

Yes NED

The Unseen

This is a work of fiction. All characters, organisations, and events portrayed in this novel are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

*He's not a hero. He's a warning, they erased his name,  
and he multiplied.*

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*by*

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# The First Fracture

*They didn't need wars anymore. Not the loud kind, with bullets and missiles and flags waving on the news. They had something better. Data. Networks they owned end to end. Systems that nudged, ranked, filtered, and quietly trained people how to behave.*

*The enemy wasn't overseas. It was on your couch. In your pocket. In your head. They called it the System. We just called it life. By 2035, the Government Citizen Control agency, the GCC, didn't feel new. That was the trick. It hadn't arrived with*

*tanks in the streets or speeches on podiums. No grand takeover. It slipped in slowly and politely, wrapped in updates and policies no one ever really read.*

*Everyone just clicked “accept” and kept moving. It started years earlier, back in the mid-to-late 2000s. Small laws here. A shiny tech contract there. One digital upgrade after another, each one sold as progress, convenience, and safety. Nothing dramatic on its own. But together, they rewired everything. And by the time people noticed, it was already everywhere.*

*Telecom towers. Data centres humming all night. Biometric IDs. Cloud servers stacked in buildings no one ever saw. Software that tracked behaviour like it was just another statistic. All of it wrapped up in words that sounded safe. National security. Modernisation. Efficiency. Convenience.*

*One ID. One platform. One life. Nathaniel Elias Drayton stared at the screen longer than he should have. The words didn't feel like progress anymore. They felt like a script he'd been repeating for years without ever questioning who wrote it. On the surface, it looked like progress. Faster services. Cleaner systems. Less paperwork. Everything linked together so smoothly you barely noticed the hand guiding it. But that wasn't the real goal. The GCC never cared about efficiency. It cared about obedience.*

*The idea started in rooms most people will never see, after riots, after market crashes, after the old systems began cracking. Someone asked a simple question. What if you could run a country without ever raising a weapon? What if control didn't need uniforms or guns? What if it could be written in code?*

*The people who built it were not chasing power in the loud, obvious way. They wanted something quieter. Something permanent. A structure so tightly woven into everyday life that no one would notice the bars. Surveillance that felt normal.*

*Helpful, even. Obedience that didn't feel forced. Just natural. The GCC never hid. That was part of the genius. Policies were published. Camera installations logged. People could even check their own citizen score if they wanted to. It all felt transparent. Open. Clean. And when people think they can see the system, they stop questioning it. Most people didn't notice it happening. Nathaniel did. For a while, it worked perfectly.*

*By the time anyone realised they weren't just logging into the system but being logged themselves, it was too late. It was in their homes, their workplaces, their bodies.*



*It stopped being an agency. It became the System.*

*The System knew your location before you did. It read biometric signatures, eye movement patterns, emotional spikes. It tracked your caffeine intake and your sleep. It knew when you were anxious before you admitted it. Ads appeared based on your pulse. Alerts popped up based on your habits.*

*Prescriptions were suggested before symptoms even surfaced. They sold it as freedom. A safer society. A smarter world. What they did not advertise was the cost. Privacy. Choice. Identity. And for some people, something worse. The system did not just watch them. It erased them. People spoke about the years before the Grid like they were legends. A time when you could walk into a shop and pay in cash. When you could fail without it being recorded. When mistakes were messy and human.*

*Now mistakes were corrected before they even happened.*

*The GCC rose out of the cracks of the old world. It presented itself as protector, provider, stabiliser. In uncertain times, that sounded comforting. But every promise came with a condition. Every citizen had a file. Every file had a score. And that score quietly shaped your life. Jobs. Transport access. Food credits. Housing eligibility. Even how long someone would wait before helping you.*

*If your score dropped too low, the system did not punish you loudly. It simply stopped noticing you. And when the system stops noticing you, everyone else follows. That is how you become invisible. Cities grew taller. Shinier. But beneath the glass and light, the numbers told a different story. A swelling class of people who did not fit the algorithm. The Unverified. Flagged as unstable. Unproductive. Unpredictable. No fixed*

*address. No reliable ID. No clean data trail. Ghosts inside a machine that refused to recognise them. Nathaniel Elias Drayton was never meant to become one of them. At first, he was exactly what the System liked. He worked at a GCC backed media agency. Official title: ad creation specialist. He built campaigns. Crafted narratives.*

*Made people feel excited about whatever the week required. What he actually did was sell comfort wrapped in lies.*

*He wrote dreams that did not exist. He turned products no one needed into solutions people thought they could not live without. He polished surveillance software until it looked like empowerment. He rebranded housing shortages as “urban transitions.” He made toothpaste sound revolutionary. He was good at it. And that was the problem. At the beginning, he believed in what he was doing. He thought maybe he*

*could use design to wake people up. Slip truth between the lines. But the longer he stayed, the clearer it became. His work was not waking anyone up. It was guiding them back to sleep. Every campaign pushed someone further into debt. Into dependence. Into quiet despair. He would stare at the actors in the final edits, smiling too wide, eyes too bright, and he would see something hollow behind them. Something fading.*

*Inside the agency, even names started to disappear. People became brands. Handles. Avatars. Everything polished. Everything curated. Nothing real. So he started writing on bathroom stalls. Small phrases. Questions. Fractures in the wall. Just to feel something honest. They painted over them.*

*So he stopped speaking at meetings. Stopped arguing. And started collecting. Old access maps. Stray signals. Dropped*

*communications. He wrote poems disguised as error messages. Embedded graffiti inside QR codes. Slipped whispers into the feed.*

*A quiet crack in the noise. The feed kept rolling. Until one day, it didn't. His final assignment was a campaign for neuro influence supplements aimed at children as young as ten. The slogan was simple. "Be the Best You." The ad showed a cartoon girl with a glowing brain. Her family clapping as she finished homework faster than everyone else. Nathaniel stared at the screen long after the room emptied. That was the moment something inside him broke clean. Because deep down he already knew the truth.*

**Quote:**

***You don't need permission to wake up.***