Project Gutenberg Australia

Title: Nineteen eighty-four

Author: George Orwell (pseudonym of Eric Blair) (1903-1950)

\* A Project Gutenberg of Australia eBook \*

eBook No.: 0100021.txt

Language: English

Date first posted: August 2001

Date most recently updated: November 2008

Project Gutenberg of Australia eBooks are created from printed editions

which are in the public domain in Australia, unless a copyright notice

is included. We do NOT keep any eBooks in compliance with a particular

paper edition.

Copyright laws are changing all over the world. Be sure to check the

copyright laws for your country before downloading or redistributing this

file.

This eBook is made available at no cost and with almost no restrictions

whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms

of the Project Gutenberg of Australia License which may be viewed online at

gutenberg.net.au/licence.html

To contact Project Gutenberg of Australia go to gutenberg.net.au

Title: Nineteen eighty-four

Author: George Orwell (pseudonym of Eric Blair) (1903-1950)

PART ONE

Chapter 1

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.

Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the

vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions,

though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering

along with him.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a

coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall.

It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a

man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome

features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even

at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric

current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive

in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston,

who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went

slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the

lift-shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was

one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about

when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

Inside the flat a fruity voice was reading out a list of figures which had

something to do with the production of pig-iron. The voice came from an

oblong metal plaque like a dulled mirror which formed part of the surface

of the right-hand wall. Winston turned a switch and the voice sank

somewhat, though the words were still distinguishable. The instrument

(the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed, but there was no way of

shutting it off completely. He moved over to the window: a smallish, frail

figure, the meagreness of his body merely emphasized by the blue overalls

which were the uniform of the party. His hair was very fair, his face

naturally sanguine, his skin roughened by coarse soap and blunt razor

blades and the cold of the winter that had just ended.

Outside, even through the shut window-pane, the world looked cold. Down in

the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into

spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there

seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered

everywhere. The black-moustachio'd face gazed down from every commanding

corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER

IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into

Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner,

flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the

single word INGSOC. In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between

the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again

with a curving flight. It was the police patrol, snooping into people's

windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police

mattered.

Behind Winston's back the voice from the telescreen was still babbling away

about pig-iron and the overfulfilment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. The

telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston

made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it,

moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal

plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course

no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How

often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual

wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all

the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted

to. You had to live--did live, from habit that became instinct--in the

assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in

darkness, every movement scrutinized.

Winston kept his back turned to the telescreen. It was safer; though, as he

well knew, even a back can be revealing. A kilometre away the Ministry of

Truth, his place of work, towered vast and white above the grimy landscape.

This, he thought with a sort of vague distaste--this was London, chief

city of Airstrip One, itself the third most populous of the provinces of

Oceania. He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him

whether London had always been quite like this. Were there always these

vistas of rotting nineteenth-century houses, their sides shored up with

baulks of timber, their windows patched with cardboard and their roofs

with corrugated iron, their crazy garden walls sagging in all directions?

And the bombed sites where the plaster dust swirled in the air and the

willow-herb straggled over the heaps of rubble; and the places where the

bombs had cleared a larger patch and there had sprung up sordid colonies

of wooden dwellings like chicken-houses? But it was no use, he could not

remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit

tableaux occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible.

The Ministry of Truth--Minitrue, in Newspeak [Newspeak was the official

language of Oceania. For an account of its structure and etymology see

Appendix.]--was startlingly different from any other object in sight. It

was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring

up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air. From where Winston

stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in

elegant lettering, the three slogans of the Party:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

The Ministry of Truth contained, it was said, three thousand rooms above

ground level, and corresponding ramifications below. Scattered about London

there were just three other buildings of similar appearance and size. So

completely did they dwarf the surrounding architecture that from the roof

of Victory Mansions you could see all four of them simultaneously. They

were the homes of the four Ministries between which the entire apparatus

of government was divided. The Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself

with news, entertainment, education, and the fine arts. The Ministry of

Peace, which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love, which

maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty, which was responsible

for economic affairs. Their names, in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv,

and Miniplenty.

The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one. There were no windows

in it at all. Winston had never been inside the Ministry of Love, nor

within half a kilometre of it. It was a place impossible to enter except

on official business, and then only by penetrating through a maze of

barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors, and hidden machine-gun nests. Even

the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced

guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.

Winston turned round abruptly. He had set his features into the

expression of quiet optimism which it was advisable to wear when facing

the telescreen. He crossed the room into the tiny kitchen. By leaving

the Ministry at this time of day he had sacrificed his lunch in the

canteen, and he was aware that there was no food in the kitchen except

a hunk of dark-coloured bread which had got to be saved for tomorrow's

breakfast. He took down from the shelf a bottle of colourless liquid

with a plain white label marked VICTORY GIN. It gave off a sickly, oily

smell, as of Chinese rice-spirit. Winston poured out nearly a teacupful,

nerved himself for a shock, and gulped it down like a dose of medicine.

Instantly his face turned scarlet and the water ran out of his eyes. The

stuff was like nitric acid, and moreover, in swallowing it one had the

sensation of being hit on the back of the head with a rubber club. The

next moment, however, the burning in his belly died down and the world

began to look more cheerful. He took a cigarette from a crumpled packet

marked VICTORY CIGARETTES and incautiously held it upright, whereupon the

tobacco fell out on to the floor. With the next he was more successful.

He went back to the living-room and sat down at a small table that stood

to the left of the telescreen. From the table drawer he took out a

penholder, a bottle of ink, and a thick, quarto-sized blank book with a

red back and a marbled cover.

For some reason the telescreen in the living-room was in an unusual

position. Instead of being placed, as was normal, in the end wall, where

it could command the whole room, it was in the longer wall, opposite the

window. To one side of it there was a shallow alcove in which Winston

was now sitting, and which, when the flats were built, had probably been

intended to hold bookshelves. By sitting in the alcove, and keeping well

back, Winston was able to remain outside the range of the telescreen, so

far as sight went. He could be heard, of course, but so long as he stayed

in his present position he could not be seen. It was partly the unusual

geography of the room that had suggested to him the thing that he was now

about to do.

But it had also been suggested by the book that he had just taken out of

the drawer. It was a peculiarly beautiful book. Its smooth creamy paper,

a little yellowed by age, was of a kind that had not been manufactured for

at least forty years past. He could guess, however, that the book was much

older than that. He had seen it lying in the window of a frowsy little

junk-shop in a slummy quarter of the town (just what quarter he did not

now remember) and had been stricken immediately by an overwhelming desire

to possess it. Party members were supposed not to go into ordinary shops

('dealing on the free market', it was called), but the rule was not

strictly kept, because there were various things, such as shoelaces and

razor blades, which it was impossible to get hold of in any other way. He

had given a quick glance up and down the street and then had slipped inside

and bought the book for two dollars fifty. At the time he was not conscious

of wanting it for any particular purpose. He had carried it guiltily home

in his briefcase. Even with nothing written in it, it was a compromising

possession.

The thing that he was about to do was to open a diary. This was not illegal

(nothing was illegal, since there were no longer any laws), but if detected

it was reasonably certain that it would be punished by death, or at least

by twenty-five years in a forced-labour camp. Winston fitted a nib into

the penholder and sucked it to get the grease off. The pen was an archaic

instrument, seldom used even for signatures, and he had procured one,

furtively and with some difficulty, simply because of a feeling that the

beautiful creamy paper deserved to be written on with a real nib instead

of being scratched with an ink-pencil. Actually he was not used to writing

by hand. Apart from very short notes, it was usual to dictate everything

into the speak-write which was of course impossible for his present

purpose. He dipped the pen into the ink and then faltered for just a

second. A tremor had gone through his bowels. To mark the paper was the

decisive act. In small clumsy letters he wrote:

April 4th, 1984.

He sat back. A sense of complete helplessness had descended upon him. To

begin with, he did not know with any certainty that this was 1984. It

must be round about that date, since he was fairly sure that his age was

thirty-nine, and he believed that he had been born in 1944 or 1945; but

it was never possible nowadays to pin down any date within a year or two.

For whom, it suddenly occurred to him to wonder, was he writing this diary?

For the future, for the unborn. His mind hovered for a moment round the

doubtful date on the page, and then fetched up with a bump against the

Newspeak word DOUBLETHINK. For the first time the magnitude of what he had

undertaken came home to him. How could you communicate with the future? It

was of its nature impossible. Either the future would resemble the present,

in which case it would not listen to him: or it would be different from it,

and his predicament would be meaningless.

For some time he sat gazing stupidly at the paper. The telescreen had

changed over to strident military music. It was curious that he seemed

not merely to have lost the power of expressing himself, but even to have

forgotten what it was that he had originally intended to say. For weeks

past he had been making ready for this moment, and it had never crossed

his mind that anything would be needed except courage. The actual writing

would be easy. All he had to do was to transfer to paper the interminable

restless monologue that had been running inside his head, literally for

years. At this moment, however, even the monologue had dried up. Moreover

his varicose ulcer had begun itching unbearably. He dared not scratch it,

because if he did so it always became inflamed. The seconds were ticking

by. He was conscious of nothing except the blankness of the page in front

of him, the itching of the skin above his ankle, the blaring of the music,

and a slight booziness caused by the gin.

Suddenly he began writing in sheer panic, only imperfectly aware of what

he was setting down. His small but childish handwriting straggled up and

down the page, shedding first its capital letters and finally even its

full stops:

April 4th, 1984. Last night to the flicks. All war films. One very good

one of a ship full of refugees being bombed somewhere in the Mediterranean.

Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man trying to swim away

with a helicopter after him, first you saw him wallowing along in the

water like a porpoise, then you saw him through the helicopters gunsights,

then he was full of holes and the sea round him turned pink and he sank as

suddenly as though the holes had let in the water, audience shouting with

laughter when he sank. then you saw a lifeboat full of children with a

helicopter hovering over it. there was a middle-aged woman might have been

a jewess sitting up in the bow with a little boy about three years old in

her arms. little boy screaming with fright and hiding his head between her

breasts as if he was trying to burrow right into her and the woman putting

her arms round him and comforting him although she was blue with fright

herself, all the time covering him up as much as possible as if she thought

her arms could keep the bullets off him. then the helicopter planted a 20

kilo bomb in among them terrific flash and the boat went all to matchwood.

then there was a wonderful shot of a child's arm going up up up right up

into the air a helicopter with a camera in its nose must have followed it

up and there was a lot of applause from the party seats but a woman down in

the prole part of the house suddenly started kicking up a fuss and shouting

they didnt oughter of showed it not in front of kids they didnt it aint

right not in front of kids it aint until the police turned her turned her

out i dont suppose anything happened to her nobody cares what the proles

say typical prole reaction they never----

Winston stopped writing, partly because he was suffering from cramp. He did

not know what had made him pour out this stream of rubbish. But the curious

thing was that while he was doing so a totally different memory had

clarified itself in his mind, to the point where he almost felt equal to

writing it down. It was, he now realized, because of this other incident

that he had suddenly decided to come home and begin the diary today.

It had happened that morning at the Ministry, if anything so nebulous could

be said to happen.

It was nearly eleven hundred, and in the Records Department, where Winston

worked, they were dragging the chairs out of the cubicles and grouping them

in the centre of the hall opposite the big telescreen, in preparation for

the Two Minutes Hate. Winston was just taking his place in one of the

middle rows when two people whom he knew by sight, but had never spoken

to, came unexpectedly into the room. One of them was a girl whom he often

passed in the corridors. He did not know her name, but he knew that she

worked in the Fiction Department. Presumably--since he had sometimes seen

her with oily hands and carrying a spanner--she had some mechanical job

on one of the novel-writing machines. She was a bold-looking girl, of

about twenty-seven, with thick hair, a freckled face, and swift, athletic

movements. A narrow scarlet sash, emblem of the Junior Anti-Sex League, was

wound several times round the waist of her overalls, just tightly enough to

bring out the shapeliness of her hips. Winston had disliked her from the

very first moment of seeing her. He knew the reason. It was because of the

atmosphere of hockey-fields and cold baths and community hikes and general

clean-mindedness which she managed to carry about with her. He disliked

nearly all women, and especially the young and pretty ones. It was always

the women, and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted

adherents of the Party, the swallowers of slogans, the amateur spies and

nosers-out of unorthodoxy. But this particular girl gave him the impression

of being more dangerous than most. Once when they passed in the corridor

she gave him a quick sidelong glance which seemed to pierce right into

him and for a moment had filled him with black terror. The idea had even

crossed his mind that she might be an agent of the Thought Police. That,

it was true, was very unlikely. Still, he continued to feel a peculiar

uneasiness, which had fear mixed up in it as well as hostility, whenever

she was anywhere near him.

The other person was a man named O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party and

holder of some post so important and remote that Winston had only a dim

idea of its nature. A momentary hush passed over the group of people

round the chairs as they saw the black overalls of an Inner Party member

approaching. O'Brien was a large, burly man with a thick neck and a coarse,

humorous, brutal face. In spite of his formidable appearance he had a

certain charm of manner. He had a trick of resettling his spectacles on

his nose which was curiously disarming--in some indefinable way, curiously

civilized. It was a gesture which, if anyone had still thought in such

terms, might have recalled an eighteenth-century nobleman offering his

snuffbox. Winston had seen O'Brien perhaps a dozen times in almost as many

years. He felt deeply drawn to him, and not solely because he was intrigued

by the contrast between O'Brien's urbane manner and his prize-fighter's

physique. Much more it was because of a secretly held belief--or perhaps

not even a belief, merely a hope--that O'Brien's political orthodoxy was

not perfect. Something in his face suggested it irresistibly. And again,

perhaps it was not even unorthodoxy that was written in his face, but

simply intelligence. But at any rate he had the appearance of being a

person that you could talk to if somehow you could cheat the telescreen and

get him alone. Winston had never made the smallest effort to verify this

guess: indeed, there was no way of doing so. At this moment O'Brien glanced

at his wrist-watch, saw that it was nearly eleven hundred, and evidently

decided to stay in the Records Department until the Two Minutes Hate was

over. He took a chair in the same row as Winston, a couple of places away.

A small, sandy-haired woman who worked in the next cubicle to Winston was

between them. The girl with dark hair was sitting immediately behind.

The next moment a hideous, grinding screech, as of some monstrous machine

running without oil, burst from the big telescreen at the end of the room.

It was a noise that set one's teeth on edge and bristled the hair at the

back of one's neck. The Hate had started.

As usual, the face of Emmanuel Goldstein, the Enemy of the People, had

flashed on to the screen. There were hisses here and there among the

audience. The little sandy-haired woman gave a squeak of mingled fear and

disgust. Goldstein was the renegade and backslider who once, long ago

(how long ago, nobody quite remembered), had been one of the leading

figures of the Party, almost on a level with Big Brother himself, and

then had engaged in counter-revolutionary activities, had been condemned

to death, and had mysteriously escaped and disappeared. The programmes

of the Two Minutes Hate varied from day to day, but there was none in

which Goldstein was not the principal figure. He was the primal traitor,

the earliest defiler of the Party's purity. All subsequent crimes against

the Party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage, heresies, deviations,

sprang directly out of his teaching. Somewhere or other he was still

alive and hatching his conspiracies: perhaps somewhere beyond the sea,

under the protection of his foreign paymasters, perhaps even--so it was

occasionally rumoured--in some hiding-place in Oceania itself.

Winston's diaphragm was constricted. He could never see the face of

Goldstein without a painful mixture of emotions. It was a lean Jewish face,

with a great fuzzy aureole of white hair and a small goatee beard--a

clever face, and yet somehow inherently despicable, with a kind of senile

silliness in the long thin nose, near the end of which a pair of spectacles

was perched. It resembled the face of a sheep, and the voice, too, had a

sheep-like quality. Goldstein was delivering his usual venomous attack

upon the doctrines of the Party--an attack so exaggerated and perverse that

a child should have been able to see through it, and yet just plausible

enough to fill one with an alarmed feeling that other people, less

level-headed than oneself, might be taken in by it. He was abusing Big

Brother, he was denouncing the dictatorship of the Party, he was demanding

the immediate conclusion of peace with Eurasia, he was advocating freedom

of speech, freedom of the Press, freedom of assembly, freedom of thought,

he was crying hysterically that the revolution had been betrayed--and all

this in rapid polysyllabic speech which was a sort of parody of the

habitual style of the orators of the Party, and even contained Newspeak

words: more Newspeak words, indeed, than any Party member would normally

use in real life. And all the while, lest one should be in any doubt as to

the reality which Goldstein's specious claptrap covered, behind his head on

the telescreen there marched the endless columns of the Eurasian army--row

after row of solid-looking men with expressionless Asiatic faces, who swam

up to the surface of the screen and vanished, to be replaced by others

exactly similar. The dull rhythmic tramp of the soldiers' boots formed the

background to Goldstein's bleating voice.

Before the Hate had proceeded for thirty seconds, uncontrollable

exclamations of rage were breaking out from half the people in the room.

The self-satisfied sheep-like face on the screen, and the terrifying power

of the Eurasian army behind it, were too much to be borne: besides,

the sight or even the thought of Goldstein produced fear and anger

automatically. He was an object of hatred more constant than either Eurasia

or Eastasia, since when Oceania was at war with one of these Powers it was

generally at peace with the other. But what was strange was that although

Goldstein was hated and despised by everybody, although every day and a

thousand times a day, on platforms, on the telescreen, in newspapers,

in books, his theories were refuted, smashed, ridiculed, held up to the

general gaze for the pitiful rubbish that they were--in spite of all this,

his influence never seemed to grow less. Always there were fresh dupes

waiting to be seduced by him. A day never passed when spies and saboteurs

acting under his directions were not unmasked by the Thought Police.

He was the commander of a vast shadowy army, an underground network of

conspirators dedicated to the overthrow of the State. The Brotherhood, its

name was supposed to be. There were also whispered stories of a terrible

book, a compendium of all the heresies, of which Goldstein was the author

and which circulated clandestinely here and there. It was a book without a

title. People referred to it, if at all, simply as THE BOOK. But one knew

of such things only through vague rumours. Neither the Brotherhood nor

THE BOOK was a subject that any ordinary Party member would mention if

there was a way of avoiding it.

In its second minute the Hate rose to a frenzy. People were leaping up and

down in their places and shouting at the tops of their voices in an effort

to drown the maddening bleating voice that came from the screen. The little

sandy-haired woman had turned bright pink, and her mouth was opening and

shutting like that of a landed fish. Even O'Brien's heavy face was flushed.

He was sitting very straight in his chair, his powerful chest swelling and

quivering as though he were standing up to the assault of a wave. The

dark-haired girl behind Winston had begun crying out 'Swine! Swine! Swine!'

and suddenly she picked up a heavy Newspeak dictionary and flung it at the

screen. It struck Goldstein's nose and bounced off; the voice continued

inexorably. In a lucid moment Winston found that he was shouting with the

others and kicking his heel violently against the rung of his chair. The

horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to

act a part, but, on the contrary, that it was impossible to avoid joining

in. Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous

ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash

faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of

people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into

a grimacing, screaming lunatic. And yet the rage that one felt was an

abstract, undirected emotion which could be switched from one object to

another like the flame of a blowlamp. Thus, at one moment Winston's hatred

was not turned against Goldstein at all, but, on the contrary, against

Big Brother, the Party, and the Thought Police; and at such moments his

heart went out to the lonely, derided heretic on the screen, sole guardian

of truth and sanity in a world of lies. And yet the very next instant he

was at one with the people about him, and all that was said of Goldstein

seemed to him to be true. At those moments his secret loathing of Big

Brother changed into adoration, and Big Brother seemed to tower up, an

invincible, fearless protector, standing like a rock against the hordes

of Asia, and Goldstein, in spite of his isolation, his helplessness, and

the doubt that hung about his very existence, seemed like some sinister

enchanter, capable by the mere power of his voice of wrecking the structure

of civilization.

It was even possible, at moments, to switch one's hatred this way or that

by a voluntary act. Suddenly, by the sort of violent effort with which one

wrenches one's head away from the pillow in a nightmare, Winston succeeded

in transferring his hatred from the face on the screen to the dark-haired

girl behind him. Vivid, beautiful hallucinations flashed through his mind.

He would flog her to death with a rubber truncheon. He would tie her naked

to a stake and shoot her full of arrows like Saint Sebastian. He would

ravish her and cut her throat at the moment of climax. Better than before,

moreover, he realized WHY it was that he hated her. He hated her because

she was young and pretty and sexless, because he wanted to go to bed with

her and would never do so, because round her sweet supple waist, which

seemed to ask you to encircle it with your arm, there was only the odious

scarlet sash, aggressive symbol of chastity.

The Hate rose to its climax. The voice of Goldstein had become an actual

sheep's bleat, and for an instant the face changed into that of a sheep.

Then the sheep-face melted into the figure of a Eurasian soldier who seemed

to be advancing, huge and terrible, his sub-machine gun roaring, and

seeming to spring out of the surface of the screen, so that some of the

people in the front row actually flinched backwards in their seats. But

in the same moment, drawing a deep sigh of relief from everybody, the

hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother, black-haired,

black-moustachio'd, full of power and mysterious calm, and so vast that

it almost filled up the screen. Nobody heard what Big Brother was saying.

It was merely a few words of encouragement, the sort of words that are

uttered in the din of battle, not distinguishable individually but

restoring confidence by the fact of being spoken. Then the face of Big

Brother faded away again, and instead the three slogans of the Party stood

out in bold capitals:

WAR IS PEACE

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

But the face of Big Brother seemed to persist for several seconds on the

screen, as though the impact that it had made on everyone's eyeballs was

too vivid to wear off immediately. The little sandy-haired woman had flung

herself forward over the back of the chair in front of her. With a

tremulous murmur that sounded like 'My Saviour!' she extended her arms

towards the screen. Then she buried her face in her hands. It was apparent

that she was uttering a prayer.

At this moment the entire group of people broke into a deep, slow,

rhythmical chant of 'B-B!...B-B!'--over and over again, very slowly, with a

long pause between the first 'B' and the second--a heavy, murmurous sound,

somehow curiously savage, in the background of which one seemed to hear the

stamp of naked feet and the throbbing of tom-toms. For perhaps as much as

thirty seconds they kept it up. It was a refrain that was often heard in

moments of overwhelming emotion. Partly it was a sort of hymn to the wisdom

and majesty of Big Brother, but still more it was an act of self-hypnosis,

a deliberate drowning of consciousness by means of rhythmic noise.

Winston's entrails seemed to grow cold. In the Two Minutes Hate he could

not help sharing in the general delirium, but this sub-human chanting of

'B-B!...B-B!' always filled him with horror. Of course he chanted with the

rest: it was impossible to do otherwise. To dissemble your feelings, to

control your face, to do what everyone else was doing, was an instinctive

reaction. But there was a space of a couple of seconds during which the

expression of his eyes might conceivably have betrayed him. And it was

exactly at this moment that the significant thing happened--if, indeed,

it did happen.

Momentarily he caught O'Brien's eye. O'Brien had stood up. He had taken

off his spectacles and was in the act of resettling them on his nose with

his characteristic gesture. But there was a fraction of a second when

their eyes met, and for as long as it took to happen Winston knew--yes, he

KNEW!--that O'Brien was thinking the same thing as himself. An unmistakable

message had passed. It was as though their two minds had opened and the

thoughts were flowing from one into the other through their eyes. 'I am

with you,' O'Brien seemed to be saying to him. 'I know precisely what you

are feeling. I know all about your contempt, your hatred, your disgust.

But don't worry, I am on your side!' And then the flash of intelligence

was gone, and O'Brien's face was as inscrutable as everybody else's.

That was all, and he was already uncertain whether it had happened. Such

incidents never had any sequel. All that they did was to keep alive in him

the belief, or hope, that others besides himself were the enemies of the

Party. Perhaps the rumours of vast underground conspiracies were true after

all--perhaps the Brotherhood really existed! It was impossible, in spite

of the endless arrests and confessions and executions, to be sure that the

Brotherhood was not simply a myth. Some days he believed in it, some days

not. There was no evidence, only fleeting glimpses that might mean anything

or nothing: snatches of overheard conversation, faint scribbles on lavatory

walls--once, even, when two strangers met, a small movement of the hand

which had looked as though it might be a signal of recognition. It was all

guesswork: very likely he had imagined everything. He had gone back to his

cubicle without looking at O'Brien again. The idea of following up their

momentary contact hardly crossed his mind. It would have been inconceivably

dangerous even if he had known how to set about doing it. For a second, two

seconds, they had exchanged an equivocal glance, and that was the end of

the story. But even that was a memorable event, in the locked loneliness in

which one had to live.

Winston roused himself and sat up straighter. He let out a belch. The gin

was rising from his stomach.

His eyes re-focused on the page. He discovered that while he sat helplessly

musing he had also been writing, as though by automatic action. And it was

no longer the same cramped, awkward handwriting as before. His pen had slid

voluptuously over the smooth paper, printing in large neat capitals--

DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER

DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER

DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER

DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER

DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER

over and over again, filling half a page.

He could not help feeling a twinge of panic. It was absurd, since the

writing of those particular words was not more dangerous than the initial

act of opening the diary, but for a moment he was tempted to tear out the

spoiled pages and abandon the enterprise altogether.

He did not do so, however, because he knew that it was useless. Whether he

wrote DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER, or whether he refrained from writing it, made

no difference. Whether he went on with the diary, or whether he did not go

on with it, made no difference. The Thought Police would get him just the

same. He had committed--would still have committed, even if he had never

set pen to paper--the essential crime that contained all others in itself.

Thoughtcrime, they called it. Thoughtcrime was not a thing that could be

concealed for ever. You might dodge successfully for a while, even for

years, but sooner or later they were bound to get you.

It was always at night--the arrests invariably happened at night. The

sudden jerk out of sleep, the rough hand shaking your shoulder, the lights

glaring in your eyes, the ring of hard faces round the bed. In the vast

majority of cases there was no trial, no report of the arrest. People

simply disappeared, always during the night. Your name was removed from the

registers, every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your

one-time existence was denied and then forgotten. You were abolished,

annihilated: VAPORIZED was the usual word.

For a moment he was seized by a kind of hysteria. He began writing in a

hurried untidy scrawl:

theyll shoot me i don't care theyll shoot me in the back of the neck i

dont care down with big brother they always shoot you in the back of the

neck i dont care down with big brother----

He sat back in his chair, slightly ashamed of himself, and laid down

the pen. The next moment he started violently. There was a knocking at

the door.

Already! He sat as still as a mouse, in the futile hope that whoever it was

might go away after a single attempt. But no, the knocking was repeated.

The worst thing of all would be to delay. His heart was thumping like a

drum, but his face, from long habit, was probably expressionless. He got

up and moved heavily towards the door.