

# 1985

“Thoughtcrime does not entail death: thoughtcrime is death.” -George Orwell

Ronald moved toward the wall, grabbing the knob underneath the telescreen, turning it left until the image died fully, a privilege that he knew he took for granted more than a fair share of the time. Throughout his years living in his flat he had learned to hate the constant buzzing, the constant noise of the intrusive device.

*How do the others do it?* he would ask himself often, in silence of course, he could never be entirely sure that someone was not listening to or watching him at any given time. He never could imagine himself living with the constant mental intrusion of an outer party member or a prole; *heaven to thank, I could be a prole*, a thought that would get him in less trouble.

He moved to his kitchen, a rather small square of space crammed into the back corner of his flat, and made his way to the cupboard above the sink. He opened it up and pulled out a small bottle of victory gin, he never had much of a taste for the wine that the inner party members were allowed to have; the gin was stronger anyway, he reasoned. He grabbed a wine glass, his silent protest to the ghastly tasting wine, and poured in the gin. He took a drink and stood still, taking in a deep breath as the clear liquid made its way down his throat and into his stomach, warming him from deep within.

He moved out of the kitchen and over to his desk and sat down, shuffling aside the books and papers that were scattered about. He looked to the ‘newspeak dictionary,’ which he knew full well was no dictionary at all but a well written and well crafted lie- one that he and the rest of the inner party members had been taught to believe for too many years to now remember. He picked it up, looking at the cover, observing it, feeling its leather binding in his hands, imagining for just a moment that it was merely just a dictionary. He took another drink of gin.

*Doublethink all in itself* he laughed silently. There was a sudden knock on his door.

Though all the inner party members had a ‘dictionary’ and knew full well what it was and were even allowed to read it, few had any regular dealings with its contents. This meant that to be holding it and mysticizing it was an uncommon sight, and he didn’t need to draw attention to himself in such a negative fashion, especially in the presence of company.

He quickly drank the rest of his gin and placed the glass on the floor behind his desk where it would not be seen. He opened the top drawer of the desk and quickly stashed the ‘dictionary’ inside in a sudden movement that almost looked as one of suspicion, though it was a hidden notion, a trained denial of emotion.

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Though it was slightly less common for the inner party members, the thought police did indeed keep their always watchful eyes on *everyone* in Oceania. The inner party was not watched as closely or with as much severity as the lower classes, they were free to think more than the lower classes, but it did have its limits, Ron knew full well. The wrong thought or action or movement would land him in a labor camp or torture room just as easily as any other outer party member or prole. Only the upper party was at all immune to the stringent and watchful role of the thought police; of course, the upper party had each other to fear more than the thought police, so it ultimately meant nothing for them to not be watched.

Another knock sounded as he made his way to the door.

“Ron, it’s O’Brien” the voice from outside said, calmly, with authority.

“I’ll be right there” Ron said. He had a particular disliking towards O’Brien, he didn’t fully know why, though he dared not find out, inner party quarrels rarely ended well for any of the members involved.

He moved in and opened the door “O’Brien, how are you comrade?”

“I am doing fine this evening. I cannot stay long, I have a rally to attend, do you have your corrections for me?” O’Brien asked looking around the flat suspiciously.

“I do, I’ll grab them for you” Ron said moving to his desk and shifting the papers around trying to find the right one, wanting to get O’Brien out as quickly as possible.

“You know, comrade, it is not wise to leave the telescreen off when you are not alone” O’Brien said in a condescending voice.

Ron looked up from his desk to the screen in anger, he had his back towards O’Brien so he could not see his face. Ron took a breath before speaking “Yes, I.. I sometimes forget whether it is on or off when I am working in here, you know how that is, yes?”

“No” O’Brien said coldly and with haste.

“Oh” Ron said finally finding the right corrections report and taking it back to O’Brien, who snatched it from his hands.

“Do I smell gin on you, comrade?” he asked in a puzzled manner, putting on a look of intense distaste toward the idea.

*I forgot to take a mint* Ron thought quickly, realizing that in his haste to hide the ‘dictionary,’ he had forgotten about the gin. He was careful to make sure his facial expressions did not give him away.

“Why would I drink gin? You know that that nasty stuff is for outer party members” Ron replied laughing at the accusation.

O’Brien smiled slightly at the thought of an inner party member drinking such horrid sustenance “very well comrade, I’ll be on my way, good evening.”

“Good evening to you, O’Brien” Ron said following him to the door and making sure it shut after him.

He seethed in anger for a quiet and unseen moment before returning to his desk. O’Brien had always acted as if he were far superior than he really was, as if he were so much better than any of the other inner party members. Ron could only assume that his comrades shared the same angst as he did about O’Brien, though he would never know for certain.

*Only the thought police or the upper party can do anything to him* he reminded himself as he took up his glass and placed it in the sink. He knew some of the secrets of the party, certainly not all of them, no one would ever know it all, but he knew enough. Though in the eyes of the party everyone was supposed to be the same, mono toned person, personality slipped through every now and again, no one would ever be that perfect.

It was a fools game, they had all been told, a waste of time, feelings were for a past generation, one that would never be as great as Big Brother could make the party. Pure freedom and creativity was taught to be a hindrance to moving forward in life, thriving. Though no one of the upper party believed it, and a good majority of the inner party had learned to quietly and emotionlessly realize the truth as well, it was one that the outer party and proles could never know; the inner party was poor at hiding its iniquity and the upper party was even worse.

*If the proles knew the half of it* Ron mused, *that would be the end.*

He knew about O’Brien, Sampson, Johnson, the whole porno crew, supervisors of all sections, all of them committed crimes of disdain against the party, even the thought police, no one was the flawless mold of a person that the party desired. Ron knew of the whorish sexual relations of the upper party and many of his so called ‘comrades’ of the inner party, he himself had even had many a sexually devious encounter.

The back room deals, the so called perks, it was corruption at its finest and the only ones who knew about it were the ones who wanted it hidden, the best cover up of any in the country. The party carried on a large pile of lies, but the lie of perfection was their most devious one yet. Ron and his comrades of the inner party were paid to keep this particular lie under wraps, Ron knowing about it since he first started working for Big Brother. It was a truth that would never be known, no one could know, if anyone said or thought anything of the sort, they would be silenced.

He stopped his thoughts before they got too carried away and might cause an outward action and looked out the window over the kitchen sink, towards the sunset; *such a beautiful sight*, he thought, *too bad it is blocked by the ministry buildings*. He could not see the street, but he knew that it was littered with the refuse of society, people too lonely and frightened to care about their trash. From a ways off there was a flash, then a sound in the distance, no doubt one of the many self launched rocket bombs, the party inflicting attacks against its own people in the hopes that they

will strike up hate for other nations and ignore anything happening at home, a clever distraction built out of fear and perpetuated by the constant reminders of the horrors of war, the glory of the freedom brought on by others destruction.

*Always at war* he mused. He actually remembered a time when there was no constant war, 'peacetime,' it used to be called. A time when everybody didn't hate everybody else; maybe a constant distrust, but not hatred. It had been a long many years now since that time of course, but he liked to think back to it once in a while, it was a calming thought. He turned to go back to his desk, pulling the 'dictionary' out once he sat back down.

He had begun to read '*the book*' as it was known to the inner party members, more and more in the past few months. He did not entirely understand it, it intrigued him, it was a curiosity, everything that he had been taught by the inner party, by the upper party, everything that he assumed he knew was all wrong according to '*the book*.' It was a tragic divide for him, the thoughts and memories of his past always pulling him away ever so slightly from the party's teachings.

O'Brien, as much as Ron disliked him, had one good thought that he shared with the inner party members. He had always talked about *doublethink* in a fascinating manner. Being able to read, or see, or hear two contrasting, contradicting ideas and believe both of them to be true at the same time. Ron had with more insistency, however, begun to wonder just the opposite, if there was one idea, one concept that was *more* true than the other. Could Emmanuel Goldstein- a made up person- be right?

He looked down at the papers in front of him, one of them had the party slogans on them:

WAR IS PEACE!

FREEDOM IS SLAVERY!

IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH!

He didn't know what to really believe anymore, all he knew was that nobody could ever know that he thought the way he now did for they would not understand as he now understood. According to '*the book*,' all of the ideas in the slogans each contradicted its mate, however, according to the party, each idea was one in the same. He desperately wanted to know which was correct. It was a curiosity that would most likely get him killed, but it was one that *he* needed to know, even death seemed a decent reward for truth he figured. He had been having what the thought police called 'dangerous thoughts' the last few years of his life.

He began to think about Big Brother, there was no such person, of course, and all the inner and upper party members knew it; the picture of BB that was seen all over Oceania was one of a prole, of all people, who was photographed and then sent off to a prisoner camp to be kept quiet—though probably now dead, Ron thought to himself.

But the power, the might of an invisible and non-existent personality, it was a concept far beyond his own mind. He only knew that the proles, the outer party, they had to believe it; in order for anything that he and the other inner and upper party members said to be true, there needed to be someone for it to be true through, a likable leader, someone to trust. *I guess if an invisible person does the trick, then it does the trick*, he thought with a slight humor.

Perhaps he was too old now, he was around before Oceania even existed, one of very few still alive. Of course, he was young back then, a mere twenty-two-year-old boy; eager to learn, anxious to do what was right, but unable to understand for himself who to listen to. The resistance, as the upper party was known at the time, made sense to him, he believed in them, followed them, and in return they helped him out. He never would have thought that what he knew before the war, what he was now thinking would ever come back to him, would ever make sense.

He opened ‘*the book*’ and began to read, taking in the words, becoming versed in its ideas, in its thoughts. He began to question the phony war that had been going on since the creation of Oceania, he began to question Big Brother, the unseen, unreal man that commanded all of Oceania from nowhere in particular yet everywhere all at once, he began to question everything that he knew, the rocket bombs that were shot at the proles, the falsified numbers, the plans, the party, he even began to question himself.

*Who am I?* he thought quietly placing ‘*the book*’ down on his desk. *The inner party, THE party, I myself may even be Big Brother. Am I not? Who am I that I am above the rest, the outer party, the proles? What makes me more free than they? Do I not do the same thing day after day as they do, keeping to myself, trapped inside my own box? Do I not fear the thought police as they, do I not live in the same estranged fake symbiotic relationship with my comrades?*

He got up and went to the couch in front of the telescreen, a funny brown-colored leather item that had been well used throughout the years. He sat and thought about what had been on his mind the last few months, maybe even years, he really couldn’t tell, time seemed to stand still in Oceania, nothing changed, there was no dynamic to it, everything seemed to be still all the time, a never-changing, never-ending world. Yes, there was motion, there were factory workers making things, there were soldiers fighting a never-ending war, yes there was work to be done by the outer party, but none of it really meant anything, he knew.

*They work because we tell them to, they do it so that they do not stand out from any other, they work because they fear of what will happen if they do not* he realized. He had been told long

ago that fear is the greatest immobilizer, people will do anything for you as long as they fear you deeply enough.

“No more fear! War is not peace” he mumbled, quickly realizing what he’d said aloud, even if inaudibly. He froze in place, a well ingrained panic reaction; holding a breath, closing his eyes, waiting for something terrible to happen. Two minutes passed and nothing did. He looked up again, he saw the telescreen, still off, he got up and moved back to his desk, taking out a piece of paper- another inner party benefit- and began to write.

*War is not peace, it cannot be, they cannot be together. We are at war, or so we pretend to be, we want to be, we wish we were. We kill our own population with our own bombs in hopes that no one will notice that we are not really in any war. We are not at peace either, however, because in order to be at peace, one needs to understand what peace is, and one needs to know that we are not at war to know peace. The war rages on only in our minds but we cannot think otherwise, for the party will not allow it. They can’t, if there is nothing external to fight, people will turn inward, fighting for themselves, wanting more. War keeps the mind busy, distracted. It is easy to tell people that they cannot have things because it must be used to fight the never ending war, once there is no war, people will want more for themselves, not out of selfishness necessarily, just out of their own self preservation, wanting a decent life, wanting to better themselves. The war is phony!*

*Slavery is not freedom, for the slave cannot be free. It has been so long now, but I do remember what freedom used to mean, what freedom was, and slavery was not with it. Freedom leaves the free man the choice to be a slave but a slave is not free. We tell the outer party, the proles that they are indeed free, but they are not, they cannot be, they do not know what it means. If they begin to deviate from the plan, the routine, if they think that they know what freedom is, we silence them.*

*Ignorance is not strength. By keeping our population ignorant to what really is, they have no way of knowing what freedom or even slavery or war or peace truly are. The upper party are the only ones who are made strong with an ignorant populace and even they are not correct. What is ignorance? It is **not** knowing? Or is it forcing others to know wrong? I believe that it is time for the population of Oceania to now know, to now understand. Truth is a powerful ally, I do not care what anyone says otherwise. We are not at war and we are not free, and the party’s strength comes only from its lies, its own ignorance.*

*We, the inner and upper party, are wrong. We always told the populace that we were right, and they were never allowed to know, or think, any different. If any believed that they did know anything better, we killed them, our power came from their deaths. One man silenced to keep a thousand more cheering and happy, that’s what we do. It is not right!*

*It is time to put a stop to it all. I was once at the level of a prole, I was once a person, a human, nothing more. Then, the war took that away from me, all I had left, the party took it. Many hated it for years but eventually gave into what the Party wanted, what we've become. Some of us were lucky and were taken aside to be the inner party, others were sent to work, all with no reasoning, I was in the right place at the right time, anyone can do what I do, anyone can do what any of the upper party does. We will be our own destruction! We will collapse because we cannot believe our own lies! We all know the truth but we refuse to say it! Two plus two does equal four!*

Ron looked up from the paper, he had written it, finally written what he had been thinking for so many years. He could not take it back, there was no way that what he had done would go undiscovered, and he would be killed for it.

*They kill for power he reminded himself quietly and only I can stop it.*

He knew he was right, no one in the outer party or the proles understood, no one knew what he knew. He had fit into his mold for long enough, he played his part, he put on the mask of the inner party member, but no longer, he now decided to refuse to do it. He had had the idea in his mind years prior in truth, he simply did not know it, the action of thought takes time to form as he now understood fully.

He got up from his desk and made his way into his bedroom, such a quiet and lonely place it was for him. Marriage had been as much as eliminated by the party as a whole and thus most people spent a majority of their non working hours alone. If one did happen to marry, it was a futility, not out of love, but out of devotion to the party, its sole purpose to procreate and raise up young party members. Sexual deviation was frowned upon but inner party members could get away with it easier than outer party members. It was a quickly learned fact, control sex and you control much of a persons desires.

He worked his way to his closet, the only part of the room out of view of the telescreen, which was still off and quiet out in the sitting room. He opened the closet door and grabbed the end chest from the foot of his bed. He clambered up on top of it and went up to the far back corner of the ceiling in his closet. His eyes had grown old and weary in the previous years, but he could still make out the lines of the cutout in the crumbling paint and drywall.

He did not know how he had hidden this particular truth, this secret, in his mind all of these years, but he never really thought about this moment, never thought that he could do anything powerful in and of himself. The thought police not picking into the minds of the inner party as much as that of the outer party or the proles did help, but either way he knew that there was something more to why he had not been discovered years before, a power greater than he. He couldn't even bring himself to remember how exactly he hid the box without anyone knowing.

He stuck the palm of his right hand in the middle of the spot and pushed as hard as he

could manage. It was easier to open than he remembered and he almost lost his balance and fell off the chest as the square piece of the ceiling went upward. He regained his stance and rebalanced himself, listening to the room now, he was as still as a deer cautioned of a hunter drawing near.

Out of fear- and conditioning- he didn't move for almost two minutes, all the memories of the pre war era were flooding his mind now, he remembered what it was like to be able to say what you wanted without the constant fear of the thought police barging in to take you away, he remembered much better wine than the stuff that the party tried to convince him was good, he remembered friendships, the ability to have fun. He remembered that the times were not all about hatred, it was about more than the constant war and the protests and the violent rally's every night of the week.

And he remembered his wife, such a beautifully painful memory. They were young but, oh how beautiful she was, how much he loved her, how lucky he was that she survived the first war, but she was not picked as an inner party member, she was taken away from him, so swiftly gone that he never found out what had happened to her. He knew that she was not an outer party member, he could only hope that she made it out alive as a prole in a safer part of the city, though nowhere was truly safe anymore he knew.

*I can always believe, they can never take that away from me* he told himself silently.

After a time he placed his hand inside the hole in his ceiling, feeling around in the dust for the box. When he had first moved into his flat almost thirty two years ago now, he had realized this one hiding spot in the closet for the one item that he refused to get rid of- other than in his mind,- it was his precious gem, his only connection to the old way of life. No one in the upper or inner party knew that he had it- he knew that he would have been done away with a long time ago if they did know- and most of the outer party and proles were too young- the older ones either died in the war or have died off since- to remember the time that the average person could have one.

He felt the cigar box and worked it out of the opening, taking it in his hands and cradling it like a child. He stepped down off of the chest, sat on the end of his bed and set the box on top of it. He blew the dust away and opened it up, still out of view of the telescreen. There inside, just as he had left it thirty years ago was the Walther P38, 9mm handgun. His father had left it to him after some war or another, he couldn't remember, he had spent too many years trying to forget, forget history, forget everything, just trying to play his part.

He picked it up out of the box, the bakelite and the cold steel resting in his hands. He pulled the magazine out of the pistol and worked the slide back, pulling the round out of the chamber. He worked the slide a few more times, making sure that it still worked. He blew out what dust he saw and left it at that, no supplies or time to clean, he had to move fast now, time was not on his side.

His father had taken him to shoot in the years before the war, over thirty years ago now, but



Ron knew it was a skill, a protection, that is not easily forgotten. He thought back to his days as a teenager, always hearing about how guns were dangerous, how nobody needed them. How they became regulated and eventually banned, how crime shot up after the bans. Not long after disarming the people, he remembered, the resistance took over, creating Oceania.

*If only people had them in the pre war era* he thought to himself *maybe it wouldn't have been so easy for the party.*

He thought about what the upper party had told him about guns when the party was first forming, they had told the inner party that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun,' they told them that some man named Mao said it. But he knew something better, his father had always reminded him that one man with a gun can control a hundred without one, for good or for bad.

He looked in the box and saw the four magazines, all loaded and ready to go, he had 33 shots plus a few extra rounds, he would take out as many upper and inner party members as he could and would save the last round for himself, he knew that he deserved something better than hanging or torture.

He knew that the thought police did not carry guns, they hadn't since almost the formation of Oceania, the military needed them more, so it was only the military that had any firepower at all in Oceania, he knew that if he moved quick, they would be too late in stopping him.

"We will be our own destruction, I will end this" he said aloud, this time with force, with power in his voice, for the first time with the knowledge that he *could* do something. His only hope now that the proles, the inner party, they would stand up and fight after he was gone.

*I'll start with O'Brien* he thought, tucking the pistol into his pocket and opening the door of his flat and heading out

*it must be done!*