

## "DEAR MOM, YOU'RE RUINING ME" Jean Van Leeuwen

Dear mom,

I am working very hard on cleaning my room. But I want to go to Katy's this afternoon to work on our Halloween costumes. Can I finish tomorrow? I would get up early and do it before breakfast and I'll do a good job. Please? Write back.

Love, The Prisoner in Tower # 3

Dear Prisoner,

No.

Love, Mom.

For days a time Sam's mother never came up to her room. And then one day Sam would come home from school and find the Condemned sign on her doorknob. Her mother had made the sign. It said: THIS ROOM IS CONDEMNED.

ITS OWNER MAY NOT GO ANYWHERE OR DO ANYTHING UNTIL THE PREMISES ARE RESTORED TO NEETNESS. In other words, Sam was grounded until she cleaned her room.

It wasn't fair. She was always getting the Condemned sign. Bradley hardly ever did. And his room was really disgusting, with posters of rock stars and basketball stars and movie stars wearing tiny bikinis covering every inch of his walls, and even suspended from the ceiling. But, her mother pointed out, his floor was clean. And his desk. That was all she cared about.

Sam had been imprisoned in her room for three hours now. She sat on the floor, looking at everything she was supposed to be putting away. It was possible she might be there all day.

There were her clothes, piled high on her chair and overflowing onto the floor. Assorted shoes. An umbrella from when it rained on Tuesday. Library books. Magazines with pictures of adorable teen-movie stars that Rebecca had lent her. Her piano music from yesterday's lesson. And odds and ends of junk: nail polish remover, cotton balls, a tennis-ball, wadded-up notes from Katy, rocks from rock collection they were making for science, pencil stubs, gum wrappers. And about twenty crumpled tissues.

The thing to do, Sam decided, was sort everything into piles. A pile of dirty laundry, a pile of her dresser drawers, a pile to throw away. That was how her father, the organization man, would do it.

She sighed. It was conceivable she could be imprisoned in her room all week-end. She decided to paint her finger nails instead.

**I. Find true and false statements. (fill in T or F)**

1. Sam was a schoolgirl.
2. She was the only child in the family.
3. The above mentioned episode occurred in winter.
4. Sam was put into prison.
5. Sam was often punished by her mother for the constant disorder in her room.
6. Sam's mother was abusive and aggressive.

**II. Choose the correct variant**

1. As a punishment the girl was not allowed to:
  - a) visit her friend;
  - b) attend the party;
  - c) leave the room until it is cleaned.
2. Sam wanted to go to Katy's because she wanted:
  - a) to prepare costumes for the party;
  - b) to gossip about their classmates;
  - c) to do homework together.
3. Bradley was fond of:
  - a) basketball stars;
  - b) rock, movie and basketball stars;
  - c) posters of stars.
4. The mother didn't scold Bradley because:
  - a) she liked Bradley more than Sam;
  - b) he was physically handicapped;
  - c) the floor in his room was always clean.
5. Sam's clothes were:
  - a) scattered around the room;
  - b) piled on her chair,
  - c) kept in a wardrobe.

6 Concerning her possessions lying on the floor Sam's decision was:

- a) to sort everything into piles;
- b) to throw everything away;
- c) to put everything into her dresser drawers.

**III. Answer the questions.**

1. What sign did Sam see on her doorknob?
2. Why did Sam think that it wasn't fair?
3. What was Sam doing in her room?
4. What kinds of things were there on the floor?
5. What did she decide to do first?
6. What did she do at the end of the story?

**IV. Make up six questions of different type to the text.**