

Penguin Readers



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1984



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CHAPTER ONE

At Victory House

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were **striking** thirteen. Winston Smith went quickly through the glass doors of **Victory** House to get out of the horrible wind, which blew **dust** into the building with him. The hall smelled of boiled cabbage and at the end of it there was a huge poster. It showed the enormous face of a handsome man with a big black moustache.

Winston went up the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. It was often broken, but at the moment there was no electricity during the day because the **Party** was saving money in order to pay for Hate Week. Winston's flat was on the seventh floor, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and not very healthy, had to rest several times on the way up. He was a small, thin man who looked thinner because of the large blue **overalls** which were his uniform as an unimportant member of the **Outer** Party. His hair was fair and the skin on his face was rough because of the old **razor blades** he had to use when he shaved.

As Winston went up the stairs, on each floor, opposite the lift, the poster with the enormous face looked at him from the wall. The eyes seemed to watch him. The words underneath the picture said: **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU**.

Inside his flat, a voice was speaking from the telescreen, which was part of the wall on the right of the door. Winston pressed a button so the screen became less bright and the voice became quieter, but it was impossible to turn it off. He moved

over to the window and looked out over London. Everywhere looked grey and colourless, except for the posters, which were attached to most of the buildings. The brown eyes looked at Winston: **BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU**. Another poster, with a torn corner, moved in the wind, showing and then hiding the name of the Party, **INGSOC**. A helicopter flew close to the windows of flats so the police **patrol** could see what the people inside were doing. Winston did not care what the police patrol did. It was the Thought Police who worried him. Through the telescreen, the Thought Police could hear every sound and see every move Winston made. In fact, they could hear and see every Party member through the telescreens in each of their homes. Everyone knew that all the sounds they made were listened to and all their movements were watched.

From his window, Winston could see the huge white building of the **Ministry** of Truth, where he worked. 'Minitrue', as it was called in Newspeak, the official language of Oceania, was a modern building compared with the tired, **dusty** city all around it. London was the main city of Airstrip One, in Oceania. Winston tried hard to remember if London had always been like this, but it was no use. No memories of how it used to be when he was a child came back to him.

The Ministry of Truth managed news, education and culture. And from where he stood, Winston could also see the buildings of the other three ministries which ruled Oceania: the Ministry of Peace, which controlled war, the Ministry of Plenty, which controlled economics, and the Ministry of Love, which managed the law. 'Minipax', 'Miniplenty' and 'Miniluv' were their names

in Newspeak. It was the enormous, windowless building of Miniluv which Winston feared most. There were high fences around the building and guards in black uniforms with guns, and no one ever went in there except on official business.

Winston turned away from the window and went to the tiny kitchen. As he passed the telescreen, he made sure his face looked calm and optimistic, in case anyone was watching. He was going to miss his lunch in the **canteen**, having left the Ministry at this time of day, and there was no food in his kitchen except the piece of brown bread which was tomorrow's breakfast. He took a bottle from a cupboard. It had a plain label saying 'Victory **Gin**' and, when Winston took the top off, there was a horrible oily smell. He half-filled a teacup with it, took a deep breath and drank the alcohol as if it was medicine. His face went red, tears ran out of his eyes and he felt as if he had been hit on the head. When the shock had passed, however, he started to feel a bit happier.

Winston then went to an **alcove** to the right of the telescreen. The alcove had probably been intended as a place to keep books when the flats were built. It was a place where he could sit without the telescreen being able to see him, although of course it could still hear him. He sat down and looked at something which he had just bought in a shop in a poor area of the city. It was a beautiful notebook with empty white pages. Even with nothing written in it, it could get him into trouble. But what he was going to do with it could get him **executed**. People had not used pens very much since the speakwrite had been invented, but Winston had found an old one. He opened the book and

wrote untidily at the top of the first page: *4th April 1984*. Winston had decided to write a diary – though he was not sure who it was for. He could not imagine a time in the future when anyone would be able to read it. He had planned for weeks to do this, to write down the thoughts that had been in his head for years. But now, with the empty white paper in front of him, his thoughts had gone.

Suddenly, he started writing about a recent visit to the cinema, where there had been films of people being injured and killed, which the audience, including himself, had laughed at. He did not know why he was writing about that. He wrote very fast, but he had to stop because of the pain in his hand – he was not used to writing.

Then he remembered something unusual which had happened at the Ministry that morning, when he and the other workers in the **Records Department** had stood in front of the telescreen for the *Daily Hate*. He did not often look at the people there, but this morning he had noticed two of them who were sitting close to him. One was a pretty, dark-haired young woman who worked in the **Fiction** Department. She wore the red scarf of the **Anti-Sex** Society and Winston felt afraid of her because most young women were wildly enthusiastic about the Party and often **spied** on their neighbours for the Thought Police. She had arrived that morning at the same time as a man called O'Brien, a member of the **Inner** Party. Winston had seen O'Brien sometimes over the years and felt connected to him – he felt that O'Brien, like him, was not enthusiastic about the Party.

As usual, the *Daily Hate* had been against Goldstein.

Goldstein had once been an important Party member but now he was Big Brother's greatest enemy, although no one remembered why. There were stories that Goldstein led a group called the Brotherhood, which wanted to **overthrow** the Party. On the telescreen, Goldstein was shouting, demanding peace with Eurasia, which Oceania and Eastasia were at war with.

In front of the telescreen, all the workers had become angry and were starting to shout at Goldstein. Then the dark-haired young woman threw her Newspeak Dictionary at the screen and everyone began shouting louder. Winston found that he was shouting, too, and kicking his chair. He remembered how easy it was to become really angry during the Daily Hate – he did not have to act. But this morning his hate was directed against Big Brother himself, the Party and the Thought Police, and then against the dark-haired young woman. He had suddenly felt very angry with her – a horrible, violent anger.

After the Hate had finished, Goldstein's face had been replaced on the screen by the three Party **slogans**:

WAR IS PEACE
FREEDOM IS SLAVERY
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

and the workers had shouted “B-B, B-B” over and over again. O'Brien had stood up to leave and as he did, he had looked at Winston. In that moment, Winston had again felt connected to him. “I am with you, I am on your side,” O'Brien seemed to be saying to him, as if they shared feelings against the Party.

Winston came back to the present and realized that he had written *DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER* five times in big letters on the page. Terrible fear came over him. For a moment he thought about tearing the page from his diary. But he knew it was useless – it would make no difference, because in the end the Thought Police would arrest him. He imagined them knocking on his door at night. He began to write quickly: *THEY'LL SHOOT ME IN THE BACK OF THE NECK.*

Suddenly there was a knock on the door. Was it the Thought Police already? Winston moved slowly towards the door. Although his heart was jumping wildly, years of practice had taught him to keep his face calm.