AMONG THE HIDDEN
Luke is a third child in a country where the Population law rules that only 2 children are allowed per family, Luke is 12 years old and has been hidden all his life, his family used to live in a desolated area and the woods were behind the house and Luke was free to play with his older siblings Mark and Matt, but now the woods are being tore down to build a development so Luke has to hide and is not allowed to go outside anymore.
Chapter 2

Luke is confused about why his brothers can do things he can’t do like go outside and play, or even do house chores so he asked his mother the reason of his hiding, Luke’s mother explained him that when she was pregnant she was so excited, that the idea of having an abortion didn’t even cross her mind and she wanted to keep the baby. She always dreamt of having four children and she even wanted to have a fourth child who she will name John. She thought that in time the Population Law would be reverted and she would be allowed to keep her child and show him proud to the world; but the Population law instead of being abolish, now is becoming stronger and stronger and to avoid being found and killed, Luke has to obey his parents and hide in the attic.
Chapter 3

Most of the time that Luke spent in the attic, he is used to read books or play with old toys from his older brothers, he was a curious child though and was always daydreaming of the possibility of looking outside to see what was going on. One day while in the attic, he discovered a vent that allows him to look outside without the fear of being discovered, he can see the construction workers working all day long and also the big trucks paving the road. He decided to keep that as a secret for fear that his parents will shut the vent down or forbid him from even watching the outside again.
Chapter 4

Just when Luke thought that things couldn’t be worst, something else happened. Luke came downstairs to have dinner with his family as usual and his mother with pain in her eyes asked him to get away from the table and sit at the bottom of the stairs, Luke protested a little bit but his mother told him that having the shades down all the time had created some suspicions among the construction workers. Now instead of having the shades down, they will have to have them up but Luke will have to sit at the bottom of the steps and eat there. Mother told Luke that they will leave the door open so he can still listen to the conversation and maybe talk to them every once in a while. Luke was devastated and felt more invisible than ever.
Chapter 5

After the routine of Luke eating at the bottom of the steps settled, The Garners receive a letter from the government, the letter was about the awful smell that the wild pigs that they raise spread. The government said that they were building a nice neighborhood for rich people and that they for sure would not like the smell of the pigs. The government in other words was giving the order to the garners to get rid of the pigs. Luke’s father and mother were angry but Matthew was devastated, it has always been his dream to have a farm just with wild hogs and now this. Luke’s parents were so worried about how this would affect their life style because the money from the hogs was very much needed in that house.
Chapter 6

Later that week, another devastating letter, the government had raised their taxes, because of the fancy neighborhood, the Garner’s farm was no longer consider a farm but a residential area, now they will have to pay three times the amount of money they paid before. They all look at each other, didn’t know what to do to get more money, until Luke’s mom softly raise her voice and said “I got my work permit today”, all eyes were on her, specially Luke’s, who would take care of him? But even the question seemed too selfish so he just shut his mouth. So Luke’s mom had to work in the old factory
By September Luke had gotten use to the routine, his mother had to be to work by seven so they all had to wake up very early to have breakfast, everybody was in a hurry so the last thing in their minds was Luke, he was watched them as they rush to their jobs or to school. The new houses in the neighborhood were almost all built, the final touch was to furnish and put the carpets and decorations, all kind of workers were buzzing all around the neighborhood. Then the new families started to come and Luke was surprised as how different they look. They dress different, the women were elegant and had fancy dresses, the guys had suits and everything around them was fancy and luxurious, even the children had fancy clothes. Luke always was counting the number of people in every house just in hope to find another child like him but no luck.

The best part of his day was when his mom after supper will go with him upstairs and read stories with him and tuck him in bed, but lately he noticed that his mom after work was extremely tired and would fall sleep in his bed so with pain in his heart he let him mom know that he was getting too old to be tuck in in bed.
Luke realized that his existence was going to change now that he was not allowed in the family living room so when all his family left for work or school he decided to go downstairs and realized that all the window shades were down, nobody from the outside could see him. Luke struggled with himself but finally decided to help around the house, do the dishes, clean the floors and bake some bread, while he was at it, he turn on the radio but kept the volume down; this gave Luke a purpose and he felt happy that he was doing his part to help the family. Suddenly Luke’s father came back from work and realized what Luke had been doing in his free time, he was upset and warned Luke not to do it again because somebody from the outside could be watching and he will get in trouble. Luke was devastated and fighting the tears so he went back upstairs to the attic and instead of going to bed, he decided to go and look through the hidden vent, he looked the neighborhood until something caught his eye, the shadow of a child in a house were two other children were already living.
Chapter 9

Luke’s mom finally came back from work and heard about Luke’s adventures, Luke apologized and told her that he only wanted to help the family, Luke’s mother felt bad for him and tried to explain him again that they didn’t want to take any chances so he must remain hidden. Luke was struggling with the idea that he would have to remain hidden forever, he went back to his room and started to think about the shadow of that child that he had seen earlier and wondered if there were other hidden children like him.
Chapter 10

It was time for supper and mother tried to make Luke feel better by placing the bread he had made in the center of the table, Luke’s brothers were making fun of his bread which didn’t turn out so good after all but Luke didn’t care, one of Luke’s brothers joke around and told Luke if he was getting ready to get married and that really bothered Luke because he knew that he would never get married as long as he was hidden. He asked to be excused from the table and went back to his attic/bedroom and looked through the vent again, all the houses were lit up and you could see inside of the houses, all the houses except the Sport’s Family house were all the windows were covered by heavy shades.
Chapter 11

Luke now observed the Sports family’s house more intently. For three days he didn’t see anything until the fourth day when he realized that even though it was such a hot day, the Sport family house had all the shades down but the windows were open, he knew they were hiding something or someone. He then saw the shadow again and what looked like the bean of a television on. He had no more doubts, there was somebody hiding in the Sport Family house.
Chapter 12

Harvest time came and Mathew and Mark stayed from school to help their father with the crops so with that people in the house, Luke got distracted but an idea started brewing in his mind... What if...? What if he would gather the courage to go and sneak into the Sports family’s house and find out who this hidden person was? What if that person was another shadow child and they can talk about it? He went back and forth with the idea because he didn’t think he could carry on with it, then the rain season started and it was almost a relief to Luke because he couldn’t go while it was raining, it would be too muddy, until one day the rain stopped and the thought of finding out was more powerful than before, he finally made up his mind and went out the back door.
Chapter 13

Luke had forgotten how fresh air felt like and he was scared of being seem so he started crawling on the grass, moving along from his property to the Sports Family backyard, he was so scared of somebody noticing him that a couple of times he thought about just going back home but he was determined. Luke thought he would sneak into the house through the sliding glass door in the back but when he finally made it to the house; he found out that the sliding door was locked.
Chapter 14

Luke panicked for a second and was about to turn around when another idea came to him and he plunge his hand through the screen, then pulled the wire and slid the door, he got inside of the house but realize that his hand was bleeding a little bit. He sneaked very quietly and started admiring such elegant place so different from his farm house when suddenly he saw a girl who was furiously typing in a computer, he didn’t know what to do and as he was turning around she noticed him. She walked across the room and knocked him down, then pinned him to the floor and buried his face into the carpet. Luke was in total panic and before he could think he told her that he was a Population Police.
Chapter 15

Jen let him go but she didn’t believe he was a Population Police. She asked him if he was a shadow child, and illegal, third child. Luke didn’t answer because he was scared but Jen said very flippantly, “you can say it, I am a third child you should not be ashamed of that”. Suddenly she realized that the alarm had been activated and tried to deactivate it by dialing the secret password but no luck, it was already on. Jen had to make a phone call to her father and asked him to cancel the alarm because it had been a mistake; the father reminded her that the penalty for harboring a third child was five million dollars or execution. Luke wanted to leave immediately for fear of being discovered by the PP but Jen told him that the PP were incompetent. Luke was still fretting so Jen tried to start from scratch, she introduce herself to Luke and asked her how he knew she was there. Luke told her how he used the vent to spy on all the house, Jen also mention that she had used mirrors to look outside but if her father knew, she would be in trouble, she told him that he had come to the right place because she would be his ticket out.
Jen and Luke agreed that they needed a secret code for when it was safe for Luke to go and visit Jen, the secret code was going to be the light on the back door. Jen then proceeded to explain to Luke how she came to be. Her mom already had two children from her previous marriage and they were boys, she wanted to have a girl and had to pay a lot of money to get pregnant with a baby girl, she was able to select the gender of her child because of previous genetic studies. Jen was the daughter from her second marriage, after that Jen’s mom married Mr. Talbot so Mr. Talbot was her stepfather. After that Jen mentioned the rally for the first time and said that maybe Luke can help. Jen also told Luke that Mr. Talbot was a high officer of the Population police. Luke realized that there were a lot of things that he didn’t know.

Jen said she would fix the security system but suddenly realized that next to the sliding door there were spots of blood from Luke’s arm, she made a quick decision and cut her arm a bit so she can explain her parents why there was blood on the carpet.
Chapter 17

Luke came back home and thought about all that had happened in Jen’s house, the next three days he wasn’t able to go and then when he finally was able to, Jen didn’t answer the secret code so Luke started worrying about Jen. Finally the day came and they got together again, Jen told Luke that she had not been home because she had to go to the mall with her mom. Luke was surprised but then he learned that Jen had had a shopping pass for a long time and had to hide in the car but once in the mall, she was just like any other kid. This was the first time Luke had heard of shopping pass. Jen also tells Luke that she has check on him and he doesn’t exist. There are no records of him. Luke wonders how could she be so secure and Jen explained to him that she had use one of her older brother’s detective kit and has done a fingerprint background check on him. Luke was somehow bothered by this information.

Jen sensing his worriment invites him to the kitchen to get something to eat and Luke has a taste of potato chips and Soda for the first time. Jen in return learns that Luke’s family occasionally eats meat; this is news for her as the government has been trying to force the baron to become vegetarians.
Luke told Jen how the government forced his father to get rid of the hogs (wild pigs) and how now they don’t have use for their leftover grains and have to dispose of them.

Jen was excited to learn this new information and posted in on a chat room and in an official bulletin board for everybody with an internet connection to see. Jen explained to Luke that the Population law was passed because the government was scared that if the population kept growing, that there would be not enough food for anybody. Luke felt guilty that maybe somebody was going hungry because of him but Jen told him that there was food just not a good distribution of it. Jen also talk a bit more about the rally, she said that she was tracking down hundreds of shadow children and there would be hundreds of them who will go and camp in front of the President’s house until the Population Law that banned all third children was overthrown.
Chapter 18

Jen was explaining to Luke about the rally and how it would allow all the hidden children to be finally free, then she received some posts in her chat room, other hidden children were communicating with her and were asking her questions about the rally. Jen was not happy because the other hidden children seemed to be making excuses not to go to the rally, they all said it was too dangerous and some were really far away. Jen was getting upset about all the excuses so she closed the chat room window. Luke wanted to know how the chat room came to be and Jen told him that she had set it up and created password that they use to access the chat room, Luke asked what was the password and Jen said “Free”
Chapter 19

Luke returned home that day with a pile of books that Jen had given him about how the Population Police and The Population Police have come to be. Some of the books explained how the Government had been force to pass the Population law or everybody would have starved to death because of the lack of food. This made Luke feel guilty, was he eating food that was rightfully somebody else’s? But what about all that food that his parents have to throw away because the government would not pick it up and it would go rotten? The he started another reading piece; this one was an article about how the government should have never passed the Population law and how it was not lack of resources but lack of organization from the government, bad distribution and poor logistics. Luke was confused. His father came home early that day and Luke could go back to Jen; Luke’s father was complaining because winter was coming and soon they would not be able to grow any crops; Luke suggested to his father that he might want to consider the idea of growing hydroponic crops in the basement, Luke’s father seemed to consider the idea and then excuse himself. It rained for several days so Luke couldn’t go to Jen’s house but when the day was clear, he went and they talked about the books Luke has read, Luke asked Jen about the book first and Jen said that this was government propaganda while the article was written by an independent writer who had probably risk his life to publish that article.
Chapter 20

The winter had started and Luke feared that he wouldn’t be able to see Jen that often but the winter was kind and Luke’s father was constantly busy working in the basement, Luke told Jen that his father was busy with the hydroponics. Luke came that day to visit Jen and she was not in a good mood, her chat friends were discussing fake IDs and how to get them so they can go outside but Jen was having none of that, she told them that she didn’t want to have a fake ID, she wanted to have a real ID, she didn’t want to be somebody else, she wanted to be Jen Talbot and be proud of it. The other kids in the chat room didn’t seem to share the same ideas and beliefs as Jen and that was very irritating to her. Jen asked Luke if he ever though that it was fair that he had to hide, Luke didn’t know what to answer but started thinking that out of all the members of his family, he was the only one that knew how to cope with being hidden all the time. He just didn’t see his brothers or parents being able to do that. Somehow he felt proud of himself for figuring that out.
In February Luke’s dad received letter from the government stating that they have noticed the supplies that he had purchased and were sure that he was doing something illegal in his basement so he was forbidden to continue. Luke’s dad was very angry but worse yet, now without that distraction, he was always home, Luke couldn’t sneaked out of the house with him around, in February he got to go once and just twice in March, Jen didn’t hold that against him, she acted happy every time he came to her house. Luke enjoyed Jen’s childhood stories about all the toys she used to play with and also playing with some pets. Luke had heard stories about pets like dogs and cats but has never seen one of them, they were forbidden by the Population Law because they wanted to use all the food to feed the people. Luke felt guilty again but Jen reminded him that it all was a scam, Jen also told Luke about this huge campaign that the government overtook to make women think that being pregnant was evil, the PP put posters everywhere about pregnant women being worse than criminals and also pregnant women were not allowed to go out in public.
April came and the first two weeks, it rained, Luke was afraid that he wouldn’t get to see Jen before the rally but finally it dried up and Luke sneaked his way into Jen’s house. Jen was extremely happy to see her, she started to talk about the rally again and how she was going to pick him up at night so they could make it to the White House before the sun was up. She was talking about directions and how she had changed the schedules of the security guards so they wouldn’t be stopped on their way. Luke was listening quietly thinking that this crazy idea was not going to work and then he asked Jen a question: “What if the other children don’t show up?” Jen look at him in amazement but then brushed it off telling Luke that they all will go and there would be thousands of them and the President would have to hear them. As she was talking, Luke finally mastered the strength to let Jen know that he was not going to the rally, Jen was in shock and tried to convince him otherwise but Luke said that it was too risky and that she better not go. Jen had had enough of Luke and asked him to leave her house, Luke tried to talk to her but she was as cold as ice so he left and ran to his house.
Chapter 23

When he got home, Luke was a mess of confusion, he really liked Jen and wanted to help her, wanted to protect her, but she was so mean to him and ask him to leave that for a moment Luke hated her, who did she think she was? She was going to the White House just to show off and brag about being a third child. Maybe somebody will shoot her, that will show her. At that moment he took it back, he didn’t want Jen to get hurt or get shot. The thought made his knees weak and he sat at the stairs thinking and torturing himself about what would happen to Jen, as he was thinking he was rocking back and forth and his mother found him in that position when she came back from work. She thought Luke was sick but then Luke lied telling her that he was just tired and wished he could go outside and feel the sun.
The next three days were a nightmare for Luke, his mind was racing and he wanted to go and stop Jen from going, other moments he changed his mind and he was going to the rally to protect her. He wanted to go to her house again but it rained for three days. Finally on Thursday night, Luke went to bed and fall sleep. He was woken up in the middle of the night by a whisper, he thought he was having a nightmare but it was Jen who was at his bed side. She had come to his house to make peace with him and told him that she should not have tried to force him to go if he wasn’t ready and that she would miss him. Luke was happy to see her but told her that he still couldn’t go; he said “People like you change history, people like me; we just let things happen to us”. Jen replied that he was wrong and he could make things happen too. Jen didn’t want to harp so she just told him that he would miss him.

Jen’s voice sounded like a Good Bye and Luke told her that she wouldn’t miss him because in a couple of days he would go to visit her and go through the front door when he didn’t have to hide anymore. Her final words were “We can hope, good bye, Luke” and she left.
Chapter 25

- Luke couldn’t sleep well that night, he was tossing and turning in his bed until he finally gave up and got out of bed, mother found him in the bathroom and he just said he had had a bad night. He went to the steps and asked his father to turn on the radio news; maybe he could hear something about the rally but nothing, just more official news but nothing about the rally.

- He checked the neighbor’s house constantly, he turn on the back porch light but nothing, Luke was getting more and more worried, he was constantly watching the Sport Family house but there was no signs of Jen, for a whole week all he did was spy on them and still nothing. He had to do something.
Chapter 26

After one week and a half of not being able to do anything, Luke saw his dad going to the fields and knew he would stay there for a long while so he decided to go back to Jen’s house, she has to be there. He made it to the screen door and quickly remember that the door had an alarm code, he enter quickly and deactivated the alarm, he then started to call Jen everywhere in the house but she was nowhere to be found. He made it to her bedroom and nothing, he finally checked in the computer and log in but had sort of forgotten the password until he finally remembered: FREE; there he was inside of the chat room but nobody else was there, he typed; where is Jen? No answer he smash his hand on the desk and suddenly somebody told Him: Turn around slowly, I have a gun, why are you here?”
Chapter 27

- Luke turned slowly, instinctively he knew that the guy standing in front of him was Jen’s dad so Luke asked him if he was and he said that he was the one making the questions. Luke told him that he was there looking for Jen because they were friends and Jen had thought him how to deactivate the alarm, he told him about the long talks they used to have and also about the rally. When Luke mentioned the rally, the man asked him why didn’t he tried to stop her and Luke replied that trying to stop Jen was an impossible task. Finally Luke asked him where was Jen, the man’s face turned pale and he said, “She is no longer with us, she dies”, Luke couldn’t believe it, Jen was dead. Mr. Talbot sounded bitter when he said that they couldn’t bury her in the family plot and had to pretend like everything was normal, then Luke asked “How did it happened?” somehow Luke thought that if it was a car accident it wouldn’t be so bad but Jen’s dad said that all the kids who attended the rally were gunned down, all 40 of them, Jen was among those kids, they were gunned down in front of the President palace. Luke thought that thousands of children were going to be at the rally but it turned that only 40 were there. Jen’s dad told Luke that now he was in danger because when he had logged in into the chat room and alarm went off at the PP offices so they PP was going to come and search every house in the neighborhood. Luke was in danger now but Jen’s dad in honor of her daughter’s memory wanted to help Luke and offered him a fake ID so he can be saved. Then Jen’s dad told Luke that he worked for the PP.
Chapter 28

Luke screamed in panic and by surprise got a hold of the gun that Mr. Talbot had in his hands. Mr. Talbot tried to calm him down by explaining that even though he was a PP officer, he was really on his side and working as a double agent. Luke was still pointing the gun at him and Mr. Talbot started to explain some things to Luke, he asked him if he knew a little bit about how the population law came to be and Luke pointed to him the books that Jen gave him, Mr. Talbot said that both type of books were bad, some were government propaganda but the others were not better because they were written by radicals who tried to accommodate the numbers to their own purposes. Mr. Talbot admitted that at the beginning the Population law had been passed because of the famines and the fear of people not having enough food to eat but now it wasn’t about that anymore, the government had decided that it was good to keep people on poverty because that is when they work their best, when they were on the edge of survival. Luke was confused about all this information but as they were talking and Mr. Talbot offered him again to give him a fake ID, somebody knocked the door, the voice was like a thunder “Open up, this is the Population Police”
Before Luke had any chance to move, Mr. Talbot had grabbed him by the shirt and placed him into the closet, he told him that there was a secret door inside of the closet and to use it to escape so Luke went all the way to the end of the closet but couldn’t find the door so he just stood there like a statue. He was in panic but Mr. Talbot handled himself well and told the agents that the one who had logged in into the chat room was him as part of his work as an undercover agent, he let them search the house and when they searched in the closet, Luke was so well in the back that they didn’t find him. Finally they left but Mr. Talbot gave Luke a paper warning him not to talk because the house was “bugged” meaning that while the agents were searching, they have placed hidden microphones and could listen to everything that was being said. They communicate but writing in the pieces of paper, Mr. Talbot finally asked Luke again if he wanted the fake ID, Luke asked for some time to think about it, Mr. Talbot told him it was now or never because he didn’t know when the opportunity will come up again and he had to make a decision right in that second. Luke started to think about how life would be hidden all his life, how he would not be able to ever meet anybody else or get married or ever had kids, he knew that had to change so in that moment he made up his mind. He wrote in the piece of paper: “I want the fake ID”.

Chapter 29
Chapter 30

Lee Grant was the fake name that Luke will have to use, the real Lee Grant was a Baron who had died in a skiing accident and his parents have accepted to donate his identity like people donate kidneys or an organ, but they wanted nothing to do with the boy, Luke was going to pretend to be Lee and was going to a boarding school transferred from another school for being a runaway. Mr. George let Luke go to his house to explain his parents the plan, they both were in disbelief but there was nothing they could do about it, they knew this was the best for Luke because there was no other way he could have come out of hiding. The next day Mr. Talbot came to the Gardner’s farm and he let everybody know by signs that he was bugged; he thanks the Garners for turning in the runaway boy and he assured them that he was going to deliver him to the boarding school where he could continue his studies. Without saying a work Luke’s mother hugged him and tears came down her cheeks as she was saying good bye to him, his father hugged him too. He jumped in the car with his new clothes that were so different to what he wore as a farmer. As he was sitting in the car, he couldn’t stop thinking what would happen to him in this new boarding school where he was going.