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Creative Writing: No More Teachers' Dirty Looks

A gray cloud casts itself over the city of Minneapolis on a brisk Monday morning. To most people living in the town that was once an educational powerhouse, it seems as though every day is overcast. For the last 1,376 days, the concept of learning has been outlawed. First it was graduate school, then college, until it reached preschool. Now, all books written before 2050 have been incinerated. Why this happened is a magnificent question, but answering it requires a great deal of explanation.

The ban on education began after the rioting that followed the war. Essentially, the government decided that the only way to obtain complete control over America would be through education. Then they decided that in order to control education, they had to start with the children. Because of these oppressive circumstances, millions of children are not receiving adequate education, not to mention the millions of others who were forced to stop their schooling mid-year once the law was put in place. When a law is put in place, there will always be people that break it. There are a series of underground schools that many risk their lives for by attending. For some, the risk is all too large; all participants face lifetime solitary confinement if discovered. This information may spark the question, if kids aren't in school, what do they spend their time doing?

Take young Penny Pearson for example. At just seven years old, Penny doesn't remember the few months of preschool she attended prior to the new system. She has no siblings because

her parents did not want to rob another child of their right to education. Penny's mother is different these days. As a former lawyer, she finds no purpose in life without education. Most of the time she stands over the sink, washing dishes for hours at a time until they're so clean you can practically see your reflection. Penny tries her best to ignore her mother's abnormal behavior. Her father goes off to his government job every morning and returns late each night. He used to be a local politician, but he has been forced to work for *them* now. This means that Penny is nearly always alone. She can't go to school, can't read, can't interact with others unless supervised by an official agent. Penny doesn't even know what a book is.

She's awoken at 7:00am by the government-issued alarms that are required in all households and cannot be turned off. This life is normal to her. She gets up and goes to the kitchen to eat her breakfast. A bland combination of oats and eggs. Food products have been simplified so people aren't interested in the origins of plants and animals. Her mother is stationed at the sink. "Good morning mother, I hope that you were able to sleep well last night," says Penny. No response is given, but Penny doesn't think twice. She is used to this behavior. Penny finishes her meal and gets dressed for the day ahead. She goes outside and heads to the work zone. Children with two working parents are required to attend "structured solidarity" until they're old enough to have careers. Those with one at home have a different kind of structured time. The government fears that if a child is left alone with one parent, they may be illegally educated. Day in and day out, Penny builds for the government. Buildings, government-assigned housing, even prisons. Millions of others do as well, but they are all separated by zone.

She clocks in and the noises start to blare. Being left in silence for longer than 25 minutes is a crime. All are required to listen to a series of pitches for most of the day to prevent them from formulating intellectual thoughts. Speakers are surgically implanted into the ears when

people are babies, and are used for thought oppression as well as government announcements.

The hours pass and Penny keeps on working. Periodically an announcement rings in her ear.

State your name to ensure you are working. We will now complete a scan of your surroundings.

Remember, we will always be aware if you misinform us. “Hello. I am Penny Pearson, and I am working in my assigned zone.” The brief interaction is the only noise Penny hears until evening when she heads home for dinner.

The evening meal is uneventful. Her father shares rehearsed anecdotes about the terrific day he had at work. Penny details the success rate of her construction, and apologizes for not reaching 100% potential. The family parts ways and Penny heads up to her bed before the nine p.m. alarm sounds. She will wake up in 10 hours and relive the exact same day. This is how life should be, according to *them*.

