

The Story Weavers of Bacalen

The Story Snatchers

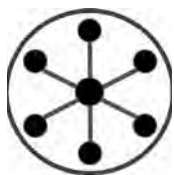


The Great Archives •



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.

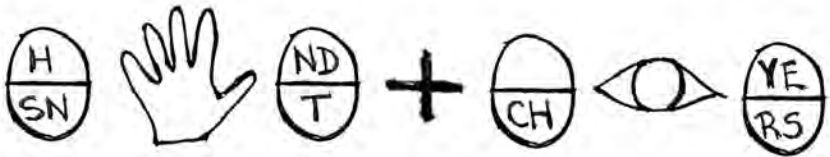
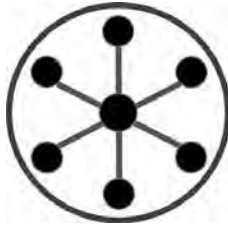
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

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.





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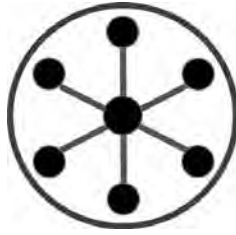
Back Cover photographs: Annabel Bowcher and James Heggie.

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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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 15:

Who can see the bookmarks?

I held the delicate bookmark carefully in my hand. It was so finely woven, I could not help but admire it.

“What is it?” Andy asked eagerly. “Did you find a bookmark?”

“Yes,” I replied, showing him the bookmark.

Then I remembered—he could not see it! The five other Weavers crowded around me and I held the bookmark across both hands for them to study.

“Will it give you any clues to where Cetus has gone or where The Archetypes may be?” asked Janet. “Only you Weavers can see the bookmarks so we’re all relying on you.”

No pressure!

The bookmark was like an illuminated piece of ribbon.

“It has a pale, yellow glow and there

are symbols and letters printed all over it,” I explained to Janet and Andy.

“It’s Diegesis Script—an ancient script used by The Great Storytellers of Bacalen,” said Andy.

“Can you understand it?” I asked Andy.

He shook his head. “It is only taught to The Great Storytellers.”

“Some of the symbols look a bit like the hieroglyphics used by ancient Egyptians,” said Leo. “They look familiar but I can’t remember where else I have seen them.”

“We have seen them before! They’re like the symbols carved into Spinner’s chair!” cried Caitlin triumphantly.

I looked at the symbols. “You’re right, Caitlin! Now we need Spinner to help us.”

I noticed a symbol at the top of the bookmark. I hadn’t seen that on Spinner’s chair. This symbol looked like an open book. I pointed to it. The other Weavers also studied the symbols more closely. Bella pointed to something at the end of the series of symbols and letters—another book!

Anna placed her finger on the book symbol. “This book is closed.”

Why were there symbols on the bookmark that looked like books? What did this mean? How were we supposed to understand the script without Spinner? We all stood looking at the collection of seemingly random letters and symbols. Then Caitlin noticed Janet's satchel was moving.

“Quick Janet, The Book wants to get out of the satchel. Can it help solve this puzzle?”

Janet opened her satchel and drew out The Book. It was difficult to hold—it was very excited!

“Open me,” The Book called to us in our minds. “Hurry, place the bookmark on my pages.”

Caitlin carefully took The Book from Janet, trying not to drop it. She had to stroke it firmly to calm it down. Finally, she could open it. I placed the bookmark on its pages.

Nothing happened.

The Book started to wriggle in Caitlin's hands.

“Close me!” It said simply. It was too impatient to say anymore.

“Close The Book,” said Meg, her voice sounding a little impatient too.

Caitlin closed **The Book**, keeping the bookmark between its pages.

The Book became still. “Now concentrate,” it commanded.

Images rapidly crowded my mind. *Slow down!* Pictures of places flickered through my head. I closed my eyes. *Focus!* The images slowed down. The bookmark was creating a map! It was showing me where its story-threads were. **The Book** was talking to the bookmark and translating the script into images.

“Can you see them?” I asked, opening my eyes to look at the other Weavers. “The pictures, can you see them in your mind?”

The other Weavers returned my gaze. They shook their heads and looked puzzled.

“Remember, Samuel,” Andy said, “the bookmark was yellow. It must have fallen from an adventure book so only you will see the image map that it creates.”

I nodded. Of course! The bookmark with its faint yellow glow had once been part of an adventure story!

“Well,” said Bella, grabbing my shoulders. “What can you see? Tell us! Quickly!”

“Ok Bella, let me go and I’ll tell you.” I

turned to the Weavers and told them what had happened.

“Brilliant!” Anna was almost dancing with excitement. “Could you see where The Snatchers are reweaving the stories? Do you think The Archetypes are there?”

“I couldn’t tell,” I replied hurriedly, “but I can describe the places where the bookmark has been, where its story-threads can be found. If I tell you about the pictures Caitlin, you might be able to use your gift of talking to travel stories to locate The Snatchers’ lair.”

Caitlin nodded. I thought about the pictures from the image map.

A place near a large lake and a high spouting fountain. A long, grey building at the top of a grassy, green mound. On a tall pole, a huge flag was flying above the building. The dark blue flag looked Australian—it was flapping in the wind but there were white stars on it and a Union Jack in the corner. It wasn’t just images. Bells were ringing, coming from a tall, thin building on a nearby island. The image map shifted into a sandstone building. Inside there were many old books. One of the pictures showed a room. Then The Snatchers. They were

working in a darkened basement. Story-threads were strewn across the floor.

I described to the others what I had seen.

“Will that description find The Snatchers, Caitlin?” asked Bella.

Caitlin was sure that the images from the map would locate them. She quickly raced upstairs to find the book she had been talking to that afternoon in the Book Deliveries Room. When she returned, she sat on the floor and opened the book. We were all getting much quicker at forming a link to the books. Within a very short time Caitlin had an answer. Her book, Paris (for the book was all about the art and architecture to be found in France), had been able to communicate with other books to find an answer for us.

“The image map was describing the National Library of Australia! It’s in Australia’s capital, Canberra,” explained Caitlin. “The lake with the fountain is Lake Burley Griffin. An Australian flag flies over New Parliament House and the sound of bells is from the National Carillon, a gift of 55 bronze bells from the United Kingdom.”

Asking a book for information is worth it!

“The Snatchers have an underground reweaving room beneath the National Library!” Leo said grimly. “They must have already rewoven many of the books located there.”

“And it could be more than books that have been snatched,” replied Janet. “All Australian publications should be deposited at this library. It has the largest Australian collection in the world. Magazines, maps, sheet music, manuscripts, oral histories, electronic media—anything with words could be a target.”

“The National Library’s Bacalen book chute is linked to the National Libraries of other countries!” warned Meg. “No library is safe!”

We needed a new plan. Cetus would not realise we had found a bookmark. We didn’t want to let The Snatchers know that we had discovered the location of their reweaving room in Australia.

“We must get a secret message to Spinner and Miss Paige,” I said urgently.

Janet nodded and pulled out a D.I.D. card. “I’ll go and tell them. We’ll meet you at the National Library. Andy will be your guide. Don’t do anything foolish. If Cetus is there, you will need Spinner’s help to catch him.”

This adventure is becoming very real! What if we were hopelessly outnumbered by Snatchers? There was no time to think about what might happen if we failed to shrink all The Snatchers. We promised to be careful.

Janet disappeared through the chute. Andy turned to us, looking thoughtful.

“Right!” he said briskly, as he went into planning mode. “We need to make sure you have enough saga pods. It’s difficult to estimate how many Snatchers might be there so fill your pouches—no such thing as too many!”

What can Snatchers do to Weavers, Bookworms or Storytellers? Can they turn us into Snatchers too?

Andy emerged from a store room with a glass jar full of swirling saga pods. Where did the pods come from? Were they collected from a saga plant grown at The Great Archives?

There was no time to ask Andy any questions as we hurriedly drizzled the colourful pods into our leather pouches. We had to nudge and remind each other not to stare at them for too long!

We walked over to the book chute. Andy inserted the D.I.D. card. We stood together

not knowing what we would find at the end of this journey.

WHOOSH! We sped away. **ACHOO!** This book chute was a bit dusty and untravelled!

Were we really prepared to tackle The Snatchers? The survival of readers and stories across the world depended upon us!

