

WINSTON [*weakly, vaguely*]. Yes.

O'BRIEN. Good! Now, then—just a moment ago I returned your blocks to you. You had five of them. Do you remember that?

WINSTON. Yes.

O'BRIEN [*pointing down at the row of blocks*]. There are five blocks here, Winston. Do you see five blocks?

WINSTON [*shaking his head as if he were in a trance*]. Yes.

O'BRIEN. I agree—it's difficult. But you begin to know it is possible?

WINSTON [*almost in horror*]. Yes.

O'BRIEN [*expansively*]. I like talking to you, Winston. Your mind resembles my own except that you are insane. Is there any question you would like to ask?

WINSTON. Any question I like?

O'BRIEN. Anything.

WINSTON. What have you done with Julia?

O'BRIEN [*smiling*]. She betrayed you, Winston. Immediately and unreservedly. It was a perfect conversion—a textbook case. We didn't even have to starve her.

WINSTON. You tortured her?

O'BRIEN. No. Torture is too brief in its effect. We re-educated her, using the appropriate incentives.

WINSTON. Does Big Brother exist?

O'BRIEN. Of course he exists. The Party exists. Big Brother is the embodiment of the Party.

WINSTON. Does he exist in the same way I exist?

O'BRIEN. You do not exist.

WINSTON. I think. I exist. I was born . . . and I shall die.

O'BRIEN. It is of no importance. He exists.

WINSTON. Will Big Brother ever die?

O'BRIEN. Of course not! How could he die? Next question.

WINSTON. Does the Brotherhood exist?

O'BRIEN. That is something you will never know, Winston. Even if we choose to let you live. It will be an unsolved riddle.

WINSTON. What is in Room 101?

O'BRIEN. You know what is in Room 101, Winston. The truth is here. [*Sharply, leaning forward with his four fingers extended.*] How many fingers?

WINSTON [*involuntarily*]. Five!

O'BRIEN [*smiling, making a motion to the GUARD*]. Feed him. Let him sleep for two hours. Then call me. [*He rises abruptly and steps away into the darkness. The lights dim and the stage is completely dark for several moments.*]

[*When the lights come up again, the scene is as before, with O'BRIEN seated in a chair talking to WINSTON, who is on the floor, facing him.*]

O'BRIEN. There are three stages in your reintegration. There is learning—there is understanding—there is acceptance. You have accomplished the learning. It is time for you to begin the second stage. . . . In reading Goldstein's book, did you actually learn anything that you did not already know?

WINSTON. Have you read it?

O'BRIEN. I wrote it.

WINSTON. Is it true—what it says?

O'BRIEN. As description, yes. As a program, no. The Party cannot be overthrown. The rule of the Party is forever. But why? What is our motive? Why should we want power?

WINSTON. You are ruling over us for our own good.

O'BRIEN [*leaning forward and very calmly, very dispassionately, slapping WINSTON's face*]. That was stupid, Winston—stupid. The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. The object of persecution is persecution. The object of torture is torture. The object of power is power.

WINSTON. You talk of power and forever, and yet you are growing old. You, too, O'Brien, must die.

O'BRIEN. I am only a cell. The Party will live forever. [*He leans in close over WINSTON.*] How does one man assert his power over another, Winston?

WINSTON. By making him suffer.

O'BRIEN. Exactly. Power is inflicting pain . . . tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again. Do you begin to see what kind of world we are creating? [*For answer, WINSTON turns his face away from O'BRIEN.*] It will be a world of fear and treachery and torment. Progress in our world will be a progress toward more pain.

WINSTON [*over his shoulder*]. Is there no room for love in your world?

O'BRIEN [*rising and circling around the pool of light to stand in front of WINSTON, becoming increasingly impassioned*]. In our world there will be no emotions except fear, rage, triumph, and self-abasement. Everything else we shall destroy. Everything! If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever. [*O'BRIEN gets hold of himself and comes back down to earth a bit.*] That is the world we are preparing. A world of victory after victory. And you will accept it, Winston, welcome it . . . become part of it.

WINSTON [*weakly*]. You can't.

O'BRIEN [*snapping out of it completely*]. What? What's that?

WINSTON. You cannot create such a world. It is impossible.

O'BRIEN. Why?

WINSTON. You cannot found a civilization on hatred and cruelty. It would never endure.

O'BRIEN. Why not?

WINSTON. It would disintegrate. It would commit suicide. . . .

O'BRIEN. Nonsense! You are under the impression that hatred is more exhausting than love. Even if it is—the individual's life may be shorter, but the Party goes on.

WINSTON. Yet somehow you will fail! Something will defeat you. Life will defeat you. The Spirit of Man will defeat you.

O'BRIEN. And you consider yourself a man?

WINSTON. Yes.

O'BRIEN. Do you actually think yourself superior to us?

WINSTON. Yes—I consider myself superior.

[*O'BRIEN gestures, and the two black-uniformed GUARDS step into the light.*]

O'BRIEN. Hold him up! [*The GUARDS pick WINSTON up and hold him firmly between them. O'BRIEN walks slowly completely around WINSTON, looking him up and down.*] You? You are superior? You're nothing more than a skeleton. You're in rags. Your teeth are gone. If you're the way the last man looks, the Spirit of Man can have you for a guardian.

WINSTON [*sobbing*]. You have done this to me.

O'BRIEN. You did it to yourself. Nothing has happened to you that you did not foresee in your first act of thought-crime. [*The GUARDS release WINSTON and he totters, almost falls. He stands swaying weakly.*] You've confessed to everything. You've plead for mercy. Your mind has been reconstructed. Is there any single degradation that has not happened to you?

WINSTON. I have not betrayed Julia.

O'BRIEN [*laughing*]. Why, you have told us everything.

WINSTON [*firmly*]. I still have not betrayed her.

O'BRIEN [*musling*]. No. No, perhaps not.

WINSTON. How long before they will shoot me?

O'BRIEN. It might be a long time. You are a difficult case, Winston . . . you have hidden strength. But don't give up. Everyone is cured sooner or later. [*Airily.*] In the end we will shoot you. [*He turns and steps out of the circle of light.*] I'll see you again. [*He turns again and comes right back to re-face WINSTON.*] Oh—I hope the rats won't bother you. Most of them are very well fed. The one's that aren't, well—you can try to make pets of them. [*WINSTON lurches forward in terror. He tries to grasp O'BRIEN. One of the GUARDS steps forward and almost casually pushes the weakened WINSTON away. He collapses onto the floor. The lights dim quickly. In the darkness we hear over the loudspeaker the scurrying and screeching of a great many rats.*]

[*When the lights come up again, WINSTON is alone. He is lying*