

THE REBELLION



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Prologue

At first, Ed wasn't concerned about the noise coming from the street. It was summer. Sometimes the kids got a little rowdy as the time to go back home for the night got closer. Instead of checking outside his window to see what was going on, he turned his attention back to the program on the television set. It seemed the Heads were all anyone talked about anymore. The news anchor was going on about the new advances in medicine that had come from this odd alliance. Ed was an open-minded man, but something just didn't seem right about trusting strangers so completely, so soon.

The Heads were an alien race that came to Earth seeking a haven. They promised a better life on Earth and to help fight off other invaders if the day ever came. This seemed all fine to Ed, but it concerned him how much information the government was willing to share with this new species when they knew very little about them.

He looked down at his young son. Matt was barely walking. He had just taken his first steps a few days before, and he was still a little wobbly when he moved. Ed knew the world his son would grow up in would differ greatly from the world he had grown up in. He wondered if it would be for the better. It was true that many things were already improving in the world. This new alien race had shared advances in technology that improved every aspect of life. Now they were helping develop new medicines that cured diseases that had once claimed lives. His own son would never have to fear or even know what cancer was.

Just as Ed was beginning to get lost in his own thoughts, the noise outside got louder. It no longer sounded like kids playing. Instead, it sounded like chaos and fear. He saw his wife cross the room to look out the window, and he held up his hand to stop her. If something was going on out there, he didn't want it to happen inside his house. He decided it would be best if they went unseen. He turned off the television set.

"Ed, what is going on?" Asked his wife.

"I don't know. Stay away from the window," he said.

He got up and walked over to his front door. He peered through the peephole and tried to make out what was happening. Through the hole, he could see a large group of heads out on the street. They appeared to be going into houses and forcing people out. Ed wasn't sure what was going on, but he didn't like the look of it. He looked back at his wife and saw fear in her eyes.

"Take the boy and hide," said Ed.

"But Ed," his wife started.

"Just do as I said."

Just as his wife scooped their son off the floor, a knock came at the door. "Go," said Ed. His wife took their son and disappeared into a back room. Ed opened the door.

"How can I help you?" Asked Ed.

"Sir, we need you and your family to step outside," said a very large Head.

"My family isn't home. It's just me. Might I ask what this is about?" Asked Ed.

"Sir, we need you to step outside, and I will need to search your house," said the Head.

Ed noticed a gun attached to the Head's hip.

"Okay, but I assure you, no one else is home." Ed stepped aside as he spoke.

The Head pushed his way into the house, and he began to look around. "Where are your wife and son?" Asked the Head.

"They went out for groceries."

"Did you purchase a new vehicle recently?"

"No. Why do you ask?"

"The only vehicle we have on file for your family is out in your driveway. The closest

grocery store is over five miles away. Did your wife and small child walk?"

Ed did not know how to respond. He didn't have to. Just as he was about to advance on the Head already in his home, another came from behind and restrained him. They pulled him out into the street with the rest of the people on his block. Everyone looked frightened. There were little kids and senior citizens among the crowd. More force than Ed thought was necessary was being used to hold them there. Ed knew this would not end well. Just as he was about to try to escape, he heard his wife.

The Head had found her and their son hiding. They were pushing his wife down the stairs while she gripped her young son in her arms. Ed wanted to fight back, but he was worried about his family. He knew they would use them against him. He was helpless. All he could do was wait for his fate.

Once everyone was removed from their homes, they were loaded up into what Ed could only describe as prison buses. Ed had never been on a prison bus, but he imagined this was what they would look like. The driver was surrounded by a cage. As they forced the people into the seats, they shackled their feet to the floor with chains. Two heads stood at the front of the bus with guns to enforce the peace.

As Ed looked around at the familiar faces surrounding him, he knew everything was about to change. There had been a shift in power, and they hadn't even noticed it. An alien race had come to Earth, and we had handed them the keys. Everything would change, and Ed wasn't sure what the fate of his family would be.

Chapter 1

As Ed stood outside his rather plain house, he felt quite out of place. Not that he looked as if he didn't belong, he just felt it. Everything in Ed's life seemed perfectly in place. The house was the same shade of grey as all the others. He had the same blue hovercar in his driveway as all his neighbors, and even his bush next to his white mailbox was the same circular shape as all the others. No, Ed appeared to be like everyone else on the outside, but deep down, he was different.

Ed knew there was something wrong with the world he lived in. His jumpsuit rubbed him the wrong way, and his shoes felt too tight. In the morning, his breakfast didn't taste as good as it used to, and the radio was no longer a thing of joy. Something was off about his life. And he knew he wasn't the only one. He could see it in the faces of a select few when they thought no one was looking. They would let their guard down and show the concern on their faces. In that split second, Ed could see, they knew something just wasn't right.

Ed still remembered life before the Heads had come to Earth. It was a simpler time where most of the world acted before they thought about the consequences. This might not have been the right way to live, but Ed thought it was a happier time. The world seemed to thrive and celebrate the differences in the world. Now no one and nothing stood apart from the crowd. Everything and everyone had a place, and no one questioned it.

Living that way had its issues. People got sick. People died. War and conflict plagued the world. And at times, it seemed hopeless to try to fix it. When the Heads came to Earth, they fixed all the world's problems. They shared secrets in medicine that allowed doctors to cure the most complex of illnesses. They gave political views that solved all conflicts and allowed the world to live in peace. And they provided the world with a better understanding of the

universe. With all this knowledge, it seemed pointless to fight amongst ourselves. The world seemed fixed and happy.

To most people, things seemed perfect. Ed felt this way for a long time as well. He didn't start to really question the new ways of the world until one day when he was late coming home from work. Ed always liked to walk to and from work. Most people enjoyed using their hovercars, but Ed always liked the feel of the sun on his face. The sun didn't really shine through the clouds much anymore, but he still liked to pretend. So while the rest of the world hopped in their cars to work, Ed walked. It wasn't a far walk to the factory, but it meant a lot to him.

Ed worked in a factory that produced grey jumpsuits. These were the jumpsuits that every single person on the planet wore, and the Heads made it seem like Ed's job was very important. He didn't get paid to do this job, and they only required him to work a few hours a day, but it was nice for Ed to have something to do. One day on his walk back home, Ed came along something rather odd. On the side of the road, there was a small yellow flower. It was the first time he had seen a flower in so long that he wasn't sure that it was, in fact, a flower. The Heads liked things to be in order, and flowers growing wild didn't seem to fit into that way of life. So this little yellow flower was a stain on a perfectly boring world.

At first, Ed didn't know what to do. He knew that if he left the flower, the Heads would destroy it. He knew if he picked it and was caught, he would get in trouble. He also knew that if he picked the flower, he would have to keep it to himself. He did not want to involve his wife in something that might be dangerous. To Ed, the thought of a flower being dangerous seemed silly, but he knew it was what the flower stood for that was dangerous. Something different, something out of place, could never be allowed to stay. He decided to pick the flower. The entire

time it took Ed to discover the flower and then stuff it into the sleeve of his jumpsuit equaled roughly 60 seconds. These 60 seconds changed his life forever.

The Heads had done away with television when they made these improvements to the way of life. The explanation was that it was the root of all laziness that plagued humanity. They had done away with pop culture magazines. They had done away with the internet and music – most of all, they had done away with color. Almost everything in this world was now a dull, dark color. Nothing was unique anymore, except for this one overlooked flower.

Ed thought about the flower the entire way home. His heart almost leaped out of his chest when he crossed paths with a Head walking down the street in front of his home. They didn't even so much as make eye contact with him, but Ed knew if they had looked his way, they would have known he had done something he wasn't supposed to do. He knew it was written all over his face that he had a secret. He even felt hot and uncomfortable in his own skin. He needed to be home and in the safety of his own office.

He took the steps leading up to his door two at a time, and when he heard the door latch behind him, he took a minute to breathe a sigh of relief. He had made it. His little secret was safe. Now all he had to do was hide it.

"Good afternoon, sweetie," said his wife as she crossed the distance from the kitchen to the front door to plant a kiss on his cheek. "You looked flushed, dear. Is there something wrong?"

Ed was never superb at hiding anything from his wife, but he knew he could not tell her what he had done. It would put her at risk. "I'm fine dear. Just a little winded from the walk is all. I guess I am getting out of shape." He leaned in to return the kiss. "I am going to relax in my office for a little. Will you call me when dinner is ready?"

"Of course, I will."

The wooden chair dug into his thighs in a way that seemed to tell him what he was doing was wrong. He shouldn't have taken such a risk for something so small and unimportant. But was it really unimportant? This one little flower that seemed to call out to Ed for saving. Was it unimportant? Did it really not matter at all? Should he have left it there to be erased with everything else that didn't fit into the perfect image of the world he now knew? No. He knew better. This flower meant a lot more than just something on the side of the road. It meant freedom.

He could hear the clatter of the pots and pans in the kitchen where his wife was working hard to make dinner. He knew his son was out playing with his friend. It was time for Ed to admire what he risked his life for. He slowly and carefully removed the flower from where he had hidden it in his jumpsuit. It was crushed now, but still beautiful. It was a bright yellow color. A shade Ed hadn't seen since the Heads had taken over. Its petals looked frail, and it smelled sweet. The whole thing was no bigger than the palm of his hand, but it made him feel happiness he thought he had long forgotten. Yes. This flower was important.

Ed knew he had to hide the flower, or he would risk getting caught. He had a drawer at the bottom of his desk where he kept his most important documents. These documents included photos of the world the way it was before the Heads had taken over. He was careful when removing the false bottom of the drawer. The first photo that greeted him was one of his mother. She wore a bright red skirt with a light green top. She was standing in front of a car that still had wheels that touched the ground. She was smiling bigger than he had ever seen her smile. Ed knew his father was the one behind the camera, and the one she was smiling at.

He wasn't sure why he felt the need to hide photos like these. Ed wasn't sure if the Heads had taken other people's photos or not, but he knew that they had taken none of their photo albums. In fact, he could see two sitting on the bookshelf nearest him. But those photos

seemed normal. It was the ones he had hidden that made him nervous. They were bright in color and showed people happier than they could have possibly been in their lifetime. Ed thought for sure that the Heads would see these as threats to the life they had created for everyone. That was why Ed hid these photos. He didn't want to lose the little ties he had to life before.

Ed removed a small book from inside the drawer. *Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger. This was his favorite book. It painted a picture of a troubled young man and the chaos he endured because of the loneliness he felt. It wasn't like the other things in the drawer. This represented sadness, which was another thing the Heads seemed to fear. The only emotion that was allowed was perfect contentment. Ed held the book in his hands for a few moments while pawing at a long-forgotten memory. Holding the book seemed to want to trigger something, but he couldn't quite reach it. He opened the book to the middle and placed the flower within. He knew it would be safe there.

"Ed. Dinner is ready," shouted his wife from the other room.

As he exited his office and laid eyes on the woman he thought more beautiful than any other, Ed felt as if he would soon lose her. He could hear his son's footsteps running up the porch steps and the laughter of the kids he was leaving behind. Everything seemed so surreal. Even the smell of the slightly overcooked chicken his beloved was known for. Ed knew one day he would miss all of this; he just didn't know why.