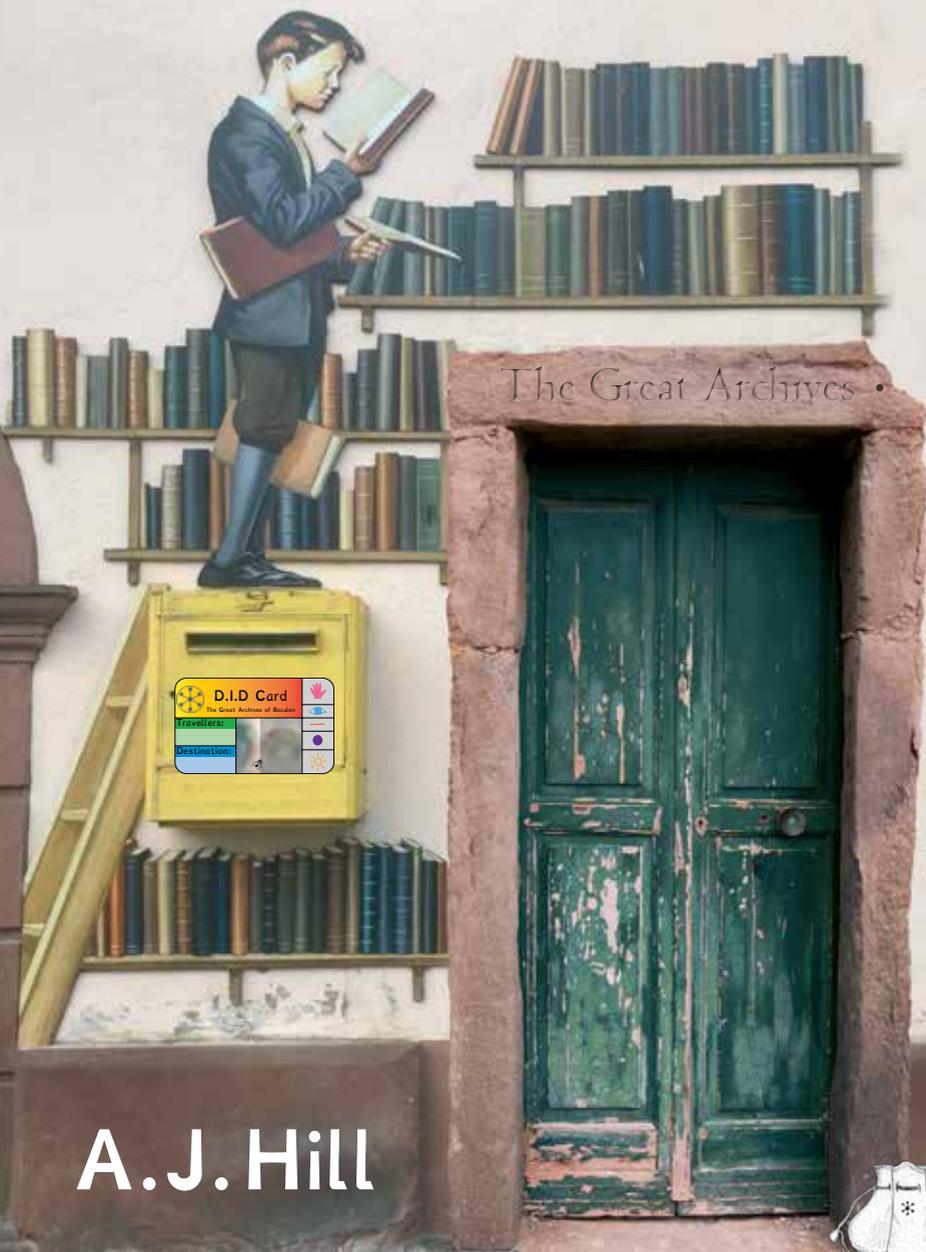


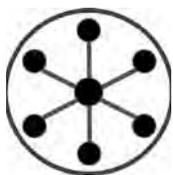
The Story Weavers of Bacalen

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.

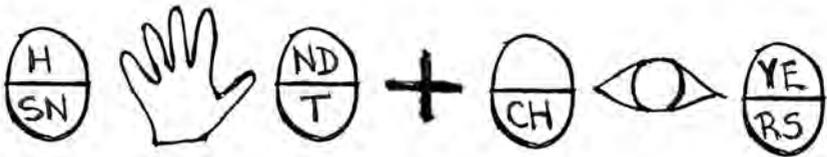
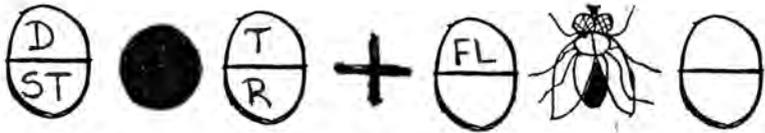
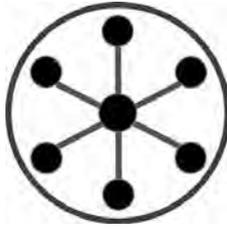
Diegesis Script will protect this story from the steals of Story Snatchers who prowl our world, searching for books so that they can change their stories.

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.





Author: A.J. Hill

Junior Authors: M.E. Grace and C. Hook

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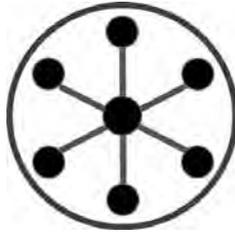
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info@bacalenbooks.com.au

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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;

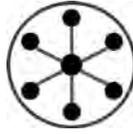
If stories are changed;

Then our lives;

Then our world;

Changes too.”

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



Chapter 4:

Where are the stories going?

We sat in silence. I did not look at Meg or Miss Paige. I stared at the book. Miss Paige held it carefully in her hand.

She adjusted her glasses and cleared her throat. “Well, Meg, it looks like our plan to find the new **Story Weaver of Bacalen** has finally worked. The **Great Archives** can begin to solve the mystery. Your parents will be able to understand why stories are disappearing at such speed from the shelves.”

She looked at me, smiling, holding the book on her right hand and softly stroking its cover with her left, like it was a much-loved, small pet. I tore my gaze away from the book and stared at the librarian.

“**Story Weaver of Bacalen?**” My voice sounded far too loud in this quiet room. “I just want to find out about this book and why there

are missing stories.”

“Exactly!” said Miss Paige. “Exactly what a Story Weaver should ask. The Great Archives needs to learn why it is happening so rapidly. Now that The Book has found you, we have a full complement of six Weavers.”

What is a Story Weaver? How could a book find me? But I had no time to ask any questions!

Miss Paige continued, her voice quickening as she spoke, “You can now all start to look for bookmarks, find any story-threads that have been carelessly left behind, discover where the unravelled story-vessels are being rewoven...”

I frowned at Miss Paige, unable to take in all that she was saying. Look for the bookmarks? Find the story-threads? Track down unravelled story-vessels? How is any of that possible?

Meg put her hand on Miss Paige’s arm, “Perhaps we should take Samuel through this more slowly and start from the beginning, Aunt Beatrix.” *Aunt Beatrix? Meg was her niece!*

Miss Paige looked a little embarrassed. “Apologies, Samuel. I’m getting ahead of myself. When you understand the problem

the world is facing, then you'll also feel the urgency to fix it."

Meg turned to me. "Samuel, this magical book is from **The Great Archives of Bacalen.**"

"Where is Bacalen?" I asked.

"Not far away," said Meg. "But not many people have heard of it."

"Diegesis, the first **Great Storyteller**, created 'The Book of Bacalen' to provide advice to **Storytellers** and to help **Story Weavers** and **Bookworms**," continued Meg. "You will learn more when we get to **The Great Archives.**"

So it is a magical book—but what are **Storytellers** and **Bookworms**?

"Are **Bookworms** real?" I blurted out, unable to think of anything else to say.

"**Bookworms** are certainly real. In fact, they walk amongst us."

I stared at Meg, imagining enormous caterpillar-like creatures wandering the streets.

That'll get the town talking!

"What do they look like?" I asked eagerly.

"They're just people like you or me," said Meg with a shrug.

"Oh," I said disappointed. There would be

no ginormous caterpillars to meet!

“Bookworms do have a special gift,” Meg said proudly, glancing at Miss Paige. “They are able to see and collect feelings, emotions, experiences and information, and weave story-threads from them. Story-threads are then made into story-vessels. These vessels are what you call stories. Many of the best authors are Bookworms or are related to one.”

Wow! Some of my favourite authors must be Bookworms who make story-threads!

A bit like super-heroes with secret identities and special powers!

“So if Bookworms weave story-threads, why aren’t they called ‘Storyworms?’” I asked.

Miss Paige clapped her hands and looked at Meg. “He’s definitely the one.” Meg smiled.

“Well Samuel, that **WAS** what they were called long ago, before books. Then books became the protectors of many of the world’s stories and our ancestors became known as ‘Bookworms’. I hope I never see the day when we all become e-Worms.” Miss Paige shook her head. “**THEN** The Snatchers would be happy!”

“We won’t let that happen,” said Meg putting a reassuring hand on Miss Paige’s arm.

“Samuel, my mother comes from a long line of Bacalen Bookworms. Mum is a Bookworm and,” Meg paused, and smiled at Miss Paige, “my aunt, her sister, is a Bookworm too. Throughout history Bookworms have been the targets for the **STEALS** of sinister **Story Snatchers** that prowl the streets, looking for stories.”

A steal of **Story Snatchers**! That didn't sound like a very friendly group.

I glanced at my watch, hoping there was still time before the bell so Meg could finish her story. I could hardly breathe as I waited for her to tell me more about these **Snatchers**.

“**Story Snatchers** creep after **Bookworms**, watching, waiting for them to leave story-threads hanging from unfinished story-vessels. Then ‘**SNAP**’! The **Snatchers**’ nimble fingers grasp the thread and pull hard until the intricately, woven story-vessel unravels at a rapid rate. The **Snatchers** then quickly stuff the story-threads into their poaching sacks and melt into the shadows. Once threads have been stolen, a **Bookworm** finds it very difficult to duplicate a thread and weave the same story-vessel. The original story is lost.”

“Where do The **Snatchers** go?” I asked

curiously.

“They take the story-threads to their secret Reweaving Rooms.”

“But what do The Story Snatchers do with the threads? Do they try and weave a new story-vessel from them?” I asked.

I was now enjoying the notion that a Bookworm magically wove stories from a story-thread into some sort of story-vessel. It made me think of the busy silk worms munching mulberry leaves and spinning silk cocoons in a shoebox under my bed!

Miss Paige continued the story. “Story Snatchers are not creative creatures, Samuel. They can’t use their imaginations to produce beautiful story-vessels. They do try to reweave the story-threads to make a story-vessel but they can’t find the right words, emotions, feelings or experiences to join the threads. They end up creating uninspiring, colourless versions that are nothing like the carefully crafted, original story-vessels of Bookworms. People won’t read their stories.”

“So are you a Bookworm too?” I looked at Meg, waiting for her reply.

“No. Dad is a Storyteller and Mum and my

aunt are both Bookworms. I am a Story Weaver like you,” said Meg.

“A what?” I said disbelievingly. “I’m dyslexic. Reading, writing and spelling are a bit of a challenge for me, even with my glasses. I don’t write proper stories. Sometimes I do write a whole page in my school journal about my holidays.”

“What do they teach them about creating stories?” Miss Paige laughed, shaking her head. “Stories aren’t just written on paper. They’re woven into the fabric of civilisations, found in the hearts and experiences of people in every corner of the globe. Being dyslexic is not a barrier. You may not find writing a long story an easy task. Try writing an imaginative, short story or creating a ‘spoken’ or ‘oral’ account from all that you see, hear, experience or imagine.”

I looked at Miss Paige and nodded thoughtfully. The imaginative games Kate and I play are actually stories! So I do like creating them!

Writing stories did challenge me. My writing didn’t keep up with my thoughts and I often left words out or misspelt them. It was

frustrating!

After today I'll certainly have an amazing story to tell! Will anyone believe me?

“You see, Samuel,” Miss Paige explained, “**Story Weavers** work with **Bookworms** to create the finished story-vessels. They help find missing threads when a story-vessel becomes damaged and needs repair. Their imaginations allow them to see the pieces required to re-join the threads and finish a story-vessel.”

Meg added. “**Story Weavers** and **Storytellers** have great imaginations and help bring story-vessels to life. They can easily memorise how a story-vessel is woven so that **Bookworms** can recreate a story-vessel if the original is destroyed. **Six Story Weavers** are needed to find the missing threads and successfully recreate the different types of story-vessels.”

Meg looked at her aunt and Miss Paige continued the story. “The **Book of Bacalen** always knows when it has found a **Story Weaver**. Sometimes the location is not clear. We've been searching for you for almost a year. You're the sixth **Story Weaver**. You're

the one who will join the others chosen by The Book to find the story-threads that have been stolen by The Story Snatchers.”

Meg and Miss Paige looked at me. I returned their gaze. Their story amazed me but how could I believe it?

Me—a Story Weaver? Well, I have often been told that I have an active imagination!

So if Meg is a Story Weaver too, who are the other four? When will I meet them? I looked at Meg and her aunt.

“It all seems totally unbelievable,” I said, “but something inside me knows it is true. I need to hear more about these Story Snatchers. I have so many questions!”

Miss Paige, her hands still holding The Book, said in a voice full of business, “The Great Storyteller will be pleased to answer your questions. He has been studying the information that Storytellers, Bookworms and Weavers have collected about The Snatchers. It is his job to keep the history and origin of stories safe. We’ll meet him after the students go back to class.”

I looked around the library. Who’s this Great Storyteller? One of the teachers? The

principal? Is the school actually a magical school that creates stories?

Miss Paige stood up. “I’ll let your teachers know that you’re needed in the library to help get ready for tomorrow’s Book Week display.”

She walked over to her desk and picked up the telephone. I turned to Meg. I had to find something out.

“Meg, if you’re a Story Weaver, why do you spend all your time on the bus looking at your tablet? Shouldn’t you be reading books?”

“I’m looking for stories on the internet that have been poached by The Snatchers. There are heaps of rewoven stories there.” Meg pushed back her chair. “False stories and information on the internet are a big problem.”

“I’ve never thought about that,” I said, standing up and stretching. My head began to spin. I sat back down with a thud.

“You OK?” Meg asked, putting her hand on my shoulder to steady me.

“I think so—just a bit light headed. This has been a crazy day!” I said.

My stomach let out a loud gurgling sound. Meg and I laughed.

“Do you think we could have lunch before

we meet this Storyteller?”

“Absolutely, can’t have Story Weavers finding stories on an empty stomach,” advised Miss Paige, as she walked toward us. “Eat your lunch and meet me back here in ten minutes.”

I felt better at once. Meg and I bolted for the door and raced to our bags. I would never forget this library lesson!

A Story Weaver? Not what I expected to be when I got out of bed this morning. Goal scorer, handball champion, Maths Whiz but not a Story Weaver!

