

The Story Weavers of Bacalen

The Story Snatchers



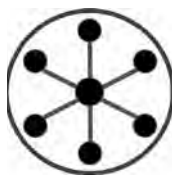
D.I.D Card
The Great Archives of Bacalen

Travellers:		
Destinations:		

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.

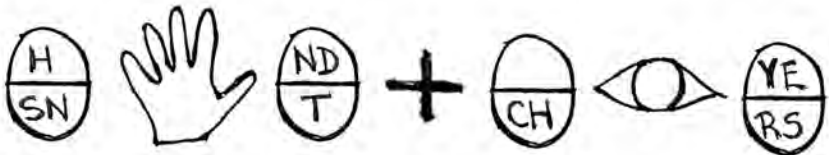
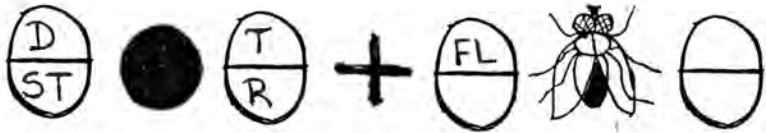
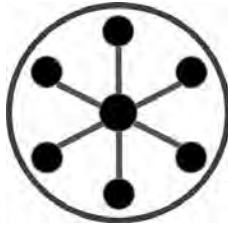
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

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

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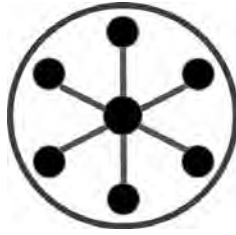
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info@bacalenbooks.com.au

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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;

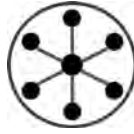
If stories are changed;

Then our lives;

Then our world;

Changes too.”

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



Chapter 14:

What attracts a book thief?

Tick, tock. Flick, flick.

Tick, tock. Flick, flick.

Time ticked by on the book-loving clock. It sat on Multi-Story's front counter, partly illuminated by the light that was shining on the new, front-window display.

I looked at softly glowing numbers on the clock's digital face.

It was almost nine o'clock.

I loved watching this strange clock when I visited the book shop but I never looked at it as much as I had tonight.

The clock was large and round. The two squares that framed the digital numbers on its face looked like eyes. It even wore multi-coloured glasses. The face had a painted round, red nose like a clown and a mouth with a slightly cheeky smile. It had long, mechanical

arms and legs. The clock sat cross-legged on the front counter; large, orange clown-like shoes on its feet and a book in its white-gloved, mechanised hands. As the clock tick-tocked, it then flick-flicked the pages of the book, at random intervals, with its mechanical fingers. On the hour, it would stand up, open and close the book the required number of times, and then settle itself down again to 'read'. It looked like it was enjoying a good book. Janet and Andy changed the title of the clock's book each day. I loved to see what the clock was reading.

The sound of the clock was comforting. I waited patiently; crouched beside the other Weavers in the shadows of the book-lined shelves. Janet and Andy were beside us. Miss Paige had not yet returned from her trip to see Spinner.

After dinner we had helped Meg's parents set up the new window display. Will this selection snare a Snatcher? It was filled with our favourite childhood classics—stories that adults and children love reading together.

Surely the Snatchers would not be able to resist poaching these stories. Shasta was not

part of the display, although he had bravely volunteered to help.

My eyes drifted to the book chute in the corner. **CLICK CLICK!**

I jumped as the sound broke the silence!

Then I noticed the clock on the counter. It had stood up to open and shut its book!

CLAAACK, CLAAACK, CLAAACK, CLAAACK... CLICK CLICK!

After the ninth time, it settled back down on the counter to read. We all looked at each other. They looked as I felt, relieved and hopeful that our plan would work.

Surely The Snatchers will come! Everyone stared at the store's book delivery chute. I could see in the dim light that the other Weavers had their saga pods ready. I held one between my fingers, rolling it slowly as I waited for The Snatchers to appear. I was impatient to see the shadowy figure the books had described to us.

Would the pods' contents work on whoever was helping The Snatchers? Who would this person be?

A dark figure materialised beside the book chute. It was joined by a small group of thin,

grey-clothed Snatchers.

At last!

The Snatchers' gangly outlines reminded me of the shadow puppet theatre I had seen during the holidays. They moved toward the display in the front window, their long arms and elongated fingers stretching out greedily to snatch the story-threads.

“Now!” I whispered urgently.

We raced towards The Snatchers, saga pods in our hands.

SWOOSH! Our fingers crushed the saga pods and the colourful seeds flew into their faces like microscopic confetti. The surprised Snatchers immediately started to shrink. Within seconds they were small enough for us to grab and cram into our bags. A struggling tangle of arms and legs tried to resist but it was no use. We helped each other push them into the bags. It reminded me of how a kangaroo's joey returns head first into its mother's pouch—determinedly wriggling and somersaulting its body inside the pouch until it can see out again.

For a moment, the shadowy form was startled by the rapid departure of The

Snatchers. Then the intruder turned to stare at us. We couldn't clearly see their face under the dark hood. Suddenly Miss Paige materialised from the chute, right beside the cloaked figure.

Yes! Perfect timing! No escaping now!

Miss Paige gasped as she looked more closely at the face hidden within the folds of the hood.

“Cetus!” she cried, stumbling back from the figure. Her reaction was a mix of horror and absolute surprise. “You have completely dishonoured the name of Storyteller!”

Cetus? Surely, he had not betrayed Spinner and The Great Archives.

The figure drew back his hood and the face of Cetus was visible. He did not look at all kind or caring. His eyes were brimming with hatred and his face was covered in a sneering smirk.

“Dishonoured?” he said, his voice sounded hoarse and full of malice. “I have been waiting years for an opportunity to have my revenge.”

He had not lost his voice completely but it was no longer the voice of a Storyteller.

Cetus continued in a husky, breathless,

tone. “The Snatchers have been waiting for somebody to lead them. We already have The Archetypes. Your foolish plans have been made too late.”

We stared at him, and then at each other, unsure what to do next. Something started to faintly glow near his feet. It had dropped from his cloak or from one of The Snatchers.

A bookmark! Get closer to it while Cetus can't see it!

I shuffled my feet a little moving closer while no one seemed to notice me.

“But why would you do this Cetus? Why would you do this to Spinner?” Bella asked.

Cetus gave a short hollow laugh. “Why? Have you not heard how I was tricked by Spinner into telling a story that crushed my speech-thread? He didn’t want to admit that I would become the most powerful Storyteller in Bacalen’s history. HE left that story-vessel out so I would find it! HE knew I would try to read it! It is because of HIM that I can no longer tell stories at The Great Archives. So I will create my own stories. They will all have the same ending—the silencing of your stories and the decay of books!”

Crazy! Cetus wanted revenge!

His voice was now husky and he was becoming more breathless. “No more will stories from books talk to people. People across the world are already forgetting how to read books. I have been secretly changing story-threads for years. It was easy! Who would suspect somebody who worked in The Great Storytelling Library?”

Cetus gave a hollow cough. Talking was not easy for him. “Spinner was too trusting. Now I control The Snatchers too! Stories are being changed swiftly and secretly all over the world. The Great Storyteller, the Bookworms and the Weavers will be no more. The pages in The Great Archives will decay into piles of dust and its story-vessels will be empty forever. Books will mean nothing to people.”

Now his voice began to crack. His damaged speech-thread strained to continue with his terrible story. “I am changing the vast amount of information that is found on the internet! People are all too quick to read what is on a screen and never question it. Soon I will be able to control what people read, what they learn and what they believe!”

Cetus' face became wild as if he was enjoying the imagined scene he was creating in his twisted mind.

Sad! For a brief moment, I now felt sorry for him. He had lost the joy of creating or doing something for others. He was lost in his own pain. Pain that had started because of a choice he had made long ago. It had not been Spinner or any of the others at The Great Archives who had made him do it. Instead of learning from his mistake, he had used the event to feed his envy. Even while I was thinking this, I was shuffling closer to him, hoping no one would notice me.

“You can’t punish the world for your choice,” said Meg, her voice was becoming steady and hypnotic. “That past decision was yours. Mistakes happen. Don’t keep making the same one, Cetus, or it becomes a choice. You can change. Your stories and your speech-thread can be mended. Let us help you. Tell us where we can find the Archetypes. Then we can fix the world’s broken story-threads.”

True. These were wise and brave words from Meg, but they are lost on Cetus.

The treacherous Storyteller turned to look

at her with dark, angry eyes; they were now deep pools over-flowing with years of hatred and revenge.

“Your hypnotic voice will not work on me, young Weaver! I do not want to be healed and my stories will never be changed!” Cetus spat the words at Meg with increased venom. “You cannot stop your world and its stories from changing. Its people are changing too and they don’t even know it! They are so blinded by their screens.”

Cetus laughed, he was enjoying this moment. “The people of this world don’t want your stories anymore. It is so easy for their minds to be swept up in a digital sea of false words and images. These people will not question or distrust what they read. Say goodbye to Bacalen. Gone are the days of story weaving and imagination. Gone are the times of adventure and new discoveries.”

Cetus looked at us all in triumph. “Without The Archetypes, you will all perish and a world full of Story Snatchers will serve the Supreme Storyteller, Argyros Cetus! Your Great Storyteller is becoming weak. His trust and belief in me has made it so easy to make a

brand new world of misinformation and lifeless stories.”

Anna sprang forward and threw the contents of a saga pod over Cetus. It had no effect.

“You children are no match for me. The powder from a saga pod will not work on a Storyteller.” Cetus’ face was covered with a contorted, hideous grin. “It is time for me to depart this little book convention. There is work to be done.”

He quickly opened the book chute once, threw in a D.I.D. card, and vanished.

“Can we follow him?” Bella cried, rushing to the chute.

Miss Paige shook her head. “No,” she replied. “There is no way to find out where he has gone this time.”

Janet looked very serious and turned to her sister. “Spinner will need to be told. What if Cetus has returned to The Great Archives to confront him?”

Miss Paige walked over to the clock on the counter and removed its glasses. “The video that the clock recorded in its lenses will not be easy for Spinner to watch. I’ll take it to him so

that we can study it. We may find some more clues.”

She produced a D.I.D. card from her satchel and tossed it into the chute. Then she and the terrible evidence of Cetus’ betrayal disappeared.

Wow! A hidden camera in the glasses! Nice work by Miss Paige. The bookmark!

I quickly walked up to the chute and bent down to pick up the bookmark that had dropped to the ground. I had forgotten all about it until that moment.

Cetus had no idea that he had left us a clue! Would the bookmark show us where he had gone? How would we unlock its message?

