

We used to live in a normal society. We used to live peacefully. Husbands, wives, and children all lived together. Back then woman cooked, men worked, and children played. Times are different now. Men still work, but not like they used to. Women still cook, but not as often. Children? There are no children. At least not that the normal person sees. I see them every day. When I sleep, when I eat, and especially when I work. They never leave my mind. I must think of them always if I am to succeed at my job; the job that I hate more then anything. I am a child hunter.

Five years ago times were good. If you walked outside you would see children playing on the streets. You could hear the music of birds and their beautiful whistling. The world was full of color: Blue, green, and the brightest yellows you've ever seen. The children were happy; as happy as children should be. The next year was different. You would walk outside and know something was wrong. No children were playing. No birds were whistling, and all the color seemed to have drained out of the world. Gray, gray, and more gray.

It started during the second great depression. People were angry. They needed something or someone to blame for all that was happening in the world. They blamed the children. They were the most vulnerable, the weakest, and the easiest target, but the children rebelled. They robbed people. They ran through the streets shooting anyone and everyone who got in their way. Now the children are gone. Children are illegal. It is my job to capture all children. We are to take them on the eve of their first birthday. Any older and they become dangerous. We then take them to the aging chambers, held in the underground tunnels of every city. Here, they sleep. On their 20th birthday they are set free to start their life of adulthood. My job is not easy. People hide their children. That is why I must hunt them. I must find them, and store them away so that such a rebellion will never happen again.

I start my day like all days. I wake up from the nightmares of the night before, the nightmares of the rebellion. I put on my gray and yellow uniform and I begin the journey that I do not wish to start. As I walk into the council office to get my list of children whose first birthdays are tomorrow. I stop to look at the wall of missing children; the children who went into hiding and have not yet been found. I stare at the face of missing child number one. He has been

hiding the longest, so he is our top priority. He has supposedly been hiding for nine years. These are only rumors though. I have never seen him in person. I don't see how finding a ten year old boy should be so hard. I grab my list and I head out the door.

My first assignment is at a normal house in a normal neighborhood. I walk up the steps, and knock on the door. A woman answers. She is young, about 28 years old. I can tell by the sorrow on her face that she knows why I am here.

"I am here to collect your child." I tell her. "I understand that tomorrow is her first birthday."

She nods. I go through the normal questions that must be answered. The woman answers them very softly as I write the answers down: Baby's Name: Sophia Elizabeth John. Height: 24 inches. Weight: 25 pounds. Birthday: December 5, 2202. She knows what's next. I tell her that she has two minutes to say good-bye. I watch as she rocks her baby back and forth. She sings to the baby, and the mother begins to cry. I can't watch it anymore.

"Your two minutes are up" I tell her.

She walks over to me, and stares at me with hate filled eyes.

"My child is a good child. She will not hurt anyone!" She yells at me.

I often have to deal with attached parents, so I grab the baby quickly and walk down the sidewalk to the street. Behind me I can hear the woman's cries and screams for her child who has just been taken from her arms. I walk to the nearest underground tunnel entrance as I whisper to myself "I hate this world".

I walk through the tunnels with the baby in my arms and it begins to cry. I run it quickly to the nurse's station and hand the baby to one of the nurses. They quickly inject the baby with the sleeping serum that will put it to sleep for exactly 19 years. I take back the child and continue walking through the tunnels. I approach the empty aging chamber that is labeled: #50,076. I lay the now silent baby in the aging chamber and close lid. The baby goes directly to sleep. I make sure the lid is secure, because the minute you open it the child will wake up. I enter her information into the pods data base, and start back down the tunnels to my next assignment.

I walk back out into the streets toward the next house and as I turn the corner of the next street I see a dark shadow cross the sidewalk ahead of me. It rushes across again, and I know I need to follow it. I run into the alley up ahead. I look around the alley and I automatically see it.

A small boy, about the age of ten, sitting near a large trash can. I recognize him right away. This is missing child number one.

He peeks out around the corner, as if I can't see him. I walk over slowly, so as not to scare him. "Hello?" I say. He peeks his head out again, and slowly crawls out. I step towards him, and his eyes grow big. He has a dirty face, and short dark brown hair. His clothes are ripped and his white shirt looks spotted with blood. He sees the gray and yellow of my uniform. He knows to fear me. He tries to run past me, but I grab him.

"Let go, Let go!" He screams.

I let him go, and he stands there, looking me straight in the eye. This boy has been in hiding for 9 years. He has a story to tell. I throw him over my shoulder while he screams and kicks, and I run through the streets as fast as I can. We finally reach the safety of my home.

Once we get inside, I sit missing child number one down. He stops kicking, and screaming and begins to calm down. I put on a pot of coffee for me, and I pour him a cup of chocolate milk.

"What's your name?" He asks me hesitantly.

"Bill" I tell him. "Bill Howard".

"Well Bill, my name is Sam, and I can tell you're a child hunter. Please don't hurt me!" He says.

"I won't hurt you." I tell him. "I just want to know why you went into hiding, and why you're not afraid."

He begins to tell me his story.

He was born before the rebellion. When the rebellion began he did not help, but over the months he began to help the other children rise above the council. He would sneak out late at night to the meetings with the other children. Even at the age of only five, he was considered very dangerous. One night when he was sneaking back into the house, after a meeting of the children, his parents caught him. They knew where he had been, and they were not happy. His parents started screaming at him, and after being exposed to the rebellion for over two months he was sick and tired of the adults. He pulled a gun out, and killed both of his parents. He has regretted that decision ever since. From that day on he vowed to stop the government from taking anymore children. It has been hard though, as he has had to go into hiding for so long. Hearing his story, I am determined to help him.

“I will help you” I tell him.

“You are unlike any child hunter I have ever seen Mr. Howard. All they know is take the child and show no mercy. But thank you.” Sam says.

The first thing we have to do is release all of the children in the aging chambers. I give Sam one of my yellow and gray uniforms to disguise him. Although he is only ten years old, he is very tall, and he could appear as an adult. We head out to the streets, and luckily there is an underground entrance right outside of my house.

We run through the tunnels, opening each aging pod as we pass. We pick up the babies who are not old enough to walk yet, and give one to each older child. I grab all of the weapons in sight, and I hand all kids who are old enough a gun. We head out onto the streets with Sam in the front. All of the older children and I who are carrying the babies, head in different directions to return the children who are too young to help us. I grab Sophia, the baby I took this morning, and I head straight for her house. I walk up the sidewalk, and her mother runs out of the house. She had seen us coming from the window. She runs right up and grabs Sophia, as tears start streaming down her face.

“Thank you! Thank you so much” The woman says.

I turn around, and walk back into the streets with the rest of the older children. We march through the streets. All of the other children hunters just stop and stare as the large group of children pass. All of their jaws drop as they see me marching at the back. The guns are not needed, as no one dares to challenge us.

We march straight down to city hall. As we pass, we rip down the missing children board. I always knew that hunting children was wrong, but I never knew that it would lead to this. We burst through the doors and see all of the council members sitting around a long table.

“What’s going on here?” The head council member says.

I turn around just in time to see Sam dart out the door. The sight of the council men scared him, and he abandoned us. A few more of the children follow in his direction, out the door. The head council man, Mr. Groth, stands up.

“Would anyone else like to leave?” he asks.

We all stand our ground.

“Suit yourself” he says.

The other councilmen stand up, and each grabs a child. Mr. Groth grabs a walkie talkie and calls in all of the other children hunters.

All of the children hunters run into the room, and grab the rest of the children. One of them grabs me.

“I am not a child!” I yell.

“You brought this upon yourself Bill” he tells me while shaking his head.

Our weapons are taken, and they march us through the streets. All of the citizens watch from the safety of their houses. I hope Sophia’s mother, and all of the other parents who just got their children back, are watching. We finally reach the underground tunnel entrance.

We walk through each tunnel. We enter the nurse’s station, and each of the children stand in line, and get re-injected with the serum to put them to sleep. When I get to the front of the line, they inject me with the serum too. I try to make a break for it, but the serum has made me weak. We march through each tunnel, and drop each child off as we come to their pod. They take account of which children are still missing. We continue to march; tunnel after tunnel. All we see are long dark corridors; one after another.

We seem to walk forever. We finally put the last child in his pod, and I am the only person left with the councilmen. We walk through more tunnels. They are the longest tunnels I have ever seen. We turn into a tunnel that I have never been into before. We come to the end of the tunnel and I see a large steel room. Inside of the room there is a dark purple pod.

“What is this?” I ask.

“I’m sorry to do this Bill, but this is where we put the worst children. Don’t worry; we have a special one for your friend Sam too.” Mr. Garth says.

The head child hunter grabs me, and shoves me into the pod. Once sitting in the pod, I find that I cannot move. I see them enter in my data, and set the pod for 80 years.

“I will be 110 by then! I will be dead!” I scream. “

That’s the point” he says. “You’re already an adult. You had your chance.” Mr. Garth says.

They shut the pod lid, and I scream for help. I know there is no one to help me. I hear the room’s door close silently behind them. I can feel myself slowly drifting off to sleep. I know that when I do let myself be taken by sleep, that I will never wake up. As I lay there I think of Sam, and the other children who escaped, or were returned to their parents. There is still hope for

them. I know they went into hiding. I know that one day peace will be restored. Sam will lead all of the kids who still have a chance. With this thought in mind, I close my eyes for the last time. The only question that lingers in my mind is: Is this the end of the rebellion, or the beginning of a new one?