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April 4. Read in the *Times* about yet another claimant to be Princess Elizabeth. It's hard to believe anyone could have survived the executions of the Royal Family back in the mid 1950s. Now if there had been 14, like the Russian Czar's family, it might seem at least possible that one child somehow was missed, but not with just four—five including her first husband. This woman has four grown children. Says she raised them with no idea they were royalty. Thinks her mother might be alive somewhere. She changed her accent in order to blend in. She remarried—the guy's a total prole, apparently. Imagine finding out after 40 years that you'd been married to the rightful Queen! The kids think their Mum has gone mad. Reminds me of that man a couple of years ago who claimed to be the son of the former King, the one who resigned, and that American woman. They used to call these people "pretenders" to the throne—good name for them. In any case, the President has said England will never have a monarchy again. Too expensive, for one thing—all those carriages and castles.

April 5. Went past Victory Mansions today. It's been tarted up and renamed "Churchill Condominiums." They're selling them off to these up and coming "entrepreneur" types—probably all Inner Party members, if you ask me. Churchill's everywhere these days—rehabilitated as a great national hero and all that. I should sympathize, given that I was named after him. They claim they've proved he was shot in 1955, but as usual they can't find the body. I went in and talked to the "sales representa-

tive." He could tell with one look at me that I could never afford to buy anything there, and he didn't want to hear about my being a "former resident." I asked to see my old flat, the only one with the alcove, I told him. He said the alcove has been preserved as a "heritage feature," for God's sake. He wouldn't let me in, but I could see the hallway had been redone in grey and orange—"dove and peach" it says in the brochure. The lift had an out-of-order sign on it. "It never worked in my day either," I told him. He asked me to move along.

Everything's "the former" nowadays—the former Oceania, the former Eurasia, the former regime. Either that or they revive old names like England instead of Airstrip One. The Russians have changed Leningrad back into St. Petersburg. But the thing isn't the same—how could it be England without a King? I'm a bit of a Royalist, I think. My slogan is "Kingsoc, not Ingsoc." Maybe we should have an elective monarchy—everyone gets to be King for one day.

April 7. Went to therapy today. Got ticked off for not showing up last time. I hate this condescending tone Martha adopts with me, as if I were senile—I reminded her I'm still under 50 (only just). "We know what you've been through, Winston," she says. "I asked you to call me Mr. Smith," I complained. She just laughed. She's humoring me. These young people, it's only been five years since the Liberation, but they already treat people of my age as relics of a long-gone era, hopelessly stuck in the subservience of the "Collectivist period." They're full of the new thinking, the new individualism, the new this and that—yet most of it they get from books that predate the Revolution. Amazing how many survived, really. It turns out "totalitarianism" wasn't as total as I and most others thought. And they go on about the Oldspeak revival, but Oldspeak never died out. Newspeak was never expected to take over completely until 2050. And now it looks as if Newspeak will never die out either. "English" has simply swallowed a lot of it, short of that "doubleplusungood" nonsense. I quite miss Newspeak; at least it was systematic and easy to learn. But now all we have is a messy mixture. All the books are full of mistakes, inconsistencies, illogical sentences, erratic punctuation or none at all. In the *Times* today I read about someone "pouring" over a book—but it didn't say what they were pouring over it!

April 6. They're opening one of those new "image consultancies" round the corner. It's called Remake. The ads say "Lose the Airstrip One Look." There's a before and after contrast: "Before" looks down, the body sags into itself, yet the shoulders are hunched with tension; "After" looks you in the eye confidently and walks with a swing. You get training in posture, clothing and elocution. The trouble is if you had the money for the course you would hardly need it.

April 8. Went down to the Chestnut Tree last night. Alf brought out an old bottle of Victory Gin he'd found in the cellar. "Who's for a walk down Memory Lane?" he asked. "Double measures on the house!" Nobody except me took him up on it, though. I couldn't resist. It was truly awful, but powerful—at least it had a kick in it, unlike this dreadful "lite" muck the Government is pushing in the anti-alcoholism campaign. I told Alf the other day, "Here, this bottle's got a spelling mistake on it. They've left out the GH." But I could tell he wasn't listening, just polishing up the litre glasses. They never did bring back the pint, any more than the pound, though the Royalists are still on about it. Part of England's heritage, and all that. I agree with them, but they say it will cause difficulties with our trading partners. Alf said, "Why don't you get a job at one of those new universities? History of the English Language, sort of thing. I can just see you as a Professor." Funnily enough, so can I. Professor Winston Smith.

April 9. Goldstein's new book is out: *The Sudden Collapse of Oligarchical Collectivism*. Hard to believe he's still alive and capable of writing—unless someone is just using his name. They're reissuing his earlier one, too. There's a big media campaign on. "Once they whispered about it. Now you can read it for yourself. Have you read THE BOOK? The underground classic now in paperback." It's required reading in schools, apparently, but amazingly few people are buying it otherwise. They'd rather just forget the whole thing ever happened.

April 11. Finally got a letter from Minfo, as they call it now—even shorter than Minitrue. They apologize for the delay in responding to my request to see my file, and would like me to attend an interview in person. Why? I felt a panic attack coming on at the mere thought. "Dear

Winston," it begins. Everyone uses first names now. I prefer the old, impersonal "Smith, W."

April 12. Watched the "Aerobics for Seniors" on the telescreen this morning. I could swear the woman instructing it is the same one who did it in the '80s when it was compulsory for everyone. But she's changed her style. It's all gentleness and soft voice and "Don't force it." Even so, my freedom to stay in my chair is more important.

April 15. Decided to go to my appointment after all. If I don't go they'll just use it as an excuse not to take any further action. The whole inside of the building has been redesigned and redecorated—I got completely lost. Ficdep has been privatized, though Pornosec is the only division that's doing really well—quite a comment on our "new society." I was late, and the official had let in someone else ahead of me. The secretary was one of those sexy-looking and warm-talking young women they like to have at front desks now, but she was wearing an "Anti-Sexism league" ribbon, to warn you not to start getting flirtatious with her. Not that I would have—I could see the contempt in her eyes. She probably sees me as a typical Ingsoc-era victim, a piece of social refuse.

Eventually she ushered me in. The official was a young fellow, under 30. They prefer them young on the grounds that they're less corrupted by doublethink and all the rest of it. But they're precisely the generation that was most thoroughly programmed by the Party Youth organizations, like the Parsons' horrible kids. All that's happened is that they've been reprogrammed with democratic-capitalist-individualism instead of socialist-oligarchical-collectivism, just like flicking a switch.

"Well, Winston," he says, in that fake-intimate tone they're all trained to use now, "we haven't come up with much. As you probably know, most of the Miniluv records were destroyed during the Liberation, either by the Thought Police or by the crowds that stormed the building in 1989. So there's no file on you, nor could we trace your 1984 diary. We can't trace either of the people you referred to as O'Brien and Julia, especially without the first name of one and the second name of the other. In any case O'Brien would be covered almost certainly by the terms of the 1990 general amnesty for crimes committed in the Ingsoc-era. You're more likely to run into either of them on the street. O'Brien

may have gone to the plastic surgeons. They were working round the clock at that time, and sometimes botched the operations through fatigue, they say." He laughed, looking at me quizzically. I'm convinced there's something he is keeping from me.

"Winston, we need to forget the past," he went on. "The future's more important. We can't go forward if we're obsessed with the past."

"Ignorance is strength, you mean?"

He ignored the irony. "You should forget all that. We're shaping a new society based on personal and economic freedom of the kind you believed in until. . . ."

"Until what?"

"Until, I suppose, they forcibly changed your mind."

"Leaving me with an unrequited passion for Big Brother, you think?"

"You're getting therapy, aren't you?" he says. "Good. We all appreciate what you went through, and want you to take advantage of the freedoms you suffered for."

"You're joking!" I said. "Do you know what my state pension comes to? I live off bread and potatoes. There's no freedom without money nowadays."

He stood up to signify the end of the interview. What does he know about me? We know as little about what he and the rest of them are up to as we did under Big Brother. And then we could at least let off steam in the Two Minutes Hate. They should have a revival.

April 16. On the news there was an item about Quebec State wanting to secede from the USA on the grounds that they were simply annexed with no consultation. Some people in Oceanic Columbia also want a separate country. Where is it going to end? First Airstrip One split from the "former" Oceania and became Britain, then Scotland and Wales split from the "former" Britain, and now Cornwall Liberation Army guerrillas are fighting to secede from England.

April 17. Had a dream about O'Brien and Julia. The three of us were walking down the street arm-in-arm, Julia in the middle. We went through a garden into a big house. We kept going upstairs and along corridors, with Julia leading. She kept looking back. I was in a panic. We came to a small bedroom. I kept saying that the owners might be back at

any time. Julia lay down on the bed. O'Brien turned to me and said, "I'm going to do it to Julia. Isn't this what you wanted?" He started undressing. His back was hairy. I woke up wondering if her second name was O'Brien. Why were they together when I first met them?

Martha told me today that the essential human personality can't be destroyed. "They claimed to do that, but they couldn't. It's impossible. Your feelings are all still there, only numbed. You froze them to survive. Your loving Big Brother was just a momentary illusion. Your heart is still whole, Winston." When she starts to talk like this, I want to believe her. I sniffle a bit—disgusting, really. She tries to get me to "feel my anger," but I just sit there, feeling nothing, or just self-pity. My homework is writing a letter to Julia:

"Julia, you must be 38 now. There's still time for us. We could marry and have children. Our betrayal of each other didn't count. I still want you. Did you really love me, or were you just a party whore? How many men did you try that "I love you" note on? I want to see you, hold you, smell you, taste you—just to reassure myself it all really happened. I'm alone nearly all the time now. I live off bread and potatoes, watch the telescreen, read the *Times* in the Library, borrow books, have a drink when my pension is paid. It's like being 70, not 50. You made me feel young and strong—like a real person. There hasn't been anyone since you. I'll find you and leave you an "I love you" note. It can all happen again, ten years later. We'll find the Room, the Golden Country, drink wine with Him."

April 20. I feel sure O'Brien survived the collapse of the regime. But where would he be now? I see him in some large organization, not an isolated individual like me. Perhaps that's why I felt that strange attraction to him, even when I knew he was on their side—the outsider's longing for the insider. Perhaps it works in reverse as well—he cherished the dissidents as if their rebellion was part of himself. He wanted me to move inside, surrender, like him, to the higher power. "They got me a long time ago," he said. Who has "got" him now? Business? Law? The Church?

April 24. Went to the morning service in St. Clement Dane's, one of the churches in the rhyme I pieced together in 1984. It's still dilapidated from its use as a military storehouse—crumbling stonework and broken floor-tiles. There was a priestess, quite young. I used to think women were the most orthodox Party believers, but now they say it was largely women who kept the church alive underground. Of course, they don't want to hand it back to the men. As I went up for communion, I realized how beautiful she was in her white robe, holding the bright golden cup. I trembled as she murmured, "The blood of Christ, shed for you." The wine was sweet, not like the stuff O'Brien gave me that time at his flat.

I looked through the O'Briens in the phone book. There are hundreds. He would certainly have changed his name. And his face. But I still feel I'd know him at once—his physique, his way of moving, and that gesture of resettling his spectacles on his nose. Those represent his ineradicable individuality, something he embodied but didn't believe in. What could be his beliefs now? Clinging to Ingsoc and his aesthetics of power? I don't want to accuse him, just be with him and talk about what happened then and since.

April 25. They showed fresh outbreaks of violence in the East End. Gangs of Whitemates set fire to a hostel for Eurasian refugees and beat up those who tried to escape. The police were suspiciously late arriving on the scene, prompting charges of racism. The Party would never have permitted this lawlessness. Yet then there were no laws . . . just fear. When people lose their fear, all kinds of vileness come to the surface. The sheer greed of the new rich, the way they flaunt their wealth in our faces, is disgusting. At least the Inner Party were discreet. And everyone ignores the new poor, jobless and hopeless, sleeping in the streets. That's how I'll end up if inflation goes on like this.

April 27. I'm convinced I've found him! He was coming out of a posh restaurant, wearing a smart grey coat. His eyes met mine for a split second before he turned away. I felt the recognition like a blow in the solar plexus. I followed him for a while until he went into a new office block. My heart was pounding so much I didn't dare go in—might have made a fool of myself. Is it really him?

April 28. Insignificance: that's what best sums up the way I feel now. Then, everyone felt they were being watched all the time, or *might* be watched at any time. Thus your slightest word or action was charged with meaning. The danger of sin was ever present, needing constant vigilance over the self. We lived in fear, like devout God-fearing Christians always on guard against Satan's trickery. But now, no-one is watching. You can do what you want, no-one pays attention to you unless you're rich and famous. You can say what you like and no-one listens. You can think what you want and no-one cares. Every day for me used to be electric with the fear of facecrime, the delirium of thoughtcrime, and the fantasy of sexcrime. Now there's just plain crime: assault, theft, murder, fraud, extortion.

Before, when I wrote my diary I was writing to the future, hundreds of years away, after the end of Big Brother. But the end came only five years later. Hitler's thousand-year Reich lasted just thirteen years, Big Brother's less than forty. Yet *at the time* people believed those regimes were invincible, eternal almost. And each "new reality" creates its own past as well as its own future. The past keeps changing, just as the future does. Today's future is expanding prosperity, renewed democracy, growing freedom; yesterday's future was unending struggle against outer enemies and inner crimes. Today's past is "English liberty, England's glorious heritage," unfortunately interrupted by a totalitarian interregnum of alien inspiration and ideology—Ingsoc was unenglish, they say. Yesterday's past was the ever-changing text of the *Times*, always vindicating the Party policy of the present.

Then, I believed in the unalterable Past, the Room and the Rhyme, the Book and the Brotherhood, the Coffee and the Wine. I believed in Reality. I believed in Sex. I believed in Truth. I had a creed. I dreamed that if the Liberation ever came, we would recover the miraculous concreteness of the present, remembered and recorded by individual acts of written witness preserved as an objective testimony and proof of a Real Past. The glass paperweight was my holy relic. These were my sacraments: drinking Julia's Real Coffee and O'Brien's Real Wine. Now "real" coffee, sugar and wine are in all the shops for those who can afford them, but they're just meaningless luxuries.

April 28. I went back to the office block where I saw *him*, intending to hang around at lunchtime to watch for him. But I bumped into him almost immediately. I followed him to a stationer's shop and accosted him as he came out with a newspaper. The face looks different, but the physique, the grace, the eyes are *his*.

"Excuse me, but haven't we met before somewhere," I faltered.

He looked right at me, then resettled his glasses on his nose, as if giving me a sign.

"I don't think so," he said, with a puzzled look. "When would it have been? Before . . .?"

"Yes, before. You worked for. . . ."

"Let's walk a little way," he said, touching my arm lightly.

"We met in the place where there is no darkness."

"How mysterious!" he laughed. "Perhaps we should meet and explore the mystery a little further. Are you free to come to my house tomorrow evening? Good. Let's say seven o'clock. Or would you prefer nineteen hundred hours?"

He gave me his card and turned away. The card read "James Appleby, Executive Director, Advantage Advertising." The home address was in St John's Wood. I remembered what he said over wine ten years ago: "I shall have become a different person with a different face."

Why does he want to see me? Isn't that a tacit admission he *is* (or was) O'Brien? He doesn't seem to be worried I'll denounce him. Not that I would anyway, even if I believed the authorities would take any action. Probably nothing was special about my case and no-one would be interested. And, curiously, I don't feel any fear of him either. Just the old excitement and longing.

April 29. Set off at 6 for St John's Wood to leave plenty of time. On the platform at the tube station a gang of Meaties were beating up a green-shirted Veggie—everyone looked the other way, including me. I didn't want to get beaten up tonight of all nights. The youth-gangs who worry me most are the Whitemates—their attacks are no longer exclusively on Eastasians or Eurasians. Anyone who happens to annoy them will do, and they usually kill you, too. Avoid eye-contact, that's safest. But I gave a quarter to two young women from the Anti-Sexism League who were collecting funds.

Walking down the platform to get away from the beating, I was suddenly amazed to see an ad for a new product called Golden Country Margarine. It showed a rural scene with trees, meadows, and a stream; in the foreground was a rosy-cheeked family. Wasn't that the place I dreamed of, where Julia and I . . . ? On second thoughts I dismissed the idea. The picture is just a sentimental, faked image of a scene that exists nowhere in reality, never has. I must be overwrought. The name is just a meaningless coincidence.

He lives in one of those new fortified "executive compounds" where the guard has to telephone your host before you are admitted. I walked through several courtyards with gardens and fountains until I found the right entrance. Again I had to give my name on the intercom. He met me at the door with his familiar affability.

"Come in, Winston. I apologize for the tight security. But we feel it's justified. My wife is out for the evening, so it'll just be us. Some wine? I've got a very drinkable Burgundy. There's so much choice now that trade has opened up with Eurasia—sorry, the *former* Eurasia."

I kept seeing allusions to our previous meetings—especially the visit to his flat. I noticed a copy of Goldstein's new book on the huge glass coffee-table. The windows looked out onto a small private garden, while the skylight gave an outdoor quality to the light as the dull spring evening began to fade. The wine, his hypnotic voice, the gathering dusk in which the white sofas we sat on shimmered and seemed to float above the floor, all created a kind of limbo, without specific time and place.

"On a practical level," he began, "you're simply mistaken. The Inner Party official you seek, and to whom you fancied I showed a resemblance, probably no longer exists, at least in a form that could be recognized or proved. I can demonstrate that I was an unimportant Outer Party member like yourself. As you can see, I've done well since the Liberation—life has been good. Yet like yourself I still have a curiosity about the old days. The recent past has become a strange and remote territory, even while we're surrounded by revivals of pre-revolutionary culture.

"How did the regime you thought impregnable come to collapse in two weeks? You've probably seen friend Goldstein's attempt at a dialectical explanation about progressive impoverishment and class conflict between the proles and the Party, but to me the whole thing is

stuck in the outdated ideology it is trying to analyze. I feel my own philosophy of collective solipsism offers a far better account. If everyone simultaneously stops believing one thing and starts believing another, that second thing becomes the new reality. The Party demonstrated that possibility repeatedly—you remember when Eastasia replaced Eurasia as the enemy back in '84, or was it the other way round? I forget. All that happened in '89 was a switch of the same type, though greater in degree. Simply the rumor that massive popular revolts were occurring in Eastasia, Eurasia, and other parts of Oceania, was enough to trigger them here. There is no "historical" explanation for why the whole population came out into the streets one day and stayed there until the regime capitulated. No-one could have predicted or even imagined this event within the mentality of the time—even the dissidents of the Brotherhood could scarcely have hoped for it. Totalitarianism was not really total, except insofar as it was believed to be so. The thing was simply a catastrophe or miracle, depending on your viewpoint. The Party had already abolished history and it cannot now be resumed—it's gone, except for holdouts like Goldstein, or perhaps yourself. This new society did not grow out of the old; it simply replaced it, obliterated it. History is collective memory, and we have lost our memories. Every age now is the age of amnesia."

As he poured me a second glass of the rich, scented wine, I said, "You sound just like O'Brien."

He laughed delightedly. "Winston, Winston, it doesn't matter who I am. Or who you are. Perhaps you need another new identity. I might be able to find a job for you in my agency, if you are willing to undergo training in self-presentation, and get rid of your defeated-looking stoop, your shambling gait, and your shabby clothes. Perhaps you see those things as marks of authenticity, but others see them as the hallmarks of failure and self-imposed exclusion. I believe you have talent and imagination, and the experience you mentioned you'd had on the *Times*, creating imaginary characters and revising statistics, would be highly relevant to the work we do. Did you see our new Golden Country Margarine ads? We are also preparing publicity for an Airstrip One Theme Park, where people will pay to re-experience the old days. The visit will include Victory Gin, Victory cigarettes, exhibitions of prolefeed, telescreens broadcasting propaganda, and complimentary interrogations and beatings, and will culminate in a Two Minutes Hate and a visit to

Room 101 with simulated experiences of giving and receiving torture. Various other theme products will be marketed in association with the Park: reproduction Party uniforms, a computer chess game called 'White Always Mates,' a mathematical game called 'Two Plus Two Equals Five,' and a word-processing game called 'Rewriting the Times.' At the moment I'm busy trying to allay Government fears that the Park will become a rallying point for Ingsoc sympathizers. I tell them that banning it will make their claims of freedom and prosperity look as hollow as the slogans of Ingsoc.

"I gave you my card—that is who I am at present. Others besides yourself have thought they recognized someone else in me, and I've often talked to them as I am doing to you. They invariably turn out to be intelligent and interesting people. Perhaps it is dangerous for me to invite them into my home, but I have never once been threatened. A few I have even recruited into my agency. You would feel at home there, I know, if you were willing to make the necessary changes.

"I feel an intuitive, perhaps even a spiritual bond with these people. In Eastasia it was once believed that the same identity moves successively through different human or other forms in successive lives—reincarnation, they called it. Perhaps we now migrate through successive identities within one lifetime.

"Your problem, Winston, but perhaps also your interest to someone like me, is that you cling to the notion of a fixed identity through time. I've learned the joy of letting go, of merging with the collective and changing when it changes. The initial resistance makes the act of surrender even more wonderful. There is no need for you to continue being Winston. Don't you ever tire of it? And you may have 20 or 30 years more of it still to come. You can reshape not only your appearance, but your entire consciousness at will. The ideas of fixity and permanence are at the root of all your delusions. Your threefold fallacy is that history can be known, that memory can be trusted, and that language can record reality. But language creates reality, just as the present creates the past. You believe that consciousness can describe reality in words and images, when in fact those words and images determine human consciousness. The image of the Golden Country has never existed in reality, yet it shapes an archetypal image for the collective, creating and satisfying its desires. The proles are now referred to as consumers, but they have never

awoken into the nightmare of independent perception and judgment that you live in, utterly lonely in your rejection of the images and words that satisfy the collective present. You dwell self-condemned in the prison you call the past. Before, you resisted the language and imagery of Ingsoc, its heroic vision of incessant struggle and revolutionary purity, its imagery of golden-haired rosy-cheeked youth gazing into the dawn of an imagined future. You resisted those images, just as you're resisting them now that we use them to sell margarine. Before, you collected books and paperweights and bric-a-brac from pre-revolutionary times; now you're probably hoarding bottles of Victory Gin, Newspeak dictionaries, and posters of Big Brother, am I right? Always stuck in the past."

"How do you know all this?" I burst out.

"Your case is not as unique as you imagine, Winston. But many former dissidents learned their lesson better, and adapted without much difficulty to the demise of the Big Brother they'd been taught to love. Now they love Capitalism. They've learned to believe what they're told. But you waver back and forth between your original rebellion, your love of Big Brother whom you call O'Brien, and your hatred of the new society for not being what you thought it would be. Perhaps you have sought me out to help you adapt once again; stubborn as you are, you need an outside agency to accomplish psychological change. Perhaps this will help you:

"Ultimately, it does not matter what form society takes. The only form that counts is its present form, today's form. Of the other forms we simply create images which best support the legitimacy of the present form. Hence the current negative images of the Ingsoc period, the adulation of Churchill and Goldstein, and the absurd pictures of pre-Ingsoc England, all roast beef and thatched cottages, which are used to give a "heritage" for the present. Perhaps things will change again, and Ingsoc's stern puritanism and conformity will be upheld, along with Cromwell's Roundheads and the ancient Spartans, as a contrast to the decadent hedonism of today's neo-capitalism. Oceania may rise again. But all of this is idle speculation. I'm indulging in it simply to help you understand reality. For a healthy mind, the past and future hold nothing except a few bold, simple images reinforcing the ideology of the present."

"You know history better than I do," I said.

"How can I know something that does not exist? The present is all there is. 'All is always now,' as T. S. Eliot put it. Probably vaporized in the early 1950s, poor fellow, though the Party could have used him if he'd been willing to collaborate. 'History is now and England.' There's a line to help you.

"You still hanker for a permanent distinction between truth and lies. But the distinction is relative and strategic. Truth is only a belief which prevails. The truths of Ingsoc are now all lies, but they may become true again. The prevailing truth at present is that of freedom, pleasure, individualism. Never mind the rising crime and violence, the poverty, the youth gangs, the interracial assaults—we believe we've been liberated, so we have. Once we had myths of the gods and believed in them. These were good healthy myths—true myths, you might say. But then came along an unhealthy myth of an objective truth that was discoverable, recordable, verifiable, and that continued to be true regardless of whether or not anyone believed it. That was your myth, Winston: that truth is permanent, irrevocable, and independent of belief.

"You should pray for credulity. You briefly knew the joy of orthodoxy, the beauty of self-forgetting, when you wept with love for Big Brother. But you relapsed. For a while, perhaps, you believed in the Liberation and our new, democratically elected President. You may remember when his tanks battered the Houses of Parliament and killed many of the members, whom the press described as hardliners, rebels, and Ingsoc sympathizers. I believe that he saved democracy by doing this; I doubt if you do. I believe neo-capitalism has brought us prosperity, despite the streets full of beggars and thieves which force the rich to live in fortified compounds; do you? I believe we are a society of free individuals; we can say and think what we want, so what does it matter if we all say and think and want the same things? But you cling to your suspicions, your memories, and the evidence of your senses—all the things that perpetuate your isolation, your gloom, your failure."

"Does the Party still exist?"

"Perhaps it has become the Brotherhood, and is even now plotting a return to power through its underground cells and vows of self-sacrificing loyalty. Perhaps the Party and the Brotherhood have existed throughout time as aspects of each other, like a form and its shadow, with conformity and revolt endlessly changing places. Perhaps you and I have met through

the ages as believer and sceptic, inquisitor and heretic, torturer and victim, forever united by what divides us, bound together in mutual need and love."

The room had become almost completely dark. We sat in silence for a few minutes. I was convinced that in some sense this was *essentially* O'Brien's voice I was hearing, mad but unanswerable. I felt too that if I yielded and became a believer like him, he would lose interest in me. As I am, as a sceptic, I represent to him part of himself. We are part of each other, like brothers.

Suddenly we heard the door, and the lights came on. A smartly dressed woman in her late thirties entered with the brisk tapping of high heels.

"What *are* you doing sitting in the dark like this?" she asked.

Both of us stood up, and O'Brien/Appleby introduced me. "Amelia, this is Winston Smith. We got absorbed in our conversation." Turning to me, he joked, "We were in the place where there is no light!"

"Julia?" I asked softly.

"No: Amelia," she answered, her eyes hard and anxious with denial, yet seeming to acknowledge me at the centre.

"I think perhaps we should conclude our discussion, Winston," James said. "Did you have a coat?"

I asked to use the bathroom. Inside, the light was brilliant and cruel. In the mirror I could see how dreadful I looked, stooping in my creased and baggy Ingsoc-era clothes. The room was so clean I hardly dared to pee. I fished out my "I love you" note, with my address on the back, and slipped it into a jar of face-cream.

At the door *he* continued, "Let me know if you want to work with me again. We will pay for you to attend an image consultancy—I recommend Remake. You could look like, and be, a different person very soon. It's up to you. Goodbye, Winston."

I wanted to hug him and hold him, but we simply shook hands. As I walked away I heard Amelia's voice saying sharply, "James, you *must* stop asking these people here, I can't stand it."

At the underground station all the benches were already taken by the sleeping figures of the homeless, with their bags of belongings stuffed underneath. At least I still have a room, I thought. He never offered me any food. I eyed the Hot-Spud stand on the platform, but, curiously, I

didn't feel hungry. I gazed around, full of a strange tranquillity and acceptance. To the south the city cast up a bluish glow of light into the sky. For now, there is no fear of bombers, no blackout. You see people at their lighted windows, free to spend the evening as they wish—mostly watching the telescreen, it's true. Opposite me the rosy-cheeked family beckoned me into the Golden Country behind a tub of margarine as big as a swimming pool. Next to it was a poster for the Liberal Christian party, which read, in big block letters: Peace. Prosperity. Freedom.

April 30. Thought of writing a novel about my experiences ten years ago. I wish I had my diary for that year, but I can probably reconstruct it from memory. It could be called "The Last Man in Oceania." Or I could simply use the year as a title. But who in the '90s wants to read a historical novel about the '80s? Perhaps it should be a musical. I could use that year's hit: "It was only an April Day." And of course the "Oranges and Lemons" rhyme. And the Two Minutes Hate would make a great chorus. It would need a sexy title to sell well these days, like "Winston and Julia Get Laid." Or "SEXCRIME!"