

Name: Camila Nunez

The Power of No

“Hi Cameron! How are you doing?” A little girl runs up to me and hugs my waist.

I reach down to pat her head.

“I’m doing well, how about you, Annie?”

She giggles. “I’m good,” Little Annie’s mom calls to her. “I have to go. Bye!”

I walk away, smiling. I like to work with the younger ones, even though sometimes I am considered a young one. I’m only seven, and still not eligible to work. To get a job, you have to take a test to see your Usefulness. The five Leaders decide when to give you a test. I’ve known people to get their test at age six, and some get it at age sixty-six! I haven’t gotten mine, but the Leaders know best, and we must trust them.

As I trudge down the road, I can’t help but to think about my secret. I’m Flawed. I can’t see well, but I don’t want to tell anyone because I don’t want to have to live in Flawed Village. If a baby is born with an obvious Flaw, like a twisted leg, or a missing limb, they are sent to Flawed Village. There, the baby is cared for by a person of very low Usefulness. Once the baby grows up, they are put to work in the Village. The jobs are normally really bad.

Once I get home, I start on my homework. The rule in the house is you need to finish homework first, then you can go over to your friend’s house. I’m almost done with it when there is a knock on the door. It can’t be my family, because they have keys. I get up and walk to the door, and I am surprised to be greeted by the Chief Leader.

“Hello!” I say, remembering to be polite. “How may I help you? Would you like to come in? I can get you something to drink.”

“No, no, child, thank you. But if you don’t mind, I’ll be coming inside,” the Chief Leader said. I nod my head, move out of the doorway, and she briskly walks in.

“So, Cameron Davis, is it?”

“Yes, ma’am,” Manners are very important when talking to the Leaders. Kids learn that at a very young age.

“Cameron. I’m here to ask you some questions,” she lowers her voice. “You have a Flaw, am I correct?”

I swallow. “Y-yes, ma’am. I can’t see well.”

“No need to worry, as I said, I’m here to help. The other Leaders and I think it’s time for an experiment. We will be giving you a pair of eyeglasses.”

“Like for the elderly?” I ask.

“Exactly. You will be given one within the next few days. If anyone asks what they are for, simply say, ‘It’s from the Leaders.’ and leave it at that. Under no circumstances will you tell

anyone the truth, not even your family. Otherwise, you will be put into Flawed Village. Understand?"

"Yes ma'am, I understand."

"Good. Now if you don't mind, I am needed somewhere else. Goodbye, Cameron."

And with that, she leaves with her swishy robes, and my innocence. I have never lied before.

Life with Eyeglasses is hard. People constantly ask me what they are for, even if I've told them a hundred times. Plus, it's been over a year! Come on people. It's not a big deal. But one thing has caught my attention: the Leaders don't seem too happy with me having Eyeglasses. They come over almost every day asking if I can see without them yet, and it's not a problem if I can't.

"Miss Davis! Please pay attention!" My teacher yells at me.

"Sorry Mrs. Tulot. It won't happen again," but I know it will.

Another thing is that the Leaders are saying that more and more people are Flawed. If you have red hair, you're Flawed. If you talk with a lisp, you're Flawed. It's outrageous! I cannot believe this is what has become of our community.

Once school is over, I walk home to see all the Leaders in front of my house.

"To what do I owe this pleasure?" I ask very politely.

"Cameron, we are taking away your eyeglasses and sending you to Flawed Village. Please hand them over and go pack," a middle age Leader asks while holding out his hand.

I don't move.

"Cameron, please! This is ridiculous. Hand them over!" another Leader demands.

I don't move.

By now, a crowd has formed.

"We don't want to do this, but you are disobeying a direct order from a Leader. We will have to arrest you."

I don't move.

But when they start coming towards me, I speak one of the most powerful words.

"No."

They stop moving and look at me. "No? Is that what you said?"

"No, I will not hand over my Eyeglasses. No, I will not move to Flawed Village. No, I will not obey you anymore. No, I will not believe you anymore."

Some brave souls in the crowd pick up my chant.

"No, I will not give you my first born because you want me to."

"No, I will not help you."

"No, I will not."

I start to lead the way out towards the gates out of the city. Even though I'm eight going on nine, the people follow me like I'm eight going on twenty-nine.

We are almost to the gates when I stop and turn around. But first, there is one place we need to go.

Once we get to Flawed Village, I finally understand what chaos is. People are screaming, pushing others to the gates, leaving the community, and some are just running around.

A man comes up to me and asks to talk.

“Sure,” I say.

He tells me that the people in the city aren't humans. They are genetically altered Beings. The human race was becoming more and more prominent, and the Leaders wanted the Beings to have the city to themselves. So they put all the imperfect people in the Village as an attempt to contain all the humans. Apparently I'm human. The first one in my family. Before I was born, a man did an operation on me where he took away the extra gene that made me a Being. Then I was a human. It's my job to help the Beings stay in the community, and help the humans find a place to live peacefully. He says I did a good job and is confident that I will lead the humans to a place to live without the fear of Beings.

Then he walked away and disappeared in the mass of people.

It's been thirty years since I put an end to it. Beings no longer rule humans. Humans are no longer fearful. But one thing bothers me: why haven't I seen that man again?

There is a story parents used to tell their kids. A magical person would help you change the world, and once they deem the job complete, they leave and never return. Maybe that's who I saw. I don't know. But I'll leave it up to your imagination.

“Cameron, c'mon! A few of us are going to get ice cream and we won't wait all day for you!”

I laugh and run to them. And right then and there, I think maybe things will work out. Maybe the human race will live for a long time. But I don't have time to dwell on the future. I have a bowl of ice cream waiting for me.