

The Story Weavers of Bacalen

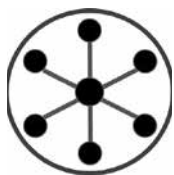
# The Story Snatchers



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.*

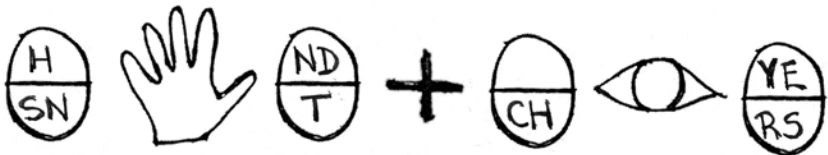
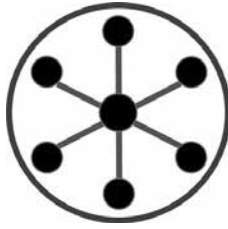
*Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.*

*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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**Front Cover photograph:** Nicole Walker (who found this ‘book exchange’ in France.)

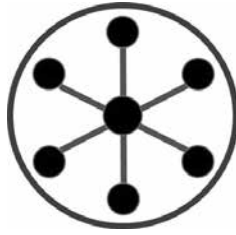
**Back Cover photographs:** Annabel Bowcher and James Heggie.

**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!).

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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 2:

### What sort of gift is this?

My mind was overflowing with questions. Gifts? What gifts? Does it mean some sort of present? Christmas had been five months ago. My birthday was in two months and I hadn't received a present from anybody recently.

Why am I believing these words? What are story-threads? Where are The Great Archives of Bacalen? Why are they calling to ME?

My mind was spinning.

This is a trick! Yes—somebody's idea of a joke! Is it April fool's day? National Practical Joke Day? You're on Hidden Camera!—the popular, reality TV show?

I jumped.

A hand brushed across my arm. They were trying to take the book.

“No!” I yell wildly, wrenching the book away.

Miss Paige called out from across the room. “Samuel, if you and Meg are going to annoy one another then move away. You can both stay in for the remainder of the lunch break if you don’t settle down.”

I looked at the person attached to the hand. It was Meg.

She put her finger to her lips and guided me between two tall bookshelves. We were now hidden from Miss Paige’s gaze.

“The book,” Meg hissed under her breath as her hand reached for its tattered cover.

“Give me the book!”

“No!” I said in a low voice, pulling the book closer. I didn’t want Miss Paige to know about this book. “I’m going to borrow it.”

“You can’t. You mustn’t.” Meg sounded desperate.

“Why?” I asked. This detention was getting really weird.

“Because,” Meg paused. She took a quick glance over her shoulder and then leant closer to me. “Because,” she said in a hushed voice, “it belonged to my...grandfather...it was a gift...I accidentally left it here yesterday.”

I didn’t believe her story. I knew she was

lying and I could prove it. The spine of the book had a library code on it—the label was worn but the printing was still visible.

“It’s a library book,” I replied. “See?” I pointed to the numbers on the multi-coloured tape stuck to the book’s worn spine.

*Multi-coloured?* The school library books have yellow tape! *Weird!*

For a moment, Meg seemed beaten. Will she tell me the truth?

Meg looked at the worn, patched book in my hand and then removed her red framed glasses. She steadily fixed her blue eyes on me. What is she going to do? I clutched the book more tightly in my hands. My fingers could feel the loose material on its cover.

Meg just smiled and replaced her glasses, never taking her eyes off me. Then for the first time, I noticed it. How had I not seen it before? Meg’s glasses did not have clear lenses but they weren’t dark like sunglasses. They had very pale-grey lenses.

I had seen these lenses before. Why? Because I wore them too. Not grey lenses but a dull yellow. People often asked about my ‘cool glasses’. Most people wouldn’t notice



Meg's—the grey was not an obvious colour.

I knew that we shared something other than wanting that book. We both had a type of perceptual dyslexia. Mum once told me that this type of visual problem is really common. It is often called Irlen Syndrome. Kate and my dad have it too.

Mum would say, “One in every five people you see down the street has it but most don't know it. You're lucky. You know you have it and how to manage it.”

Wearing the coloured lenses made things easier. They helped my eyes and brain talk to each other better. I was able to concentrate in class. I didn't get headaches or bump into things as often. White paper was less bright. It was easier to see numbers and words. I could read my books more quickly because letters and words stopped moving on the page.

Letters moving on the page? That was exactly what had happened in the old book!

The swirling, the rivers of white running through the text...I often saw that when my eyes were tired or when I forgot to wear my glasses!

Is this a coincidence? Is the book really

trying to tell me something? I looked at the old book resting quietly in my hand.

Seriously, Samuel, listen to yourself! You actually believe the book made the words move? Maybe you need new glasses. Think about it! Use your brain! Books don't talk!

My thoughts raced away again. They reconnected where all the impossible and improbable ideas always met in my head. Where imagination and creativity ran wild and free.

Mum often said, "Dyslexics are extremely intelligent. They really think outside the box. Learn to manage it and don't use it as an excuse. See it as a gift."

A gift? A gift! Is the book calling to me because of this 'gift'? I just couldn't believe that the book was a magic gift from Meg's grandfather.

"Listen," said Meg, grabbing my arm.

Her fingers pinched my skin. The sudden pain made me flinch and broke through my thoughts.

"Ouch! Stop it—you're hurting me!" I hissed.

Meg relaxed her grip and stepped back. "Shhh!" she warned, looking for Miss Paige.

The librarian had not heard me cry out.

“Sorry but we need get out of here. We must get this book to safety.”

*Safety?* I blinked hard and tried to focus on what Meg was saying. What is going on? Why is Meg behaving like this? Has she also seen what this magic book can do? Can it do more?

I rubbed my pinched arm and looked at my watch. Twenty minutes was almost up. I stuffed the book into my library bag and hastily grabbed some of the books from the trolley. I signalled to Meg to do the same.

We found places for the books on the library shelves and then went to find Miss Paige. She was reading a book catalogue at her desk.

Miss Paige looked up and smiled. “Your detention is over. I hope this extra time amongst all these authors has been inspiring. You might be surprised where you just might find a book that will take you to another time or place.”

I hastily replied, “Yes Miss Paige. I’m sure books with adventures or mysteries can sometimes turn up when you’re **NOT** looking for them.”

My mission is a success! What will Kate say? I need to show her this book!

Meg was trying to remain calm and not appear too eager to leave. She rolled her eyes at me and tilted her head in the direction of the door.

“Let’s go!” she mouthed.

I nodded. As I swung the library bag over my shoulder, the book inside bumped my hip. Suddenly I felt guilty.

Should I be taking this book out of the library? I had never taken anything before. I slipped my hand into the bag and felt the book’s worn cover. My body started tingling again. There **WAS** something magical inside it. Something that I didn’t think Miss Paige would understand. She didn’t seem to have much imagination. What would she know about magical books?

I nodded to Meg, grasped the bag and we left the library side-by-side.

Somehow, this book had brought us together. Now to find a place to talk about it and what it could do.

My head was bursting with questions. I hoped Meg would be able to answer some of

them.

Who really owned this book? Does it have magical powers? Will it be able to tell us about The Great Archives of Bacalen?

