

A Perfect World
By Kaitlyn Harris

“Breaking news: an unnatural person has been found in the Australian region! As a result of this, all homes will be checked by a government official. Remember, you have nothing to fear. . . if you have nothing to hide.”

I stare, open mouthed, at the government slogan on the screen, *for a perfect world, WE must be perfect*. I am good at lip-reading but surely, I’ve messed up. I thought I was the only UP (unnatural person) in Australia. I thought the government had wiped them all out as a part of their “perfect world” scheme. I race upstairs, turning towards my dad’s room before I realise, he’s at work. Mom will have to do. Walking across the hallway, she hears me and turns, face paler than paper.

“Mama,” I sign, “Did you see the news?” I see the fear in her eyes. I didn’t mess up the lip-reading. There will be a government official in my house in less than an hour. I’m out of time. We can’t erase my presence now, not like last time when we had a week.

Mom taps me. “We have to try.”

I wipe my eyes.

“Come on! The hiding place, maybe we have time, maybe we’ll get a slack officer.” Mom’s frantic signing brings me back to myself. I stumble to the *for a perfect world, WE must be perfect* tapestry, pull it aside and climb in.

Now I must wait. Wait for Dad to come home. Wait for the government officer who will be looking for someone disabled or Deaf, because we are deemed unnatural. We are the ants in the pantry, hated by everyone, so they try to stamp us out at birth. My parents don’t know how I passed the hearing test, but it saved my life. I don’t exist on the government system; Dad wiped me from the records at his job. He works in IT.

Glowing minutes tick down on my mom’s government-issued watch. I feel footsteps that can only be the official. Biting my lip, I peek through a crack. A man comes up, searching our house, searching for an UP, searching for me. My limbs go stiff as I see the form come closer and closer. He looks about my age. A green mark on his black vest means he’s new. My eyes travel up to his face, but instead of seeing the cold dark glare of a new officer, I see a familiar twinkle, one that brings me back to another time.

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I was ten, told to stay inside, that it was dangerous for me outside, but I didn’t listen. Inside was so boring; I was reduced to watching flies. I wanted to explore the world that my parents had told me stories about. I started small, but as the days got longer, I ventured further and further away from home till I found our neighbour’s house. I stared at the house, so like mine; the only difference was a small tree where our stump was. My eyes travelled over the empty front porch, up to the attic window and saw a blond boy with a twinkle in his eyes peeking at me. The boy was my size! He disappeared from the window, just as I realised how stupid I’d been. He would report me. He must have put the pieces together, I never responded to people, never went to

school. But no, outside my front door the next morning, he was there, a little notepad in his hand, "Will you be my best friend for ever and ever?"

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Feeling the footsteps again, I see my friend leave the room. Blinding light hits me as I clamber awkwardly out. Mom shakily signs "He knew you were here; you need to leave now!"

I feel myself sliding down the wall behind me. "If I leave, I'll never see you again but if I stay and he dobs... I could die!" Dad comes up behind mom.

"The choice is yours."

I grab my phone and search "how to avoid government detection" but everything I click comes up as; "worldwide block". I spot a flash of something and go back, but it's blocked again. Seeing red, I chuck my phone across the room. Spotting a camera, I glare at it and sign, "The government has taken everything from me, I can't go outside, I can't have a friend. I'm the same as the rest of the world, the only thing "wrong" with me is the fact that I can't hear. I deserve to live. Me and countless other children who must hide away because they are different! We need to stand up!" I pause and Mom tells me that Dad hacked into the Government system, and I am being broadcast all around the world. She is voicing for me. "We need to stand up and be strong for all those people who have been killed in the hope that *you* could be perfect."

I take a deep breath, "We cannot make a perfect world, as it is our differences that make us who we are. I just want to live."

A few days later...

"Breaking news: Unnatural people are coming out of hiding all over the world. The Government is trying to crack down but Rose Annerley, the Deaf girl is working hard to create protests in support of UP's. Annerley is now being called "UP Hero". Annerley's motto is: "remember, we have nothing to fear, and we have nothing to hide."

I watch as the news presenter introduces me onscreen. Hopefully, in time, everyone will be able to live, regardless of their differences. People like me will be able to have a friend, won't have to live in fear anymore. It was the fear that grew and grew throughout the world, a mountain of fear that needed just a rock to trigger the avalanche, that one rock was my anger.