

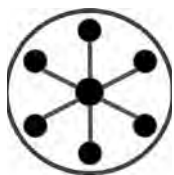
The Story Weavers of Bacalen

The Story Snatchers



A.J. Hill

Junior authors: M.E. Grace & C. Höök



*Protect your books' stories:
a warning to readers from
The Great Archives of Bacalen.*

The words on the spine and title page of this book are written in an ancient script from The Great Archives of Bacalen.

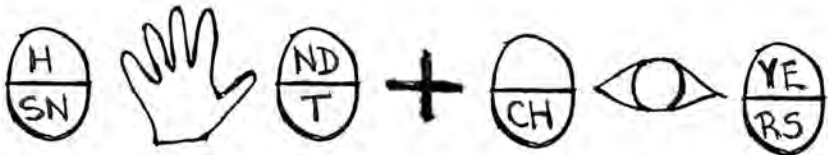
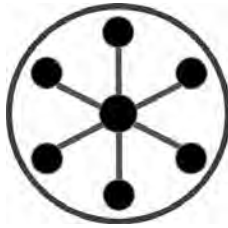
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

If you are truly a friend of The Great Archives, you can use this script to save other stories from The Snatchers.

Translate your book's title into Diegesis Script, write it on a bookmark or strip of paper and place it between the book's pages each time you have finished reading. The Snatchers can't remove a bookmark touched with Diegesis Script. It will protect the story forever!

To translate a book title into Diegesis Script, you will need to decipher the words woven into the magical bookmarks that the Story Weavers find in this adventure.





Author: A.J. Hill

Junior Authors: M.E. Grace and C. Hook

Published by AnDi Communications, Wagga Wagga, Australia

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ISBN 978 0 6482179 0 9



A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

Cover Design: Di Holding and Annabel Bowcher

Illustrations: Annabel Bowcher

Front Cover photograph: Nicole Walker (who found this ‘book exchange’ in France.)

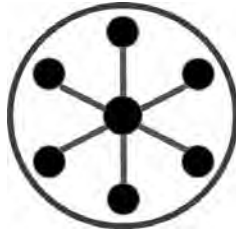
Back Cover photographs: Annabel Bowcher and James Heggie.

Back Cover illustration: Ned ‘Elly: the original painting, ‘Ned Kelly’ by Sidney Nolan resides in The National Gallery of Australia in the capital city of Canberra. The picture has been transformed by The Picture Pinchers (or by Annabel Bowcher!). The important thing is that the author has acknowledged the source and original artist (sadly The Story Snatchers and The Picture Pinchers would not have bothered to do this!).

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Typeset in Dyslexie font

Printed and bound in Wagga Wagga, Australia by Active Print & Design



The History of Stories

“Stories are everywhere;

And in everything;

In all that we do;

In all that we see.

They are why we learn.

They are why we question.

But,

If stories are lost;

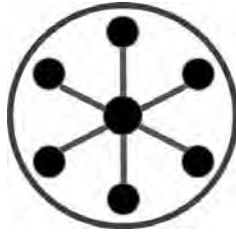
If stories are changed;

Then our lives;

Then our world;

Changes too.”

*(Diegesis, The First Great Storyteller
at The Great Archives of Bacalen)*



Acknowledgements:

To the amazing, young, junior authors in my family, M.E. Grace and C. Hook and to their Dad who have all overcome perceptual dyslexia (Irlen Syndrome) hurdles. You, your journey with perceptual dyslexia and your love of stories has inspired me to write this. Thank you for your love and support.

To my group of ‘child test readers’, who included Sebastian, Cassie, Else, Klara, Ella, James, Richa, Andrew, Noah, Caitlin, Ines, Reagan, Jake, Sahara, Georgia, Eliza

Thank you for taking time to read and provide comments. Any names that you can’t see in the acknowledgement text have been written in invisible ink (surely The Story Snatchers haven’t sneakily snatched words from this book!). If you can’t see your name, please add it!

To Fiona Culley, Catherine Evans and Di Holding for reading, proofing and suggesting those ‘story tweaks’.

Dedication:

To my parents: Mum who always read stories to us each night and to my Dad who has given so many wonderful books to their grandchildren. xx

To all children who find reading or learning using traditional methods, challenging: I hope that this story helps you to connect to stories and inspires continued learning using the gifts you have been given.

To those children who hear books calling to them; befriend books; get lost in the stories; and then travel to another time or place: I hope that you will take some other less travelled children with you on your story journeys.

For my own children, Mia and Lincoln, for my nieces, Else, Klara and Beatrix and for our dear friends, Sebastian and Cassie: you have all enjoyed so many hours of imaginative play after being inspired by stories that you have read and shared together.

I look forward to you providing ideas for the future **Story Weavers of Bacalen** adventures when our adventurers meet **The Picture Pinchers**, **The Music Meddlers**, **The Theatre Thwarters**, **The Hobby Hinderers**, **The Sport Spoilers**, **The Learning Loathers** and **The Digital Detesters**.

Dyslexie font:

This book is published in ‘Dyslexie font’. It was developed in The Netherlands by dyslexic, Dutch graphic designer, Christian Boer.

It has been proven to assist dyslexics read text more easily and accurately.

(www.dyslexiefont.com)

What is dyslexia?

dyslexia: a difficulty learning to read or to interpret words; it doesn’t affect general intelligence and is not a problem with comprehension; has a continuum from mild to severe; no two dyslexics are alike;

Note: a dyslexic is often able to use higher level language skills to support their reading of connected text (stories) and this ability to ‘compensate’ may mask their underlying difficulties with single word reading (decoding).

A dyslexic person finds it difficult to convert letter symbols to their correct sound (decode) and convert sounds to their correct written symbol (spell).

(*Australian Dyslexia Association, 2017*)

Research has also shown that 1 in 5 people (including dyslexics) find it difficult to process visual information and may have a very common condition known as Irlen Syndrome.

What is Irlen Syndrome?

Irlen Syndrome: a perceptual processing disorder (a problem with the brain's ability to process visual information) and not an optical problem.

Note: it is also known as Meares-Irlen Syndrome, Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome (SSS), Perceptual Dyslexia and Visual Stress.

This common syndrome tends to run in families (1 in 5 people have it). It is not currently identified by other standardised educational or medical tests. Research shows that about 46% of people with reading problems have this processing problem.

It can affect many different areas such as academic and work performance; behaviour; attention; ability to sit still and concentration.

The Irlen Method uses coloured overlays and glasses to improve the brain's ability to process visual information. It can improve reading fluency, comfort, comprehension, attention, and concentration while reducing light sensitivity. (www.irlen.com)

For further information about possible symptoms, online self-assessment and to locate testing centres within Australia go to:

www.aaic.org.au

The Story Snatchers: comments from children and their parents

“Just read the first quarter, you’ve got me sucked right into it!” (Cathie P.)

“Wow! I’ve read the first 80 pages and I’m hooked!! What a great story!” (Jane H.)

“Kids (aged 8 and 10) loved the story as did I. They were hooked after the first page!” (Caroline B.)

“My son (aged 9) was very disappointed it came to an end! You have got him interested in stories again! A very clever story and I can see it making lots of children happy!” (Kylie W.)

“My daughter (aged 10) loved your book and looks forward to the second one!” (Kim T.)

“We have just finished reading your book and thoroughly enjoyed it. My daughter (aged 9) is so thankful that you sent it to her to read. She has sent you some ideas for the next story.” (Neeta T.)

“A really good book. I liked everything about it.” (Reagan, aged 8)

“I especially liked the bookworms.” (Jake, aged 8)

“It was cool how their glasses were the same colour as their archetypes.” (Sahara, aged 8)

“I thought it was interesting, adventurous and funny!” (Georgia, aged 9)

The Story Weavers of Bacalen

We heard their whispers.

They called to us—quietly, urgently.

In our dreams or as we walked amongst them.

One day, somehow,

From somewhere,

Their voices become stronger.

They were desperate.

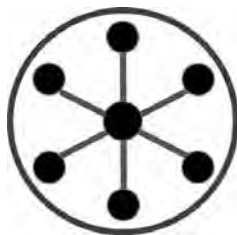
Books were calling to children across the world.

Some of us heard them.

Some of us were chosen by them.

*We are the Story Weavers of Bacalen—called to save
Earth's stories from The Story Snatchers.*

*If our quest fails, then this story will be the last
one the world will ever remember.*





*“Logic will get you from A to B.
Imagination will take you everywhere.”
(Albert Einstein, Dyslexic Physicist)*


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Glossary of Terms and Places


 **(The) Archetypes:** the most ancient of all story-threads and where all stories come from; there are six coloured archetypal threads: adventure & mystery (yellow); human relationships (grey); travel (blue); biographies (purple); fantasy and magic (pink); and information and facts (orange); each Archetype is linked to one of the six *Story Weavers*.


 **Argyros Cetus:** injured *Storyteller*; his *speech-thread* was damaged during training after telling a story that he was not ready to re-tell; works at *The Great Archives*; before his injury, he was known as Alexis Craft.


 **Bacalen:** located within Earth; The Star of Bacalen is made up of seven orbs (six smaller orbs surround a central orb); The Great Knowledge Tree is in the middle and *The Great Archives*, The Great Studio Gallery, The Great Music Hall, The Great Bacalen Coliseum, The Great Recreation Retreat and The Great Sport Stadium orbit around it. Bacalen and its people protect Earth's vast amount of stories, pictures, music, theatre, hobbies, sport and knowledge from those who wish to change and forget it all: The *Story Snatchers*, The Picture Pinchers, The Music Meddlers, The Theatre Thwarters, The Hobby Hinderers, The Sport Spoilers and The Learning Loathers.


 **(The) Book of Bacalen:** the most ancient of all *story-vessels*; created by the first *Great Storyteller*, Diegesis; locates *Story Weavers* and *Bookworms* and chooses trainee *Storytellers*; able to speak to *Story Weavers*, *Storytellers* and *Bookworms* using words on its pages or by forming words in their minds; translates *bookmarks* into *image maps* that can be seen by *Story Weavers*; *image maps* help to locate lost or poached *story-threads* and *story-vessels*.


 **book chute:** *Bacalen* book chutes are located in all libraries and book shops as not all libraries and bookshops have a public book chute; *Bacalen* book chutes are only visible to *Bookworms*, *Storytellers* and *Story Weavers*; used to magically move between destinations by inserting a *D.I.D. card*.


 **bookmark:** a luminescent strip of material that holds the *story-vessel* inside a book; only visible to *Story Weavers*; has the ability to store images of where a *story-vessel* has been and where its *story-threads* have been taken; the images form an *image map* that is decoded by *The Book of Bacalen* when a bookmark is placed between its pages; the images are only seen in the minds of *Story Weavers*.


 **Book Translator:** a small, multi-coloured book carried by members of *The Great Archives*; a magical dictionary that can understand the meanings of words used by books; an unknown word is spoken into the Translator's pages and the meaning appears.

 **Bookworm:** person who is able to see and collect feelings, emotions, experiences and knowledge and create *story-threads* from them; works in *The Yarn Room* creating story-threads that are woven into a completed *story-vessel* (the story-vessel is then enclosed in a book and held in place by a *bookmark*); works with *Story Weavers* and *Storytellers* to create stories that are interesting for people to read and listen to.


 **D.I.D. card:** magical, small white card printed with D.I.D. that has spaces on it for writing a destination and the number to be transported on it; stands for **D**estination **I**dentification card; thrown into a book chute to allow *Bookworms*, *Storytellers* and *Story Weavers* to move between destinations.


 **Diegesis Script:** ancient code from *The Great Archives* that was developed to protect books.


 **(The) Great Archives of Bacalen:** home to *Storytellers*, *Bookworms* and *Story Weavers*; location of *The Yarn Room* (where stories are woven); *The Hall of Yarns* (where *Storytellers* gather); *The Shredding Basement* (where *Story Snatchers* are restored); *The Great Storytelling Library* (where stories are kept and where *The Archetypes* are located).


 **(The) Great Storyteller:** the oldest and wisest of *Storytellers*; currently the position is held by Spinner; sits in *The Great Storytelling Library* of *The*

Great Archives advising *Bookworms*, *Story Weavers* and *Storytellers*; keeper of the most ancient book, ‘*The Book of Bacalen*’ that can speak to other books and decode *bookmarks* and produce *image maps*.

 (The) *Hall of Yarns*: situated next to *The Yarn Room* and where *Storytellers* gather to practise telling stories and train new *Storytellers*.


 *image map*: images produced by a *bookmark*; appear in the minds of *Story Weavers* and visually describe where a *story-vessel* has been and where missing *story-threads* are located.


 *Irlen lenses**: coloured lenses used in glasses to assist people with *Irlen dyslexia* to read words more clearly; (*these lenses are real and were developed by Helen Irlen from the USA to help people with perceptual dyslexia to read more easily); worn by the *Story Weavers* and others at *The Great Archives*.


 *life-plug*: colourful plug made from life experiences and found within people on Earth and *The Star of Bacalen* and in *Story Snatchers*; reflects the six archetypal colours and absorbs the colours from life experiences; the life plugs of *Story Snatchers* have no colour and have a dark, non-reflective surface; it is removed and replaced through the ear.


 *matrix* (plural: *matrices*): used by *Bookworms*, *Storytellers* and *Story Snatchers* to stamp each

other with ink; looks similar to an old candle stick with a carved handle; The **Snatchers'** stamp uses transforming ink that says 'Property of The **Snatchers'** and this stamp transforms the person into a **Snatcher** (firstly taking the colour from their *life-plug* and then transforming them into a **Snatcher**). **Bookworms'** and **Storytellers'** stamps use transporting ink that says 'Property of **Shredding Basement**' and this stamp sends The **Snatcher** to the *Shredding Basement* to be turned back into a person who enjoys reading books.

 **poaching sack:** sack used by *Story Snatchers* to store the stolen *story-threads* during a snatch.

 **Reweaving Room:** room used by *Story Snatchers* to reweave *story-threads* into dull and unimaginative stories or incorrect versions.

 **saga pod:** peppercorn-sized seed pod used by *Story Weavers* and carried in a small pouch around their neck; used to capture *Story Snatchers* as they contain powdery seeds that shrink **Snatchers** to a size small enough to fit into the *Transporter Bags* carried by The **Story Weavers** (sends **Snatchers** straight to the *Shredding Basement*); the seed pod is covered in swirls of colour which continuously move and have a hypnotic effect when **Snatchers** look at it.

 **saga pouch:** small pouch on a long piece of leather that fits over the head of a *Story Weaver*

and is used to carry *saga pods*.

⊗ **(The) Shredding Basement:** room in *The Great Archives* where *Story Snatchers* have their *life-plug* shredded and re-coloured so that they return to being people who enjoy using their imaginations, see the wonders in the world, and value books.


⊗ **speech-thread:** found in all *Storytellers*; gives them the ability to tell and remember stories from ancient times and also recite more modern tales.


⊗ **Steal of Snatchers:** a group of *Story Snatchers*.

⊗ **Story Snatcher (or Snatcher):** creatures with elongated legs and arms, small heads, bulbous eyes and hooked noses; wear long, thin sleeping caps that fall down their backs; are unimaginative and dull; poach and unravel *story-vessels* and then reweave the *story-threads* into *story-vessels* that people don't want to read; being used by a traitor from within *The Great Archives* who has realised that people don't enjoy *Snatcher* stories and so these stories can be used to create a world full of people who turn away from books and rely only on information found on screens; they are also being ordered to replace information on the internet with incorrect versions which nobody is questioning; a group of *Snatchers* is called 'a steal'.


⊗ **story-suggestion:** a *Story Weaver* gift that hypnotises people; a damaged *story-vessel* is then


secretly taken from a person and mended; the story is forgotten until the repaired vessel is returned.


 **Story Weaver:** one of six dyslexic children from across the world (must be in their tenth year and no older than 18) who works at *The Great Archives of Bacalen* finding missing *story-threads*; currently the *Bacalen Weavers* are: Samuel, Meg, Caitlin, Bella, Anna and Leo; they have many unique gifts such as: i) helping *Bookworms* to reweave *story-vessels* that have broken or missing threads, or *story-vessels* that have been unravelled by *Story Snatchers*, ii) seeing bookmarks when they become separated from their *story-threads*, iii) communicate via telepathy with certain types of books, depending upon *The Archetype* that they are linked to e.g. Samuel with mystery and adventure (yellow); Meg with human relationships (grey); Caitlin with travel (blue); Bella with non-fiction (purple); Anna with to fantasy and magic (pink); and Leo with information and facts (orange); each *Weaver* wears glasses with lenses that are the same colour as the *Archetype* they are linked to, iv) use *story-suggestion* to hypnotise people and retrieve damaged *story-vessels* that are inside books.


 **Storyteller:** person who works in *The Great Archives*; learns historical stories and recites them; provides advice to *Bookworms* about old and new stories that need to be woven from *story-threads*;


located in *The Hall of Yarns* where they practise storytelling and work with the young, trainee Storytellers.


 **story-thread:** *Bookworms* collect feelings, emotions, experiences and knowledge and spin them into a story-thread; threads are joined together and woven to produce a completed *story-vessel*; a story-vessel is then enclosed in a book and kept in place by a *bookmark*; the most ancient story-threads are the six *Archetypes*; story-threads reflect the colours of these six Archetypes i.e. yellow (adventure & mystery); grey (human relationships); blue (travel); purple (non-fiction); pink (fantasy and magic); and orange (information and facts).


 **story-thread extractor:** similar to a vacuum; has a long nozzle that is attached to colourful bags; when a large number of *story-threads* are located in one place, The *Bookworms* use a story-thread extractor to send them back to *The Yarn Room*. The threads are pulled into the bags and immediately reappear in the sorting piles.

 **story-vessel:** the completed story; created when the *story-threads* are woven together; the colour of the story-vessel depends upon the dominant colour of the story-threads that are used to weave the completed story; a story-vessel is enclosed inside a protective book cover and held in place by a *bookmark*.

 **transforming ink:** used by *Story Snatchers* on their *matrices* to transform *Bookworms*, *Storytellers* or *Story Weavers* into a *Story Snatcher*; ink is counteracted by using *saga pod* powder on the stamp or by a visit to *The Shredding Room*.

 **Transporter Bag:** small, stretchy bag carried by *Story Weavers*; used to put (for example) *story-threads*, *Story Snatchers* or notes in so that they can be instantly transported back to *The Great Archives*.

 **transporting ink:** used by *Bookworms* and *Storytellers* on their *matrices* to transport *Story Snatchers* to *The Shredding Basement*.

 **(The) Yarn Room:** place where *story-threads* are created by *Bookworms*; *Bookworms* join the threads together and with the help of *Story Weavers*, weave them into completed *story-vessels*.



Chapter 1:

How can books just vanish?

“Ten minutes!”

The words echoed in my head. I glanced at my watch. The countdown was on. I had to find it. It must be there. I crouched between the bookshelves. Keep searching! Don't give up!

My eyes darted across the lines of books. My hands hovered back and forth over the titles. My fingers tensed and twitched, waiting eagerly to snatch the book from the shelf.

Where is it? Keep looking! The time was almost up. My mind was racing. I must complete my mission! There! That's the title!

My right hand reached into the collection of books. I grasped a dark red spine and pulled it clear. The excitement made my hands shake. Frantically I turned to the first page. Are the words there?

I could feel the panic rising in my throat.

I blinked my eyes three times. A word-locator ray beamed from my glasses. It wove through the paragraphs, scanning and searching. I turned to the second page.

Slow down! Focus! Concentrate! Nothing?
No-oooo!

How can this be happening again? It was not the book I had been sent to find. Is this mission going to fail too?

“Five minutes!”

I looked across the sea of faces to where the voice had come from. I froze.

A woman in a brightly coloured dress and long, purple boots briefly fixed her eyes on me. Then she abruptly turned and surveyed the others in the room. Their heads were bowed, frantically searching for their own book titles.

“Remember there is a three book limit.”
The scrambling of thirty school children, hurriedly shoving books, any books, into library bags, muffled the encouraging voice of our librarian, Miss Paige.

I sighed inwardly and stared sadly at the shelves. Welcome back to reality Samuel! No book to read again!

Pretending to be on a secret mission to

find a valuable, lost book was not helping me today. Borrowing a book each week had become an impossible task.

There was not a single book I wanted to read in this library. Not even the schoolboy secret-agents or daring girl detectives in the books I enjoyed, would be able to locate an adventure book in this library.

Three books? Miss Paige is dreaming! Where are the books that make reading fun? *GONE!* Had picture books vanished too?

“This way, you’re in the ‘big kid’ section now,” Miss Paige would say to us when we entered the library for our weekly lesson.

She always steered us away from the colourful picture books and towards the shelves that were crammed with chapter books.

I tried to look for the exciting titles that my older sister, Kate, had told me about.

“Samuel,” she would say on Monday mornings, “your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to find a brilliant book of mystery. It has been hidden deep within the library’s most secret shelves. I hope you will be able to use your super sleuthing skills to find it!”

Kate would then give me a folded sticky-

note square. It had a title on it—written in the secret code that we had made up!

I did, of course, accept these missions with great excitement but lately they had been unsuccessful. Kate was puzzled. She knew the books must be there. She had read their pages!

Kate loved books and finished them so quickly that my parents thought that she inhaled the stories. There were books filled with adventures; timeless characters in exciting new worlds; pony stories and animal rescues; magical realms or dragon tales; true stories or fiction—Kate read them all. Now that I had my new glasses, the words in these books were clear. I was Kate's reading apprentice. There was always time to read a book together!

People in our country town often joked that the Reid children should change their name to READ. *Hilarious!*

We DID do more than read books. We liked sport, art, music and dancing. But we loved our books and playing games—imaginative games!

When we played games, Kate and I became the characters from our books. Books were like doors to unexplored worlds. They inspired us to go on adventures. Our imaginations unlocked

doors to so many places. Finding a new book was always exciting. It was hard to walk past a book without picking it up and flicking through the pages. Books seemed to call to us!

But something very strange **WAS** happening in our school library. The books that I had been sent to find had definitely vanished. Last week I had found the right title but the story wasn't quite as Kate had described it to me. *Curious!*

A few weeks ago I had told Miss Paige that books must have vanished. She had smiled at me and said, "A good story Samuel."

Did she think that I didn't want to read anymore? *Seriously?*

"You're just not looking hard enough, Samuel. There are plenty of chapter books for boys your age," Miss Paige had replied, giving me a pile of books to look at. "Just borrow one and start reading. It doesn't matter how long it takes you to finish a book. Reading is supposed to be fun."

Exactly! Earlier in the year I had dubiously borrowed some of the titles she showed me, 'Undies at Large', 'Bottom of the Class', 'Fart-astic stories for boys', 'The Adventures of Gluteus Maximus'.

Mum would shake her head and say, “Just add a dash of toilet humour and books seem to become best sellers for boys your age.”

Mum was right. At the start of the year those books had grabbed me. Seeing **THOSE** words on a page had made me laugh. But now I was looking for something different to read. A really exciting adventure or mystery book but no horror stories.

Where’s the book of adventure and mystery that Kate described? I kept searching, shelf after shelf, determined not to give up.

No, that definitely isn’t it— that fantasy series is about terrible tribes killing and torturing each other. *Scary!*

I just wanted to find the title that had been in Kate’s coded message. I checked the title on the very crinkled paper square.

Ah, this book has a similar title and a very interesting and dark, mysterious cover.

I read the summary on the back.

No—it’s about beast-like bullies, ghosts, zombies and their violent wars! It’ll fill my dreams with nightmares and wake me night after night.

The book must be there. Kate would be

disappointed if I couldn't find it. She always read the secret mission book with me.

“One minute!” called Miss Paige, her voice was still calm and reassuring.

Hurry up, hurry up! I have to complete my mission, or I'll be caught and have to face a horrible punishment! Missing handball!

“Time's up!” Miss Paige's encouraging tone turned shrill. Her penetrating gaze deftly located the students who would join her at lunchtime.

There would be only one student this week. Her green eyes stared at me. I looked down at my empty library bag. Again my mission had been unsuccessful. There was no way out. I knew what would happen next. Not even the most skilled secret agent or superhero could avoid Miss Paige and her lunchtime library detentions.

“Samuel Reid, you will remain here during lunchtime and spend 20 minutes returning books to the shelves.”

My classmates turned and looked at me. They each held a cloth bag containing three books. Their books would return next visit, unopened. Miss Paige would never know that.

For some reason even my friends, James and Hugh, had lost interest in reading.

I stared sadly down the rows of books at our librarian. Miss Paige ignored my desperate and pleading look. Instead she began busily packing things into her leather satchel with the colourful shoulder-strap. ‘The look’ often worked on unsuspecting babysitters but it didn’t have the same effect on teachers.

James and Hugh smiled briefly at me as they stood at the counter waiting for Miss Paige to scan their books.

“See you at the handball squares,” they mouthed as they dropped books into their bags.

Then in two orderly lines, my class walked outside. They all grinned and whispered to each other as Miss Paige closed the doors behind them. Then my class was gone. It was lunchtime and there was no time to waste.

“Let’s get started, Samuel,” Miss Paige said briskly. “We’ll soon be joined by Meg Richmond. She couldn’t find a single book to read when her class came in.”

Meg Richmond—at least I know her.

Meg probably doesn’t need to borrow library books. Her parents own the bookstore

on the corner of the main street called, Multi-Story. It has three levels of books and Meg's family live in an apartment at the very top. Kate and I often wished we could live IN a bookstore.

Meg caught the same crowded school bus. She sat up the front near the driver. She read for the whole trip but never from a book. Her bright red glasses just stared at a screen.

Digital screens on the bus were fun for Kate and I. We didn't need to play a game on them—they were the game. We played the BFG game. We had made the game up when we noticed kids had stopped talking to each other during the long trip to school. Everyone just stared at their screens. BFG was easy to play. We counted how often kids looked up from their screens during the trip. They achieved the ultimate level, BFG (Brain Function Gone), when they never looked up at all. Meg was BFG every time!

“Samuel!” Miss Paige's stern voice destroyed my BFG daydream. “Start putting that pile of books away please!” She waved her hand towards a colourful tower of books stacked precariously on a trolley. She smiled at

me. “You may find an action-packed adventure or a mind-blowing mystery amongst the titles.”

Doubtful! I’ve been telling her for weeks that all the good books had gone!

I reached for a book with a murky-green cover and a picture of slime. I glanced at the authors’ names, ‘P. & C. G-R-E-E-N’. *Funny!*

I found the correct section on the library shelves and slid the green book into its place. The next book was old and worn. The material on its cover was fraying and coming away from the corners. It was difficult to read the title. I couldn’t see who had written it. I squinted and tried to focus on the dark brown letters, outlined faintly in gold.

The letters are moving!

I rubbed my eyes and adjusted my glasses.

The text was still for a moment. Then it began to slowly swirl—like a whirlpool, faster and faster. My stomach began to churn.

I quickly opened the book. *NO!* The letters inside were moving too! Wide spaces were appearing between the words. They flowed like white rivers, meandering lazily through the text. Suddenly they became white snakes, twisting and turning. Slithering slowly through

sentences, parting words and covering letters. They began to wriggle rapidly. The page was a swirling sea of snakes.

Shee-oosh! Clunk! The noise of the library's automatic doors tore my eyes from the book's pages. I shut the book. **SNAP!**

I looked over at the doors. Meg Richmond, her brown hair pulled back in a loose ponytail, had sauntered in. She looked shyly at Miss Paige. The librarian gave her a quick nod in acknowledgement and pointed to the colourful stacks of books on the return trolley. Meg moved toward the trolley where I was standing.

My hands began to tremble. The tattered book was squirming and shaking! I must be imagining it! I need food or have the 'flu!

NO! It **WAS** moving! How this happening? Is it trying to escape? Will Meg notice?

I glanced at Meg. She was returning books to the shelves. The book kept wriggling. My hands gripped the cover tightly.

My head was pounding! I could feel it echoing the rapid drumming of my heart:

Pan-ic, Ba-bom, Ba-boom;

Pan-ic, Ba-bom, Ba-boom.

The movement suddenly stopped. My eyes

were being pulled back to the letters on the book's patched cover.

The letters were very clear. The letters were still. The letters were gold and glowing!

I took a deep breath and made myself read what they said. My eyes began moving slowly from letter to letter.

Those shining letters on the book's cover made words that sent my whole body tingling and my thoughts tumbling in all directions.

What did the words mean?

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