

Martin. An Eastasian prisoner of war who was given the graceful privilege of living within the Inner Party quarters, serving none other than O'Brien. Most prisoners of war get publicly hanged or shot, yet he was an exception.

He had been a high government official of Eastasia, in fact. He worked in Eastasia's equivalent of the Inner Party, and was one of the most prolific persons to be captured in war by Oceania. In exchange for sensitive intelligence on Eastasian tactics and plans, Martin was gifted with a new role: being O'Brien's personal servant. Little did Martin know, he'd work this job his entire life, a slave under the ownership of a deceptive, two-faced liar. Allowed to talk or emote he was not—years of suppressed feelings and thoughts gave Martin a lifeless, cold air about him. It could have been ten, twenty, or even fifty years that he had served the Inner Party. Martin developed a cold feeling towards Oceanic politics. Chances are, Martin had seen dozens upon dozens of "Winstons" come through O'Brien's office, each lifted to high spirits under the illusion of an internal rebellion, only to meet the same fate of death, either physically or mentally, every time.

The Party's ideologies showed itself clearly through Martin. For the sole purpose of having complete power over him, they had exposed him to dozens of rebellious citizens who will all either die horribly or turn into lifeless shells once they are done with O'Brien for the crime of thinking the wrong thoughts.

At a time, Martin and O'Brien may have been equals in their respective governments. Martin could have been an emissary when Oceania was at war with Eastasia, like it always had been. This explains why he could understand English, but not advanced Newspeak. When the tides of

war shifted suddenly, Martin found himself trapped in London and was forced to become a domestic servant—only because he had no other hopes in escaping Oceania. Any day he'd work, Martin could be taken out and killed.

But not today.

Night had fallen over the canopy of trees beneath which Martin laid. He had been panting and wheezing for what seemed like hours. He wasn't laying down intentionally, rather due to the extreme exhaustion he put himself through while running for his life from O'Brien's office.

Like any human with a sense of empathy, his mind had not loved Big Brother. He could not take the years of mental torture, the passive psychological manipulation and the sudden shift of roles he had been thrown into. Once a powerful diplomat, the small Eastasian man turned a frail mute. O'Brien's meeting with Winston was Martin's last straw. Though he was serving a similar role under Eastasia's government, he did not have the will to see another innocent life removed from existence by the workings of the Inner Party.

His heart palpitated faster than he ran. He had to have ran at least a hundred kilometers before completely collapsing under his own weight. Years of emaciation proved to do no well for Martin in physical regard, and that was made evident as blisters instantly formed beneath his feet, his arms shook, and his lungs stuck in a stitch that made breathing impossible. He lay there motionless, in a small, muddy ditch, shaded by only a few tall trees. Feelings of impending doom came about him—and it was right to come about him, as not a single footstep in Oceania

went past Big Brother. No doubt there was a team of Thought Police tracking his very path at this moment in time, reaching ever closer to Martin.

He shifted in and out of consciousness over time. Every time he woke, an extreme dizziness came about him. His arms and legs still remained in a contorted position. An attempt to propel his body from one ditch to the next would be made, yet his arms hadn't nearly enough muscle for the task. At this point, lying hopeless and in a state of paralysis, Martin accepted his fate. He always knew what would become of him anyway, regardless of whether he ran, or stayed. The thought police would catch him, he thought.

Another phase of unconsciousness came about him, until a loud, blaring noise shuddered Martin awake. He jolted awake like a thief who had been caught red-handed. The droning noise continued for another few seconds, decreasing in pitch, then stopped. Adrenaline pumped through all of his veins, and he managed to raise his head so as to give him a better view of the scene. It was none other than a train blaring its horn—the image of the headlights, the shudder of the train tracks and the plume of smoke rising above the figure in the distance was not a view Martin was unfamiliar with. He had managed to run within five-hundred meters of the closest train station. His luck proved fruitful.

After a series of groans and yelps from the pain of enabling his legs to function properly again, Martin helped himself up, and started advancing towards the halted train. On and on he drudged, coming closer and closer to what seemed like his last chance of escape. The back of the train would be less obvious, he thought. Hiding amongst the cargo would be his best chance to remain under cover. He slugged his weak frame over the gloomy field, illuminated only by

the moon, and onto the final carriage of the train. A smile managed to creep onto his face.

Martin was ecstatic.

“Out, out! Move on! Quickly!” A muffled voice commanded.

Martin peered out of the carriage’s side door for a mere second, before the sight of dozens of armed police advancing towards his position entered his frame. They marched tactically, guns pointed directly at the carriage Martin was in. Martin’s head was spotted, and his carriage was instantly infiltrated. Yells and commands were thrown back and forth, before Martin received a shocking blunt hit to the side of his skull. His head fell back on the wooden floor. Dozens of thought police surrounded him, ready to unload, yet they yielded when a gentleman in a suit entered the carriage and walked towards the dying Martin. He leaned over, and whispered the final words Martin would hear.

“Is this what you call freedom, Martin?” The soothing voice terrifyingly asked. “Freedom, Martin, is slavery.”

Another hit sent Martin into his eternal sleep.

by Shuayb Talic