

Little Brother

ByteNoise

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Imagine if Winston Smith from Nineteen Eighty-Four had been a modern-day hacker, as rebellious and defiant as Tyler Durden from Fight Club and V from V for Vendetta, but without the penchant for blowing things up - just a belief in the right to privacy and freedom.

As far as novels go, I'd wholeheartedly recommend Little Brother. Much like Nineteen Eighty-Four, "fun" doesn't seem like the right word to describe the experience of living vicariously through the protagonist's eyes, but "thrilling" is about right. I don't want to spoil too much because I sincerely hope you decide to read it, but it's refreshing to read a story in which the hero is fighting for freedom, yet is hip enough to recommend Wikipedia articles and Google searches to the reader.

This book is more than just a novel, however. It's a warning, and it's a manifesto. It's set in the near future, painting a chilling picture of the direction the Department of Homeland Security would head in given the chance. What makes it so scary is that it's easy to imagine it coming true, given the history of their ADVISE project.

It's important for young readers to realise how much power they have to make the world a better place if they just work together, and this book may just help them do that. Conversely, older readers will understand the politics and hopefully learn a bit

more about the hacker mindset.

If you're a hacker, you probably want to explain to your friends and family why you read 2600 Magazine and take things apart to understand how they work, but more than that, you want them to be able to get a sense of the thrill of learning for themselves how things work.

Lending them this book might well be a good place to start. Cory Doctorow clearly understands the political and social importance of modern technology, but unlike far too many hackers, he can also explain the concepts of things like public key cryptography and Bayesian maths simply and clearly - and explain why they're important.

Take blogging, for example. Many people have probably overlooked the importance of decentralised publishing, but it's a truly democratic medium. The author clearly demonstrates why it's harder for bad people to continue doing bad things if anyone passing by can tell the whole world about it.

Don't take my word for it, though. You can download and read as much of the Creative Commons licensed eBook as you like, and make up your own mind whether you want to buy a copy for yourself, or for anyone else for that matter. The author recommends that anyone who enjoyed the eBook but doesn't want to buy themselves the real thing can instead donate a copy of it to a school. In my opinion, this is a much better strategy than suing fans.

So please, download this book, but don't stop there. It's a call to arms. Try out some of the projects mentioned in the novel, and experience for yourself the joy of figuring out how technology works. If we work together, we can make technology continue to

work in the interests of the people, not just the governments and corporations.