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Where Radiation Meets Pen and Paper

The novel *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut introduces an Earth where all liquid on Earth is frozen, including human blood, by ice-nine. Felix Hoenikker, known as the creator of the atomic bomb in *Cat's Cradle*, invented ice-nine. Through this novel, Vonnegut illustrates a story exposing the superficial nature of the Cold War binary and spins a twist on the dangers of human creation. Humans developed nuclear weapons, but their threat demands us to abolish them. In the words of Beatrice Fihn, the story of nuclear weapons is the one that needs to meet its ending, not the story of humanity.

I wondered what it would have been like to live during the Cold War nuclear arms race, but in reality, nuclear weapons did not simply dissolve alongside the Soviet Union. Beatrice Fihn, who has dedicated her life to the disarmament of nuclear weapons, makes this clear in her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

As world leaders continue to have the ability to set off nuclear weapons at any moment, they simultaneously revoke the individual liberty to direct our lives. One person's story and its ending become written by someone else's hand. Nuclear weapons force us to relinquish our freedom and, according to Beatrice Fihn, become "hostages" to the threat of nuclear war.

The role of authority is one of the fundamental concerns in the story of nuclear weapons. One trivial conflict with a world leader who has access to nuclear weapons can lead to the destruction of the entire planet, leading us to reconsider the distinction between authority figures and the average citizen when the world is on the brink of destruction. This leads us to ask ourselves, should these weapons of mass destruction have belonged in the hands of one person in the first place?

Nuclear weapons also propose a psychological threat. It is possible that individuals can develop the same form of psychological trauma presently due to the continued existence of nuclear weapons and that those who lived during the Cold War still withhold them. The world has yet to serve justice to the descendants of victims of weapons of mass destruction. Their stories cannot continue for as long as the same dangerous weapons that murdered their ancestors exist. Nor

should any individual have to endure additional psychological stress imposed by the threat of nuclear warfare.

Without a consistent effort to oppose and dismantle nuclear weapons, the story of humanity will have an abrupt end, marked by blank pages of ash and radiation. Our liberty, independence, and thoughts are plagued by the menace proposed by nuclear weapons. As Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Beatrice Fihn leads a coalition to rewrite human history, one that is no longer constrained by nuclear warfare. Unlike the post-apocalyptic world created by Kurt Vonnegut in *Cat's Cradle*, we still have time to reverse our mistakes. Everyone is obliged to participate in this cause and ensure the continuation of humanity and our planet, if not for others, then ourselves.