

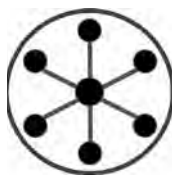
The Story Weavers of Bacalen

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.

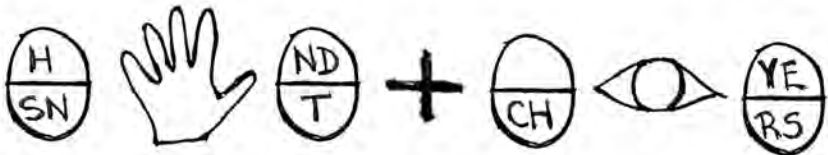
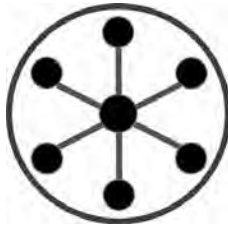
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

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.





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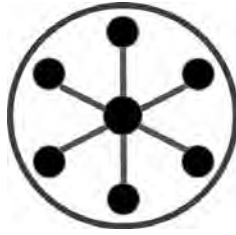
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Back Cover illustration: Ned ‘Elly: the original painting, ‘Ned Kelly’ by Sidney Nolan resides in The National Gallery of Australia in the capital city of Canberra. The picture has been transformed by The Picture Pinchers (or by Annabel Bowcher!). 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;

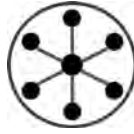
If stories are changed;

Then our lives;

Then our world;

Changes too.”

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



Chapter 16:

When is a bookmark really useful?

The air whipped around us. Then it was calm.

We were standing inside The National Library in Canberra. The books in the room looked very old! There were bookshelves from floor to ceiling. Now to find the entrance to The Snatchers' Reweaving Room.

I scanned the room wishing my glasses had x-ray vision. Nothing seemed familiar.

Andy turned to me. "Samuel, you'll have to tell us when we are in the room from the image map."

I nodded, and thought hard about what the image map had shown me.

Leo carefully took a green, leather bound book off the shelf and looked at its cover. He opened it. Immediately the pages disintegrated. A cloud of coloured particles fell to the floor.

The story-threads had been destroyed. A pale pile of dust was all that remained of a once treasured story-vessel.

Leo held the empty book sadly in his hands. “It’s happening already. The oldest and most vulnerable stories are decaying.”

A number of small insects emerged from the pile of dust. Leo carefully picked one up between his fingers.

“Silverfish!” Leo exclaimed. “They like to eat clothing and pages of old books.”

Leo closed the cover of the book. He was frowning with concentration. We could hear him quietly repeating, “Silverfish, silverfish, silverfish...” and then he turned to us and said more clearly, “*Argyros Cetus!*”

We looked at him blankly.

“Yes,” I said, “We know he is the mastermind of this terrible plan.”

“No,” said Leo. “*Argyros Cetus*—his name comes from two Greek words! ‘*Argyros*’ meaning silver and ‘*Cetus*’ meaning monster fish!”

Nice! It certainly pays to read more than adventure stories! Leo is a fountain of information!

“Great work, Leo.” Andy gave Leo a pat

on the back. “None of us have thought about the meaning of his name or linked it to the poaching of story-threads.”

“Well he is definitely a monster who wants to destroy stories,” said Caitlin. “Wish we had worked out what his name meant when we first met him! If we had known the origin of the name he chose, then we may have been able to stop him stealing The Archetypes.”

“Perhaps,” said Andy, “but names and words can be deceiving. Cetus has been quietly replacing story-threads for years. Nobody suspected him. They trusted him. He has been part of The Great Archives for such a long time.”

I looked around the room and thought about the image map that we needed to follow. Nothing in this room looked familiar. We moved through to the next room.

“What about alarms or guards?” I asked.

“Alarms can’t detect Weavers, Bookworms or Storytellers,” said Andy. “Any guards we meet may need to be shown a saga pod—that will hypnotise them and lull them into a deep sleep for a few hours. They won’t remember seeing us.”

“I guess alarms don’t detect Snatchers either,” I said.

Andy shook his head. “Alarms are of no use when it comes to Snatchers. You may catch them on camera if you know what to look for. They easily blend into the shadows.”

We continued through the rooms of the Library. Then I stopped. This room looks familiar!

The shelving, the carpet, the position of the doorway and windows—it was just like the image from the bookmark.

“This is the room I saw in the image map,” I said, my voice becoming excited.

“There must be an entrance to the Reweaving Room somewhere in here.” Meg was looking up and down, scanning for clues.

We spread out across the room, not really knowing what we were looking for. Perhaps we would be lucky enough to find another bookmark or piece of dropped thread.

“Shouldn’t we wait for Spinner, Miss Paige and Janet to return?” Anna asked. “We really don’t know how many Snatchers we’ll find or if Cetus is with them.”

“If we can find the entrance before they

arrive, then we can guard it,” said Bella.

I was beginning to think that perhaps my image map had been wrong. Then I saw a glimmer of light. It was so faint that at first I thought it was just the light from my torch catching a sliver of stainless steel on the shelf’s edge.

I turned off my torch. The glimmer of light was still there. It was low down on the shelf.

“Here, over here!” I bent down.

The others came to look at where I was pointing. It was the shimmering end of another bookmark.

“What is it?” asked Andy. “I can’t see anything.

Meg whispered excitedly to him, “It’s a bookmark, Dad. It’s between two books.”

Leo went to pull out one of the books. It wouldn’t move. He tried the one on the other side of the bookmark, but it didn’t move either. Then he pulled them both together and they came away in his hands. The bookmark remained in the space where the books had been removed.

“Is the bookmark free?” Andy asked.

“No,” said Leo. “It’s still wedged in

there.”

Leo shone his torch into the space and looked more closely at where the books had been.

“It’s stuck in some sort of little door. Well you’d call it a door if you were a fairy or an elf!”

Andy came closer and peered at the tiny wooden door. Luckily he could see the door!

“Perhaps you’d better have a look, Anna,” said Andy. “You’re The Story Weaver who knows the most about magic and fantasy.”

Anna came to look. “It is like a fairy door but I have no idea how to open it.”

She pushed and pulled at the tiny door handle, knocked softly on the surface but nothing happened.

Can The Snatchers use such a tiny door? What’s behind it? A switch to open a secret entrance?

Suddenly we heard footsteps quietly approaching behind us. We swung around, ready with our saga pods.

“Steady, Story Weavers.” Miss Paige’s voice was no more than a strong whisper. “What have you found?”

Miss Paige, Janet and Spinner had arrived. We showed them the discovery behind the two books.

“Spinner,” Caitlin said. “There’s a bookmark stuck in the door.”

“Ah, that will be very useful,” said Spinner, “and makes it even more important that we get the door open.”

Spinner looked thoughtfully at the little door and then reached for The Book that was now hidden back in his robe. He opened The Book and steadily held it up to the tiny entrance.

I watched, curious to see what would happen. Spinner took The Book away and looked at the open, blank pages. Black symbols were appearing on them. It was not Diegesis Script. Spinner studied them as they took shape and smiled.

“Ah, Cetus, you have tried to hide the entrance to the Reweaving Room with great skill but when you open a good book it very rarely lets you down.”

“What do these symbols say?” asked Meg, trying to understand them.

Spinner pointed to each symbol on the page

as he spoke, “This means clockwise, this anti-clockwise, and this symbol indicates dots and dashes, like Morse code.”

I had read about Morse code in many adventure books. If you needed help you signalled **S-O-S** (dot dot dot – dash dash dash – dot dot dot). Will this type of code open the little door?

Spinner spoke again. “Andy, put your finger on the door. I’ll tell you what to do.”

Andy put his finger on the door and we watched, waiting for Spinner to recite the code to him.

“Circle your finger once in a clockwise direction, tap twice, then circle twice anticlockwise...yes, good. Now tap quickly once, then three long taps, circle clockwise again, and finally four quick taps.”

Andy’s fingers tapped, quickly and slowly then quickly again. When he had finished there was a click and the little door opened.

The bookmark that had been wedged in the door fell to the ground. Meg picked it up.

“Should we read it?” Her eyes sparkled in my torch light.

“It can be read later,” said her aunt. “The

image map it contains could provide important information about other Snatcher locations. It won't tell us any more about this one."

Meg nodded. "What should we do with it? Where will it be safe?"

"Here, Meg. It will be safe in The Book. Put it at the back," advised Janet and Spinner passed her The Book. "The image maps only form when a bookmark is placed between the pages of The Book."

The bookmark immediately attached itself to the inside back-cover of The Book and Miss Paige took The Book, returning it to her satchel. We again focused our attention on the hidden door and took turns looking at what was behind it.

It was dark. More like a tunnel than an entrance to a room! There was nothing to see or hear, smell or feel. Just blackness.

Anna broke the silence. "Well if it isn't a door for little Snatchers, do they use it as a post box for story-threads?" She giggled.

"That's it, Anna!" said Janet.

"What?" said Anna. "You don't really think it is a story-thread post box?"

"No but I'm sure the Snatchers do post

something into it.” Janet shared her idea with us and we all nodded.

It wasn’t a post box for threads. It was a post box for some sort of transportation card. We HAD found the entrance to The Snatchers’ lair.

Janet took a D.I.D. card out of her satchel.

“How do we know if using our D.I.D. cards will get us there?” asked Leo. “The Snatchers might have another way they travel through these doors. They steal and copy threads, so they might copy D.I.D. cards too.”

Copy? Can that happen?

“That could be true, Leo,” said Spinner. “However, I think our cards will work. Snatchers don’t have the same ability to instantly travel to destinations as we do. Cetus has helped The Snatchers to hide their Reweaving Room using this door. He’ll be using D.I.D. cards to transport them to rooms all over the world. If he has been copying D.I.D. cards, then those copies will not work in the chutes. Copies are never as good or as strong as the originals.”

Interesting! I hope Spinner is right!

Janet wrote on the D.I.D. card— National Library Reweaving Room and 10 people!

“Saga pods ready,” Bella called.

We knew we would need them as soon as we arrived at our new destination. Janet opened and closed the little door 10 times and posted the D.I.D. card. Just like travelling by chute, the wind swirled around us and we were gone, through the little door and closer to The Snatchers.

Would Cetus be there? How would we capture him? Had he left The Archetypes here with The Snatchers?

