

circle of confusion

'84

"Pilot"

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TEASER

CLOSE UP ON: BIG BROTHER, early 40s, with the charismatic smile of a natural leader. He addresses the camera directly.

CHRYON at the bottom: "The Morning Hate with Big Brother" (almost like it's a chirpy Today Show logo).

BIG BROTHER
Citizens. Compatriots. Dare I say,
friends? The sun rises on another
double-plus-good morning in Oceania.

INT. PACKED SUBWAY CAR - DAY

A retro-future dystopia, but it's still the 1980s so think big hair, bold colors and questionable fashion choices.

WINSTON SMITH, 20s, threadbare suit and world-weary sigh, carefully cradles a package under his arm. All eyes on telescreens above as Big Brother continues.

NOTE: These telescreens are mounted literally every five feet, so we'll hear the speech over the next few scenes.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREENS)
Sadly, due to scheduling errors, we have
no public executions today. But fear
not, for tomorrow we execute the man who
botched the scheduling.

EXT. THE MINISTRY - DAY

Winston heads towards the massive building looming over the city, industrial and fierce. More fortress than corporate HQ.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREENS)
No doubt the handiwork of insurgents
undermining the peace with their
traitorous crimethink.

ARMED GUARDS scrub anti-Big Brother graffiti off the grimy walls. We see a huge WANTED poster for EMMANUEL GOLD, 40's, a handsome guy with a bad-boy moustache.

INT. THE MINISTRY - LOBBY - DAY

Winston scans the bustling workers, as if waiting for someone. And then he sees her: JULIA HUGHES, 20s, mousy and adorable with an easy smile. Winston's spot of color in this world of grey.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREENS)
But Big Brother loves all citizens, and
chooses not to focus on the negative.

Winston beelines for the hall of elevators, timing it to cross paths with her.

She smushes into an already packed elevator, the last one to fit. She sees Winston and tries to give a small wave, but she's too jammed in to move her arm.

The elevator shuts, separating them. Back to a world of grey.

Behind him, another elevator, this one empty except for a single FRIENDLY MAN in a white smock, 50s, splattered in blood stains. He holds the door open for Winston, all smiles.

INT. THE MINISTRY - LOBBY ELEVATOR - DAY

Winston hits the 3rd floor button: "PROPAGANDA." The bloody man hits the 4th floor: "INTERROGATION."

FRIENDLY MAN
T.G.I.F., huh?

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - DAY

A dozen workers, sit around a shabby open desk floor plan. Everything cobbled together from spare parts. A huge oil painting of Big Brother fills one wall.

Winston hurries past the glass window of a sound booth. Inside, we see Big Brother himself, finishing his speech.

BIG BROTHER
In other news, the following items have been added to the emergency supplies sent to aid our valiant troops in the ongoing war with Eastasia...

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - MEDIA ROOM - DAY

Big Brother stands under the lights, talking directly at the CAMERA MAN filming his daily speech.

BIG BROTHER
Whiskey, canned potatoes, and instant corfee-- Er, coffee.
(winces at mistake)
Those caught hoarding these items will be immediately shipped to the joycamp for a week of relaxing labor... Have a wonderful day!

The second the ON AIR sign above him goes dark, Big Brother's entire demeanor changes. He paces the room, a neurotic mess.

BIG BROTHER

Well, that was a disaster.

(glares at camera man)

What the hell is corfee?! Who put that
in the teleprompter?

The terrified Camera Man looks to Big Brother's personal assistant SIMONE, 20s, her severe eye-shadow complimenting her humorless disposition. She shrugs. On your own, buddy.

CAMERA MAN

I swear it said coffee when I typed it--

BIG BROTHER

Are you calling me a liar? Because
that's clearly not what I read. Live. On
the air. To all my loyal citizens. Like
a goddamn moron.

CAMERA MAN

(second-guessing himself)

I don't-- Maybe I did it wrong? Typos
happen all the time--

BIG BROTHER

Not in my office. I'm afraid I have to
refer this matter to HR.

CAMERA MAN

No, please! Anything but that!

WHAM! The door BURSTS open. A small army of THOUGHT POLICE in full military gear storm inside, guns drawn.

In a blur of motion, they SLAM the Camera Man against the wall, zip tie his hands. Throw a burlap sack over his head.

The SWAT CAPTAIN reads from a clipboard with zero emotion.

SWAT CAPTAIN

You have been found guilty of treasonous
thought-crimes, code five-seven-dot-two.
We now begin your trial...

(flips to next page)

Guilty on all charges.

(flips page again)

And this concludes your trial.

The Captain and his squad drag the Camera Guy away.

SIMONE

Still a great speech, sir. One for the
history books... I'll have them add it.

Big Brother scrolls through the words in the teleprompter.
Gets to the line he flubbed and it clearly says "COFFEE."

BIG BROTHER

Huh. Guess it said coffee after all.

SIMONE

Should I ask HR to hold off or...?

Outside the room, the unmistakable sound of a GUNSHOT.

Big Brother and Simone share an awkward glance.

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLE OVER BLACK - '84 in a huge oppressive font.

END TEASER

ACT ONEINT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - RECEPTION DESK - DAY

A huge flipboard on the wall, like you see in old train stations. It reads: "WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN AT WAR WITH EASTASIA."

Behind the receptionist desk is RUTH, 60's, a little plump with grey hair. A constant bundle of nerves.

The phone RINGS at the switchboard, and she practically jumps out of her seat. Takes a breath. Then answers.

RUTH

Ministry of Propaganda. You're having a wonderful morning. How can I help you?

INT. BIG BROTHER'S OFFICE - DAY

At his polished oak desk, Big Brother looks back and forth at two mock-ups of a propaganda poster, deep in thought.

In each one, a Soviet-style graphic depiction of a menacing Big Brother towering over regular citizens with the words "Big Brother is Watching You" (in different fonts).

He looks up at Simone, who patiently awaits an answer.

SIMONE

You look bolder in this one--

BIG BROTHER

I look fat. Why am I twice the size of everyone else?

SIMONE

It's a metaphor for power, sir. Strength. No one is suggesting that you're husky--

BIG BROTHER

(tosses posters down)

No, no, start over. Destroy these. Then destroy the designer.

Simone nods, and scurries out of his office just as--

The telescreen on his desk POPS on. It's a hesitant Ruth.

RUTH (ON TELESCREEN)

Call for you on the secure line. The War Department.

Big Brother picks up the phone. Starts doodling on one of the rejected posters as he talks, adding muscles to his arms.

BIG BROTHER

Ah, yes, General. Tell me the good news from the front-- What?! I thought Eurasia was on our side... Gotcha, yeah... Is that regular napalm or...? Soooo no survivors then?

Big Brother stops doodling.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - JULIA'S DESK - DAY

Winston passes by as Julia casually redacts words in a thick book with a black marker as they chat.

WINSTON

So what's the hot new censorship these days?

JULIA

Apparently the words "War" and "Peace" are suddenly no-go. Which makes reading Tolstoy a bit of a challenge.

She holds up the cover of the book: Tolstoy's [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

WINSTON

Sorry I missed you earlier. Wanted to be the first to say Happy Birthday. Have you decided what you want for your extra birthday ration?

JULIA

(giddy with excitement)
Ok, I've narrowed it down to, like, twelve. You gotta help me decide.

Julia pulls out a black binder, pages of items on the ration list. We see pics of each one like it's a Chinese menu.

JULIA

Normally I go with booze or lipstick, but now I'm thinking, can I order off the banned items list? 'Cause the rules don't say I can't--

WINSTON

On my birthday, I lean more practical.

JULIA

What's more practical than booze?

WINSTON

Socks. They're sturdy. Dependable. And I can't afford what they go for on the black market.

JULIA
 Hmmmm, rations with high resale value. I like the way you think...

Julia flips through the binder, grins at the possibilities.

A fluttering of CLICKS catch everyone's attention. The flipboard on the wall changes to now read: "WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN AT WAR WITH EURASIA."

Disappointment ripples through the office.

WINSTON
 Ugh, I just finished un-writing the records from the last time we switched who we're bombing.

JULIA
 C'mon, somebody's gotta keep our truth straight.

Big Brother POPS up on a nearby telescreen.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREEN)
 Winston. In my office. Now.

INT. BIG BROTHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Winston sits across the desk from Big Brother, notices the poster with hand-drawn muscles. Big Brother quickly shuffles that under other papers.

BIG BROTHER
 Not gonna sugar coat it: Our troops took a double-plus ass-beating today, and obviously...
 (conspiratorial wink)
 That didn't happen.

Winston takes the hint, nods with a smile.

WINSTON
 I'll talk to Jerry in Preemptive Statistics, adjust the numbers of enemy casualties to what I'm sure they'll be eventually.

BIG BROTHER
 Yeeeeeah. Gonna need something bigger this time.

WINSTON
 We can distract the public. Have a ceremony to honor past military victories? Maybe a new patriotic song--

BIG BROTHER

Loving that idea. We'll definitely schedule that, but-- It's not enough. I need it to be like today never happened.

(beat)

Oh wait, that's it! Remove the date from the calendar!

WINSTON

Wait, you want today to just not exist?

BIG BROTHER

Unless you have a reason my idea isn't completely brilliant.

Winston hesitates, looks out the office window at Julia, fashioning party hats out of redacted book pages.

WINSTON

We've never deleted an entire day before. I don't wanna screw this up, maybe we should wait--

BIG BROTHER

I want it done before the end of the day. Which is not today. Because it's tomorrow. If it's not tomorrow by noon today, I'll personally escort you to the fourth floor myself.

Winston nods in understanding. Shit.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - WINSTON'S DESK - DAY

Winston clacks away at a typewriter, behind a desk plaque: WINSTON SMITH, RECORDS. He rolls the document into a plastic capsule, then places it in his desk's pneumatic tube--

WHOOSH! Off it goes into the bowels of the building.

Almost immediately -- DING! Another capsule with a note.

INSERT: "Are you sure you want to completely delete this date from history? YES or NO"

Big Brother POPS up on the desk telescreen.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREEN)

Winston, don't change that date yet!

WINSTON

That was a close one, sir. I almost--

BIG BROTHER

Just realized that would make today Saturday. Can't have you guys working on the weekend. I'm not a monster... Cancel Sunday too. Make today next Monday.

(beat)

Good morning! How was your weekend?

WINSTON

It flew by...

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREEN)

I'd say "I owe you one" but since no one can know about this, even I must forget the excellent work you've done here. Annnnd forgotten.

And just like that, the telescreen goes dark. Damn.

In defeat, Winston scribbles the extra dates on the note. Circles "YES" to delete them. Sends it off. WHOOSH!

Winston looks down at the brown-paper package he carried to work, now open to reveal a homemade chocolate cake. Icing on top that reads "Happy Birthday Julia!"

An idea hits. Shouldn't do this but...

He types a message, stuffs it in a different capsule in another tube. WHOOSH!

DING! The capsule returns and Winston pulls out:

JULIA'S PERSONAL FILE.

Full of photos and records of her entire life. And her birth certificate, dated 1/21/61.

Winston checks that the coast is clear, then WHITE OUTS her birthday. Rolls the page into the typewriter.

Starts typing a new birth date when--

The custodian, HENRY, 50s, in grease-stained coveralls, angrily rolls by with his cleaning cart. Glares at Winston.

HENRY

We ain't allowed to complain, so this is me simply stating facts. I missed my kid's sewerball game on Sunday 'cause it's now Monday.

Winston panics, frantically types a new birthday before Henry can see what he's working on. Doesn't realize it but we see that in his haste, he made a typo: 11/21/61.

He stuffs the birth certificate in the tube. WHOOSH!

WINSTON

Maybe I can change the record to have
his team win?

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - COPY MACHINE AREA - DAY

BRZZZZZ! Simone feeds the unwanted propaganda posters into an industrial-sized shredder, when she notices...

A book well hidden in the document loader tray of the nearby copy machine. Huh.

Pulls it out. Eyes go wide in horror.

INT. BIG BROTHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Simone stands in front of Big Brother's desk, deadly serious.

SIMONE

We have a rat.

BIG BROTHER

Huh. Must've escaped from Interrogation.
They're supposed to chew through
people's faces, not the walls--

SIMONE

Found this in the copier.

Simone holds out the book, by the corner, like it's toxic.

INSERT: A cheaply printed book, "Death to Big Brother: A Beginner's Guide to Rebellion." On the cover is a photo of Emmanuel Gold, handsome as ever with that moustache.

Big Brother rolls his eyes, annoyed. Didn't need this today.

BIG BROTHER

We gotta find whoever is trying to
spread those filthy lies.

(turns to Simone)

I need someone I can trust.

Simone blushes, looks up at Big Brother with adoration. She's waited forever to hear those words.

SIMONE

Well, thank you, sir. I'm flattered--

BIG BROTHER

Get me O'Brien.

Her shoulders slump at the unintended slight.

INT. MINISTRY SURVEILLANCE ROOM - DAY

A dark room lit only with the floor to ceiling banks of surveillance monitors, watching all facets of life around the city. Nothing goes unseen by the Ministry.

Big Brother and Simone stand with O'BRIEN, early 30s, who oozes cool in a tailored suit as he examines the book.

BIG BROTHER

I mean the nerve of this guy sending in someone to spy on me!

O'BRIEN

Don't worry, B.B. We'll find the traitor. No one's ever come up against the I.T. department and lived.

O'Brien tries to hand it back to Simone, who lets it fall.

O'BRIEN

I'll start a deep dive. Employee records, their family's records--

BIG BROTHER

Whoa, how long's this gonna take?

O'BRIEN

--sift through months of surveillance footage 'cause we don't know when the book was hidden. Should have a list of suspects in... thirty days.

BIG BROTHER

What, no! In that time, I could have the entire office wiped clean. Unperson all of 'em, get a whole new batch of workers.

Simone shoots a worried glance to an oblivious Big Brother.

O'BRIEN

And we lost the weekend, so I better get started, huh?

Big Brother fumes as O'Brien struts off.

BIG BROTHER

Dammit! This bureaucratic nightmare system isn't supposed to affect me!

Simone marvels at all the monitors. The power they represent. Pulls up the camera for the Propaganda Office. Zooms around at the faces of all the employees.

SIMONE

If I may, sir: we go rogue. Interrogate the staff ourselves--

BIG BROTHER

You know we have, like, a whole floor upstairs dedicated to that.

SIMONE

But I know how to torture someone using only my personality... All my ex-boyfriends have told me so.

Big Brother nods. Fair enough.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Custodian Henry scrapes off an "F" in "coffee" on the Coffeemaker. Using a sharpie, he adds an R to read "CORFEE."

Winston picks at his bland lunch, sits next to a shaky Ruth, who burns her nervous energy on a scarf she's knitting. They both stare over at O'Brien, who's chatting with Julia as she microwaves her food.

RUTH

We're all doomed. If he doesn't find the spy, we'll end up like the second floor.

WINSTON

Don't worry. They're not allowed to use flame throwers in the building anymore.

Winston twinges with jealousy at Julia and O'Brien.

JULIA

You coming to Big Brother's ceremony to honor military heroes? Dad's getting a medal. He'd love to see you again.

O'BRIEN

For you, anything.

The microwave DINGS and she takes out her food.

WINSTON

I didn't realize you two...

JULIA

Me and O'Brien go way back. Our dads fought together in the Battle of Huxley's Ridge.

O'BRIEN

I've known this one since Big Brother was still Little Brother... Seems I'll be working here a lot while we sort out this nasty spy business.

JULIA

Ooooo, I love office gossip. Who do you think it is? Always thought Dave in the insemination department was a bit shifty.

RUTH

We shouldn't guess. Don't like speaking ill of the soon-to-be-dead.

WINSTON

If we can help in any way... Quicker you find the spy, the quicker you can get back to more important things on your floor.

O'BRIEN

Don't worry. I can chew gum and flamethrow traitors at the same time.

O'Brien gives Julia a flirty wink as he struts off. Winston shakes his head, as Ruth sinks in her seat, terrified.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - O'BRIEN'S DESK - DAY

O'Brien works, surrounded by stacks of files. Ruth hesitantly approaches him, holding a birthday card.

RUTH

We're passing around a card for Julia's birthday if you wanna sign it?

INSERT: The card has Big Brother's face with the words "So You've Somehow Survived Another Year!" in a cartoon-y font.

RUTH

'Cause we're all friends here, right? And friends don't unperson each other. That'd be rude.

Winston rushes over to interrupt.

WINSTON

Uh, Ruth? That's from third floor only. We'd have to change who chipped in, then it becomes a whole thing--

But O'Brien holds up a yellow birthday card of his own.

O'BRIEN

I find it's a little more personal to write my own.

Ruth scurries away in defeat, her brown-nosing thwarted.

O'BRIEN

Got her a gift too, or do I have to clear that with you as well?

He pulls an ornate bowl from his messenger bag. The carvings go all the way through, making an intricate pattern.

O'BRIEN

A fruit bowl. Carved it myself from rare Eastasian wood.

WINSTON

It's got holes in it.

O'BRIEN

Better than your gift. Completely erasing her birthday from history...

WINSTON

Oh no, turns out we had the date wrong the whole time, even Julia. She was born today. The new today.

O'BRIEN

Hmmm, pretty sure Julia knows her own birthday. But hey, got the file right here for my internal review.

O'Brien rummages until he finds the birth certificate.

O'BRIEN

Huh. This says she was born in November.

Winston grabs the birth certificate from O'Brien.

WINSTON

Wait, what? No, that can't be right--

O'BRIEN

Problem is... That means her dad enlisted in the Air Rangers before she would've been conceived.

WINSTON

It's gotta be a typo. I'll correct the correction, before anyone finds out--

The main Telescreen POPS on, transmitting from the lobby, where the SWAT Captain guards a concerned GEORGE HUGHES, 50s, dressed in his military uniform.

SWAT CAPTAIN (ON TELESCREEN)
Ms. Hughes, we have a man here insisting on seeing you.

JULIA
Yeah, that's my dad. Just send him up.

SWAT CAPTAIN (ON TELESCREEN)
It seems you're both mistaken. Ran a security protocol and the dates don't add up. This man is not your father.

The telescreen goes dark. Julia stands there in shock.

WINSTON
Ok, so there's a teensy discrepancy on your file. But you know it's not true--

JULIA
If the government believes it, then I'm toast.
(off Winston's confusion)
They only trusted me with this job 'cause my dad's a war hero.

O'BRIEN
And if he's not officially her father, then she lied on her application. That's a fourth floor offense.

JULIA
Forget my extra rations. I'm a dead woman...

END ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - WINSTON'S DESK - DAY

Winston furiously types up a note.

INSERT: "Amendment to Julia Hughes life - URGENT!"

Stuffs the note in a capsule and tube, but nothing happens.

Winston bangs on the side of it. Still nothing.

DING! A capsule shows up. Winston pulls out the note.

INSERT: "Per orders, third floor tube operations have been suspended until investigation is complete."

WINSTON

But then how did...?

DING! Another capsule with another note.

INSERT: "Yes, we realize we sent you that one but no more will be forthcoming."

Winston rushes towards the...

ELEVATOR:

As he waits for it, Henry stares him down, never breaking eye contact as he rips the last three pages off a desk calendar.

Henry crumples each skipped "day," angrily throwing them in the trash. Never gonna let this go.

WINSTON

I told you I was sorry.

HENRY

(sarcastic)

Sure, it's not like anyone needed those three days.

QUICK MONTAGE: CONSEQUENCES TO DATE CHANGE.

-- WEDDING COORDINATOR consoles a confused BRIDE in her wedding dress, standing in an empty church.

WEDDING COORDINATOR

It's not so much the groom that's not here, as it is the date.

-- TEACHER stands before a group of MIDDLE SCHOOLERS.

TEACHER

Pay attention because there will be a quiz on Monday on everything we're about to cover today.

TEACHER'S AIDE steps in room, whispers in Teacher's ear. Teacher nods and starts handing out quizzes.

TEACHER

And here is your quiz.

The Students look at each other in confusion and fear.

-- SURLY COP writes a ticket to a MOTORIST he's pulled over.

COP

You have two days to get this fine paid before you are in violation.

He clicks his shoulder radio. Listens intently.

COP

Step out of the car, sir.

Cop taps his baton against his palm.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Simone has turned this place into a makeshift interrogation room. A hanging light bulb overhead for dramatic effect. Julia sits in the lone seat, playing it cool.

SIMONE

I know all about you, so you might as well confess... Where did you obtain the illegal book?

JULIA

Oh, this isn't about my dad?
(puts it together)
Hold on, are-- Are you accusing me of being the spy?

SIMONE

You sure do spend a lot of time around books.

JULIA

Yeah. Destroying them.

SIMONE

Well, someone around here is committing word-crimes against Big Brother--

JULIA

Is this retaliation because I found facial hair cream at your desk? 'Cause it's really not a big deal.

Simone flashes a worried glance at Big Brother, who sits at the other end of the room, feet up on the table. But he's too engrossed in reading the illicit book to notice.

SIMONE

(hisses under breath)
It's a medical condition!

Big Brother holds up the book, annoyed.

BIG BROTHER

What do people see in this guy? It's not like this is even that well-written.
(flipping through)
"Down with Big Brother... Resist Big Brother... Kill Big Brother..." It's like, we get it, move on.

SIMONE

People are sheep, sir. They'll believe anything if you repeat it loudly enough.

BIG BROTHER

Exactly! He's stealing my best moves.

INT. THE MINISTRY - BASEMENT ARCHIVES - DAY

This place feels like a musty library, windowless and worn by neglect. Rows of shelves containing ledgers and bound books.

Winston approaches the joyless ARCHIVIST behind the counter, 70s and pale. She hasn't been outside in years.

WINSTON

My typewriter conked out so I'm gonna correct some of the files by hand--

ARCHIVIST

(sips from coffee mug)
Sorry, I'm on my corfee break.

WINSTON

Mmmm, smells like a medium roast Eurasian blend. Guess you didn't get the memo we're at war with them now.

The Archivist SPITS out her coffee, drops the whole mug into the trash. Then gestures for Winston to make himself at home.

ARCHIVIST

Bring the adjusted record to me and burn
anything that contradicts your changes.
But for the love of all that's holy...

She points to a sign hanging on the chute to the flaming
incinerator that reads: "The incinerator is for facts ONLY.
Do not burn paper towels or feminine hygiene products."

INT. THE MINISTRY - THE ARCHIVE STACKS - DAY

Winston strides down the rows of books. Finger running along
the shelf edge, stops at the marker for: Hughes, Julia.

But the shelf is empty, save for a small note.

INSERT: "Checked out for investigation #37890 - O'Brien."

Damn. Winston looks around, frustrated.

Grabs the book right before it: Hughes, George.

WINSTON

(sotto)

Can't save your birthday, but at least
you can keep your dad...

Winston flips through the book, starts rewriting.

INSERT: Under the heading "Military Enlist Date - First Class
Air Rangers," Winston crosses out the date, and pushes it
forward nine months to match the new timeline.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Ruth, arms crossed as if giving herself a calming hug, now
sits in the chair opposite an aggressive Simone.

SIMONE

Dowdy. Plump. Tiresome. You're the kind
of person nobody suspects of being a
traitor, and that's why I suspect you.

Ruth sinks in her chair, as if trying to disappear.

SIMONE

Who are you working with? Why are you
reading this filth?

RUTH

I work with you. And I only read romance
novels--

(notes Big Brother)

But only state-sanctioned ones, I swear.
Lots of bodices ripped for the cause.

She shakily pulls a worn paperback from her purse. The cover features a Fabio-esque rendition of Big Brother embracing a scantily-clad woman under the title "MY BROTHER'S KEEPER."

Big Brother excitedly snatches the paperback.

BIG BROTHER

See? Now this is literature!

(reads from the book)

"Big Brother took Jasmine in his toned arms, her body heaving in moist anticipation. His throbbing member rising faster than Oceania's economy."

SIMONE

Some of your finest writing to date.

With a jealous HUFF, Big Brother taps the book's photo of Emmanuel, all smiles and prominent moustache.

BIG BROTHER

Yeah, but then they get suckered in by "Mr. Eat the Rich" here's good looks. Chiseled abs, dreamy eyes...

(an idea sparks)

I should grow a moustache.

SIMONE

No!

RUTH

No!

SIMONE

(covering)

No... one has suggested that to you yet? You'd look great with a moustache!

Big Brother ponders this, fingers his upper lip in thought.

INT. THE MINISTRY - BASEMENT ARCHIVES - DAY

Winston stands before the Archivist, holds up George's book.

WINSTON

All done! Process these changes in the next five minutes, I'll bring you some of the good corfee from the third floor.

SIMONE (O.S.)

Who's file is that?

He turns to see Simone standing there, arms crossed.

WINSTON

Official business from Big Brother himself. Super top secret.

SIMONE

I'm his personal assistant, who do you think schedules his top secrets? Hand it over.

Simone reaches for the book. But, Winston pulls it away and they start wrestling over it. Pushing. Shoving.

WINSTON

Only after they process it--

SIMONE

You're hurting my hand! And both of our dignities!

WINSTON

Archivist lady! Catch!

Winston tosses it to the Archivist, who turns around, unprepared. Whaaa? It sails right past her--

Into the incinerator chute. FLOOSH! The flames consume George's book whole.

WINSTON

Please tell me there's a back-up.

ARCHIVIST

That was the back-up. Hope it wasn't important, because anything in that book is completely erased from the system.

SIMONE

C'mon, Big Brother would like a word...

A defeated Winston stares helplessly at the flames.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Simone paces. Glaring down at Winston in the chair, who keeps nervously glancing at the clock.

SIMONE

Got somewhere to be? A secret rendezvous with the resistance? Tell 'em everything you've learned?

WINSTON

Don't think Emmanuel Gold cares how annoying I think you are.

Simone SLAMS down her hands on the table. No more good cop.

SIMONE

You've been acting strange all day.
Running around, hiding in the basement.
Planning a party for Julia, when clearly
it was my birthday last week and nobody
made a peep.

Big Brother looks up from the book and we get our first view
of the obnoxious fake moustache that Big Brother now sports.
Winston does a double-take.

BIG BROTHER

Excellent observations. It's important
that we notice anything out of the
ordinary...
(stroking moustache)
Anything... different.

Winston hesitates, knows he's expected to comment but...

WINSTON

Has your moustache always been so
fantastically full, sir?

Big Brother beams with happiness.

BIG BROTHER

Oh this ol' thing? Nice of you to say.

WINSTON

I'm feeling inspired. Might grow one
myself. So if we're done here--

SIMONE

We haven't even started! I am going to
break you, mister.

BIG BROTHER

(rubs moustache)
He's clearly proven his loyalty...
Winston, you're free to go.

SIMONE

But all the evidence--

WINSTON

--conveniently throws suspicion off of
you! The one person who "found" the book
in the first place.

BIG BROTHER

(eyes her suspiciously)
Hmmm, yes. They do say "treason often
starts at home."

He nods to the propaganda poster on the wall that says exactly that, with a graphic of small children being lead away in handcuffs by the Thought Police.

Winston rushes out before Big Brother changes his mind.

INT. THE MINISTRY - BASEMENT ARCHIVES - DAY

Winston pushes a hastily-made file with "George Hughes" scrawled on the cover across the counter to the Archivist. Pages fall out, as if it were a fifth grader's report.

WINSTON

I need this file entered into the official system!

ARCHIVIST

Absolutely. But first, I'll need form bravo-three-slash-two, in triplicate, with a signature from Big Brother.

WINSTON

No, it has to be done before--

Telescreens POP on, playing live footage of the ceremony in the Magnolia Garden. Oh no.

Winston rushes off, but we stay on the telescreen and--

CUT TO:

EXT. THE MINISTRY - MAGNOLIA GARDEN - DAY

A pristine courtyard, full of blooming flowers, used for photo ops. A stark contrast to the rotting world outside.

The ceremony is in full swing. Big Brother soaks up attention behind a podium, moustache and all, speaking to the crowd as the orchestra plays a rousing patriotic song.

BIG BROTHER

Today we honor the real heroes. Men like me... Who asked men like you to risk their lives to keep us all safe from those evil bastards in...

He sneaks a quick glance at the word written on his palm.

BIG BROTHER

...Eurasia.

APPLAUSE as Big Brother works his way down a line of stoic VETERANS, shaking hands, pins medals to their uniforms.

George spots Julia in the audience. She waves at him, so proud of her father. He smiles back, but then quickly returns to his professional stance as Big Brother approaches.

BIG BROTHER

And you are?

GEORGE HUGHES

George Hughes. It's an honor, sir.

Big Brother checks the list of names on his clipboard.

BIG BROTHER

Never heard of you.

And off that, ZAPPPPPP! The ceremonial medal falls to the ground as a Thought Policeman cattleprods George, another bags his head, and drags him off.

JULIA

Dad!

Big Brother moves down the line, all smiles, giving handshakes and medals to the other men like nothing happened.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE**EXT. THE MINISTRY - MAGNOLIA GARDEN - DAY**

Winston rushes in, but the ceremony's over. Henry cleans up.

WINSTON

Where's Julia?!

HENRY

Said somethin' about funeral
arrangements. Thought she could get a
father-daughter discount if she hurried.

A glint of metal on the ground catches Winston's eye...

George's discarded medal.

INT. THE MINISTRY - ELEVATOR - DAY

Winston hits the fourth floor button: "INTERROGATION" but
pulls his thumb away. The button seems wet. Is that...?

He wipes the residual blood onto his pants, grossed out.

INT. THE FOURTH FLOOR - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Winston bursts in, stops when he sees a dozen PRISONERS, bags
over their faces, sitting on metal chairs against the wall.

More Soviet-style posters: Big Brother frowning with the
caption "This Hurts Big Brother More Than It Hurts You."

A bored BLONDE RECEPTIONIST, 20s, with a valley girl accent,
mindlessly files her nails at the front desk.

BLONDE RECEPTIONIST

If you're here to be executed, you'll
have to wait in line behind the others.

WINSTON

One of your prisoners isn't supposed to
be here! You're making a mistake.

The Friendly Man (from the elevator earlier) enters, wiping
blood off his hands.

FRIENDLY MAN

We make puncture marks, flesh wounds,
deep cavity searches. But never
mistakes.

Winston holds up the medal, engraved "GEORGE HUGHES."

WINSTON

This proves George Hughes exists.
Complete with the government seal.

Winston hands it over. The Friendly Man examines the seal on the back: an engraved boot stamping a screaming human face.

FRIENDLY MAN

The Great Boot of Justice... Eh, could be a cheap knockoff. You know how many people think writing their name on something's a "get outta death free" card?

WINSTON

Yeah, it might just be an inconsistency. But you know how much Big Brother hates inconsistencies.

The Friendly Man frowns. Doesn't like where this is going.

WINSTON

Oh, huh. It's your job to eliminate everyone associated with them... Does that include yourself?

FRIENDLY MAN

(nervous)

Of course, if Big Brother acknowledges him, I suppose he exists after all.

(hands pin back)

Denise at reception can have him re-personed. We also validate.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - DAY

Henry balances nearby on a ladder, painting a huge garish moustache on the official Big Brother portrait on the wall.

Julia hugs her father, who looks a little roughed up, bruises on the face but nothing that will last.

JULIA

Sure you can't stay a little longer?

GEORGE HUGHES

Nah, love, better get home while I still exist. Can't be too careful 'round here.

George limps onto the elevator as the doors close behind him.

Julia looks at Winston hovering nearby.

JULIA

I wish I knew who saved my father, so I could thank them--

Winston opens his mouth to reveal himself.

JULIA

--And then strangle the person who almost got him killed.

Winston shuts his mouth.

Just then, Big Brother strides to the center of the room. O'Brien reluctantly trailing behind.

BIG BROTHER

Everyone! Circle up! O'Brien found surveillance footage of the spy!

O'BRIEN

(quietly to Big Brother)

I really think that this is a private matter, for your office--

BIG BROTHER

Nonsense! Let's out this traitor publicly!

Big Brother hits some buttons and instantly the grainy security footage appears on every telescreen in the office.

BIG BROTHER

Okay, mole. Poke out your head so I can whack it.

ON THE TELESCREENS:

Security footage of the room they're all standing in. After hours. A bit darkened. Empty.

Shuffling into view is a drunk Big Brother, carrying the book of rebellion. He swigs from a liquor bottle, slurring words as he reads aloud to himself.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREEN)

"Big Brother retains his dangerous chokehold on society by convincing the people not that the Emperor has no clothes, but that he never needed them in the first place."

(takes a swig)

First of all, asshole, I look fantastic in the nude.

BACK IN THE OFFICE:

Everyone averts their eyes. It's awkward. And deadly.

BIG BROTHER
Wait, that's me!

SIMONE
Get that off the screen!

She frantically looks for a way to cut the feed.

BIG BROTHER
I don't even remember that.

SIMONE
That's because it never happened, sir.

ON THE TELESCREENS:

Big Brother takes another swig, stumbles around.

BIG BROTHER (ON TELESCREEN)
"Oh look at me! I'm Emmanuel Gold! I
don't have the blood of the innocents on
my hands!"
(drops the mocking tone)
You're not better than me! Just 'cause
you have friends and a family and people
who love you!

With drunken rage, Big Brother SMASHES the book into the document loading tray of the copier machine.

BIG BROTHER
I'm gonna destroy your book. And then
everything you--
(drunken frustration)
How the hell does this shredder work?

It doesn't fit. He JAMS it in deeper.

He uses his fist to smash the big button labeled COPY.

BIG BROTHER
Shred! Shred! Goddamit, shred!

He slides down the machine. Passing out, up against it.

BACK IN THE OFFICE:

The footage ends, leaving the room in total silence. All eyes on the floor, the ceiling, anywhere but the screens.

RUTH
 (whispers)
 Is it over?

HENRY
 (whispers back)
 I don't know. 'Fraid to look.

Winston steps forward, and starts a slow CLAP.

WINSTON
 Congrats, sir. You've done it again.

BIG BROTHER
 Yes. Of course, I have... Done what?

WINSTON
 A speedy investigation that uncovered proof that there is no mole! Plus, staying late in the office when everyone else has already gone home. Diminishing the words of the enemies with such ferocity.

Big Brother smiles, runs with this re-framing of events.

BIG BROTHER
 Yes, exactly!
 (turns ire on Simone)
 You really had me worried earlier, with this crazy notion that there was a mole in my ranks.
 (sighs)
 You guys don't realize how hard it is to be me. Sometimes, I just-- don't wanna be surrounded by a bunch of "yes" men, ya know?

All the employees nod, enthusiastically.

EVERYONE
 Yep / Totally / Of course.

BIG BROTHER
 But, look how happy you are. A nice reminder that everyone loves me, and I should never doubt myself again.

Big Brother tries to rip off the fake moustache, but it won't budge.

SIMONE
 C'mon, sir. I have something at my desk that will remove that.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - WINSTON'S DESK - DAY

Winston looks forlornly at the chocolate cake. All that effort for Julia, but he couldn't save the party. Surprised when a clean-shaven Big Brother swings by.

BIG BROTHER

Thanks for what you did back there. I'll never forget this... until I do. So if there's anything you need from me, you got about ten seconds.

WINSTON

Well, we were planning on celebrating Julia's birthday, but had to cancel it when the calendar changed--

BIG BROTHER

What?! I love parties! Why don't I just make Julia's birthday today? I can do whatever I want.

Winston smiles. Has he pulled this off?

BIG BROTHER

Oh, but wait... Can't go to a party empty-handed.

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - DAY

Big Brother saunters in, carrying Winston's chocolate cake.

A couple streamers, made from the back of copy paper, hang above. As festive as this place can get. Ruth wears one of Julia's home-made party hats that sits askew.

BIG BROTHER

Happy Birthday, Julia! I baked this special for you.

Winston sighs. His credit stolen. But seeing the joy on Julia's face as she takes a bite, makes it all worth it.

BIG BROTHER

Did you choose your extra ration?

JULIA

Sure did! Best decision I've made in years!

Julia holds up a pair of thin socks, more excited than she should be. Big Brother shrugs, doesn't see the big deal.

BIG BROTHER

A little boring but hey, you do you.

Julia leans over to Winston with a smirk.

JULIA

Realized I can use these to strain the alcohol for my homemade moonshine. The gift that keeps on giving!

INT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - BREAK ROOM - LATER

The party in full-swing. People are laughing, and joking.

Henry in the b.g., back on the ladder, grumbling as he re-paints the Big Brother portrait to remove the moustache.

There's just enough cake left to be split between Simone and Winston. But, Simone selfishly takes the whole chunk.

SIMONE

(takes a bite)
It's a little dry.

Winston gets no cake. Or Julia's attention. O'Brien hands her the ornate fruit bowl.

O'BRIEN

And for the birthday girl.

JULIA

Oh, you always get me the most thoughtful gifts!

Julia gives him a friendly hug, then sets it down on the table with her birthday cards.

Big Brother chows down on a slice of cake, alongside Winston.

WINSTON

Shame he's gotta leave us, but looking forward to the real tomorrow when everything goes back to normal.

BIG BROTHER

One big happy family! But if I ever find out one of you is a spy, I'll rip your heart out and use it as a paperweight.

Big Brother strolls back to the party, looks for more praise.

Frustrated, Winston passes by the table of birthday cards. Each one sitting open and upright. Next to them is that damn fruit bowl.

He spots O'Brien's yellow birthday card. The inner message is long and thoughtful. Annoyed Winston flicks it over. Slides the fruit bowl to cover it.

But, that's when he notices that the intricate holes in the bowl align with words in the message. Like a code breaker. On closer look, these isolated words spell a new message!

INSERT: "resistance meeting tonight. three doors east of last location. death to bb."

Winston, shocked, looks across the room. Sees Julia, as sweet as can be, straightening Ruth's party hat.

He quickly moves the bowl to hide his discovery.

But now Winston knows the truth about her...

END ACT THREE

TAGINT. PROPAGANDA OFFICE - DAY

Remnants of the party all around as the office workers keep an eye on the wall clock. So close to quitting time.

Henry cleans up the discarded cake plates. Others put away files, pack up briefcases, grabs coats.

Ruth knits the last loop on her scarf. Holds it up, proud of herself. The end has "EASTASIA" lovingly knitted into it.

And behind them, a fluttering of CLICKS as the sign on the opposite wall changes once again:

"WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN AT WAR WITH EASTASIA."

A room of sighs, as coats and purses are set back down. No one's going anywhere.

Ruth stares in terror at the scarf she worked so hard on. Immediately, starts pulling out the loops, as if her life depends on it... because it does.

FADE OUT.