

WALLS

by

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EXT. FARM YARD -- NIGHT

The tip of a stick completes a fifth parallel line in the dirt.

LAURA, a thirteen year-old girl, face stained with tears, makeup running, lipstick smudged, looks up from her drawing.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (O.S.)
(demanding)
What does that mean?

SIMONE (O.S.)
(gently)
What does that mean?

Laura does not answer.

CUT TO BLACK

FADE IN

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Laura is an awkward, lanky, thirteen-year-old girl in a plain dress. She walks into a classroom. She's very different than the fifty or so neatly and, despite all being from different ethnic groups, homogeneous-looking adolescent Consumers already in the room.

The girls and boys all have a "look" about them.

TWO BOYS start to tussle in a corner.

An intercom signal chimes.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES(O.S.)
Student Consumers 313 and 536, you
will sit immediately or face
further disciplinary action.

The two boys take their seats.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (O.S) (CONT'D)
Student Consumers 313 and 536 will
each have 15 credits taken from
their rewards accounts.

Laura takes a seat at a desk that faces in the same direction as all of the other seats. A touch screen built into the desk lights up.

SCREEN

Good morning Student Consumer 982.
A good consumer produces to
consume.

Above a main electronic screen at the front of the room, a string of letters and numbers races across another screen that spell "Pure Joy Corporation School for the Gifted Consumer: Number 8." A series of commercials advertising every sort of game, clothing item and device an adolescent might want, follow.

More advertisements promoting the "look" compete for attention on the walls of the classroom.

A chime sounds. Any students still on their feet, sit. A LAST STUDENT runs in as the door to the room closes automatically.

The desk next to Laura's is empty.

Another chime sounds and the face of BRANCH MANAGER JONES - a face that personifies calm, careful and attentive teaching -- the perfect teacher -- appears on the main screen.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

Good morning Level 9 Student Consumers. I hope you are all ready to have a productive day in your training to become effective consumers. Please remember to pay attention only to your own work. Don't worry about your friend. Your friend's problems are not your problem.

ALL STUDENTS

Good morning Consumer Jones.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

On the screens at your desks, you will see the image of page 98. Begin your lessons now. Continue until you see the stop sign. In forty-five minutes you will be quizzed and rewarded for your efforts. If you finish early, sit quietly. A good consumer produces to consume.

Branch Manager Jones' face fades from the main screen. All of the students begin to interact with the screens built into their desks.

The room is silent save for the advertisements that continue to intermittently sell products.

COMMERCIAL

Don't let your eyebrows get in the way of productivity.

There is another chime.

Students in the room look up at the main screen.

Branch Manager Jones' face reappears.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

Level 9 Student Consumers of Pure Joy Corporation School for Gifted Consumers, in a moment, your door will open and a new student, Student Consumer 658, will enter. Please remain calm and productive. You will be able to speak with him in two hours time during your physical necessities break.

The main screen goes blank. All the student consumers return to work.

The door opens. STUDENT 658, a tall, handsome, adolescent boy, enters the room and takes the seat next to Laura's.

Laura can't help but look over and smile at him.

He does not respond to her smile. Instead, he looks down and begins to work on the screen in front of him.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD -- DAY

A set of mathematical algorithms is written with a stick in some dirt.

The stick is held by Laura, who sits at the edge of a playground.

The playground is enclosed by a high wall on which hang electronic billboards which flash bright, colorful and loud commercials like: "Have you asked your parents about your next reward for the schoolwork you do? You know they can't say no." And, "Walls are there to help you be the best consumer you can be. Have you thought about what your snack will be this afternoon? How about a Pure Sugary Bar from the folks at Pure Joy!"

Laura looks up at the sky. A bird flies up above. Her gaze follows it as it disappears behind a wall.

A shadow falls across her face.

Instinctively, she slides her foot to cover the equations she's written out in the dirt.

Student 658 smiles at her.

JIM
Hi.

LAURA
Hi.

JIM
Can I sit down?

LAURA
Sure.

JIM
I'm Jim.

Laura looks at him quizzically.

JIM (CONT'D)
(as if reciting his rank
and serial number)
Student 658 in Level 9 at the Pure
Joy School for the Gifted Consumer:
Number 8.

Laura has to laugh at his overly serious recital.

LAURA
Laura.

She puts out her hand. They shake.

JIM
You've been at this school long.

LAURA
Uhuh. All my life.

JIM
Your parents have never been
transferred?

LAURA
Low skilled. Subsistence farming.

JIM
Yeah, but still. Never transferred.

LAURA
Nope.

JIM
Don't you want to see all four
corners? The South Wall? The Hub?

Laura shrugs.

Jim points down to the algorithms in the dirt.

JIM (CONT'D)
What were you writing in the dirt
here? Looks like math. You like
math?

LAURA
It's OK. We went on a school trip
to see the Southwest Corner, once.

JIM
How was that?

LAURA
OK, I guess.

JIM
I hear it's almost a perfect right
angle. I've only seen what they
call the Northeast Corner. But it's
just a curve. You can't really tell
where one section of the wall
begins and where the other ends.

A chime sounds, students head toward a door.

JIM (CONT'D)
See you inside.

He smiles.

LAURA
Yeah.

She smiles back.

EXT. ROAD AWAY FROM SCHOOL -- DAY

Laura rides a bicycle away from the walled-off school as
other students walk and ride away.

At regular intervals of a few blocks - an electric billboard promotes "the look" and products to young and old alike.

COMMERCIAL

Save time. Be productive with a new
vacu-mop!

On his bike, Jim separates from a pack of students and catches up to Laura.

JIM

You head this way too.

LAURA

Yeah, the farm is up this way.

They ride along for a little bit.

Laura looks at Jim. Jim smiles back. They reach a fork in the road - a huge billboard there. "Out with the old. In with the new. Keep your home fresh and clean with Pure Joy Cleanser!" A WOMAN with "the look" smiles.

JIM

I'll see you tomorrow.

LAURA

Yeah. See you.

As Laura rides away, she looks back.

Jim rides away down the other road.

Laura turns to ride up her road.

Jim turns to look at her.

EXT. ROAD DIRECTION OF FARM/WALL - DAY

Laura heads up toward a small farmstead beyond the last billboard, right next to a huge, gray, slick-sided wall that extends many thousands of feet straight up beyond the clouds.

EXT. FARM YARD -- DAY

Laura gets off her bike and heads into a small house attached to a small barn. The wall looms large next to the tiny farmstead.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

DANIEL, 40s, sits in a simple chair in a bare-bones kitchen. He knits two large pieces of cloth together.

DANIEL
Hello student consumer 982.

LAURA
Dad.

DANIEL
Just testing....

LAURA
I get enough of that at school.

DANIEL
Did you let them know what you're capable of?

Laura grabs an apple and bites into it as she sits in a chair in the plain kitchen. She shakes her head in the negative.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Good. Did you buy anything?

LAURA
You know I had to.

Daniel nods as he sews.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Where's mom?

DANIEL
In there.

Laura jumps up.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Tell her dinner will be ready in half an hour.

INT. BARN -- DAY

SIMONE, 40s, Laura's mom, with chalk in hand, looks at something in front of her

As a door opens behind her, Simone spins around.

SIMONE
It's just you.

LAURA
Hello to you too.

For an instant, before the room is transformed back into a standard barn with hay, a horse stall and farm equipment, a set of equations and illustrations flash by on blackboard that is flipped out of view.

SIMONE
You're home early.

LAURA
No. Regular time.

SIMONE
Let me show you something.

LAURA
Dad says that dinner will be ready
in half an hour.

Simone ignores that sentence and pulls open the horse stall gate, pushes aside some hay with her feet, locates a handle and pulls open a hatch.

INT. CELLAR -- DAY

A still steams and drips alcohol into a milk pail.

Simone and Laura climb down a ladder.

Laura walks up to the pail and picks it up.

LAURA
How much?

SIMONE
Almost a gallon. But that's not the
most exciting bit.

Simone heads toward another section of the cellar. In the dim light of the open hatch, she and Laura walk up to a work table. Simone lifts a cloth that covers a contraption of some sort.

LAURA
It's the nozzle.

SIMONE
Yes.

LAURA
So you're almost done.

SIMONE

A couple more gallons and we'll be ready to go.

Simone turns back and looks at the still.

Drip, drip, drip: The alcohol slowly drips.

LAURA

Are things really better on the other side of the wall?

SIMONE

They have to be.

LAURA

You believe that?

SIMONE

Don't you?

LAURA

Yes.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

The face of that picture perfect teacher, Branch Manager Jones, is on the screen.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

Who has the answer to the algorithm on page 23?

In the classroom, hands shoot up.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (CONT'D)

You will be rewarded with 6 credits to spend at the commissary. You may have had your eye on a new dress or a new football to throw around with your friends. Now's your chance? Who has the right answer?

More hands shoot up.

But Laura sits quietly and looks at the screen in front of her, algorithms stare back at her. She looks at them, calculating them out in her head.

Jim looks at her.

Laura notices him looking.

She smiles. He smiles back.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (CONT'D)
Student Consumer 453 in School 18.

STUDENT 453 (O.S.)
67, Consumer Jones.

CONSUMER JONES
Congratulations Young Consumer 453.

The other students in the classroom sit down - dejected.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD -- DAY

Students are lined up at the commissary, a fancy vending machine with a touch screen. They approach it one by one and use the touch screen to chose products: The latest in cheap adolescent knickknacks.

Laura walks up to the machine and chooses some lipstick.

SCREEN
15 credits left. A good consumer
produces to consume! Enjoy your
day.

EXT. ROAD AWAY FROM SCHOOL -- DAY

Students walk and ride bicycles away from the school.

But Laura and Jim are not among these students.

EXT. GRASSY BANK BESIDE A RIVER -- DAY

Laura's and Jim's bicycles lie on their sides in the grass behind a billboard.

Jim stands in its shadow next to the river that flows slowly by.

He tries to skip a stone. But the stone plops directly underwater.

Laura stands next to him: Her lips a little redder than before.

LAURA
You really are bad at this.

JIM
I told you. I've only seen it done
in video games.

Laura stands, picks up a stone and skips it at least five
times across the silky surface of the water.

JIM (CONT'D)
Wow!

Jim picks up a stone.

JIM (CONT'D)
Like this?

He shows her how he holds the stone.

LAURA
No.

She moves closer to him, reaches out and takes his hand with
both of hers.

She moves his fingers around until they correctly hold the
stone in preparation for skipping.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Like this.

She looks into Jim's eyes. The two young people look closely
at each other.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Do it.

JIM
What?

LAURA
Skip it now.

Jim looks at his hand.

JIM
Yes.

He turns toward the water and skips the stone four times
across the surface.

He turns around all smiles.

EXT. ROAD AWAY FROM SCHOOL -- DAY

Jim and Laura ride away from each other, up and down their respective forks in the road.

Laura ignores the three billboards that flash their messages as she rides past. She looks back at Jim and watches him ride down the road. Then she turns and continues on her way.

Then, Jim stops and looks at Laura ride up toward her farm and the wall.

After she disappears around a bend behind the last billboard, he turns his bike around and heads back toward the school.

INT. KITCHEN -- MORNING

Simone completes some cleaning chores as Daniel comes in and takes off muddy boots.

He grabs a bowl of food from a simple refrigerator and sits down.

Laura comes in. But she's different. She has some makeup on and has a belt around her waist that accentuates her figure. Ever so slightly, she looks more like the adolescents in the commercials.

Daniel looks over at his wife.

DANIEL

What...

Simone shuts Daniel down with a look.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What's going on at school today?

Laura looks at him quizzically.

LAURA

Um. Nothing.

SIMONE

Have a good day.

LAURA

Thanks.

DANIEL

Don't let them know what you're capable of... Remember that.

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)
They'll leave us alone if they
think we're just country bumpkins.

LAURA
I know that... It's harder than you
think, though.

SIMONE
Why do you say that?

LAURA
Their world is so easy to like.
It's all so easy to like.

DANIEL
It's not real. Don't believe for a
second that it's real. What's
beyond the wall is real.

LAURA
I know. See you later.

Laura heads out for school.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE -- MORNING

Jim stands at near attention in front of a desk in an office
decorated with the ubiquitous advertisements. Branch Manager
Jones, in a professional suit, sits behind a neat desk.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
They are not good consumers.

JIM
But she's a nice girl...

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
She's been lying about her
abilities since she's been a small
child. What kind of consumer would
do that?

JIM
I don't know.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
Exactly, you don't know.

Branch Manager Jones changes her tone.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (CONT'D)
Sit down.

Jim looks at Branch Manager Jones, who nods at Jim. He sits down.

Now Branch Manager Jones stands up.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (CONT'D)

Look. These people are leeches taking from the economy and not adding anything back. How do you think all of this gets created?

Branch Manager Jones gestures toward an advertising screen.

Jim looks.

On the screen, a young man who resembles Jim smiles happily in a commercial for a hair product: "Always Pure Joy! Always your best!"

JIM

Consume as much as you can, so all produce as much as they are able.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

It's an ideal, of course. Reality is always a bit messier. But this family...

JIM

They're not even trying. They're just taking advantage of the natural order. I don't think her family is giving Student Consumer 982 the opportunities she deserves.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

Exactly. And that's not OK.

JIM

No.

BRANCH MANAGER

It's not fair.

JIM

No. It's not fair.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

Get her to admit what she knows. Today.

Jim stands up.

JIM

Thank you, Branch Manager.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES

No, Consumer, thank you.

Branch Manager Jones shakes Jim's hand.

EXT. GRASSY BANK BESIDE A RIVER -- DAY

Jim skips a stone across the water.

There is clapping behind him. He turns and flashes his electric smile.

Laura smiles and leans back on the grass. She's "very pretty" in an even more "conventional" way now.

LAURA

I told you, you could do it.

Jim runs over to her and lays down next to her.

She lies down too.

He moves his head closer to her. She doesn't pull away.

He kisses her and then lies on his back.

The two teenagers look up at the sky.

Clouds float by. A bird on the wind.

Laura smiles. She's in bliss.

JIM

Why do you pretend not to know
answers to questions you obviously
understand?

Laura is still under the spell of the kiss.

Jim turns on his side and props his head up on his hand.

JIM (CONT'D)

Laura.

Laura turns to Jim and drinks him in with her eyes.

JIM (CONT'D)

Don't you want to consume? I
mean... think about it.

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)
How would our economy function if
everyone were like your family?

Laura finally hears what he's saying.

She pulls away from Jim a little.

JIM (CONT'D)
Even if your parents are unable,
it's obvious you could be more
productive than you are. Why do you
pretend to be ignorant? It's not
good for you.

Laura gets up.

LAURA
Oh, no. No.

JIM
Don't run. Everything will OK.
We'll make sure you're better than
they are.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Laura bursts through the door into the empty kitchen.

INT. BARN -- DAY

Laura runs through the barn. She passes the blackboard
covered in mathematical symbols and, most interestingly, a
depiction of a balloon rising beside the great wall.

INT. CELLAR -- DAY

Out of breath, Laura stands before her worried parents.

SIMONE
What's wrong?

LAURA
I'm sorry.

DANIEL
What are you sorry about?

LAURA
I'm sorry.

SIMONE

They know.

LAURA

About me...

DANIEL

You showed them what you're capable of.

Laura sobs.

SIMONE

They'll be coming to get her tonight.

DANIEL

We don't have enough fuel for us to get over the wall. We'll get three quarters of the way up and come right back down.

SIMONE

We send her. At least she'll make it.

Daniel looks at his wife and nods.

DANIEL

Maybe. If the wind is right.

EXT. ROAD DIRECTION OF FARM/WALL -- NIGHT

Two vehicles leave the school. Their headlights cut through the darkness, interrupted often by the moving pictures of billboards.

INT./EXT. LEAD VEHICLE -- NIGHT

Jim points to something in the sky.

Branch Manager Jones looks up.

BRANCH MANAGER

What is that?

A flame illuminates the bottom of a makeshift balloon that floats beside the wall.

When the flame disappears, so does the balloon.

The flame lights up once more.

JIM
It's coming down.

EXT. FARM YARD -- NIGHT

Simone and Daniel stand in the middle of the yard. Milk pails lie scattered all over the ground. They look up into the night sky.

SIMONE
She didn't make it.

DANIEL
The wind wasn't strong enough.

SIMONE
Daniel.

Simone collapses into Daniel's arms.

The vehicles pull into the yard and light it up with their headlights.

Jim and Branch Manager Jones step out of the lead vehicle.

Four SECURITY GUARDS secure the courtyard.

Branch Manager Jones and Jim confront Simone and Daniel.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
This is what you get when you leave
non-consumers alone. This is what
you get.

The balloon lands. The basket seems empty.

Branch Manager Jones opens the door to the basket.

Huddled in a corner is Laura. Her eyes are wide and wild with fear.

Two guards pull her out.

BRANCH MANAGER
How far up did you get?

Laura looks up at him.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
How far up?

Simone steps forward.

SIMONE
Leave her alone.

DANIEL
Can't you see she's terrified.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
Shut up. You two are responsible
for this.

This stops Laura's mother and father in their tracks: Branch Manager Jones is correct.

BRANCH MANAGER
Let her go.

The two soldiers let Laura go. Simone steps forward and Laura folds herself into her mother's embrace.

SIMONE
What did you see?

Laura looks at everyone - mother, her father, Branch Manager Jones, the guards and Jim - and then squats down.

She picks up a stick, and with it she draws four parallel lines on the ground.

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
What does that mean?

SIMONE
What does that mean?

While everyone moves closer to Laura to examine her markings on the ground, the balloon rises again.

POV DOWN FROM
RISING BALLOON

As the group made up of soldiers and Laura's family huddle around the girl, they get smaller and smaller as the balloon quickly rises.

DANIEL
This can wait. She's in pain.

Daniel bends over and takes hold of Laura.

Branch Manager Jones pulls Daniel away

BRANCH MANAGER JONES
This family is bankrupt. You have
no more rights here.
(MORE)

BRANCH MANAGER JONES (CONT'D)

You'll be separated and she'll get
the care she deserves.

Simone makes a last ditch effort to grab her daughter. She's restrained by guards.

The balloon rises faster and faster as a wind takes hold of it.

Very quickly it is above the wall.

And on the other side of the wall: a landscape almost identical to the one on the group's side of the wall, with houses, and schools and towns surrounded by walls. And all are plastered with billboards. Billboards with symbols and signs in another language, but with identical messages.

The balloon now rises at an artificially quick pace and then suddenly stops to reveal a globe that has been segmented into sections by a series of huge high walls.

Between each wall, cities, towns and buildings - all nearly identically walled off.

And between the cities, towns and buildings - electronic billboards.. Everywhere - billboards with their messages. Between each wall a different language. The message always the same: "Consume."

END POV DOWN
FROM RISING
BALLOON

EXT. FARM YARD -- NIGHT

With the stick, Laura draws one more wall in the dirt.