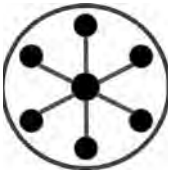
The Story Weavers of Bacalen

The Story Snatchers

A.J. Hill

Junior authors: M.E. Grace & C. Hook



Protect your books' stories:

a warning to readers from The Great Archives of Bacalen.

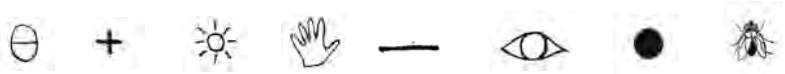
The words on the spine and title page of this book are written in an ancient script from The Great Archives of Bacalen.

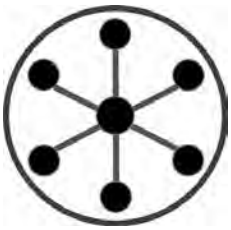
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

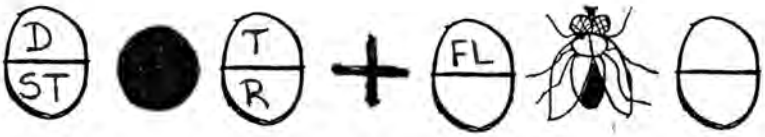
If you are truly a friend of The Great Archives, you can use this script to save other stories from The Snatchers.

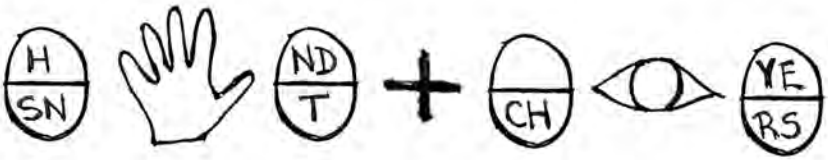
Translate your book's title into Diegesis Script, write it on a bookmark or strip of paper and place it between the book's pages each time you have finished reading. The Snatchers can't remove a bookmark touched with Diegesis Script. It will protect the story forever!

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

Copyright © Annabel Bowcher 2017

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.)

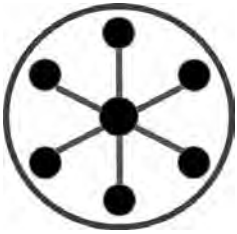
Back Cover photographs: Annabel Bowcher and James Heggie.

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!).

info@bacalenbooks.com.au

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)

Chapter 12:

When do books become friends?

I looked at the book in my lap. It sat motionless. I felt both nervous and excited. I opened it and turned to the first page.

Before I had even read three paragraphs, vivid images formed in my mind. I knew these pictures came from the book's story. There were horses running across deserts, soldiers in chain mail, and brightly dressed people from faraway lands. This book was certainly talking to me! Now I had to use my gift!

Can it tell me about The Snatchers and the lost threads? Does it know how The Archetypes were removed from The Great Archives?

I focused on the images in my head and felt the connection to the book immediately strengthen.

"Hello!" The friendly greeting formed

clearly in my mind. The book WAS talking to me!

The voice sounded young—exactly like Shasta, the boy in the story, should sound!

"I think you are kind to books and their stories." The book continued to talk as if it was trying to find out more about me.

I thought of a reply. "Yes." It felt strange to form these words in my head and not speak them—it would take some practice! "I really enjoy reading books. Your story is one of my favourites."

The book seemed to like this comment. It moved slightly in my hands as if it was gently pressing closer to me, like Kate's cat when it wanted another scratch under its chin.

"Thank you. Who are you? Are you from The Great Archives? I have not met many people who can actually talk to books."

"I'm a Story Weaver. My name is Samuel. Talking to books is one of my gifts. We're trying to find lost story-threads. The Story Snatchers have been prowling for story-threads all over the world. They've also removed the ancient Archetypes from The Great Archives."

Will the book know about this?

Shasta, for the book had a name and the name fitted the voice, replied, "I did not know about The Archetypes. Many original story-threads have been snatched from the shelves of this book store. Story Snatchers have been entering late at night, poaching and then returning with the revised story-threads." Shasta's voice filled with fear. "You must help us, Samuel. I don't want to lose my story-thread. It is strong but eventually they will unravel it. Please don't let them take it."

The book trembled in my hands. It must be very scared of The Snatchers and its panic was entering my mind too.

I patted and stroked it, as if it were my dog cowering when it heard fireworks. I could feel it starting to become calmer. The patting helped me calm down too. I kept comforting the book and quietly asked my first question about The Snatchers.

"Do you know how The Snatchers are getting into the store?"

Shasta's reply was soft, "Through the chute".

"But only Weavers, Bookworms and Storytellers can use the chute," I said. "How

can The Snatchers be using it too?"

My thoughts were racing. Somebody must be helping The Snatchers steal the threads! Maybe somebody from The Great Archives! They could have stolen The Archetypes too!

"They came through the chute." Shasta's voice was firm.

Who could it be? Did they work in The Yarn Room? The Hall of Yarns? The Shredding Basement?

"Was there anyone with them?" I asked. "Somebody who was not a Snatcher?"

Shasta did not answer immediately. Then his voice broke through the thoughts racing in my mind.

"It's hard to talk to you if you don't concentrate!" His voice sounded slightly annoyed. He didn't seem frightened anymore!

I took a deep breath, trying to relax myself and focus again. "Please continue."

"There is a shadowy figure that appears at the chute when The Snatchers arrive and when they are ready to leave. Other books have seen it and told me. It waits at the chute, opening it for The Snatchers and then disappears after them."

I tried not to let my mind race with questions. "Have any of the books seen the figure before? Could they recognise it or give a better description?"

Shasta did not think that was possible. He offered to ask some of the books that had been displayed closer to the chute.

"Do you think The Snatchers will return?" I asked.

"Yes," replied Shasta, his voice had become a whisper. "The most treasured of all stories have not been taken. Many of these stories have been hidden here to keep us safe but people will want to buy us. We can't be hidden forever. If we are bought by people some of us will not be protected from The Snatchers."

The books need to feel safe. Not everyone looks after books.

"Snatchers steal our story-threads when we're left at a bus stop or sit forgotten at the bottom of a school bag. When books are lost or torn and damaged, they become easy prey for Snatchers," said Shasta.

"Yes, I see."

I now knew why our parents had taught

us to treat books properly. We always used bookmarks rather than bending a page. They showed us how to carefully turn each page so that it didn't tear. I cringed when people treated their books badly—ripped them, threw them, bent them, forgot them. That made the stories easy prey for sneaky Snatchers.

A plan was forming. The pieces were slowly coming together. We had to stop more story-threads disappearing. These books were like friends, like family. Their stories were a comforting blanket that wrapped around you on a cold, rainy day or when you were sick in bed.

"Don't worry, Shasta. The Weavers will keep you all safe. I have a plan that will show us who is behind The Snatchers' poaching."

I picked up Shasta and stretched. I could hear the other Weavers talking. They were chattering excitedly with Miss Paige and The Book.

I stood up and walked over to the little group of people and books.

"My book's name is Shasta," I announced. "He's told me that somebody is helping The Snatchers to poach the threads. They are using Bacalen book chutes to steal story-threads all

over the world."

The other Weavers and Miss Paige nodded solemnly.

"Yes," said Miss Paige, "that's what the other books are saying too. I've already sent a message to Spinner. At first he didn't want to believe that somebody from The Great Archives was involved! However with so many books giving us proof that a traitor is in The Archives, Spinner knows that he must start an investigation."

Leo looked grim and determined. "The traitor must be caught."

We all agreed. Carefully we put the good books, our new friends, safely back on the shelves. I held Shasta in my hands for a moment before returning him.

"I'll be back soon for you, Shasta. I'll buy you and take you home where you'll be well read, looked after and safe."

"Thank you, Story Weaver," he replied. "The future of all the stories in this world depends on you."

Shasta was right. We needed this plan to work. The survival of stories, past, present and future, was in our hands.

126
127