalled elevator. His going back up on the elevator provides both the motive and the means for his own execution. This bit of irony is what makes the story appealing.