

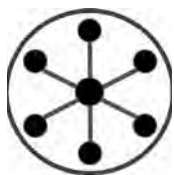
The Story Weavers of Bacalen

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.

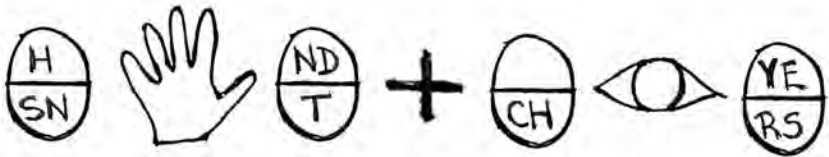
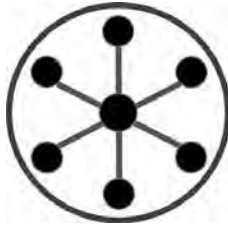
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

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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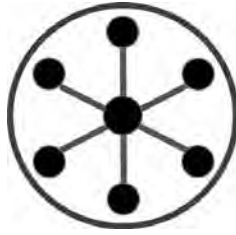
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The History of Stories

“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;

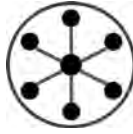
If stories are changed;

Then our lives;

Then our world;

Changes too.”

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



Chapter 17:

Why would you ruin a good book?

The room we appeared in was dimly lit. Our eyes took a moment to adjust.

“There!” yelled Leo. A grey figure rushed toward us but Bella was too quick with her saga pod. The Snatcher was minimised in an instant. She popped his wriggling body, little arms and legs thrashing wildly, into her bag. For a brief moment the coloured bag danced as tiny feet and fists battled with it. Then the bag was still. The Snatcher was off to the Shredding Basement.

“He won’t be the only one,” Andy said with grim determination.

Where were the other Snatchers? The rest of the room was empty.

“There’s a door in the back corner.” Anna pointed to the darkest corner of the room.

“Quietly now, be ready. The Reweaving

Room could be in there and it will be filled with Snatchers at work,” warned Miss Paige.

I looked at her and said in a serious voice, “And Cetus too!”

She nodded. “Janet and Andy will guard the entry.”

“What if a Snatcher comes through?” asked Caitlin.

Andy smiled at her. “Even we Bookworms and Storytellers have a way to deal with Snatchers.” He removed something from his satchel and showed us.

There are so many amazing things hidden in those satchels! I looked at what Andy held out to us. It looked like an old, silver candlestick but it was shorter and thinner. The handle was covered with impressions of little books. The end looked like it had some sort of stamp on it.

Just like the stamps that our classroom teachers used in our books to print, ‘Excellent work’ or ‘Well done’ or ‘Fantastic effort’.

“What will that do?” I asked.

“Is it one of those old stamps that was used with wax seals?” Leo looked closely at it. “Important documents were sealed or stamped by pushing it into hot wax and then an

impression was made when you took it off.”

“Very similar,” said Andy, “It is called a matrix but we don’t use hot wax with it. We use *transporting ink*.”

He pulled out a small notebook. Holding the matrix around its middle, he stamped a page of the notebook and showed us the page. The words, ‘Property of the Shredding Basement’, glared at us from the paper.

“Stamp this on a Snatcher, and they immediately get transported to the Shredding Basement,” he said with a grin. “The tricky bit is getting close enough to use it without them getting us with their matrix.”

Ah, so The Snatchers did have a way to deal with us too!

“What mark does their matrix leave?” I asked, a little nervously. I wasn’t sure that I really wanted to hear the answer!

Andy looked at me, glanced at the door and said in a low voice, “You don’t want to be stamped by their matrix. The words, ‘*Property of The Snatchers*’, appears in *transforming ink*. It changes you into a Snatcher more quickly than having too much screen time!”

I shuddered. *No way!*

“The ink from their stamp changes the colour of your life plug. When the colour is gone you change into a Snatcher but it doesn’t happen immediately.”

The look on my face must have shown the horror that I felt building inside.

“We can change you back,” said Janet quickly, seeing my concern. “Crushing a saga pod on the transforming stamp will stop the change but it has to be done before the life plug loses all its colours. If you do transform into a Snatcher, getting you to the Shredding Basement will sort things out!”

I shuddered again. I wasn’t keen to visit the Shredding Basement—even though I knew you didn’t actually get shredded!

“All ready?” asked Miss Paige, she had a matrix in each hand. With saga pods poised, we crept slowly toward the dark door in the corner.

Miss Paige put her ear to the door and listened. We held our breath. There were sounds of clanking and a constant clicking.

“That’s the sound of them reweaving the threads,” whispered Miss Paige.

The Reweaving Room was behind this door!

Any minute we were going to burst through and surprise The Snatchers!

“On the count of three,” Spinner said and he put his hand on the door handle.

“One, two, three...”

He flung the door open. We burst into the room, saga pod powder flying at the faces of surprised Snatchers working at the enormous, reweaving machines. One, two...five, six, seven... I started to lose count of how many Snatchers I had minimised and put, squirming, into my bag.

The other Weavers were busy too.

The room was a frenetic scene of Snatchers trying to flee and multi-coloured saga pod powder appearing in the air, like fireworks on New Year’s Eve.

Snatchers were quickly vanishing. None had managed to stamp us with transforming ink from their matrices. Snatchers had long arms but their matrix accuracy was clumsy and sluggish. Miss Paige and Spinner had a matrix in each hand. They were skilfully stamping Snatchers and accurately finding their targets. The sounds from the machines slowed.

Suddenly the room was quiet. We surveyed

the room. Not a single Snatcher could be seen. There were many threads on the floor and many more rewoven into new, dull looking story-vessels.

The Bookworms would be busy unravelling and reweaving these colourless stories back to their original and vibrant forms.

We were all breathing hard and wiping sweat from our foreheads.

“Well done everyone!” Spinner said, looking around at our faces that were now breaking out into smiles of relief.

“Everyone OK?” Janet asked with concern. She and Andy stood in the doorway.

We looked at each other and quickly checked that none of us had been stamped.

“Think we’ve won this Snatcher encounter.” Andy grinned, giving us all a double thumbs-up before returning with Janet to guard the entry.

“Now,” said Miss Paige, her voice again full of librarian efficiency, “We must get the threads back to the Yarn Room at The Great Archives.”

“If we don’t find The Archetypes, will each of these threads have to be sent back through

our Transporter Bags?” I asked, looking at the enormous pile of threads.

That would be a very long and tedious process! We could be here for ages!

“Story-threads have never been snatched on such a large scale,” replied Spinner.

“Weavers usually search for lost threads and send them back to The Yarn Room, but with such a large number located in one place, The Bookworms can bring the story-thread extractors. The extractors are like vacuums. They have long nozzles that are attached to colourful bags. When the threads are pulled into the bags, they immediately reappear in the sorting pile at The Yarn Room.”

Clever! The Great Archives had so many amazing inventions.

“That sounds much quicker.” I was relieved. “We can spend our time looking for The Archetypes and Cetus.”

“Where is Cetus?” asked Leo, his eyes darting around the room.

Cetus had not been in the Reweaving Room with The Snatchers. There were no doors to any other rooms. He was not here!

“Are The Archetypes here?” Anna asked.

These questions made me feel uneasy.

“You will never find them,” a voice rasped from the direction of the door.

We all knew that voice. It could only be Cetus. We whirled around and saw him staring into the empty Reweaving Room.

How could we capture him? How had he got past Andy and Janet? Were they OK?



*Property of the
Great Archives*