



OTHERS

by

DAVID WOLFF



Others is a book about a society that lives amongst us that we know very little about. The beings that comprise this society are visible, but hardly ever noticed. They have been put here by a higher power to fill gaps in our existence. They are not harmful. They are here to assist us in traveling along our human paths without stumbling. They are fulfilling their duty, wanting neither praise nor rewards.

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DAVID WOLFF

2015

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Introduction

The earth's population is a complex matrix of unique individuals with different appearances, abilities and agendas. Goals are pursued daily by interacting with each other within certain organized social structures. Not much attention is paid to those who fall outside our realm.

However, there is a society that lives amongst us that we know very little about. The beings that comprise this society are visible but hardly ever noticed. You vaguely see them walking along the shoulder of the road carrying a nondescript bundle or sitting on a wood bench outside a mall or near a community park clutching a paper bag or in a crowd waiting to cross a busy intersection and a myriad of other locations where they are avoided or just ignored. And if and when by chance we do notice them we write them off as indigent marginal losers. We make a *tsk-tsk* sound and mutter "What a shame!" and make a passing promulgation that something should be done about *these* people-put them in shelters or somewhere. Occasionally we feel guilty about their situation. Mostly we are embarrassed by them. But they do not need our pity or charity.

Then there are the ones who blend in so well that they go virtually unnoticed. They are rarely acknowledged and go about their business without seeking acceptance or attention. They are brushed off as anti social misfits – loners.

But don't be too quick to dismiss these beings as human debris. They have been put here by a higher power to fill gaps in our existences. Without them civilization would be more chaotic than what we experience in our normal days activities. They know our weaknesses and faults and accept them without bias and prejudice.

They are not harmful. They are here to assist us travel along our human paths without stumbling. They are fulfilling their duty wanting neither praise nor rewards.

They are the OTHERS.

Chapter 1

CYCLIST

One rainy fall night our family was on the way to a very important social event for my sister Anna. She was the lead actress in her senior high school's annual musical. She had practiced long and worked very hard to perfect her role as Maria in this year's production of *The Sound of Music*.

Father was dressed in his best suit, white shirt, favorite tie and wingtip shoes. My mother had on a new dress, hose and heels and simple tasteful jewelry. An afternoon visit to the hairdresser was evident by her perfect hairdo. I had to abandon my jeans, sweatshirt and sneakers for something more appropriate for the occasion. We settled on corduroy slacks, turtleneck sweater and loafers. We looked the part of the proud family of the lead actress. Ana was dressed comfortably in a skirt, tights, a cardigan sweater and pumps. These could be changed with ease into her Maria wardrobe.

The mood in the car was quiet and tense.

The road we were on is a narrow two lane well traveled macadam artery connecting the town of Paoli and the borough of West Chester. The speed limit is a questionable forty-five miles per hour. This night the visibility was limited due to the glare from the lights of the oncoming traffic on the wet surface and the smear of the windshield wipers. Just as we came around a slight curve there was a figure crouched on a bicycle peddling slowly on the right edge of the road.

My father leaned forward squinting and said "What the heck is this? Who would be out on such a night? Where could he or she possibly be going?"

My father slowed the car in an effort to take advantage of a break in the oncoming traffic. As an opening occurred, my father edged the car over

and sped up a little to pass the cyclist. But just as we were about to pass the figure it veered slightly onto the road causing my father to respond by swerving into the oncoming lane to miss him. My mother and Anna gasped and let out slight shrieks. As we passed, I looked out the side window and the figure turned his hooded head toward us. In a flicker I saw the expression on the cyclist's face. There was a slight smile but most notable were his eyes. They were wide open with an expression of loving kindness. It was haunting. As my father straightened out the car he let out a "Dam it" curse followed up with a proclamation about putting these people away for the good of all.

As I sat through Anna's impeccable performance, I couldn't get my mind off the earlier close call on the way to the school. Who was that person on the bicycle and why was he there? And where could he have been headed on such a miserable night? And if I closed my eyes, I could still see that expression on his face and those eyes flashing by us in the night.

On the way home we noticed flashing red emergency lights ahead in the general area where we had our close encounter with the cyclist. They were letting only one lane by at a time and the traffic was slowed to a crawl.

My mother said, "I hope someone didn't hit that poor man on the bicycle."

As we inched past an officer directing traffic, my father lowered his window and asked, "What happened?"

The officer said, "A car hit a pothole, blew a tire and went off the road. It hit a tree and rolled over on its side. The driver couldn't see the pothole because it was full of water."

"Is everyone OK?" my father asked.

"There are serious injuries but nothing life-threatening," the officer responded.

As my father raised the window he looked over at my mother. Realizing that could have happened to them earlier this evening had it not been

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for the strange cyclist forcing them to swerve missing him and consequently missing the pothole he slowly shook his head in disbelief.

My mother's eyes were wide open and her hand was up covering her open mouth.

I glanced over at Anna. She was staring straight ahead.

No one said a word.

I kept remembering the expression on the cyclist's face and just felt that this was not a mere consequence.

Unknowingly we had experienced an encounter with an Other.



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