

Summary:

Mr. Verloc, an agent provocateur, traveled alone to the foreign embassy, where he had been summoned at eleven in the morning. As he entered the embassy he reminded himself how inopportune it might be if one of the anarchist guests whom he often entertained at his shop may catch him at such a place. His work with the embassy was a well-kept secret at his business, which also served as his residence. The thought of visiting Mr. Vladimir did not bring a reign of contentment in Verloc's soul, rather forced him to realize how lazy he had become through the years. Now, standing in front of Mr. Vladimir, Verloc found himself receiving a verbal lashing of sorts due to his 'slothfulness' and 'inefficiency,' and was threatened with dismissal. Vladimir demanded Verloc take action to 'upset English complacency,' and specifically requested it be directed toward the Greenwich Observatory. Badly shaken, Verloc returned to his home behind the store and regained his composure before revealing his troubles to his anarchist friends. His wife, however, did manage to detect Verloc's anxiety and frustration. Mrs. Verloc married her husband, not for love, but rather the security of her brother Stevie, who she had protected since the days of their childhood. Stevie was taught to respect Verloc and listen to every word he said, so Verloc grew a tolerance for his presence in the household. Winnie, being troubled with Stevie's actions, suggested that he accompany Verloc on his long mysterious walks, and this soon became an established practice. After some time, Mr. Verloc suggested that Stevie go spend some time with Michaelis, an anarchist whom they were both fond of. Winnie approved, and Stevie embarked on his trip. A few days passed without any unusual occurrence until Mr. Verloc returned home from a walk rather upset. After showing signs that he was obviously worried about something, Verloc was taken by the London police that evening. While he was gone, Chief Inspector Heat brought a piece of Stevie's clothing to the house, and allowed Winnie to examine it. Upon the sight, Winnie became quite frantic, and demanded to hear know what happened. Mr. Verloc arrived home just in time to interrupt the conversation and speak with Heat privately in another room. Mrs. Verloc, very upset, heard her husband explain that he had trained Stevie to bomb the Greenwich Observatory, but he had tripped in the fog and blown himself to bits. When Heat departed, Winnie confronted her husband, without listening to anything he had to say. He sat on the couch, and in her rage, Mrs. Verloc grabbed a carving knife and stabbed him in the heart. While Verloc died on the couch, Winnie fled, and happens to meet with Comrade Ossipon, an anarchist friend who eyed her from time to time. Ossipon promised to help Winnie, but then discovered the happening of the past few days, and did not wish to be associated with her. Ossipon persuaded Winnie to accompany him on a boat, and then jumped off once it began moving, taking all Winnie's money with him. Feeling heavy-hearted for his actions, he read a newspaper and discovered Winnie had jumped from the boat and taken her life. This increased his sadness, and forced him to realize what he had done.

Characters:

Mr. Verloc, lazy and vulgar, is assigned to spy on any possible anarchists while posing as a small business owner and operator. He is instructed to bomb Greenwich Observatory by his superiors, although he believes such action to be irrational and radical enough to spark an anti-anarchist campaign by the London police. He is eventually murdered by his wife for using her brother as a pawn in his mission, and is responsible for his death.

Winnie Verloc, the wife of Mr. Verloc, married primarily to provide for the needs of her brother Stevie, whom she loves very much. After learning of her husband's contrivances dealing with her imbecilic brother, she kills Mr. Verloc and attempts to flee to the Continent, only to be deserted by her companion. After being deserted, she jumps from the steamer while in route to Calais and dies.

Chief Inspector Heat, a methodical man, and investigator for the London Police, attempts to solve the mystery of the bombing by following convention and other standard procedures. With his inability to comprehend the actual motives for the act, he arrests Michaelis, the most harmless anarchical propagandist. Due to a new commissioner's insistence and a small portion of evidence, he is forced to approach Mr. Verloc, who has been quite helpful in previous cases.

The Assistant Commissioner, recently accepting a position in the London Police force, realizes the quandary of relying on standard police procedures. Questioning Chief Inspector Heat's methodology, he eventually gains an active role in the investigation of the observatory bombing.

Privy Councillor Wurmt, a representative for the foreign embassy, demands Verloc be reprimanded and given instructions.

Mr. Vladimir, the First Secretary of the embassy, accuses Verloc of indolence and pressures him to bomb the Greenwich Observatory so the British People may renew their European responsibilities.

Comrade Ossipon, "the Doctor," escapes with Winnie Verloc after she murdered her husband, and is willing to share the bank account, but deserts Winnie when he thinks she may begin to become suspicious of him. He holds quite remarkable anarchical viewpoints.

Michaelis, or the "Apostle," is arrested by Inspector Heat, so that the inspector would not lose prestige. An ideal anarchist, he writes a book of his experiences while in prison. Lady Mabel, his patroness, cares for him.

Professor X, the perfect anarchist, has grand visions of creating the perfect detonator. For protection he strapped explosives to his physically deformed body, and supplied Verloc with the necessary explosives for the bombing.

Karl Yundt, the old terrorist, is a man of much talk but little action.

Stevie, Winnie's half-witted brother, is manipulated into Verloc's scheme and killed when the bomb accidentally explodes.

Sir Ethelred, The Home Secretary of the Assistant Commissioner reports progress of the bombing investigation.

Lady Mabel, the young patroness who supports Michaelis.

Toodles, Sir Ethelred's young secretary

Glossary:

Embassy: embajada
Summoned: convocado
Reminded: recordar
Reign: reinado
Contentment: alegría
Due: debido a
Threatened: amenazado
Dismissed: despedido
Regained: recuperar
Manage to: conseguir
Revel aligns: estar en contra
Household: hogar, familia
Sorrow: pena
Mopped: secar
Allow: permitir
Upon: encima
Sight: vision
Frantic: desesperado
Departed: marcharse
Couch: sofa
Rage: rabia
Grab: agarró