

## "The Thin Membrane"

By Kalee Kite

"Love is such a powerful source of rebellion." Some could argue it is true, others would say it is not. Love is a hard word to define. Is it when you do crazy things for people, or is it just thinking about someone all the time? There is no period for when people will fall in love and no way of telling how long it will last. In 1984, by George Orwell, when Winston and Julia started their relationship they most likely did not plan it to turn out the way it did. It reminds me of the book *Waiting*, by Ha Jin, which was about a girl, Manna Wu, who ends up waiting for a guy, Lin Kong, to divorce his wife in another city. The guy cannot seem to choose whom he wants to be with. Manna was a modern nurse, who lives in the hospital campus, where Lin works. Shuyu, his wife through an arranged marriage, lives back in the countryside with his daughter. Love is a powerful source of rebellion because it is a strong-willed emotion, like a covalent bond. This is the strongest bond and takes the most energy to break.

In the book *1984*, people are oppressed by society, for it is a totalitarian government. The government even wants to control whom you have kids with. "All marriages between Party members had to be approved by a committee appointed for the purpose, and through the principle was never clearly stated- permission was always refused if the couple concerned gave the impression of being physically attracted to one another." (Orwell, 57) With Julia and Winston's relationship was that there were feelings involved. They never asked for permission from the government. It was as if they were laughing in Big Brother's face, like little kids poking fun of someone because he wet his pants.

When Winston was captured, after he was tortured, the period where he just laid around his cell all day, all he could do was think. The reason they did not let him go was that it was a scare tactic. "He walked down the corridor, waiting for the bullet. He knew it was coming at any moment." (Orwell, 230) They were just waiting for him to snap or actually start talking to himself. When you give someone lots of time with nothing to do, they are bound to crack at some point. Winston did one night. "Suddenly he started up with a shock of horror. The sweat broke out on his backbone. He had heard himself cry aloud: Julia! Julia! Julia, my love! Julia! For a moment he had had an overwhelming hallucination of her presence." (Orwell, 230) Even though they were separated, they did not betray each other consciously; it was their mental state that gave them away. It was when their bodies could not take it to hold it anymore, the thin membrane that kept his emotions in finally broke. All that work just to rid him of emotions. It goes to show that love is a powerful form of rebellion because it is difficult for government to control emotions.

They were also very honest with each other. "He did not feel any temptation to tell lies to her. It was even a sort of love offering to start off by telling the worst." (Orwell 100). Winston trusted that by telling Julia the truth would not change their relationship. They believed they could withstand the reality of life and their relationship. They did not want to cover up the truth. It was the same with the book *Waiting*, Lin and Manna had a

trust between them. Manna knew that Lin had his obligation to his wife and daughter in Wujia Town, and she trusted that he was doing his best to end the arrangements on the best terms. Love is able to surpass through all the difficult and hard truths of reality and oppression by people.

It also relates to the book, *Waiting*, where people are oppressed in their working environment. Lin falls for a woman he works with in the city, Manna, but the problem is he has a wife, Shuyu, back where he lives in the countryside, Wujia Town. His wife in the countryside was an arranged marriage his parents had set up for him. They lived during the Cultural Revolution, where most of your life was run by rules you had to follow. "Never had they been together outside the compound; nor had their conduct revealed any intimacy, which lovers usually couldn't help showing, such as patting each other and signaling with glances." (Jin, 58) This quote showed what people thought was couple behavior and how Lin did not break the rules, like not leaving the hospital campus, since he was a married man. A couple could only leave the campus together if they were married. It is also related to the quote, mentioned earlier, from 1984, where the Party set rules for how marriage worked.

Lin would of never have thought of leaving his wife in Wujia Town had it not been for Manna Wu. He did not know what love was before he had met Manna. "Before his marriage, he had even doubted his manhood, because unlike other men who were crazy about women, he had never fallen in love with a woman." (Jin, 73) Like in 1984, someone else had chosen his marriage for him. It was love that got him to defy his obligations in life and the people that tried to control him. If Manna Wu had never brought it up, he may have stayed with his wife for the rest of his life. Every time he went back to Wujia Town and go to the courthouse, they would always side with the wife and she did not want to let him go. It was the love he had for Manna that kept him going no matter what others thought.

Love more like a covalent bond between two people that no one can seem to break easily. In both of the books, we can see that there were always people trying to break up love. It was mostly the government, but the public helped. In 1984, there was always a chance a child could turn you in and in *Waiting*, there were also people watching you. In both books, though, the relationship seemed to last for the most part through the hard times. It was after the hard times that they seemed to break apart. Love is like a thin membrane where it lets some stuff diffusion through, but if too much force is put on it, it could break.