

## Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Part IV

Karel Reisz , Dir. (1960)

Arthur and Brenda are on their way to see Arthur's Aunt Ada about Brenda's pregnancy. There are some posters put up on the side of Ada's building. One of them advertises a show and says, "Life is a circus." Arthur goes in ahead; Brenda waits outside.

When Arthur comes in, Aunt Ada is sitting at the table, reading the paper. Her family is out at the cinema, and she's happy to see him. As she prepares him a cup of tea, Arthur explains why he's come: a mate of his at the factory has got a young woman in trouble and they don't know what to do about it. "Couldn't he have been a bit more careful?" asks Ada. "Well, he'll just have to face the music."

As Arthur continues to explain his mate's predicament, Ada finally says reproachfully, "It's you, isn't it? It's you who's in trouble." He admits that it is.

"I once knew a woman who got sent to prison for doing a thing like that," she says, "I'm sure I don't know what to tell you."

"I've got nobody else to turn to."

"Why don't you marry her if she's nice girl?"

"She's already married."

"You are in a bloody fix then, aren't you?"

Finally, Ada agrees to see Brenda. Arthur says he can bring her right over and Ada agrees.

Much like the Italian neorealists, Director Reisz has a wonderful way of showing his players engaged in the daily tasks of working-class life. Here, Aunt Ada talks to Arthur as she washes the dishes in the scullery, a small, cluttered space lit by a naked bulb.

As Arthur and Aunt Ada talk, Brenda waits on the corner, hands in pockets, wearing her white high heels. Outside the newsagent's, a poster for the *Daily Sketch* announces a contest to win seats to the royal wedding. The stained-glass window of a church frames Brenda, as if she were an angel in a painting of a Biblical scene.

Arthur comes out, takes her by the arm and talks to her quietly beside a patched brick wall, while life continues all around them: boys ride past on their bicycles, girls walk home from school. From the church, we hear choral music.

Inside the house, Arthur introduces the two women.

Ada warns, "It won't be easy."

"I know."

Ada complains, "It isn't right, is it? I think men get away with murder."

Brenda agrees: "They do, don't they?"

Ada sends Arthur away so that she and Brenda can talk.

Outside, Arthur lights a cigarette, absorbed in his thoughts. Gazing through the window, he sees Brenda sitting forlorn at the kitchen table.

It's another day: Brenda walks through the park to the promenade, where Arthur awaits her. Children run and shout, a few figures look out over the parapet.

"Hello, duck," says Arthur, his hair tousled by the wind.

"Been here long?"

"Ten minutes. I was just looking at the lovely view," he says grimly: the mill, the power station, the nondescript industrial buildings. "Better come down to earth then, haven't you?" she replies.

He asks how it went at Aunt Ada's. It did not go well at all. Brenda had to sit in a hot bath for hours drinking gin till she felt so sick she thought she'd die – and it didn't work.

"I don't know," he says. "I can't think of anything else."

Changing the subject, Brenda says, "Somebody told me the other day that they saw you coming out of the pictures with a young girl."

Arthur looks away. "That's a bloody lie."

Then he walks away. Brenda follows him to an archway.

“Do you think I’m daft, Arthur? I can tell you don’t go with me as much as you used to.”

“That’s not true, Brenda. You know I like you a lot.”

“You know the trouble with you? You don’t know the difference between right and wrong. And I don’t think you ever will.”

“Maybe I won’t. But I don’t want anybody to teach me either.”

“You’ll learn one day.”

“We’ll see. But it’s now that matters, isn’t it? We’ve still got to clear this mess up.”

“Look, I’ll try one last thing,” says Brenda, “A girl I know told me about a doctor that would do it.”

The problem is that she needs money for it. Arthur promises to get it for her in a couple of days.

“You’re getting off light, aren’t you?” she says bitterly.

He gives her a look of disgust, turns and walks away. She trails behind him.

The next scene opens on a group of boys playing soccer outside a playground. Just as an Italian movie must have at least one clothesline, a movie set in Britain must have at least one football match. Arthur and Doreen come walking arm in arm.

She tells him a work mate of hers just got married and looked very pretty. Arthur comments that the groom must have been drunk when he agreed to the wedding.

Angry, Doreen walks away, over to a chain link fence. Arthur follows her, threading his fingers through the fence as he leans towards her. Changing the subject, but only slightly, she asks, “Why don’t you ever take me where it’s lively and there’s plenty of people? We always go to the pictures or a walk at night.”

“That’s not true.”

“Anyone would think you’re ashamed to be seen with me.”

“Well, I’m not. I can tell you that. I’ll take you to the fair on Saturday night, all right?” he proposes.

“All right, if you like.”

Here we see Arthur and Doreen at the fair, laughing on a ride with Bert and Betsy.

And here we see Brenda and Jack also at the fair.

And following close behind are Jack's burly brother and his brawny mate, both soldiers in uniform, holding hands with Tommy, Jack's son.

Arthur and Doreen are in the bumper cars, one of Jack's soldiers is in the shooting gallery, and Brenda has wandered off by herself.

Brenda looks up and sees Arthur and Doreen, walking by and laughing.

Arthur catches sight of Brenda from behind a fence. Their eyes meet, hers aflame with anger. He stops and looks over at her, immobilized with shame and pity.

He gestures to Brenda to meet him off to the side. Making sure that her family is not in sight, she steps away. In the meantime, the soldiers, in matching berets, are at the shooting gallery with Tommy. "Where's Brenda?" Jack asks them.

They start to look for her, as she meets Arthur behind the tents.

"Having a good time?" she asks him.

"Not bad," he replies. "I'm with some pals from work. I've been worrying about you all week."

"Well, you can stop worrying."

"Is it all right, then?"

"No. I went to the doctor, but I didn't stay. I've decided to have it and face whatever comes."

"You want to have the kid now, then?"

Stammering, Arthur doesn't know what to say.

Brenda says, "Look, I must get back."

"I want to help you."

"Do you?"

"Yeah, what can I do?"

“There’s nothing much you can do, is there?”

Again, Arthur searches for words, but can’t find them.

“I must go, love,” she says. “Jack will be looking for me.”

She runs off to get on a ride. Heedless, Arthur runs after her. They are spotted by the soldiers, who take off in pursuit.

Jack stays behind, holding Tommy’s hand. He rests his other hand on Tommy’s shoulder.

The ride goes spinning around and around. The soldiers strategize. They decide to split up and stand at opposite ends of the ride, biding their time. Each time Brenda and Arthur go around, she sees her brother-in-law and his mate staring at her, waiting patiently. The roar of the wheels on the tracks and the background rock and roll music are deafening. Lights flash; a siren sounds. Brenda’s face reflects worry and fear.

The ride slows down and Arthur makes a run for it. One of the soldiers grabs him, but Arthur pushes him off, jumps down from the platform and flees.

Brenda stays behind, helpless, as the ride keeps turning. The soldiers go off to look for Arthur.

As Brenda steps down from the ride, Jack grabs her, yelling, “Come here! What the hell have you been doing?!” As a crowd watches, he drags her off the stairs and slaps her. Tommy, holding a toy horse, watches together with the crowd. Brenda cries out.

Jack takes Tommy by the hand and they leave. Brenda is alone in front of the ride, motionless, the crowd staring at her.

As the next scene opens, Arthur walks out of the pub, looking around to be sure no one has followed him. He starts walking down the street, absorbed in thought, his eyes downcast. He turns the corner.

But the soldiers are waiting for him behind a building. Jack's brother throws the first punch, while his mate looks on.

They've picked a good spot: empty crates and rubbish bins are scattered in the empty lot. No one is around. The soldiers push Arthur against a tall wooden fence, which breaks under the impact. Aside from the sound of their scuffling, the scene is eerily quiet.

Arthur fights back, then tries to run away. Of course, he's no match for the soldiers. Now we hear another sound: the impact of a fist on Arthur's jaw. At a window in the background of the scene, two figures appear, peer out, then close the curtain, before walking away. Arthur is truly alone in a problem of his own making.

After Arthur falls out of sight behind some crates, the two continue pounding him. We see the shadow of a raised fist on the wall. Hoisting Arthur up, they hold him against a brick wall, without slowing down the assault. It is all still strangely quiet, except for a moan from Arthur. He doesn't call for help. It's as if he knows that he deserves it.

The soldiers' shadows on the wall make Arthur seem even more outnumbered. Finally, exhausted and out of breath, they stagger away to the sounds of carnival music that begins just now.

Propped up against the wall, breathing heavily, Arthur is a bloody mess. His clothes are rumpled and his hair is matted with blood and sweat. Blood from his nose covers his swollen face. With great effort and wincing in pain, he rights himself and stands.

He finds his way to a water tap. Leaning on it, he takes a handkerchief out of his jacket pocket, and turns on the spigot. Cringing with pain, he does his best to clean himself up. He seems almost to be praying as the water flows through his bloody hands.

He stands to leave, his shadow making an eerie partner. He staggers and finally falls to the ground lifeless. The screen fades to black.