

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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BRIGHTON ROCK (US title: *Young Sacrifice*) 1947

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OVERVIEW

Pinkie Brown is the leader of a second-rate gang in Brighton, on the south English coast. In order to cover up one murder, he murders another man and marries a young waitress (Rose) in order to prevent her from giving evidence against him in court. Pinkie and Rose, however, are observed closely by Ida, a woman who is both a clairvoyant and a seaside entertainer. Through her determined efforts, and none by the police, a fake suicide pact (in which Rose would have killed herself and Pinkie would have survived) is interrupted. Pinkie dies and Rose lives, but she is haunted by guilt for not dying with him.

HISTORICAL/LITERARY NOTES

Following the credits, the following historical note appears on screen: 'Brighton today is a large, friendly seaside town in Sussex, exactly one hour's journey from London. But in the years between the two wars, behind the Regency terraces and crowded beaches, there was another Brighton of dark alleyways and festering slums. From here, the poison of crime and violence and gang warfare began to spread, until the challenge was taken up by the police. This is the story of that other Brighton—now happily no more.' Indeed, much of the film was shot on location in Brighton, and some scenes used hidden cameras so that we see the residents of the town going about their normal business.

This movie is one of the darkest of all film noirs, with a truly evil protagonist, brilliant cinematography and skilful direction. For example, the killing of Hale in a fairground tunnel called 'Dante's Inferno' is a stroke of genius. The story differs significantly from Greene's source novel of the same name only at the end. The suicide pact is about to be committed on Brighton pier and not (as in the novel) on a cliff outside the city. And more poignantly, in the film, Rose actually hears Pinkie's voice on the record, whereas in the novel, she only thinks that she will. Greene (who co-wrote the screenplay with Terrence Rattigan) hated that change, but it is effective in dramatising Rose's deluded hope. Indeed, the young actress who played Rose later said that she 'couldn't bear' to watch the film.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Pinkie	Pinkie Brown is the young leader of a criminal gang.
Spicer	Spicer is one of his gang members.
Cubitt	Cubitt is another of his gang members.
Dallow	Dallow is the third member of his gang.
Prewitt	Prewitt is a lawyer, employed by the gang.
Colleoni	Colleoni is the leader of a rival gang.
Hale	Fred Hale is a newspaper man, who is murdered at the start of the film.
Ida	Ida Arnold is a middle-aged woman who performs on the sea front.

STORY

The gang Pinkie's gang—Spicer, Dallow and Cubitt—are gathered in the basement of a rooming house. They shout with surprise when they see an advertisement in the paper about the 'Kolley Kibber' scheme coming to Brighton. It is a publicity stunt, in which the mystery man drops cards around the town until someone identifies him and wins a prize. What catches the gang's eye, though, is the photograph of the 'KK' man: it is Fred Hale, who knows too much about the gang's petty crimes.

On the run When Pinkie and two gang members confront Hale in a bar, he says he's not Hale. They threaten him and leave, but Hale is scared and looks for cover. He finds it in Ida, a gregarious lady of undetermined age who frequents the bar. He buys her a drink and offers to take her to lunch, to have some company—surely, he thinks, they wouldn't murder me with witnesses everywhere. But she turns him down, and he is forced to wander the streets alone. He fears he is being followed but sees no one and begins to run toward the train station. When he sees two thugs, he jumps on a bus and

eludes them, reaching the pier on the seaside.

Dante's Inferno Again, desperate for company, he makes friendly advances to two young women, but soon the gang members find him and force him to flee. On the pier, he runs into the slightly drunk Ida, whose company he secures by giving her some money to buy a pair of gloves to replace those she's just lost. Sensing he is not well, Ida agrees to stick with him. She goes to the Ladies for a moment, while he buys a ticket for a fun ride in Dante's Inferno. Hale gets into a two-seater car on a moving track and notices, too late, that Pinkie has joined him. While the lurid and sinister faces jeer at them inside the dark tunnel, Pinkie pushes Hale into the sea below.

Alibi Pinkie emerges alone out of the tunnel, as Ida looks around for the missing Hale. Pinkie goes to a shooting gallery and asks what time it is. He's told 1:15. That established his alibi because he has told Spicer, a gang member, to distribute Hale's cards all over town until 2 pm. That proves that Hale was killed after 2 pm, when Pinkie has a solid alibi.

Card at the café But when Spicer says he put one of the cards in a café, to show that Hale had eaten, Pinkie is alarmed: suppose the waitress notices that the man who left the card (Spicer) is not Hale, whose photograph will soon be in the papers. 'Maybe she won't find it,' Spicer says. 'I put it under the tablecloth.' Pinkie demands that he retrieve it, but he refuses. Cursing the cowardice of the whole gang, Pinkie goes himself to the café.

Rose At the café, Pinkie finds out that a young waitress named Rose found the card that Spicer left earlier in the day. 'Why didn't you claim your reward?' Pinkie asks, and she explains that the man didn't look like the KK man in the photograph. Worried that she might blow his alibi, he advises Rose not to say anything about the two men not being the same. He also makes a date with her, to meet on the pier, on Sunday night. As he leaves, he says, 'See you Sunday, but you might not recognise me.' 'Oh, no,' Rose says, 'I never forget a face.' Pinkie is further alarmed.

Inquest At the inquest on Fred Hale, the KK man killed by Pinkie, the Coroner's Court hears that he had distributed his cards right up to the moment of his death. Ida, who gave testimony, is not satisfied with the evidence presented. Why, she wants to know, did he tell some people he wasn't Fred? And why didn't Pinkie, who had spoken to Fred in her company, show up in court? 'I would've asked questions if they'd let me,' she says. 'Plenty of 'em.'

Clairvoyant Ida says she wishes Fred could talk to her now, and the others make fun of her. Then, to demonstrate her powers as a medium, she closes her eyes and arbitrarily brings a pen down on a newspaper. Someone notes the letter that the pen has landed on. After a series of these blind moves, the sequence reads: 'eyesuicillfre.' The others laugh, but Ida spies a meaning: 'eye for an eye...suicide...Fred.' One of the men asks about the two 'i's and Ida says she'll find out about them later. 'Don't you see,' she urges her companions. 'Someone drove him to suicide.' Apparently, Ida is in touch with the departed.

Rendezvous When Rose meets Pinkie on the pier, he asks if she got her reward for the card. She has but she is curious why the man in the photograph is not the man she saw leave the card. Pinkie is worried and tries to scare Rose with stories of girls who got mixed up with gangs and 'lost their looks.' He tells her to let him know if anyone comes and asks her questions. They also discover that both of them are Catholic. 'You believe, too, don't you?' Rose asks, expectantly. 'Of course, I do. There's a hell, all right,' Pinkie says.

Dissension Back at the rooming house, Pinkie overhears the gang members quarrelling. Spicer says that Pinkie is too young and that killing Hale was a mistake. 'I'm against murder,' Spicer says, 'and I don't care who knows it.' Pinkie threatens Spicer, who backs down.

Carving Pinkie and Dallow go out to collect protection money from a Mr Brewer. Brewer explains that the rival gang, run by Colleoni, demanded the money first. 'I can't pay you both,' he complains, shaking with fear and listening to his sick wife moan in the room above. Pinkie slips out his knife and slashes Brewer across his cheek.

Colleoni Pinkie is invited to a meeting in a fancy hotel by Mr Colleoni, who is European, rich, older and suave. He can't believe that Mr P Brown is the teenager who stands in front of him and warns Pinkie to stay off his territory, but the young man is not cowed. As Pinkie leaves the hotel, he is taken to the police station, where an inspector also warns him not to challenge Colleoni. 'Take my advice and clear out of Brighton,' he says. 'You're not big enough for the filthy racket you're in. And don't

start anything at the races tomorrow. I'm watching you.'

Ida investigates Meanwhile Ida is tracking down witnesses and collecting statements about Hale's death. She finds Rose at the restaurant and questions her about the card and the man who left it. 'I never saw him,' Rose lies, in obedience to Pinkie's instructions. When she says she just 'fetched him a bottle of beer,' Ida knows she is covering up because Hale told her he never drank beer. After Ida leaves, Rose telephones Pinkie to tell him that a woman had cornered her. Ida goes to the police, but they dismiss her 'evidence.' But she makes a key link when she sees Rose and Pinkie together on the sea front.

Photograph Sitting together in the sun, Pinkie warns Rose to say away from Ida and her questions. Then they stroll along and Rose looks at all the 'holiday snaps' pinned up on a board. 'Look, Pinkie,' she cries. 'Here's a photo of the man who left the card.' It is Spicer and now Pinkie is afraid. Pinkie tells Spicer that he must 'disappear,' and Spicer agrees to 'blow town.'

Race course In order to ensure that Spicer disappears, Pinkie sets up a 'hit job' at the race course, to be carried out by Colleoni's men. At the race course, Pinkie says goodbye to Spicer, who is leaving town, which is the sign for Colleoni's thugs to attack. There is chaos as others pile in and Pinkie is cut by a knife while Spicer lies on the ground. Pinkie goes to the restaurant, where Rose cleans his wound. 'I got it defending Spicer,' he lies to her, 'but he died.' Back at the flat, Pinkie explains to Cubitt that he got rid of Spicer because Rose might have identified him in court. Cubitt is horrified.

Prewitt Mr Prewitt, the lawyer, arrives half-drunk and full of Shakespearean quotations. Pinkie explains that he wants to marry Rose, who needs parental consent because she is only sixteen and an orphan. Prewitt waves away any problem and says people sometimes give the 'wrong age' and that he can arrange it, with a little money.

'Accident' Pinkie is told, incredibly, that Spicer is in the next room, alive, and is about to leave town. But Pinkie is taking no chances and throws him to his death down the stairs. Pinkie sends for the police and a doctor. 'Fortunately, we have a lawyer here to swear that it was an accident,' he says with a chuckle.

Phonograph record Pinkie and Rose are married in a civil ceremony, although Rose is late because she stopped off at a church to confess. When the newlyweds go to the pier for a celebration, Rose sees a booth, with modern equipment, where you can make your own phonograph record. 'Go on, Pinkie,' she says. 'Record something for me. Then, if you're away somewhere, I can hear your voice.' Pinkie steps into the booth, and with Rose's happy face glowing through the glass door, he records this message: 'You want me to say I love you. Here's the truth. I hate you, you little slut. You make me sick.'

Ida's ideas Pinkie leads Rose to a fancy hotel and asks for a room. Ida observes them and begins to understand what has happened, especially the card left for the alibi and the death of Spicer to remove evidence. Now, she fears that Rose is in danger and tracks down Prewitt, who lets it slip that Pinkie was in the flat when Spicer fell to his death. Rose will be next, Ida thinks.

Honeymoon There was no room at the hotel so Rose and Pinkie spend their honeymoon in the rooming house. When Pinkie tells Cubitt that he killed Spicer, Cubitt quits the gang, leaving only Dallow as a loyal member of the gang. A woman who hangs out with Dallow gives Rose a phonograph player for her record. Dallow is also kind to Rose, and they both pledge their loyalty to Pinkie. Ida appears, says she is Rose's mother and goes up to her room. She tells her that Pinkie is a murderer and pleads with her to run away. 'You think he's in love with you, but he isn't,' Ida says. But Rose won't hear of anything said against her husband. When Rose points out that he married her, Ida says, 'To stop you giving evidence.'

Suicide pact Pinkie sees a letter that Rose has written to him: 'I love you, Pinkie... wherever you go, I'll go, too.' Those words give him an idea: a suicide pact between a boy and a girl, something he read in the papers. He finds the phonograph record of his voice and damages it, realising that it might be used as evidence against him. Next, he tells Rose that the police will probably arrest him and take him away. He reminds Rose that she wrote she would stay with him, always. She is almost in tears, and he says, 'Don't worry. I've got it all thought out. It won't hurt.' She wants to know what won't hurt, and he says, 'Dying together. But we have to act quick. You don't want to see me hanged, do you?'

Going away party Pinkie and Rose prepare to go away for a little celebration. They and Dallow go

to a pub for drinks, where he sees Ida. Suddenly, Pinkie says goodbye to everyone and takes Rose out in the rain. As he passes her, Ida notices the gun in his jacket pocket. Still in the pub, Ida asks Dallow where Pinkie is taking Rose, but Dallow won't cooperate until Ida mentions the gun. Suddenly, Dallow tells his girl to get the police, while he and Ida hurry out into the rain.

Chase on the pier Pinkie leads Rose to the end of the pier, while Dallow, Ida and the police chase around, trying to find them. Pinkie says it's time to kill themselves, but Rose hesitates. 'There'll be no forgiveness. It's a mortal sin,' she says. 'Have it your own way,' Pinkie says. 'I'll do it myself.' He hands back her letter, and Rose relents. 'No,' she says, 'I'm going with you.' They kiss, and Pinkie withdraws a little distance to watch as Rose raises the gun to her head and prays. The noise of the approaching policemen distracts her and, seeing the men, she throws the gun away. Pinkie goes to her and demands the gun, but it's gone. Dallow reaches him, and Pinkie thinks he will help, but Dallow knocks him down. As the police close in, Pinkie scrambles to his feet but stumbles off the pier into the water.

Record of love Rose sits on a bed in a convent, speaking to a nun. She is distraught, still haunted by the guilt that she did not die with Pinkie. 'That woman who said he wanted to get rid of me,' she says in tears, 'she didn't know a thing about love.' The nun is sceptical, and Rose says, 'But I've got proof that he loved me.' She plays the phonograph of Pinkie's voice. But it has been damaged and the needle gets stuck, so she only hears only this: 'I love you, I love you, I love you...'

THEMES

Nature of evil This 1947 film is one of the bleakest films ever produced. Other films have focused on evil (for example, *M*, *The Force of Evil* and *A Touch of Evil*), but none is as desolate, with an anti-hero so thoroughly corrupted and vile as Pinkie Brown. The source of Pinkie's wicked nature is suggested by his own comment that he 'had seen evil' as a child, perhaps in his parents' home. Now, at the ripe age of seventeen, he is too twisted to ever go straight again. Inside him, is an explosive combination of thwarted ambition (to be the biggest gang leader in Brighton), wounded pride (that he is second best) and barely suppressed rage (at the world that doesn't respect him). His Catholic upbringing also played a role in giving him a visual and theological vocabulary. When Rose finds out that he, too, is a Catholic, she is enthusiastic. 'You believe, too,' she says, breathlessly. 'It's true.' Pinkie smiles that crooked smile of his and says, 'Oh, yes. There is a hell. Flames. Damnation. Torments.' His eyes glaze over as he recites this litany of pain and punishment. In the course of the few days covered by the story, he kills two people (Hale and Spicer) and almost leads another to commit suicide (Rose). All to protect his 'filthy racket,' as the police inspector puts it. The story offers no clear sociological or psychological explanation for his depravity, although the statement at the beginning of the film mentions 'festering slums,' from where 'the poison of crime and violence and gang violence spread.' Pinkie may have grown up infected by that poison, but the film itself shows him no sympathy.

Dishonour among thieves Often, in crime stories (for example, *The Frightened City* and *Touchez pas au Grisbi*), there is some redeeming feature, event or character in order to relieve the horror on the screen, if only briefly. Here, with the possible exception of Dallow, we have no such dose of goodness to balance the wickedness. Even the gang itself is rife with deceit, betrayal and conflict. Spicer, the oldest member, is the first to turn on Pinkie and he is killed for his betrayal. He is not missed because, as Pinkie says, he was 'milky.' Then, Cubitt quits the gang, again because of a quarrel with Pinkie about tactics. Even the gang's incompetent lawyer, Mr Prewitt, 'sings' at the end and provides Ida with crucial information. Dallow is the last remaining gang member and, he, too, breaks rank when Pinkie hints at doing away with Rose. 'Leave the kid alone,' says Dallow. And it is Dallow who leads the final chase after Pinkie, which results in the young gang leader crashing over the pier railings and falling to his death in the sea. The gang is filled with distrust, each one fearing and sometimes killing the other. The group of criminals is just as vile as its individual leader.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Pinkie

Character Pinkie is a narcissistic young man (only 17), who knows only how to protect his own interests. He has a chip on his shoulder about his own underrated role in life, especially vis a vis his rival gang leader. He is deceptive, manipulative and sometimes violent. His psychopathology is even more grim than that displayed in Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

Illustrative moments

Violent Pinkie often has outbursts of violence. He may be frustrated, angry or humiliated, but it is the uncontrolled and sudden eruption that is truly frightening. A good illustration of this violent streak occurs in an early scene, when Pinkie and his gang confront Hale in a bar. Pinkie remains in the background, playing obsessively with his cats-cradle, listening to them and to the raucous singing (of Ida) coming from the next room. His eyes shift back and forth, his face tenses and he screams, 'Can't anyone shut that brass's [brassy woman's] voice?' The next second he sweeps his arm across the bar and half a dozen glasses shatter on the floor. It is a brief scene, but it sets up our understanding of the film's main character as a creature of wild, unpredictable actions.

Defensive Pinkie has a chip on his shoulder. He is sensitive to any slight because he is so young and inexperienced. To cover this up, he often reacts with braggadocio, as in the scene at the police station with an Inspector. The older man tries to give Pinkie advice, warning him that he's 'not big enough' to challenge Colleoni (the rival gang leader). The Inspector speaks without rancour but the patronising tone stings Pinkie's pride, who wears a sarcastic smile as he listens. 'That's valuable advice,' he says in a mocking tone. 'You think I'm finished, don't you?' The sneering smile never leaves his seventeen-year-old face as he talks. Standing in front of the Inspector, he cocks his head to one side and says, 'I'll have to think it over.' When he reaches the door, Pinkie turns and adds, 'I think I'm too young to retire.' In truth, he's too young to be a gang leader, but he doesn't want to admit that, so he puffs up his ego and talks tough.

Manipulative One of Pinkie's most sinister qualities is his manipulation of young Rose. As soon as he realises that she is a threat to his alibi, he sets out to woo the impressionable waitress and later marries her in order to prevent her from giving evidence against him. But even that is not enough, it seems, so he has to remove her by spinning her a tale about the need for a suicide pact, while having no intention of killing himself. He sweet talks her into the plan, as he holds the damaged phonograph record behind his back, a sign of his deceit. 'We're nearly through, Rose,' he says. 'Finished.' She sighs and he reassures her. 'Don't worry,' he says. 'Just leave it all to me.' She is scared by his words and begins to cry. Sensing her reluctance, he says, 'You don't want to see me hanged, do you?' She continues to cry and he says, 'I've thought it all out. It won't hurt.' When she asks what won't hurt, he says, 'Dying together.' More tears. 'You don't want to leave me, do you?' She screams that it's a mortal sin, but he points out that she is already a sinner, having lied about her age to get married. He is skilled at sensing her weak points, knowing how to make her feel guilty and how to lead her into a suicide pact that is designed for one person only.

Ida

Character Ida is a middle-aged woman, who performs in entertainment shows on the seafront in Brighton. She is a garrulous, light-hearted person, who likes a bit of fun and believes she is 'in touch with the departed.' She also has a well-honed sense of right and wrong, and will not give up easy when she's hunting down a criminal.

Illustrative moments

Tender Ida might be called 'brassy', that is outspoken and forward, but she is also tender-hearted, as we learn in an early scene. She has run into Hale a second time, this time on the pier, where he begs her to stay with him (fearing Pinkie's gang will kill him). He asks her to come back to London with him, and she wonders if he is ill. When he repeats his plea for her to stay close to him, she laughs and says, 'Yes, of course, I will. You know, I like you, Fred. I liked you from the moment I saw you. You're a real good sport.' Again, he makes her promise not to leave him, and she does. Ida herself is a good sport, a happy-go-lucky person, but she also responds sensitively to Hale's need in this scene. She sees that he is afraid, or at least feeling lonely, and agrees to stick by the total stranger. Despite her fun-loving nature, and her devil-may-care attitude, she really does care for poor Hale. And it is that initial and instinctive reaction that leads to her prolonged investigation into the circumstances of his death. Without tender-hearted Ida, we would have no story.

Tenacious Tender Ida is also tenacious. As the mystery about Hale's death develops, she is more and more convinced that something 'ain't right.' Having gathered enough evidence that he did not die a natural death, she marches into the police station and has an interview with the Inspector, who twiddles his pencil and says that the Hale case is closed. But Ida says, 'Now listen to me, Inspector, I

was with him that afternoon. He said he'd wait but a moment later, he was gone.' The Inspector points out that she'd said all that at the inquest, and Ida says, 'Well, you haven't heard this: 'The man who placed that KK card was not Hale.' She keeps at it until the inspector shows her Hale's medical report, which is against police procedure. She scans it and finds what she's looking for. 'There you go, inspector,' she says triumphantly. 'Bruises on the arms.' Again, the Inspector dismisses this as the result of a 'holiday crowd in Brighton' and suggests that she reads too many detective novels. Frustrated, Ida rises and says, 'So the police won't do a thing. All right. I'll handle this myself. I believe in justice.'

Intelligent Ida is not only suspicious and committed, she is also intelligent. All along she has observed and noticed details that don't fit the police theory of suicide. Then, one evening, she puts the whole picture together. She is sitting with a male friend in the balcony of the hotel, where Pinkie brings Rose and tries to get a room for their wedding night. Looking down, she sees them and says, 'I see it all now, and I've got to work fast. The show's packing up on me.' Her companion urges her to forget it, but Ida is insistent and starts to think. In a flash she remembers the two mysterious 'I's in the cryptic message she worked out in the pub. Now she's convinced that they stand for 'kill,' meaning that Hale was murdered. She cogitates a bit more and puts the whole chain of events in line. Hale didn't leave the card, someone planted it, for an alibi. And you don't need an alibi unless you've committed a crime. Next, she works out that Spicer was killed, just like Hale, to silence him. 'I've got to save Rose,' she declares. When her companion suggests that Rose doesn't want to be saved, Ida says, sharply, 'What does that matter?' In the space of five minutes, over a cup of tea, showgirl Ida has figured out what the police force couldn't: Pinkie is a murderer. The problem is that he might murder again. Ida is too convinced of her eclectic mixture of supernatural powers and detective skills to care if Rose wants her help. She rushes off and finds the girl, but Ida's intelligence is wasted on the silly thing, who believes whatever Pinkie tells her.

Rose

Character Rose is young, very young, and innocent. Lonely and impressionable, she falls for Pinkie and is too blind to see his faults.

Even when she suspects that he might have killed someone, she declares her loyalty, saying, 'I don't care what you've done.' This sweet girl has her life ruined by her self-delusion

Illustrative moments

Impressionable Rose is just sixteen years old, her life formed by the Catholic church and the people around her in Brighton. When Pinkie, a handsome if dangerous young man (only 17 himself), shows interest in her, she is flattered. Soon, she is over the moon and impressed by his 'work', even if it is outside the law. Pinkie takes her to a hotel ballroom on their first date, where she has an ice cream and listens to a woman sing with a full orchestra and dancing couples. 'It's lovely here,' she says. When she finds out that Pinkie, like her, is Catholic, her face lights up. 'You believe, too, don't you?' she says. As they talk, she follows his every word and comments, 'You know a lot of things.' And by the end of the scene, when Pinkie has warned her not to say anything about the man who placed the card, she is captivated by his bristling energy. 'Anything you say, Pinkie,' she sighs. This is the tipping point, after which Rose has little control over her fate, having placed all her faith in the hands of ruthless Pinkie.

Deluded From that point onwards, Pinkie cultivates Rose's love for him, showing just enough affection to con her. The tragedy of her delusion is dramatised in the final sequence. Pinkie has died, when the police interrupted his fake suicide pact, and Rose is all alone. Sitting in a convent, talking with a nun, she explains that she doesn't want absolution. She is consumed with survivor's guilt because she had agreed to die with Pinkie, but she is alive. 'I don't repent. I only repent not dying,' she says half in tears. She says that Ida knew nothing about their love, and the nun suggests that maybe Pinkie didn't love her. At this, Rose gets angry. 'I have proof,' she says firmly and then plays the record of his voice, which only repeats his first phrase—'I love you.' As soon as she moves the needle, she will hear the rest of his vile message. For the moment, as the film ends, she remains in a supreme state of self-delusion.



(Pinkie and Rose)



(Pinkie records his voice for Rose)