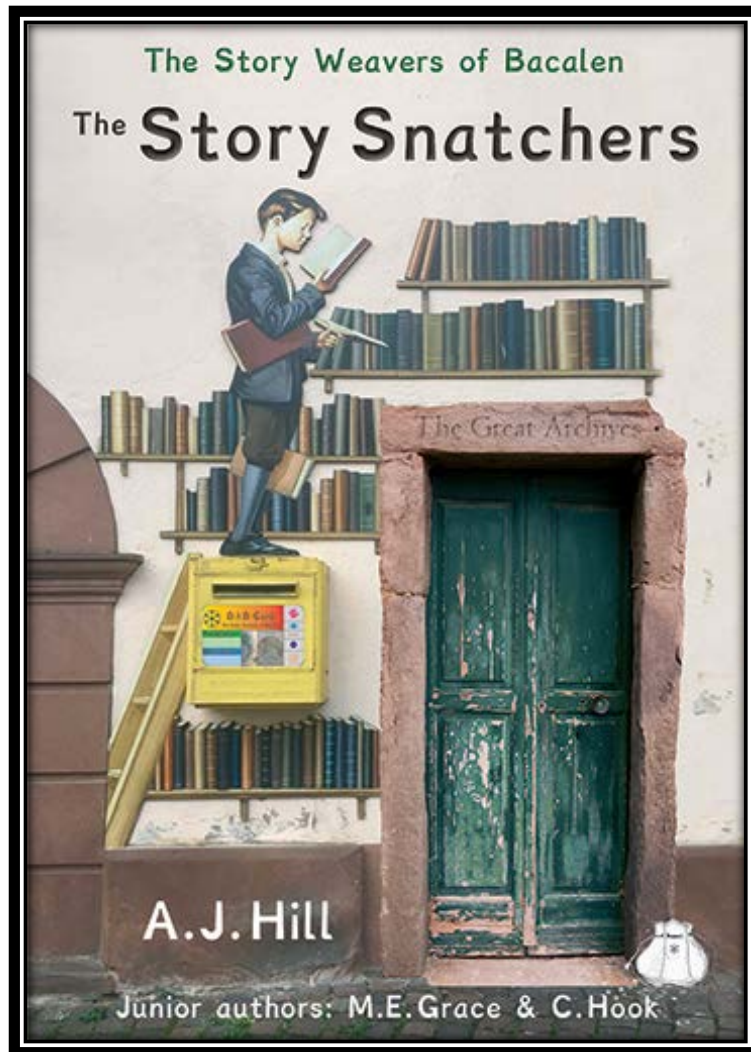


The Story Snatchers



A play written by A.J. Hill

Adapted from the first book in

The Story Weavers of Bacalen Series

‘The Story Snatchers’

by A.J. Hill, M.E. Grace and C. Hook

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)

This extract is from the opening page of *The Story Weavers of Bacalen Book 1: The Story Snatchers*. It focuses on how important stories, in all forms, are to learning in all cultures and across all communities. However not everyone learns in the same way. People who have eg a processing disorder such as Irlen Syndrome, find it difficult to see words on eg. a white board, black board, digital screen or paper without wearing coloured lenses. Undiagnosed, this syndrome can make people frustrated or anxious with learning, reading and completing other tasks that many others take for granted. Everyday ‘stories’ are changed for them and so the world that they live in can be quite different from the one experienced by those who do not have it.

What if these same people were the only ones on Earth who can save our stories?

What if their ‘processing gifts’ can stop The World and its people from being drained of creativity, imagination and stories?

What if wearing those coloured lenses and their ability to think outside the box, is the only way to bring balance back to Earth?

What if their quest fails?

Well then THIS STORY will be the last one the world will ever know!

CAST

SAMUEL REID	Story Weaver of Bacalen wears yellow lensed glasses; student from Australia
MEG RICHMOND	Story Weaver of Bacalen wears grey lensed glasses; student from Australia
MISS BEATRIX PAIGE	Librarian and Bacalen Bookworm; Meg's aunt and Janet's sister wears green lensed glasses;
SPINNER	The Great Storyteller of Bacalen
LEO	Story Weaver of Bacalen wears orange lensed glasses; student from Holland
CAITLIN	Story Weaver of Bacalen wears blue lensed glasses; student from Ecuador
ANNA	Story Weaver of Bacalen wears pink lensed glasses; student from New Zealand
BELLA	Story Weaver of Bacalen wears purple lensed glasses; student from Belgium
ARGYROS CETUS	a.k.a. Alexis Craft and injured Bacalen Storyteller leader of The Story Snatchers
JANET RICHMOND	Bacalen Bookworm wears grey lensed red framed glasses
ANDY RICHMOND	Bacalen Storyteller (can also be the Storyteller Narrator at start and end or substitute this character for e.g. Janet, Miss Paige or Spinner)
JAMES	school friend of Samuel's (<i>could combine James and Hugh as one character</i>)
HUGH	school friend of Samuel's (<i>could combine James and Hugh as one character</i>)
THE BOOK OF BACALEN	voiced from off stage
SHASTA	Samuel's 'book' that he speaks to; can be a character or an offstage voice
NARRATOR	Storyteller at start and end of play. This role could be actor playing 'Andy'

OTHER GROUPS ON STAGE DURING SCENES

SCHOOL STUDENTS: from Samuel's school (in library and outside playing or eating at lunchtime.)

STORY SNATCHERS: multiple dark, grey shapeless figures that sneak around stealing story-threads and reweaving them creep across the stage in a number of scenes and are in other scenes with Cetus

PICTURE PINCHERS: grey figures who steal pictures; creep across the stage at end of final scene

FURTHER NOTES ON CHANGES TO CAST OR REDUCING NUMBERS FOR SMALLER CASTS:

Miss Paige could take Spinner's lines when they get to The Great Archives, a line could be inserted to suggest that Spinner is away because of more story-thread disappearances. He has left Miss Paige in charge until his return.

The number of Story Weavers could be reduced and lines reallocated to the other Story Weavers. Some of the Weavers could have gone with Spinner to investigate stolen story-threads.

Janet and Andy could be combined as characters or omitted and their lines said by Miss Paige and/or Spinner. The scene outside the Reweaving Room where Janet and Andy are guarding the entrance and inked by Cetus would need adapting eg perhaps Miss Paige could be inked instead.

Character names can be changed to suit male or female cast members eg Samuel to Sam, Meg to Max etc

The Story Weavers of Bacalen

We heard their whispers.

They called to us—quietly, urgently.

In our dreams or as we walked amongst them.

One day, somehow,

From somewhere,

Their voices become stronger.

They were desperate.

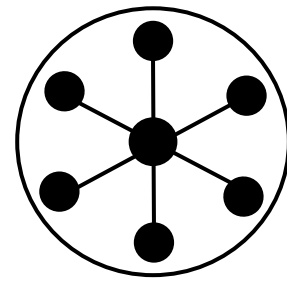
Books were calling to children across the world.

Some of us heard them.

Some of us were chosen by them.

We are the **Story Weavers of Bacalen**—called to save Earth's stories from **The Story Snatchers**.

If our quest fails, then this story will be the last one the world will ever remember.



The Star of Bacalen

Dyslexie font:

The above quote from 'The **Story Snatchers**' book is printed in 'Dyslexie font'. It was developed in The Netherlands by dyslexic, Dutch graphic designer, **Christian Boer**. This font may assist dyslexics to read text more easily and accurately.

For more information go to: www.dyslexiefont.com

BACKGROUND STORY:

The Story Snatchers are stealing stories from across the world. They are substituting information. Nobody on Earth has noticed. Now it is up to those who dwell on The Star of Bacalen hidden deep within our Earth to stop The Snatchers. The Storytellers and Bookworms from The Great Archives of Bacalen guard the world's stories. The Great Archives must save generations of stories from being replaced or the world will forget its own history and its people will transform into grey and unimaginative Story Snatchers! Six young Story Weavers are the world's only hope.

The Great Storyteller, Bookworm Beatrix and the ancient, magical Book of Bacalen, have found five of The Story Weavers to help them defeat The Snatchers but they need to locate the sixth Weaver. The play opens with how they discover the sixth Story Weaver, Samuel.

The six Story Weavers of Bacalen are certainly not like other children. They all have a special gift. It allows them to talk with books and see their stories. On Earth this 'gift' is called **perceptual dyslexia** or **Irlen Syndrome**. All of these children wear coloured lenses which help them in many ways. The lenses also stop letters moving on the page so that words can be seen more clearly. When The Story Weavers of Bacalen wear their tinted lenses, they see, feel and hear things about stories that other children do not. Each of The Story Weavers is linked to one of the ancient Bacalen story-threads called The Archetypes:

- Meg, The Story Weaver linked to human relationship stories (grey lenses);
- Caitlin, The Story Weaver linked to travel stories (pale blue lenses);
- Leo, The Story Weaver linked to information and facts (orange lenses);
- Bella, The Story Weaver linked to non-fiction stories (violet lenses);
- Anna, The Story Weaver linked to fantasy and magical stories (pink lenses); and
- Samuel, The Story Weaver linked to mystery and adventure stories (yellow lenses).

The Great Archives soon discover that the prowling Story Snatchers have a new leader, Argyros Cetus, a renegade, injured Storyteller who was a trusted member of The Great Archives. Cetus has stolen and cleverly hidden the six Archetypes. All stories are woven from these ancient story-threads. Lost, broken or stolen stories will never be able to be mended and re-told without the return of The Archetypes to The Great Archives of Bacalen. Cetus wants to destroy the world's stories and transform the world's population into Story Snatchers.

The Story Weavers travel the world via magical book return chute. They embark on a quest to find Cetus and stop The Snatchers. The Weavers discover a magical bookmark written in the ancient Diegesis Script that helps them to locate Cetus at a Story Snatcher Reweaving Room which is built underneath The National Library of Australia. The Story Snatchers are minimised and sent to The Shredding Basement at The Great Archives but Cetus escapes.

Another magical bookmark is also found at The Reweaving Room. The play ends with The Story Weavers following the bookmark's image map to a city on the other side of the world where they will hopefully locate Cetus and The Archetypes and save the world's stories from The Snatchers.

This leads onto the next story in series, The Picture Pinchers.

What is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is a difficulty learning to read or to interpret words; it doesn't affect general intelligence and is not a problem with comprehension; has a continuum from mild to severe; no two dyslexics are alike. Note: a dyslexic is often able to use higher level language skills to support their reading of connected text (stories) and this ability to 'compensate' may mask their underlying difficulties with single word reading (decoding). A dyslexic person finds it difficult to convert letter symbols to their correct sound (decode) and convert sounds to their correct written symbol (spell). (Australian Dyslexia Association, 2017)

*Research has also shown that 1 in 5 people (including dyslexics) find it difficult to process visual information and may have a very common condition known as **Irlen Syndrome**.*

What is Irlen Syndrome?

Irlen Syndrome is a perceptual processing disorder (a problem with the brain's ability to process visual information) and not an optical problem. **Note: it is also known as Meares-Irlen Syndrome, Scotopic Sensitivity Syndrome (SSS), Perceptual Dyslexia and Visual Stress.** This common syndrome tends to run in families (1 in 5 people have it). It is not currently identified by other standardised educational or medical tests. Research shows that about 46% of people with reading problems have this processing problem. It can affect many different areas such as academic and work performance; behaviour; attention; ability to sit still and concentration. The Irlen Method uses coloured overlays and glasses to improve the brain's ability to process visual information. It can improve reading fluency, comfort, comprehension, attention, and concentration while reducing light sensitivity. (www.irlen.com).

For further information about testing centres within Australia go to www.irlenclinic.com.au

A message from the playwright, A.J. Hill:

A commonly asked question: Is Irlen Syndrome or perceptual dyslexia real?

You should ask people who actually wear the coloured lenses. Everyone's learning journey is different. It is frustrating to watch your child try but be unable to grasp what many consider to be 'simple' concepts at school e.g. reading, writing and concentrating to complete tasks. Irlen lenses are not the answer for everyone. It is estimated that they can help one in five people. Coloured lenses changed my husband's life when he was 26 years old. He had completed school and university and had perfect vision but experienced headaches, eyestrain, and extreme tiredness after his working day. We heard about perceptual dyslexia or Irlen Syndrome and found out where he could be tested. The yellow/green lenses changed his world and reading books became a recreational activity that he could enjoy. Our children also wear coloured lenses. They were tested for Irlen Syndrome during their third year of school. They embrace learning at school. Their school reports do not have the words: "if they tried harder they could..."; "if they concentrated on tasks..." or "they are behind in the basic literacy skills of reading, writing and spelling."

Thank you Helen Irlen for providing a learning pathway for this perceptual processing disorder. The Story Weavers of Bacalen exist so that more people hear and learn about the power of the coloured lenses. It just might be the answer that they are looking for.

ACT 1: SCENE 1

MULTI-STORY BOOKSTORE STORYTELLING SIGN WITH A CLOCK ON IT TO SHOW THAT IT IS TIME FOR STORYTELLING AT THE BOOKSTORE. SIGN IS BESIDE A READING CHAIR AND PILES OF BOOKS ARE NEXT TO THE CHAIR. NARRATOR 'STORY-TELLER' WALKS IN AND SITS IN THE READING CHAIR.

STORYTELLER Welcome to story time at Multi-Story. I am your Storyteller
(e.g. ANDY (insert name of Storyteller).
or another Multi-story is the tallest and most magical children's book shop in the
narrator world!
character) Why is it so magical? Well because you really never know what will
happen here. Books can be like that. They often surprise you.
NEVER judge a book by its cover!
We have every book YOU could imagine and every story that has BEEN
imagined.
Which story will we read today?
(looks through the pile of books near the reading chair)
Perhaps one about *(insert a selection to suit the audience)* a talking
bear who lives in a wood with his animal friends or a story about
Or a story about
Or an exciting adventure story etc.....
(picks up a large old, worn book)
Ah, now THIS looks like an old and well-read book.
(Sits down in the reading chair)
Its cover is worn and coming away from the edges. I can't quite read
the title on the front....wait a moment....the letters are moving!
What's going on?
(looks at the audience and then back to the book)
Thank goodness - the letters are still. They're very faint gold letters.
I can just read them,
"The Great Archives of Bacalen".

Where is that? (*looking at the audience*)

Have you heard of it?

Let's see if it tells us a bit more when we open the book....

(*reads from the book*)

"Hidden deep inside the Earth is The Star of Bacalen.

In one of its seven orbs, there is a most magical place filled with stories. Long ago this place was given the name, 'The Great Archives of Bacalen'.

The Great Archives protect the World's greatest treasures - its stories.

Stories are everywhere and in everything;

In all that we do and 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 and its people change too."

(*looks up from the book.*)

So stories are all around us!

Wow—that means every day is a NEW story and each one of us fills the day with lots of DIFFERENT stories. What else does this book say....

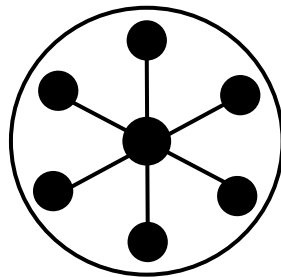
"The Great Archives needs your help. There is a traitor within its walls. They have harnessed steals of Story Snatchers to destroy and change stories across the world.'

Do you know what Story Snatchers are? I wonder what they do.

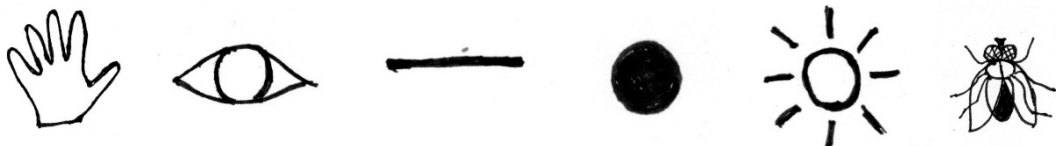
DARK, GREY FIGURES BEGIN CREEPING AROUND BEHIND THE STORYTELLER. THEY LOOK UNDER BOOKS, INSIDE BOOKS AND PULL OUT LONG STORY-THREADS WHICH THEY PUT INTO SACKS; THEY ARE CHATTING, ARGUING AND SNIGGERING ABOUT SOME OF THE STORIES WHEN THEY OPEN THE BOOKS.

The Snatchers are poaching story-threads and replacing them with stories people don't want to read. Only The Story Weavers, six gifted children who wear specially coloured glasses to help them read can save the world from becoming dull and grey and filled with people that have lost their creativity and imagination. I am The Book of Bacalen, and now you must all come with me to find the sixth Story Weaver and defeat The Story Snatchers!"

A LOUD BANG LIKE A BOOK SHUTTING AND THEN BLACK OUT



The Star of Bacalen



The symbols used in Bacalen's ancient Diegesis Script



ACT 1: SCENE 2

DARKENED SCHOOL LIBRARY. SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON SAMUEL WHO IS LOOKING FOR A BOOK IN THE BOOK SHELVES.

MISS PAIGE *(voice from offstage)* Ten minutes

SAMUEL *(Glances at his watch and frantically searches the book shelves)*
Where is it? Focus on the mission! That's it! *(grabs a book off the shelves and opens it with shaking hands, turning the pages).*
Activate word locator ray. *(touches glasses on the side)*
Slow down, focus, concentrate....Nothing? The lost book must be here somewhere! The secret message can't be wrong.

MISS PAIGE *(voice from offstage)* Five minutes

STAGE LIGHTS COME ON AND CHILDREN WANDER ON STAGE LOOKING FOR BOOKS ON SHELVES; PUTTING BOOKS INTO LIBRARY BAGS; LIBRARIAN, MISS PAIGE APPEARS AND MOVES TO SIT AT HER DESK TO CHECK OUT LIBRARY BOOKS.

SAMUEL Welcome back to reality Samuel. Even pretending to find a valuable lost book won't help me find something to borrow from the library this week. It's impossible to find a good book in here.

MISS PAIGE Remember there is a three book limit. *(groans from the students)* I know so many of you want to take more books home but you'll just have to wait until next week. *(students shake their heads and snigger)*

JAMES Found your books Samuel? *(nudges him and shows him a book he is about to borrow)* Just take anything, Miss Paige won't know if you read them.

HUGH *(joins James and Samuel with another book)* Who likes reading books anyway? Hurry up. It's almost lunch. I'm first server in handball.

SAMUEL Why won't you two help me find the books that my sister Kate has written down for us in our secret Book Club code?
You've always liked reading Hugh. What about the books we read last term, they were hilarious.

HUGH I don't remember any book being funny.

SAMUEL Seriously Hugh you must remember. You LOVED them. We laughed and laughed at those books. My mum even said, "Just add a dash of toilet humour and books seem to become best sellers for boys your age!" and we laughed and laughed at that too!

JAMES What were the books called?

SAMUEL Come on James, you read them too. Your favourite was 'Undies at Large *(James and Hugh look blankly at Samuel who is just about bursting with laughter at the title)*; What about 'Bottom of the Class' or 'Fart-tastic stories for boys'? 'The Adventures of Gluteus Maximus'? *(sticks out his bottom and points to it but still no reaction from James or Hugh)*

JAMES *(looking at Samuel without a smile and shakes his head)* No, can't remember them at all. Why would we want to read them or work out secret codes?

HUGH Everyone in our class knows books are boring Samuel. Those yellow glasses have really changed you. Now you want to read everything.

JAMES Yeah, Why would anyone want to read a book? They're not exciting.

SAMUEL What are you talking about? Is this some kind of joke? Where's the hidden camera? (*looking around but his friends just start at him*)
Can't you SEE that all the stories in these books have changed? They're not CALLING to us like they used to.

JAMES You're crazy Samuel. Books don't talk. They don't have an audio button. (*pauses and thinks*) But that might make them more interesting.

HUGH There's much better stuff to do on screens. Just fill your library bag and take it to Miss Paige or you'll get a detention. Library detentions are the WORST kind.

JAMES Yep, there's nothing worse than having to spend time in a library surrounded by books! (*shudders and walks with Hugh to the librarian's desk*) Ugh!

MISS PAIGE One minute

SAMUEL What is going on with them? (*keeps looking for books*). There must be a book that I can read. No - too scary; no - that will give me nightmares.....

MISS PAIGE Time's up! (*other students are all lined up and standing straight with book bags ready to go outside; she looks around and sees Samuel*)
Samuel Reid you will remain here and spend 20 minutes returning books to the shelves.

SAMUEL Yes Miss Paige. (*gives a small sad wave to Hugh and James*)

JAMES AND HUGH MOUTH 'SEE YOU AT THE HANDBALL COURT' AND THE CLASS LEAVES.

MISS PAIGE Let's get started Samuel. Meg Richmond will be joining us too. She couldn't find a book when her class came in this morning.

FOUR STUDENTS ENTER THE LIBRARY.

MISS PAIGE And here are our four new students. All from overseas. They're looking for some books to read about Australia. Come and sit down over here.

A BOY AND THREE GIRLS SIT AT A TABLE NEAR MISS PAIGE AND SHE BUSTLES AROUND THEM GIVING THEM ALL BOOKS TO READ. THEY NOD AND CHAT.

MISS PAIGE Please start putting that pile of books away Samuel. (*gestures to a trolley of books*) You may even find an action-packed adventure or mind-blowing mystery there. (*keeps working at her desk*)

SAMUEL Doubtful (*mutters*). Meg Richmond - she's not a book lover. She just sits on the bus and stares at her screen all the way to school. (*picks up a book with a murky green cover*). P. & C. Green - hilarious! (*returns book to shelf and reaches for next book*) What an old book! (*stares at the cover as the letters start to move*). The letters are moving! My coloured lenses should stop that. What is happening? I must be imagining things. Phew! They've stopped. (*opens book and letters begin to swirl and move again*). Ahhhh! The words are moving inside the book! The spaces are turning into rives....now they're white snakes....I can't read a book if the words do that! Why aren't my glasses working?

SHE-OOSH - CLUNK! DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE AS MEG RICHMOND WALKS IN.

SAMUEL Stop it! (*talking to the book; shuts it with a loud SNAP! It starts to wriggle in his hands*)

MISS PAIGE Good afternoon Meg. Thank you for joining us. I'm sure we're going to enjoy this impromptu story time together.

MEG (*smiles at Miss Paige*) Yes Miss Paige. Should I help Samuel with that pile of books? He seems to be having a few problems.

MISS PAIGE (*smiles back*) Yes, thank you. Please return all those books to the shelves quickly and quietly.

MEG MOVES SLOWLY TOWARDS SAMUEL. HE IS TRYING TO HIDE THE BOOK AND STOP IT FROM WRIGGLING IN HIS HANDS. HE DOESN'T SEE MEG.

SAMUEL Stop it! (*whispers at the book; it stops; Samuel looks at the cover and reads*) 'The Great Archives of Bacalen calls to you. Find the stolen story-threads. Use your gifts.'
What gifts? This **MUST** be a joke! Is this 'You're on Hidden Camera'?
Come on James and Hugh, I give in. (*looks around for a hidden camera*)
Where are you hiding?

MEG COMES UP QUIETLY BEHIND SAMUEL AND REACHES FOR THE BOOK.

SAMUEL NO! (*yells and wildly rips the book away and turns to face Meg*)

MISS PAIGE Samuel, if you and Meg are going to annoy each other then move away. You can always stay in for the whole lunch break.

MEG (*puts her fingers to her lips*) Shhh
(*guides Samuel away from Miss Paige*) Give me the book!

SAMUEL No. I'm going to borrow it.

MEG You can't.

SAMUEL Why?

MEG Because...because...it belonged to my grandfather. It was a *GIFT*. I accidentally left it here yesterday.

SAMUEL You're lying. You never read books. You're always a BFG on the bus.

MEG A Big Friendly Giant?

SAMUEL No silly - Brain Function Gone. That's the ultimate level on the game my sister, Kate and I made up. You get that when you don't look up from you electronic device for the whole bus trip to school.

MEG Really? Well you'll have to teach me how to play it when we aren't so stuck for time. Let's discuss that book. (*smiles mysteriously and stares at Samuel who is clutching the book, slowly takes off her glasses, keeps staring at him and then puts the glasses back on.*)

SAMUEL (*shakes his head, trying to clear his mind and stop the hypnotic stare*)
You're lenses are grey! Mine are yellow. You need them to read properly too! Do you have Irlen Syndrome? Mum says one in five people have this type of dyslexia but most don't know it. I know it's much easier to read and focus with the coloured lenses! Is that why you wear those glasses?

MEG Yes it is super sleuth. (*looks at her watch*) We don't have much time.
(*she grabs Samuel's arm*) Listen to me!

SAMUEL Ouch! You're hurting me!

MEG Shhh! (*releases his arm*) Sorry. We need to get out of here and get this book to safety. Come on Samuel, it's important.

SAMUEL (*rubbing his arm*) Why? What's so important about this book? Nobody seems to need books anymore.

MEG Hide it in your library bag and put these books away. I'll tell you outside.

SAMUEL I can't just TAKE a book from the library! Even a special one.

MEG Do you really think this book is SPECIAL?

SAMUEL Yes... it might even be MAGICAL

MEG Magical? Miss Paige won't believe THAT story so you need to sneak it out.

SAMUEL Ok but what if she catches me?

MEG She'll just be glad you finally found a book that interested you! Come on!

MISS PAIGE (*BUZZER GOES OFF*) Detention is over. I hope this extra time amongst these authors has been inspiring. Perhaps one of their books will take you to another time or place one day soon.

SAMUEL You could be right Miss Paige. See you next week. (*grasps bag tightly and leaves the library with Meg*).

OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY DOORS

CHILDREN ARE PLAYING AND EATING THEIR LUNCH. MEG GRABS SAMUEL'S ARM AND PULLS HIM TO A BENCH. HE SITS DOWN WITH A THUD.

SAMUEL Ouch! Stop it! What's wrong with you?

MEG There's nothing wrong with ME. I just need to know why you wanted this old book. *(pauses)* I do know where it's from.

SAMUEL Where?

MEG I need to take it back. Give me the book.

MEG IS LOOKING AT SAMUEL INTENTLY. SHE IS HYPNOTISING HIM WITH STORY SUGGESTION. SAMUEL STARTS TO REACH FOR THE BOOK IN THE LIBRARY BAG BUT WHEN HE TOUCHES IT THE SPELL IS BROKEN.

SAMUEL Were you hypnotising me? *(he pulls the book from the bag and clutches it tightly in his hands)*

MEG *(becoming very excited)* Just a bit of story suggestion but it doesn't work on Story Weavers.

SAMUEL What are you talking about?

MEG You'll find out! So you were really drawn to this book? Did you see the words move? Did the star appear? The Book called to you didn't it? I'm right aren't I Samuel? Aren't I?

SAMUEL *(perplexed)* Well it didn't actually CALL to me. It did seem like an interesting book...it grabbed my attention. *(looks at the book again)*

There's NOTHING on the cover now (*opens The Book*) and the words inside are GONE!

MEG You want to read it?

SAMUEL How can you READ a book without words? Or pictures? I'm just sick of not being able to find a library book to borrow! I think all the books my sister has told me about have VANISHED.

MEG So you've noticed that all the GOOD books have gone!

SAMUEL (*slowly*) Yes, I guess they would have been GOOD books.

MEG Well they have gone. It's happened all over town.

SAMUEL All over town?

MEG Yes. The librarians and bookshop owner are trying to stop the stealing. They've used alarms and security cameras but nothing!

SAMUEL What about you parent's book shop, Multi-Story? Have books gone from there too?

MEG Yes. People won't want to visit bookshops or libraries if they can't find a good book.

SAMUEL Why would somebody steal so many books? I'm sure there are some missing from this library but there aren't any spaces on the shelves. Wouldn't Miss Paige notice if books had been stolen?

MEG Of course she'd notice! But it's not the BOOKS that are missing, it's the STORIES.

SAMUEL *(a bit annoyed)* Same thing.

MEG It's not. It's not the same thing at all. Books protect and hold the stories inside them. A skilful story is the essence of a good book. If it is lost or changed then the book is just a hollow shell, not worth the paper the story is printed on.

SAMUEL You sound like Miss Paige! Can the lost stories be found and put back? Can this book tell us what to do?

MISS PAIGE *(walking quietly up behind them)* I will need to take that book back.

SAMUEL *(looks around and sees Miss Paige)* Ahhh, sorry Miss Paige, I just...

MEG Come on Samuel. It'll be ok. We'll explain inside. *(pulls Samuel up from the bench and propels him back inside the library, followed by Miss Paige walking slowly behind them in her long boots.)*

MEG, SAMUEL AND MISS PAIGE SIT DOWN IN THE LIBRARY. THE FOUR NEW STUDENTS' ARE SEATED AT A TABLE NEARBY AND LOOK AT THEM. SAMUEL IS CLUTCHING THE BOOK AND LOOKING AROUND AT EVERYONE; MISS PAIGE PUTS ON A GREEN PAIR OF GLASSES; SHE LOOKS AT SAMUEL AND HOLDS OUT HER HAND FOR THE BOOK; SAMUEL SLOWLY HANDS IT TO HER IN A TRANCE AND THEN AS THE BOOK LEAVES HIS HAND, HE SHAKES HIS HEAD AS IF RELEASED FROM A HYPNOTIC STATE.

MISS PAIGE *(holding the book and stroking it like a cat)*
Well Meg, it looks like our plan to find the sixth Story Weaver of Bacalen has finally worked! Now we can solve the mystery of the disappearing story-threads.

SAMUEL *(staring at Miss Paige)* Bacalen? I don't know where that is but I just want to find out about that book and why stories are missing in the library.

MISS PAIGE Exactly! Exactly what a Story Weaver should ask. Now The Book has found all the Story Weavers, you can work on the mystery together.

SAMUEL Story Weaver?

MEG Just like me and Leo, Bella, Caitlin and Anna.

THE OTHER STORY WEAVERS GATHER AROUND SAMUEL.

LEO All the way from Holland

BELLA Just blew in from Belgium

CAITLIN The Book found me in Ecuador

ANNA 'Ewe' can even find Story Weavers in New Zealand!

SAMUEL So you're not new students? *(they all shake their heads)*

ANNA We've been waiting for The Book to find you.

CAITLIN We can start looking for the story-threads.

MISS PAIGE *(ignores Samuel's perplexed look and continues excitedly)* and locate bookmarks and discover where the story-vessels are being rewoven.....

MEG *(putting her hand on Miss Paige's arm)* Perhaps we should take Samuel through this more slowly and start from the beginning Aunt Beatrix.

SAMUEL Aunt Beatrix?

MISS PAIGE *(gets up)* Apologies Samuel. I'm getting ahead of myself. When you understand the problem that the world is facing, then you'll also feel the urgency to fix it.

MEG Samuel, this magical book is from The Great Archives of Bacalen

SAMUEL Where is that?

LEO Not far away but not many people have heard of it.

MISS PAIGE Diegesis, The First Great Storyteller created The Book of Bacalen to guide Storytellers and help Story Weavers and Bookworms. You'll learn more when we get to The Great Archives.

SAMUEL Are bookworms real?

MISS PAIGE Bookworms are certainly real. In fact, they walk amongst us.

SAMUEL That'll get the town talking! What do they look like?

BELLA *(shrugs)* Just like you or me

SAMUEL Oh - so not like ginormous caterpillars?

ANNA Not quite. They do have a special gift.

CAITLIN *(pretending to pick things from the air around her)* They collect feelings, emotions, experiences and information and weave story-threads from them.

MISS PAIGE Story-threads are then made into story-vessels or you might just call it a story. Many of the best authors are Bookworms or related to one.

SAMUEL Really? They're a bit like a super-hero with a secret identity. So if they make stories, why aren't they called 'Storyworms'?

MISS PAIGE *(clapping hands with laughter)* He's definitely the one! Well Samuel many years ago before books, they were called Storyworms. I hope I never see the day when we become eWorms!

SAMUEL You? *(looking confused)*

MEG *(reassures her aunt)* We won't let that happen Aunt Beatrix! You see Samuel, my mother comes from a long line of Bacalen Bookworms. Mum is a Bookworm and her sister, my Aunt Beatrix is one too.

SAMUEL Oh Miss Paige I had no idea you were a REAL Bookworm! I just thought librarians were bookworms because they liked reading books!

MISS PAIGE Never judge a Bookworm by its cover Samuel!

SAMUEL So who is stealing the stories?

MISS PAIGE Throughout history, Bookworms have been targets for steals of sinister Story Snatchers.

EXTRA SCENE: ACTORS DRESSED AS STORY SNATCHERS CREEP ONTO STAGE AND FOLLOW UNSUSPECTING BOOKWORMS CARRYING BOOKS WITH THREADS HANGING FROM THEM; SNATCH THREADS AND STUFF INTO SACKS BEFORE RUNNING OFF AND BOOKWORMS CHASE AFTER THEM

MISS PAIGE They creep up on Bookworms and snatch story-threads that may be dangling from unfinished story-vessels. Then they stuff the threads into their sacks and melt into the shadows. It is very hard to copy a thread and weave the same story-vessel so the original story may be lost for ever. Story Weavers are sent to track down the stolen threads - they have the most active imaginations. They can see damaged or missing threads and help the Bookworms re-join story-threads so that they can be made into a completed story-vessel.

SAMUEL Where do The Story Snatchers take the threads?

MISS PAIGE Back to their secret Reweaving Rooms to weave new story-vessels.

MEG But the new stories are never as good as a Bookworm's story.

ANNA Snatchers aren't very creative. They just poach and plagiarise stories.

BELLA They can't find the right words, emotions, feelings or experiences to join the threads together into a really good story.

SAMUEL Wow! Is your Dad a Bookworm too Meg?

MEG No. Dad is a Storyteller. He was a Story Weaver when he was younger.

SAMUEL But how can I be a Story Weaver when I have a type of dyslexia? Reading, writing and spelling are a bit of a challenge. My coloured glasses have helped a lot. I don't write proper stories. I'm not an author.

LEO We're not either.

MISS PAIGE What do they teach them about creating stories? Stories aren't just written on paper or typed on a computer. They're woven into the fabric of civilisations, found in the hearts and experiences of people in every corner of the globe.

SAMUEL So even dyslexics or people with Irlen Syndrome can tell a story?

LEO, BELLA, CAITLIN AND ANNA ALL PUT ON THEIR COLOURED GLASSES AND SAMUEL STARES AT THEM.

MISS PAIGE Absolutely! We all wear coloured lenses to help us read more easily. It's the only way to stop all those excitable words from moving or blurring on the page. Just remember that being dyslexic or wearing coloured lenses is not a barrier to weaving stories. You might find writing a long story a bit of a challenge at first but try an imaginative short story or a spoken or oral account from all that you see, hear, experience or imagine. Practice makes perfect.

BELLA Creating stories is lots of fun. You're in one right now!

SAMUEL Well I was looking for an adventure book that I could really get into!

MISS PAIGE We'd better see *The Great Storyteller* before we get too much further into this story.

MEG Are you ready Aunt Beatrix?

MISS PAIGE *(packing her satchel)* Just a few more things....right...this way. *(all move towards the book return chute in the library)*

SAMUEL Is The Great Storyteller the principal? Is this school a magical story school?

LEO No but getting to The Great Storyteller is magical.

CAITLIN Hope you like fast rides. *(Samuel is looking very unsure)*

MEG D.I.D card Aunt Beatrix *(handing Miss Paige a white card that she has been writing things on)*

MISS PAIGE OPENS THE BOOKS CHUTE AND THROWS THE CARD INSIDE

BELLA Ready Samuel *(grabbing his hand)*

ANNA Let's go!

SAMUEL Go wh-ere-ere! *(voice tapers off as he gets dragged offstage into the book chute with all the others)*

SLAM OF BOOK RETURN CHUTE SHUTTING AND LIGHTS GO OUT.

ACT 1: SCENE 3

THE GREAT ARCHIVES OF BACALEN INSIDE THE GREAT STORYTELLING LIBRARY. SHELVES AND SHELVES OF BOOKS, A BOOK RETURN CHUTE AND A LARGE CHAIR WITH A ROUND RUG IN FRONT OF IT.

CETUS IS DUSTING THE SHELVES AND PUTTING EVERYTHING IN ORDER. HE DISAPPEARS THROUGH A HIDDEN DOOR IN THE BOOKSHELVES.

THERE IS A LOUD 'BANG' AND THE SPOTLIGHT FALLS ON THE BOOK RETURN CHUTE. THE STORY WEAVERS AND MISS PAIGE COME DOWN THE AISLE, THROUGH THE AUDIENCE - ALL THE CHILDREN EXCEPT SAMUEL ARE MAKING EXCITED NOISES AND CHATTING AS THEY ENJOY TRAVELLING RAPIDLY THROUGH THE BOOK CHUTE; SAMUEL IS A LITTLE SCARED AND SAYING THINGS LIKE 'WHOA-OOO SLOW DOWN, WHAT'S HAPPENING ETC. THEY MOVE UP ONTO THE STAGE NEAR THE BOOK CHUTE AND SAMUEL 'FALLS' ONTO THE FLOOR AS HE IS NOT USED TO TRAVELLING BY BOOK CHUTE.

MISS PAIGE *Well here we are Samuel (sneezes and brushes dust from her dress; makes a note in her diary while muttering). Must get the Bookworms to clean that book return chute before the next trip.*

SAMUEL *(Leo helps him up and Samuel looks around in amazement, unsure where he is) Next trip? (peers at where the book chute is)*

MISS PAIGE *Of course - a dusty book return chute is terribly dangerous. You could be whisked away to the wrong destination completely!*

CAITLIN *What's the matter Samuel?*

SAMUEL *(still peering at the chute & shaking his head confused)*
*So did we just travel through a... How did we travel through a...
That must have been a MAGICAL book return chute!*

LEO Well I suppose you could call it 'magical' if that helps you understand the complex physics of book return chute travel.

BELLA You look a bit green.

MEG You don't get travel sick?

ANNA That could make riding the chutes very messy! (*all the other Story Weavers nod and pull faces thinking about the potential mess!*)

SAMUEL Travel sick? You're probably lucky our library lesson was before lunch! What just happened Miss Paige?
How could we have.....it's just not possible.....

MISS PAIGE Everything is possible if you have imagination Samuel.
Get used to using yours more often.

SAMUEL But how did we fit inside a book return chute?
Did we shrink?

LEO It's really rather simple physics. Given your present state, we should just explain it from an operational perspective.

CAITLIN First, open and close the book chute to make it big enough for the number of people travelling - one, two;

BELLA Fill out the D.I.D. card - that's the Destination Identification card - nice and clearly with who's riding and their destination.

ANNA It's quite easy and heaps of fun!

SAMUEL Easy for all of you. I'm still recovering from being pushed into a book return chute by my school librarian and a group of excited new students.

MISS PAIGE Apologies Samuel. I'll try to be less....spontaneous next time. Riding the chutes is how we at The Great Archives of Bacalen travel the world. Now that The Book of Bacalen has chosen you to be the sixth Story Weaver, you'll be needing some D.I.D. cards too. (*gives him a card*)

SAMUEL (*looks carefully at the card*) So we're not in some hidden room underneath the school library?

MEG Haven't you been listening? We're at The Great Archives of Bacalen.

BELLA In the Great Storytelling Library. So many books! You can't even see to the top of the book shelves. (*they all peer upwards amazed*)

CAITLIN The Great Storyteller will be here soon won't he Miss Paige?

MISS PAIGE He's just in The Yarn Room talking to some Bookworms. Unless he has to stop in The Hall of Yarns and see a Storyteller, he should be here directly.

SAMUEL Yarn Room? Hall of Yarns? Let me get this straight. You've taken me out of school....

MISS PAIGE Yes

SAMUEL Without my parents' permission....

MEG Yes

SAMUEL To a place that I've never heard of....

BELLA Yes

SAMUEL Without a passport or a travel visa.....

LEO Technically yes...

SAMUEL To meet a total stranger?

ANNA Well WE know The Great Storyteller so he's not really a stranger...

SAMUEL (*cuts in*) Are you crazy? (*looks at Miss Paige*) You're supposed to be a librarian - you know, meek, mild, bookish - not some sort of secret agent who goes about kidnapping students.

MISS PAIGE Samuel, I AM a librarian. Librarians encourage borrowing - not stealing! (*mutters and shakes her head*) Goodness me! A secret agent? You've been reading too many detective stories!

SAMUEL School librarians are supposed to help students find BOOKS to borrow.

MISS PAIGE That is certainly one of my jobs.

SAMUEL Today I was looking for a book to READ that would take me on an adventure but you didn't help me find one. You just gave me a detention.

LEO Well technically, she did help you find a book by giving you a detention. You should be grateful!

MISS PAIGE (*patting The Book she is holding and turning to Leo*)
Exactly Leo. Perhaps The Book of Bacalen ACTUALLY found Samuel... but... The Book IS definitely taking him on an adventure.....so Samuel did find the adventure story he was looking for. A job well done I think.

SAMUEL Ahhh!! (*he is totally perplexed and frustrated!*)

MISS PAIGE Calm yourself Samuel. There is so much for you to learn and understand about what has just happened. It's fine to feel a bit...OVERWHELMED... especially when you've been on such a long journey.

SAMUEL Long journey? (*looks at his watch*) But it took no time at all. I suppose you're going to tell me we've magically travelled so far that we've left Australia!

MEG Exactly - Bacalen is not in Australia

SAMUEL Oh great - so where on earth is this place?

CAITLIN Well Bacalen is not on Earth.

SAMUEL NOT - ON - Earth?

ANNA No. Not on Earth.

SAMUEL So exactly how far away from earth are we?

BELLA Don't be concerned Samuel. We haven't left Earth.

SAMUEL Stop it! Now you're just talking in riddles. Where are we?

MISS PAIGE Can't you guess? You're usually so good at solving puzzles during class.

SAMUEL This isn't funny. If this was a question at school, I'd just say we were 'Inside the Earth'.

MISS PAIGE Exactly. I knew you'd start to see things clearly.

SAMUEL I'm inside the Earth? I have to sit down.

BELLA It's really OK Samuel. You're quite safe. I suppose it must be a bit of a shock if you're not used to it....

SAMUEL BIT of a shock?

ANNA But you are absolutely safe.

LEO The Star of Bacalen has been inside the Earth since the dawn of time. The Great Archives are just a small part of it.

SAMUEL And that's supposed to make me feel better?

MISS PAIGE Look on this map Samuel. (*pointing*) Here is Earth and inside it is The Star of Bacalen.

MEG The central orb is The Great Knowledge Tree and The Great Archives of Bacalen is one of the smaller orbs surrounding it.

SAMUEL What are those other ones called?

LEO The Great Studio Gallery, The Great Music Hall, The Great Bacalen Coliseum, The Great Recreation Retreat and The Great Sport Stadium.

SAMUEL What happens there?

MISS PAIGE One day you will visit them but today you must focus on how to find The Story Snatchers.

SAMUEL But Miss Paige...I have so many questions about Bacalen...

THE BOOK SHELF DOOR BEGINS TO OPEN. THE GREAT STORYTELLER, SPINNER COMES INTO THE ROOM. EVERYONE STOPS TO WELCOME HIM, CALLING 'HELLO SPINNER', 'WE FOUND HIM' ETC. SAMUEL STANDS AWAY FROM THE GROUP.

MISS PAIGE (*motions to The Story Weavers to settle down*) Spinner, we have found the new Story Weaver. The Book called to him in MY OWN library. Surely we can now defeat The Story Snatchers and bring balance back to the world's stories.

SPINNER Welcome to the Great Archives of Bacalen Story Weaver. I am Spinner, The Great Storyteller. What is your name?

SAMUEL Samuel, sir. I'm not exactly sure why I'm here but I do want to help. I am really old enough to be a Story Weaver?

SPINNER Story Weavers are always children Samuel. They have the most active imaginations. When a Story Weaver reaches adulthood, a search is undertaken by The Book of Bacalen to find a gifted child to replace them. A child who has reached their tenth birthday. A child like you.

SAMUEL And what happens to the old Story Weavers when they...retire?

SPINNER *(laughs)* Well Samuel, a Story Weaver never retires their imagination. They might choose to be a Bookworm or a Storyteller here at The Great Archives or on Earth like Meg's father. They always use their creativity to do extraordinary things. Their names are found in the history books across the world.

SAMUEL So what will I do here?

SPINNER Samuel, The Book of Bacalen has brought you to this place because it knows that you love stories and a gift that will help find the lost stories that have been stolen by The Story Snatchers.

SAMUEL Gift? I don't have any gift. I'm not some sort of super hero in a comic book with super powers. I just like to read books. Lots of people do.

MEG Do they?

SAMUEL Well, my friends do.....or they used to....

MISS PAIGE Mmmm....have you noticed a change?

SAMUEL YES! It was so fast. Now they just read things on their digital screens.

CAITLIN Interesting....it's happening in my town too.

SAMUEL Why do I want to read books?

LEO Because, your coloured lenses protect you from being controlled by The Story Snatchers.

SAMUEL I wear these glasses because I have a type of dyslexia not because they protect me from Story.....Snarers.....

ANNA Snatchers.

SAMUEL Whatever!

BELLA Well you'd better start believing in Story Snatchers - the survival of the world and its stories depends on it.

SAMUEL Isn't that a bit dramatic?

MISS PAIGE No Samuel - it's extremely serious.

SAMUEL So who are they? Do they live in Bacalen too?

SPINNER No. They have existed on Earth since the first great story was told. They are very dull and unimaginative. They poach and pilfer stories and steal information.

ANNA They can transform people into Story Snatchers - just like that!
(SNAPS fingers close to Samuel's face)

SAMUEL Now you're scaring me!

MEG Oh the change doesn't have to be permanent. A quick visit to the
Shredding Basement and they come back...

SAMUEL Shredded?

CAITLIN No - almost as good as new!

SAMUEL I'll take your word for it! So people who don't like stories and books
or say that reading is boring, could be Story Snatchers?

MISS PAIGE Oh highly likely or going through their transformation.

SAMUEL But they still look like people?

SPINNER Well now that you're a Story Weaver, you might see them take a
slightly different form.

SAMUEL Different form?

SPINNER Yes.

SAMUEL So what do they look like? I suppose you're going to tell me that
they turn into some terrible monster.

LEO Well, at first they get a bit smudgy around the edges.

SAMUEL Hmmm, ok. That's not so bad.

SPINNER WAVES HIS ARMS SLOWLY AND 'VIRTUAL' STORY SNATCHERS APPEAR ON STAGE ACTING OUT THE TRANSFORMATION OR A VIDEO CAN APPEAR ON THE BOOK SHELVES.

SPINNER Then their skin becomes pale and grey. Their noses get long and pointy and their eyes become big and bulgy. Their arms and legs go all thin and stretchy. Long fingers like tentacles SNATCH loose story-threads from unfinished stories being woven by unsuspecting Bookworms.

SAMUEL Ahhhh! They're hideous creatures!

ANNA And they have small, unimaginative brains in those tiny heads. Easy to recognise but not so easy to catch.

BELLA They melt into the shadows after a sneaky snatch.

MISS PAIGE These books contain all the information we know about them.

SAMUEL Some interesting titles...
'Plagiarism: a history of The Story Snatcher'
'Poaching Recipes: a Story Snatcher's Guide to Cooking a Good Book'

MEG The Great Archives needs you Samuel.
The Story Weavers of Bacalen are the world's only hope.

SAMUEL I do want to help. I love stories but what can be done?

SPINNER Without The Archetypes, The Story Weavers can do nothing to save the unravelled stories.

SAMUEL What are the Arch-e-types?

MISS PAIGE They are the most ancient and important of all the story-threads. The origin of every story can be traced back to one of these six ancient threads.

SPINNER And they have been stolen!

THE OTHER STORY WEAVERS GASP AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER IN SURPRISE!

MEG Who has stolen them?

BELLA How did they find them?

CAITLIN They're well hidden in this library!

ANNA Nobody but The Great Storyteller knows how to remove them!

MISS PAIGE The Bookworms and Storytellers are trying to work out how it happened. We will find out who is responsible.

SAMUEL But what can Story Weavers do to help?

SPINNER Each Archetype is linked to a Story Weaver. The Archetypes and The Story Weavers work together to find and repair story-threads.

MISS PAIGE Every story-vessel has a different amount of each archetypal thread in it. There are six Archetypes and six Story Weavers.

MEG I wear grey lenses so I am linked to the grey Archetype. These story-vessels are about human relationships.

LEO My orange lenses help me link to the orange Archetype which creates information and factual details.

ANNA Pink is fantasy and magical tales.

CAITLIN Blue is travel and information about places all over the world.

BELLA Real stories about real events or non-fiction is what you get when a story-vessel looks purple.

SAMUEL What colour Archetype am I linked to?

LEO (*pointing to Samuel's yellow lenses*). Yellow.

SAMUEL Of course! So what is my specialty?

MEG Guess!

SAMUEL (*thinking hard*) Mystery and...adventure! We all wear lenses to match the colours of The Archetypes!

SPINNER The Book has chosen well (*pats the book*). Remember, the power of The Story Weavers is strongest when you are together. You will hear The Archetypes calling to you and be able to draw the stolen story-threads back to The Yarn Room.

MISS PAIGE That's where all the Bookworms will help you to reweave the lost story-threads into their proper story-vessels.

IMAGE OF BOOKWORMS WEAVING OR A VIDEO PROJECTED ONTO THE BOOKSHELVES. YARN WOVEN INTO COLOURFUL MATERIAL STUCK INTO BOX-LIKE BOOK COVERS USING MAGICAL BOOKMARKS.

SPINNER On your quest you must look for the magical bookmarks that have been ripped from their story-vessels. Only you can see them. Their image maps will guide you to The Story Snatchers' Reweaving Rooms.

SAMUEL Image map?

SPINNER This map makes pictures in your mind. The pictures will give you clues to where the Snatchers are hiding. They could be ANYWHERE in the world!

MEG Where do we start looking?

SPINNER We have been working on a plan.

MISS PAIGE You will all need your satchels.

SPINNER THROWS A CARD INTO THE BOOK CHUTE. CETUS ARRIVES CARRYING THE SATCHELS. HE HANDS THEM TO THE STORY WEAVERS AND STOPS AT SAMUEL. GIVES A LOW BOW AS HE PRESENTS HIM WITH HIS SATCHEL. SAMUEL LOOKS SURPRISED AS HE TAKES THE SATCHEL.

(NB. See Appendix 1 for alternative Scene 3 pp40- 49 with a Narrator)

SPINNER Thank you Cetus. Miss Paige and The Book have finally located the sixth Story Weaver. This is Samuel. *(Cetus looks at Samuel curiously, nods and gives a sly smile.)* Cetus helps me in The Great Storytelling Library. He has packed your satchels for the trip. *(Cetus nods at Spinner)* Thank you Cetus.

CETUS BOWS AGAIN AND LEAVES THROUGH THE SECRET DOOR IN THE BOOK SHELVES.

LEO He never says a word.

MISS PAIGE Cetus damaged his speech-thread when he was training to be a Storyteller.

BELLA Speech-thread? Don't you mean vocal chords?

SPINNER You must pay attention to your studies Bella! People use vocal chords to speak but Storytellers also have speech-threads that give them the gift of story-telling and the ability to remember a story.

ANNA So how did he damage his speech-thread?

SPINNER GENTLY WAVES HIS HANDS IN THE AIR AND A NEW 'SCENE' (EITHER VIDEO OR ACTORS) APPEARS. A GROUP OF CHILDREN ARE SITTING LISTENING INTENTLY TO A WOMEN WHO IS TELLING AN EXCITING STORY.

SPINNER When Cetus was young, we knew him as Alexis Craft. Alexis showed great promise as a storyteller. He progressed quickly.

THE GROUP OF CHILDREN RUN OFF WITH THE WOMAN AND CETUS STANDS WALKING UP AND DOWN PRACTISING A STORY.

SPINNER One day, despite numerous warnings, he overstretched his speech-thread telling a story that he was not yet ready to recount.

CETUS CLUTCHES AT HIS THROAT AND COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND. PEOPLE RUSH TO HIM AND A YOUNG MAN HELPS CETUS TO HIS FEET.

SAMUEL (*Gasps and points*) That's my dad with Cetus! Was he training to be a Storyteller too?

SPINNER Yes. Joseph Reid was one of the best trainee storytellers we have had at The Great Archives. He left when Alexis lost his ability to tell stories.

MEG You'll have to ask your dad about that when you get home.

SAMUEL I will! He wears coloured lenses too. He reads to us but doesn't tell us stories like Mum. Now I know why.

CAITLIN I learnt that speech-threads could be repaired.

MISS PAIGE They can but this time the damage was severe. Our healers or Threaders tried to help Alexis regain control over his story-telling but he was impatient with the progress. He gave up trying to speak. Eventually he changed his name to Argyros Cetus.

SPINNER I thought that it was important to keep him connected with stories so Cetus has helped me in the library ever since.

MEG So what has Cetus packed into our satchels?

ANNA Bags? (*producing a colourful, stretchy bag from inside the satchel*)

MISS PAIGE These are transporter bags. When you find a lost story-thread, you put it inside and it is instantly whisked back to The Yarn Room.

SAMUEL Wow!

LEO And what's in this leather pouch? (*holds up a leather pouch on a strap*)

MISS PAIGE This is a saga pouch. (*takes the pouch and opens it and shows them a tiny, round pod. The Story Weavers lean in to look at it.*) It carries your saga pods.

BELLA It's so colourful!

ANNA The colours swirl round and round.

CAITLIN I'm getting sleepy!

MEG Can't keep my eyes open...

LEO So tired...

MISS PAIGE No time to sleep Story Weavers. (*closes her hand over the seed*)

THE STORY WEAVERS SNAP OUT OF THEIR TRANCE;

MEG What just happened?

MISS PAIGE *(laughs)* You were hypnotised by the swirling colours on the outside of the saga pod.

SPINNER The Story Snatchers will be hypnotised by these pods too. The moment they start to stare you crush the pod between your fingers and throw the powdery seeds at them.

SAMUEL And then what happens?

MISS PAIGE The Snatchers shrink and become small enough to be put into your Transporter Bags.

SAMUEL And then?

MEG They end up in The Shredding Basement?

MISS PAIGE Exactly Meg.

SAMUEL What EXACTLY happens in this Shredding Basement? It sounds like the torture chamber in old castles.

LEO Story Snatchers don't get shredded. Their life-plugs are removed, shredded and recoloured with creativity and imagination.

SAMUEL Life-plugs?

MISS PAIGE We all have them hidden inside us.

CAITLIN They absorb things that happen during our lives.

BELLA They should be colourful and reflect our creativity and imagination...

ANNA And all of our experiences and adventures.

MISS PAIGE But sometimes life-plugs start to lose their colour.

LEO Story Snatchers have dark, dark grey life-plugs.

SAMUEL Because they have lost their imagination and creativity?

SPINNER Yes Samuel. The Shredding Machine mends their life-plugs.

THE OTHER STORY WEAVERS OR ANOTHER GROUP OF ACTORS ACT OUT WHAT HAPPENS IN THE SHREDDING BASEMENT: STORY SNATCHERS WITH THEIR EYES CLOSED CROUCHED DOWN IN A LINE AND MOVING SLOWLY LIKE THEY ARE ON A CONVEYOR BELT; SOMEBODY IN A WHITE LAB COAT WITH LONG 'PINCERS' MOVES CLOSE TO THEM AND TAKES OUT THE LIFE-PLUG; PUTS IT INTO A JAR HELD BY ANOTHER ACTOR IN A WHITE COAT; THEN THEY ADD THINGS TO IT, MIX IT UP AND PRETEND TO PUT A NEW LIFE-PLUG IN)

SPINNER Once the colourful life-plug is put into place, The Story Snatcher transforms into a creative and interested person again.

STORY SNATCHERS STAND UP AND SHED THEIR DARK CLOAKS TO REVEAL COLOURFUL CLOTHES; PICK UP A BOOK AND EXIT READING

ANNA And they go back to Earth to enjoy stories and reading!

SAMUEL Amazing! A life without books is not one I'd enjoy at all! (*pulls out a notebook from his new satchel*) What do we write in these empty note books?

MISS PAIGE That is a Book Translator. It won't stay empty for long.

MEG What do we fill it with? Stories?

SPINNER Words. You won't understand every word you read or hear so you open the Translator, whisper the word and its meaning appears on the pages.

BELLA A magical dictionary!

MISS PAIGE Exactly.

ANNA So how do we actually snare a sneaky Snatcher?

MISS PAIGE Nice alliteration Anna! (*she smiles*)

SPINNER The Book will tell you the plan. (*stands The Book up on the table and all gather around; opens The Book but pages are blank*)

SAMUEL There's still nothing written on the pages.

SPINNER Remember Samuel, sometimes you just need to let books speak to you.

SAMUEL What do you mean?

A NOISE LIKE SOMEBODY CLEARING THEIR THROAT COMES FROM THE BOOK.

THE BOOK Weavers you must all learn how to use your gifts and speak to books.

MEG The Book is talking to us!

SAMUEL It IS a magical book! Does it contain spells? Can it do magic?

SPINNER Magic, real magic, is just a spark that ignites change in the world. It is woven carefully into many books. Not just magical books or books about magic. A story that can stir feelings deep inside us should be treasured. When a book makes a connection with its reader that is REAL magic.

ANNA Do all books talk? I've never heard them speak to me quite like this!

SPINNER Books often try to talk to us. Not many people on Earth hear them anymore. Most books have stopped trying to speak to people. People are becoming too busy to sit and read.

SAMUEL In the library, The Book caught my attention because the words were moving around! My coloured glasses usually stop that.

MISS PAIGE The Book was trying to test if you were truly a Story Weaver.

SAMUEL So this time it wasn't my perceptual dyslexia that made the words move and create white rivers through the words. It was this magical book. I thought I needed to get glasses with a different colour!

- MISS PAIGE Everyone in The Great Archives of Bacalen does have a type of dyslexia. Some of us wear coloured lenses to help us read on Earth but here we need our coloured lenses to see the story-threads and use our gifts.
- LEO We're super-heroes who save stories but we have to WEAR our glasses so that our powers will work.
- MEG *(laughs)* Thanks Clarke Kent!
- SPINNER Story-threads get excited when they want to share their story with you. They know the most creative, inquiring and intelligent minds will see them moving.
- MISS PAIGE Sadly not everyone knows how to manage the excited story-threads. When the words move it often stops people reading books or enjoying school.
- SPINNER Instead of being excited when they see the story-threads dancing on the pages, people find the words difficult to focus on and give up trying to make them stay still.
- LEO Many think that they aren't smart enough to read or spell.
- SAMUEL But they are smart enough! They just don't know that something like coloured lenses could help. There are just so many ways to help people read.
- MEG You're right Samuel but if we don't save the world's stories from The Story Snatchers, these people will never get the chance to find out!

THE BOOK And people say that books can take a long time to tell a good story!
Can somebody please turn the page? We need to talk about the plan.

SPINNER *(laughing)* Ah we mustn't keep The Book of Bacalen waiting.

THE BOOK Now Weavers we must hurry. The Snatchers are moving quickly and quietly from country to country and there is no time to waste. They want people to forget about stories and reading books. They want to control what people read and believe. Snatchers are changing information everywhere, including the internet. We must stop them before the world becomes full of Story Snatchers and stories in The Great Archives crumble into dust.

CAITLIN What can we do?

THE BOOK You will go to Meg's bookshop, Multi-Story and speak to some good books. Find out who is helping The Story Snatchers. There is a traitor in The Great Archives. That traitor has stolen the ancient Archetypes and is also leading The Story Snatchers.

THE STORY
WEAVERS A traitor? In The Great Archives? *(they all look at Spinner and Miss Paige in disbelief as . Spinner and Miss Paige nod grimly)*

THE BOOK Tell nobody else at The Great Archives of our plan. I will come with you and show you how to use your gifts and really talk to books.

MISS PAIGE *(picking up The Book)* And you must look for any lost book marks that have fallen from unravelled story-vessels. They will hold valuable clues. *(she looks at Meg)* D.I.D. card ready Meg?

MEG Ready (*holding up the card*). The Book of Bacalen, 1 Bookworm and 6
Story Weavers for Multi-story

SPINNER Send me a message in your Transporter Bags if you need me. (*tapping
the pocket on his cloak*) Your message will appear here in the blink of
an eye. Now safe travels and watch for Snatchers.

ANNA (*to Samuel*) Got to admit, book chutes are a NOVEL way to travel!

*BANG OF CHUTE CLOSING AND DARKNESS ON STAGE AS THEY ENTER THE
BOOK RETURN CHUTE.*

ACT 2: SCENE 1

MULTI-STORY BOOK SHOP.

MEG'S PARENTS, JANET AND ANDY ARE WORKING IN THE BOOKSHOP (DUSTING, PUTTING BOOKS AWAY ETC.) THE SPOTLIGHT FALLS ON THE BOOK RETURN CHUTE AND THE STORY WEAVERS AND MISS PAIGE COME DOWN THROUGH THE AISLE AGAIN BUT THIS TIME SAMUEL IS HAVING FUN ON THE SPEEDY TRIP IN THE CHUTE.

JANET *(laughing at their noisy arrival)* Welcome Story Weavers! Welcome to Multi-Story.

ANDY Hello Beatrix. Looks like we're 'CLOSED' for the rest of the day.
(moves to turn the sign on the door to 'CLOSED')

JANET I have seen you many times in our bookshop Samuel. Congratulations on becoming a Story Weaver. My name is Janet and I think you know Andy, our Multi-Story Storyteller.

SAMUEL Yes, yes I do. Now I know why he tells such amazing stories!

ANDY Great to have you here Samuel. Spinner sent us a message instructing us to have some good books ready for your arrival.
(points to a couple of piles of books) These are classics that have been read and enjoyed by people for many years.

JANET It is very difficult to unravel the story-thread of a story-vessel that has been enjoyed by generations of children and their parents.

MISS PAIGE Thank you Andy. *(produces The Book and props it up the table)*
Weavers, it is time for The Book to teach YOU how to use your gifts and speak WITH books.

THE STORY WEAVERS EAGERLY CONGREGATE AROUND THE BOOK WAITING FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

THE BOOK Now Weavers, let your book call to you. The book might be in these piles or on the shelves. Walk slowly around them and listen to them calling to you...clear your minds and listen carefully to their whispers...

THE WEAVERS WALK IN A CIRCLE PAST THE BOOK SHELVES AND THE PILES ON THE FLOOR.

BELLA So many of my absolute favourites here...(stops and picks out a book)..this one...it wants me to read it. It is calling to me! (she sits down on the floor and opens the book, the other Weavers crowd around her but Miss Paige, Andy and Janet usher them away)

JANET Give her space. She needs a quiet, peaceful place to really communicate with the book.

THE WEAVERS CONTINUE WANDERING AROUND THE BOOKS, EACH OF THEM EXCEPT SAMUEL FIND A BOOK AND SIT QUIETLY ON THE FLOOR.

SAMUEL May be I won't get to talk to a good book today. I couldn't find one in the school library.

ANDY Give it time Samuel. There are plenty of un-snatched stories here. Let it call to you.

SAMUEL (nods and walks around again as Miss Paige, Janet and Andy move around to talk to the other Weavers.) Hello? (stops and listens) Is

anybody there? I can't hear you properly. Your voice is muffled.
Keep talking so I can find you. (*moves towards a pile of books and takes some off the stack*).

SHASTA (*off stage voice*) Thank you. It is much easier to talk when you're not being squashed by your friends.

SAMUEL (*in surprise, he takes a plain book off the top of the stack and sits down slowly; he opens the book*).

Your story is about a horse and a boy in a place called Narnia!

SHASTA (*dressed as a book, Shasta moves on stage and sits down across from Samuel*) Yes. Have you read it? (*a little sadly*) My cover is so plain and blue that nobody has bought me yet. I think people often judge a book by its cover.

SAMUEL Oh you should never do that. My mother read your story to me. And all the others about Narnia too.

SHASTA Most people only read the story about the children and the magical wardrobe so I'm glad you have read my story. My name is Shasta, like the boy in the story. Are you from The Great Archives? I have not met many people who can actually talk to books.

SAMUEL My name is Samuel and I am a new Story Weaver from The Great Archives. We're trying to find the ancient Archetypes. They have been stolen and The Story Snatchers are stealing story-threads all over the world.

SHASTA (*fear in his voice*) Help us Samuel. We don't want to lose our story-threads. When people stop reading books, our threads will weaken.

Eventually they will be unravelled too. Don't let The Snatchers change us. Help us! Please help us!

SAMUEL *(puts his arm around Shasta)* We will keep you safe. Do you know how The Snatchers are getting into the book shop?

SHASTA Through the book chute.

SAMUEL But only Weavers, Bookworms and Storytellers can use the chute. The traitor must be helping them! Was there anyone with them?

SHASTA A shadowy figure appears at the chute when The Snatchers arrive and when they leave.

SAMUEL Do you think The Snatchers will return?

SHASTA They will come back. They want the most treasured of all stories. Even in our plain covers we can't keep hidden forever.

SAMUEL I will talk to The Book of Bacalen and we will catch The Snatchers. Don't worry Shasta. I will buy you and keep you safe in my bookshelves.

SHASTA Thank you Story Weaver. I know you will all do your best to keep our story-threads from being changed. *(Samuel stands, closes the book and Shasta moves off stage).*

DURING THE TIME SAMUEL AND SHASTA HAVE BEEN TALKING, JANET, ANDY, MISS PAIGE AND THE OTHER WEAVERS HAVE BEEN SETTING UP A NEW BOOK DISPLAY OF 'CHILDREN'S CLASSICS' AS BAIT TO TRAP THE SNATCHERS. MISS

PAIGE TAKES A D.I.D. CARD AND DISAPPEARS INTO THE BOOK CHUTE.

SAMUEL COMES OVER TO THE GROUP.

SAMUEL My book's name is Shasta and he told me that the traitor is using the Bacalen book chute to bring The Snatchers to Multi-Story.

JANET *(nods)* Yes, the other Weavers have been told that story from their books.

ANDY The Book has a plan to catch the traitor. Beatrix has gone to The Great Archives to tell Spinner.

JANET It is time to snare The Story Snatchers. We have been setting up some bait. *(points to the display)*

MEG The Snatchers won't be able to resist coming for all these children's favourites.

STORY WEAVERS PICK UP BOOKS AND SAY SOME TITLES EG WIND IN THE WILLOWS; WINNIE THE POOH; ALICE IN WONDERLAND; THE MUDDLEHEADED WOMBAT; THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE ETC.

ANDY It's getting dark. Time to hide and wait. Saga pods ready?

EVERYONE NODS AND MOVE TO THEIR HIDING POSITIONS.

STAGE DARKENS AND SPOTLIGHT FALLS ONTO THE BOOK RETURN CHUTE. TICKING OF A CLOCK IS HEARD.

THERE IS A NOISE AND EVERYONE JUMPS. THE SPOTLIGHT FALLS ON AN ACTOR DRESSED LIKE THE TALL CLOCK THAT HOLDS A BOOK NEAR THE

COUNTER. IT OPENS AND SHUTS THE BOOK THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF TIMES FOR THE HOUR AND THEN GOES BACK STANDING STILL WITH THE BOOK OPEN FOR READING.

(THE ACTOR CAN GO OFF STAGE ONCE THE SPOTLIGHT GOES BACK ONTO THE BOOK RETURN CHUTE).

EVERYONE LOOKS RELIEVED AND GO BACK TO CROUCHING AND WATCHING THE CHUTE.

THE SOUND OF THE CHUTE OPENING OCCURS AND DOWN THE AISLE COME DARK SHAPES OF STORY SNATCHERS. ONCE THEY GET ON STAGE AND START LOOKING AT THE BOOK DISPLAY, THE STORY WEAVERS SHOUT 'NOW' AND FLASHES OF COLOURED LIGHT ('THE SAGA PODS') LIGHT UP THE STAGE AS THE WEAVERS PRETEND TO THROW SAGA POD POWDER AT THE SNATCHERS.

THE SNATCHERS 'SHRINK DOWN' AND DISAPPEAR OFF STAGE AS THE WEAVERS PRETEND TO PUT THEM INTO THE TRANSPORTER BAGS. JANET AND ANDY ARE STAMPING STORY SNATCHERS WITH THEIR MATRICES WHICH ALSO SHRINK THE SNATCHERS AND SENDS THEM TO THE SHREDDING BASEMENT.

SUDDENLY THE COLOURED LIGHTS STOP AND ALL THE SNATCHERS ARE GONE. EVERYONE LOOKS AROUND TO SEE A SHADOWY, HOODED FIGURE STANDING NEAR THE BOOK CHUTE.

MISS PAIGE EMERGES FROM THE BOOK CHUTE AND APPEARS BESIDE THE FIGURE..

MISS PAIGE *(looks at the face of the hooded figure)* Cetus! You have dishonoured the name of Storyteller!

CETUS *(removes his hood and says in a nasty voice)* Dishonoured? I have been waiting for years to have my REVENGE! The Snatchers have been waiting for THOUSANDS of years for somebody to lead them. We will make a world full of Story Snatchers and forgotten stories.

BELLA But why Cetus? Why would you do that to Spinner?

CETUS Why? He tricked me to tell that story...the one that crushed my speech-thread. He knew that I would become the most powerful Storyteller in Bacalen's history. He left that story-vessel out for me to read.

MISS PAIGE That's not true Cetus!

CETUS It is time to put an end to The Great Storyteller and his library. I will create my own stories. MY stories will all have the same ending - the silencing of your stories and the decay of the books that protect them!

MEG You just want revenge! It wasn't Spinner's fault that you found the story-vessel. You should have taken it back to him. Your story can be changed.

CETUS I don't want it to change. I have been changing story-threads for years. It was easy. Who would suspect somebody who worked at The Great Storytelling Library? People are already forgetting how to read books. The Great Storyteller, The Bookworms and The Story Weavers will be no more. The Great Archives will crumble into a pile of dust.

MISS PAIGE We will find a way to stop you Cetus.

CETUS You are too late. I am changing information everywhere. People are too quick to read and believe what they see on the internet. They don't question it. Their minds get swept up in a digital sea of false words and images. I will control what people read, learn and believe! They will ALL become unimaginative Story Snatchers!

CAITLIN The Star of Bacalen won't let that happen Cetus!

CETUS What can YOU do to stop me? Gone are the days of story weaving and imagination. Gone is the time of adventure and new discoveries. Bacalen will not be able to return BALANCE to the world.

ANNA Bacalen WILL win! (*throws a saga pod at Cetus; nothing happens*).

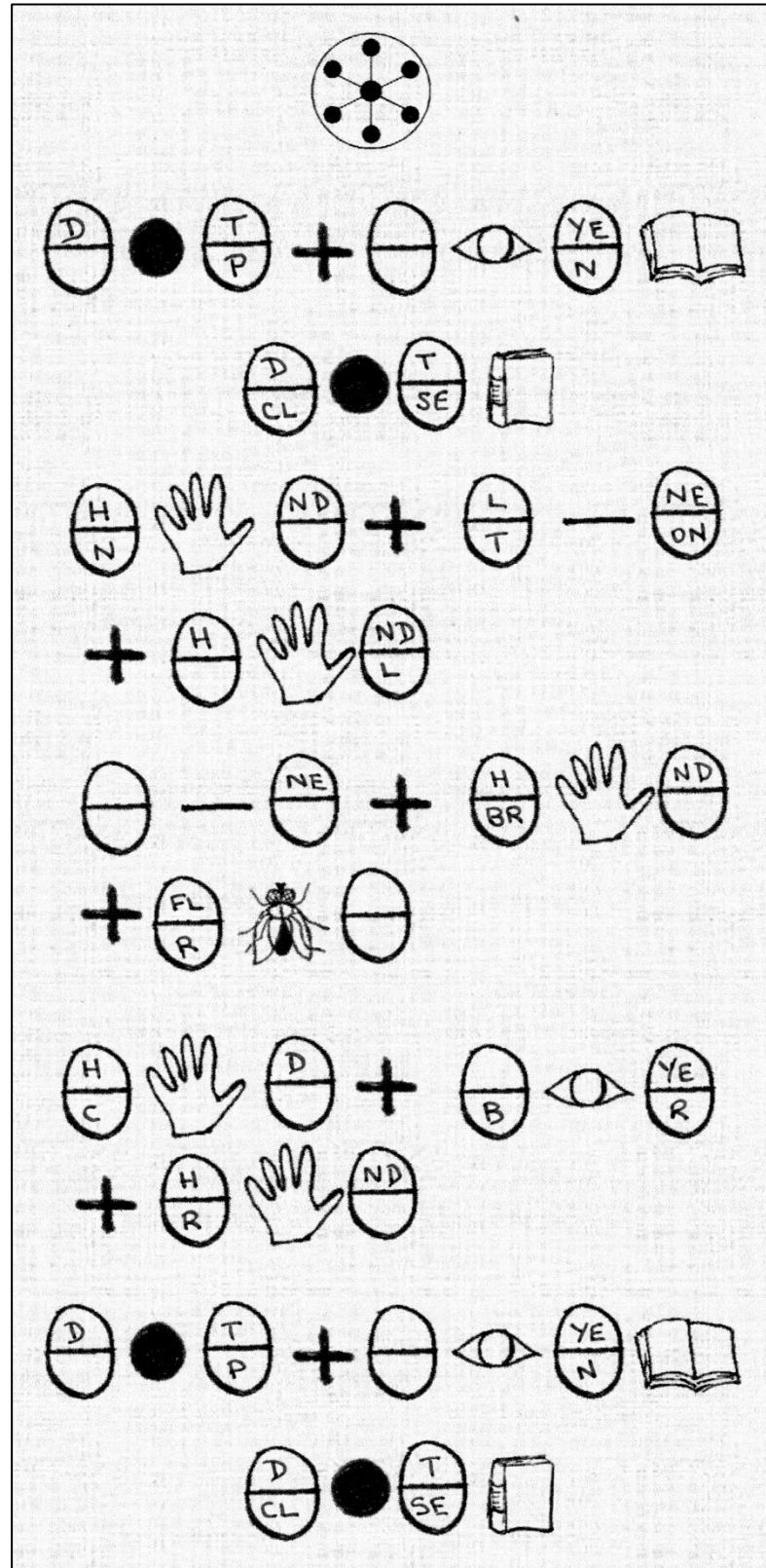
CETUS Saga powder won't work on me! I am not a Story Snatcher! You children are no match for Argyros Cetus! It is time to depart this little book group. (*throws a D.I.D. card into the chute; the lights go out and then back on and Cetus has disappeared*)

BELLA (*looks into the book chute*) Can we follow him?

MISS PAIGE No. There is no way to know what book chute network he has taken.

SAMUEL But he has left us this! (*holds up a yellow book mark that he picks up near the chute*)

ANDY What is it?



SAMUEL It's a bookmark. See?

MEG Remember only Story Weavers can see the Bacalen bookmarks once they become separated from a story-vessel.

SAMUEL Sorry Andy. It's a yellow bookmark and has symbols and letters printed all over it.

JANET That is Diegesis Script. Spinner can read it if you tell him what the symbols are. What's The Book doing Beatrix? It's squirming in your satchel.

LEO It wants to get out. Can The Book help read the bookmark?

MISS PAIGE Steady. I'll just put you on the table. (*takes The Book from the satchel and props it up on the table*).

BELLA (*looking at the bookmark*) There are open and closed book symbols on the bookmark.

THE BOOK Open me! Hurry place the bookmark on my pages. (*Caitlin opens The Book and Samuel places the bookmark inside*). Close me! (*Caitlin closes the book*). Now concentrate and use your gifts. (*The Story Weavers all stand with their eyes closed*).

SAMUEL Can you see them? (*opening his eyes and looking at the others*)

MEG See what?

SAMUEL The pictures

ANNA What pictures?

LEO It's the image map!

MISS PAIGE Only you can see them Samuel. The bookmark is yellow and you are connected to the yellow Archetype. Concentrate.

SAMUEL *(nods excitedly and closes his eyes again)*

LEO What can you see?

BELLA Tell us!

ANNA Hurry up!

CAITLIN Can you see the Re-weaving Room?

SAMUEL I see a place near a lake and a high spouting fountain.
(props or pictures representing Canberra can move across the stage or be projected onto a screen at the back).

MEG That could be anywhere!

SAMUEL There is a long grey building on top of a grassy green mound and a hug flag pole about the building with a blue flag flapping. It must be an Australian flag. I think there are white stars on it and a Union Jack in the corner.

ANNA Anything else?

SAMUEL I can hear bells ringing from a tall thin building on a nearby island and across the water is a building made of cream stone. There are so many books inside it.

LEO Were there any Snatchers?

SAMUEL I see a room with lots of books on shelves. The Snatchers are working in a basement. There isn't much light. Story-threads are scattered all over the floor. (*opens eyes*) That's all.

BELLA Can you think of a place like that Caitlin? You know so much about places in the world.

CAITLIN Let me talk to my book. Her name is Paris. She'll be able to link to other travel books and find the exact place. (*grabs her book from the table, holds it tightly and closes her eyes; then opens her eyes with excitement*). It's The National Library in Canberra! Lake Burley Griffin, The Australian Flag over New Parliament House, the bells in the National Carillon! It all makes sense!

LEO The Snatchers must have started reweaving books from The National Library! How terrible!

JANET It could be worse than that! It doesn't just have books there. It has the largest Australian collection of magazines, maps, music, manuscripts, oral histories and electronic media too. That could all be changed by The Snatchers!

MEG The library's Bacalen book chute is linked to all the other National libraries in the world! No library is safe!

BELLA We must tell Spinner!

MISS PAIGE Janet and I will go and tell him. Andy you take The Story Weavers to The National Library. If Cetus is there, you'll need Spinner's help to catch him! (*disappear into the book chute*)

ANDY (*grabbing a jar from a shelf*) Fill up your saga pouches. There will be a lot of Snatchers to shrink! (*The Weavers all fill up their saga pouches and put them around their necks*).

MEG Ready? (*takes out a D.I.D. card and holds it up; the others nod*) 1 Storyteller and 6 Story Weavers to The National Library in Canberra (*drops the card into the chute*)

BANG! LIGHTS OUT AS THEY DISAPPEAR INTO THE BOOK CHUTE.

ACT 2: SCENE 2

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY (CANBERRA).

A DARKENED ROOM WITH BOOKSHELVES. SHADOWY FIGURES DRESSED IN DARK COLOURS ARE WALKING AROUND OPENING BOOKS AND STEALING LONG STORY-THREADS. THEY ARE SNIGGERING AND TALKING TO EACH OTHER. THEN THEY MOVE TO A BOOKSHELF, TAKE OUT TWO BOOKS, TAP OUT A SEQUENCE OF KNOCKS, THROW IN A CARD AND DISAPPEAR.

THE STORY WEAVERS AND ANDY ARRIVE ON STAGE DOWN AN AISLE THROUGH THE AUDIENCE. THEY ARE VERY QUIET AS THEY TRAVEL THROUGH THE CHUTE THIS TIME. THEY HAVE SAGA PODS READY AND ANDY HAS HIS MATRIX OUT; THEY ARE LOOKING AROUND FOR STORY SNATCHERS.

ANDY No Snatchers here. Samuel is this the room with the books that you saw in the image map.

MEG Is anything familiar?

SAMUEL *(walking around and scanning the room for clues)* It had big books with green spines...like these *(pointing excitedly at some books in a bookcase)* and there was a painting...just like that one...and a clock...YES! THIS IS IT!

LEO *(picks up a book and dust falls from it)* It's happening already. The oldest and most vulnerable stories are decaying. What are these? *(bends down and picks up a small insect)*

MEG It's an insect.

LEO Silverfish! They like to eat clothing and pages of old books...silverfish, silverfish...ARGYROS CETUS!

SAMUEL Yes Leo...we know he is the mastermind of this terrible plan.

LEO No - ARGYROS CETUS - his name comes from two Greek words!
'Argyros' means silver and 'Cetus' means monster fish!

ANNA He's certainly a monster!

BELLA Why didn't we think of that before?

CAITLIN We might have been able to stop him earlier.

ANDY Perhaps but names and words can be deceiving. Cetus has been
quietly replacing story-threads for years. Nobody suspected him.
We all TRUSTED him. Now we have to STOP him.

SAMUEL What about alarms or security guards?

ANDY Alarms can't detect Weavers or Storytellers and we can use the
saga pods to hypnotise any guards we come across. They won't
remember seeing us.

MEG Let's spread out and look for the entrance to the Reweaving Room.

SAMUEL Shouldn't we wait for Spinner, Janet and Miss Paige? We don't know
how many Snatchers we might find and we need them to catch Cetus.

ANDY We'll just look for the entrance. No harm in that.

*THEY ARE AGREE AND START LOOKING AROUND WITH THEIR TORCHES.
SAMUEL SEES SOMETHING SHIMMERING IN THE LIGHT OF HIS TORCH.*

SAMUEL Here! Over here!

EVERYONE CROWDS AROUND HIM.

ANDY What is it? I can't see anything.

MEG It's a bookmark Dad. It's stuck between two books.

LEO I'll just get these two books out so we can get to it. (*tries to pull one book but it won't budge; he tries harder but nothing happens*).

CAITLIN I'll try the other book. (*pulls and pulls but nothing happens*).

ANDY Try taking the books out at the same time.

LEO AND CAITLIN PULL TOGETHER AND THE BOOKS COME FREE. SAMUEL BENDS DOWN TO LOOK AT THE BOOKMARK WITH HIS TORCH.

ANDY Is the bookmark free?

SAMUEL No. It's been caught in some sort of little door.

ANDY (*comes closer and peers at the tiny door*). You'd better have a look Anna. You know the most about magic and fantasy.

ANNA (*examines the door*) It is like a fairy door. (*tries to open it*) I have no idea how to open it. It's locked.

BELLA How could Snatchers use such a tiny door? Do they shrink?

FOOTSTEPS ARE HEARD COMING CLOSER TO THE ROOM. THEY ALL STOP TALKING AND LOOK AROUND FOR SOMEWHERE TO HIDE, SAGA PODS READY. HOODED FIGURES ENTER THE ROOM AND THEY SPRING OUT AT THEM.

MISS PAIGE *Steady Weavers! (pulls down the hood of her cloak and Janet and Spinner do the same; they are all relieved to see Miss Paige, Janet and Spinner) What have you found?*

CAITLIN *A tiny door hidden behind some books.*

ANNA *There's a bookmark caught in the door.*

SPINNER *Ah that will be very useful. It is very important that we get the door open. (he looks at the door and then pulls out The Book from his satchel). Well old friend, I think we need your help here. (he opens The Book and holds it up to the door; takes it away and studies the pages).*

LEO *What does The Book say?*

BELLA *Can The Book tell us how to open the door?*

SPINNER *It has. Cetus tried to hide the entrance to the Reweaving Room but when you open a good book and let it talk to you, it very rarely lets you down.*

MEG *(pointing to the symbols) What do the symbols mean?*

SPINNER *(pointing to the symbols in The Book) This means turn clockwise; this means anticlockwise; these symbols are like dots and dashes.*

LEO Like Morse Code?

SPINNER Exactly.

SAMUEL But how will that open the door?

SPINNER Watch. Andy, put your finger on the door and I'll tell you what to do. *(Andy moves to the door and stretches out his arm so that his finger rests on the door)*. Circle your finger once in a clockwise direction; tap twice slowly then circle twice anticlockwise...yes, good... Now tap quickly once. Then three long, slow taps, circle clockwise again and then four quick taps.

ANNA The door is opening!

MEG The bookmark is free. *(picks it up off the floor)*. Should we read it now? *(shining her torch on it)*

MISS PAIGE The image map it contains will tell us about other Reweaving Rooms so we can read it later.

MEG What do I do with it?

JANET Here Meg, The Book will keep it safe. *(she takes The Book from Spinner and opens it; Meg lays the bookmark inside it; Janet closes The Book and hands it back to Spinner)*. It will show one of you the image map after we've dealt with these Snatchers.

BELLA *(looking through the open door)* It's like a tunnel behind this door. Nothing to see or hear or smell or feel *(reaching inside)*. Just blackness.

ANNA Well if it isn't a door for Snatchers perhaps it's a post box for their stolen story-threads.

JANET That's it Anna!

ANNA Really? It's a post box?

JANET It's for D.I.D. cards - or at least The Snatchers' version of a D.I.D. card. (*she holds up a card*). You know that they love to copy things so I bet they've just copied our cards.

SPINNER A copy is never as good as the original but in this case, a copied card would be enough to transport them to a hidden Reweaving Room.

MISS PAIGE So let's try using our original cards to take us to The Snatchers.

ANDY Saga pods ready Weavers.

SAMUEL How will you snare a Snatcher? You don't have saga pods.

MISS PAIGE We have matrices Samuel. (*Miss Paige, Andy, Janet and Spinner hold out their matrices for him to see*)

SAMUEL It's like a candlestick with a stamp on the end. Like the stamps our teachers use to put 'Excellent work' or 'Fantastic effort' on our homework.

LEO They're also like the ones that stamped hot wax and sealed important documents.

ANDY Very similar. It's called a matrix. (*stamps a piece of paper in his notebook and holds it up*).

SAMUEL (*reading the words*) Property of the Shredding Basement.

JANET This matrix use TRANSPORTER ink. Stamp this on a Snatcher and they immediately get transported to The Shredding Basement.

ANDY The tricky bit is getting close enough to stamp them before they stamp you.

SAMUEL What does their stamp do?

MEG You don't want to be stamped by a Snatcher. They use TRANSFORMING ink on their matrices.

LEO The words, 'Property of The Snatchers' appears on your skin. The transforming ink takes the colour from your life-plug. That changes you into a Snatcher more quickly than too much screen time!

SAMUEL I'll try to keep out of their way! I don't want to be a Snatcher.

MISS PAIGE We can change you back. Crushing a saga pod on the stamp will stop the change BUT it has to be done before the life-plug loses all its colours.

LEO (*cheekily*) There's always the Shredding Basement...

SAMUEL (*shudders*) I want to avoid going there!

SPINNER Time to go and snare some Snatchers. Ready Weavers?

MISS PAIGE *(holding up a D.I.D. card)* The Book of Bacalen, 2 Storytellers, 2 Bookworms and 6 Story Weavers for The National Library Reweaving Room.

THE STORY Let's hope this WOR-RR-KSSS...(voice drifts off as they disappear)
WEAVERS

SLAM - BLACK OUT - DISAPPEAR OFF STAGE.

ACT 2: SCENE 3

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY REWEAVING ROOM

A DARKENED ROOM WITH THREADS AND BOXES EVERYWHERE IS ON ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE. SHADOWY FIGURES ARE WALKING AROUND PICKING UP LONG STORY-THREADS. THEY ARE SNIGGERING AND TALKING TO EACH OTHER. THEY MOVE TO A REWEAVING MACHINE AND TRY TO WEAVE SOME OF THE THREADS TOGETHER BUT END UP ARGUING AND DISAGREEING ABOUT THREADS AND WHERE THEY SHOULD GO. THE SCENE IS VERY NOISY AND CHAOTIC.

THE STORY WEAVERS CREEP ON STAGE FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE. THE NOISE STOPS. THE SNATCHERS ARE STILL ARGUING IN MIME (NO SOUND AS THE ROOM IS BEHIND A DOOR). THE STORY WEAVERS, STORYTELLERS AND BOOKWORMS CREEP ON STAGE WITH SAGA PODS READY AND MATRICES OUT; THEY ARE LOOKING AROUND FOR STORY SNATCHERS.

THERE IS A SNATCHER WITH A MATRIX GUARDING THE DOOR TO THE REWEAVING ROOM. HE RUSHES TOWARDS THE GROUP. BELLA QUICKLY THROWS A SAGA POD AT HIM (COLOURED LIGHTS APPEAR AS HE SHRINKS) AND PICKS UP THE MINIMISED SNATCHER TO PUT HIM IN HER TRANSPORTER BAG.

ANDY He won't be the only one!

MEG There must be more hiding somewhere.

MISS PAIGE Quietly now. The Reweaving Room should be behind that door. It will be filled with Snatchers.

SAMUEL And Cetus too.

SPINNER Janet and Andy will guard the entry.

JANET AND ANDY NOD AND HOLD UP THEIR MATRICES

LEO *(puts his ear to the door)* I can hear the reweaving machines clanking.

ANNA *(puts her ear to the door)* Lots of arguing going on too.

MISS PAIGE Saga pods and matrices ready. On the count of three... *(they all get ready to leap through the door)* One, two, three....

THE GROUP BURST INTO THE REWEAVING ROOM AND SAGA PODS AND MATRICES ARE FLYING AROUND. (COLOURED LIGHTS FLASH TO REPRESENT SAGA POD POWDER) SNATCHERS SHRINK DOWN AND DISAPPEAR OFF STAGE UNTIL NONE ARE LEFT. THE STAGE BECOMES QUIET AND THE GROUP FROM THE GREAT ARCHIVES LOOKS AROUND, BREATHING HARD. JANET AND ANDY APPEAR AT THE DOOR.

JANET Everyone OK? No transformation ink on you? *(everyone checks but all are ok)*

ANDY Think we won that Snatcher encounter! *(gives a double thumbs up and he and Janet go back to guard the entrance)*

MISS PAIGE *(picking up story-threads and looking at the piles)* Now we need to get these threads back to The Yarn Room.

MEG If we don't find The Archetypes, it will take us a long time to send all these threads back through our Transporter Bags!

SPINNER Snatchers have never been able to snatch threads on such a large scale. The Bookworms have been building a story-thread extractor. It's a bit like a vacuum. Its nozzle attaches to a colourful bag and the threads get sucked up and immediately sent to The Yarn Room to be sorted.

AS SPINNER IS EXPLAINING ABOUT THE STORY-THREAD EXTRACTOR, CETUS HAS QUIETLY APPEARED THROUGH THE LITTLE DOOR AND MANAGED CREEP UP ON ANDY AND JANET AND STAMP THEM WITH HIS MATRICES. THEY FALL TO THE GROUND. CETUS STANDS IN THE DOORWAY UNNOTICED BY THE REST OF THE GROUP.

LEO That's a brilliant invention!

MISS PAIGE Thank you Leo!

BELLA Where is Cetus?

ANNA Are The Archetypes here?

CETUS *(from the doorway in a nasty, raspy voice)* You'll never find them.

ALL TURN IN SURPRISE AND LOOK AT CETUS.

MEG Where are my parents? What have you done to them?

CETUS They're a bit **stretched** out at the moment I think they'll be **snatching** a bit of time with me soon. *(laughs)*

MEG No! (*pushes past Cetus and rushes to her parents; takes out some saga pods and crushes them on the ink stamps that she finds when she examines them; she sits waiting beside them; worried and hoping that they recover quickly*).

SPINNER It is over Cetus. The Snatchers have gone to the Shredding Basement. There will be no more poaching of stories. We can fix your speech-thread. Let us help you to become Alexis Craft again.

CETUS You can't stop me Spinner. This is not the only place in the world that stories are being rewoven. I don't want to return to The Great Archives. I want to destroy it. Your precious stories will become nothing but dust. Just like the memory of Alexis Craft.

MISS PAIGE Alexis Craft will always be a part of you Cetus.

CETUS That name means nothing to me. We have The Archetypes. I will be the world's Supreme Storyteller. (*turns and races past Meg and back to the little door; throws in a D.I.D. card and disappears*.)

THE GROUP RACE AFTER HIM BUT HE IS GONE. THEY MOVE TO HELP MEG AND CHECK ON JANET AND ANDY.

Samuel Meg, are your parents ok?

MEG (*tearily*) I don't know. I hope the saga powder was able to stop the transforming ink getting to their life-plug. They haven't moved.

MISS PAIGE (*examines where the ink was stamped on Andy and Janet*) You got to them in time Meg. Well done. (*she looks at the ink stamp again*) See the ink that says 'Property of The Snatchers' is already fading.

SAMUEL The ink's twisting and turning on their skin. It's making new words; Property of the Pinchers, Meddlers, Thwarters, Hinderers, Spoilers and Loathers. What are they?

SPINNER 'WHO are they', Samuel. They are as difficult to find as The Snatchers and just as troublesome. I am sure you won't need to worry about Music Meddlers, Theatre Thwarters, Hobby Hinderers, Sport Spoilers or Learning Loathers. I do have some books about them in the library. You can borrow some next time you're there.

MEG Look, the stamp says 'Property of The Great Archives'.

BELLA Now the ink's gone! They're opening their eyes.

JANET AND ANDY OPEN THEIR EYES AND TRY TO SIT UP.

SPINNER Slowly, go slowly.

ANDY Cetus...Did you catch him?

MEG *(hugs her father and then her mother)* He got away.

JANET We're ok Meg. Cetus was too quick for us. He must have had a matrix in both hands and inked us before we knew he had arrived.

ANNA We caught all The Snatchers and there are plenty of threads to return to The Yarn Room so our plan worked out pretty well.

CAITLIN But there are other Reweaving Rooms across the world. The Archetypes are still missing and Cetus got away. We have failed you Spinner.

SPINNER Young Weavers you have not failed me or The Great Archives. Without your help we would never have found out that Cetus was leading The Snatchers or recovered these precious story-threads.

MISS PAIGE (*taking out The Book*) And don't forget this. (*opens The Book and shows them the bookmark*). The bookmark will give us clues to where Cetus is hiding.

JANET What colour is the bookmark?

SAMUEL (*he reaches for the bookmark and holds it up*) Blue, a pale blue

SPINNER So the bookmark fell from a story-vessel that had a travel story woven into it.

CAITLIN (*she gently takes the bookmark from Samuel*) Then I'll see the image map this time.

MISS PAIGE Ready to find out where you are going next Story Weavers?

THE STORY (*excitedly together*) Yes; absolutely; definitely, totally etc.

WEAVERS

CAITLIN Travel awaits.

LEO Nobody can stop us!

MEG Let's do it!

BELLA No time like the present!

ANNA As long as we are together.

SAMUEL Ready for adventure!

JANET Cetus thinks he has won but he'll be no match for us when we meet
him again.

ANDY We'll be ready for him.

THE BOOK *(held open by Janet)* Story Weavers you've certainly taken me on an
adventure. Now I'll help you find out where your next adventure will
start.

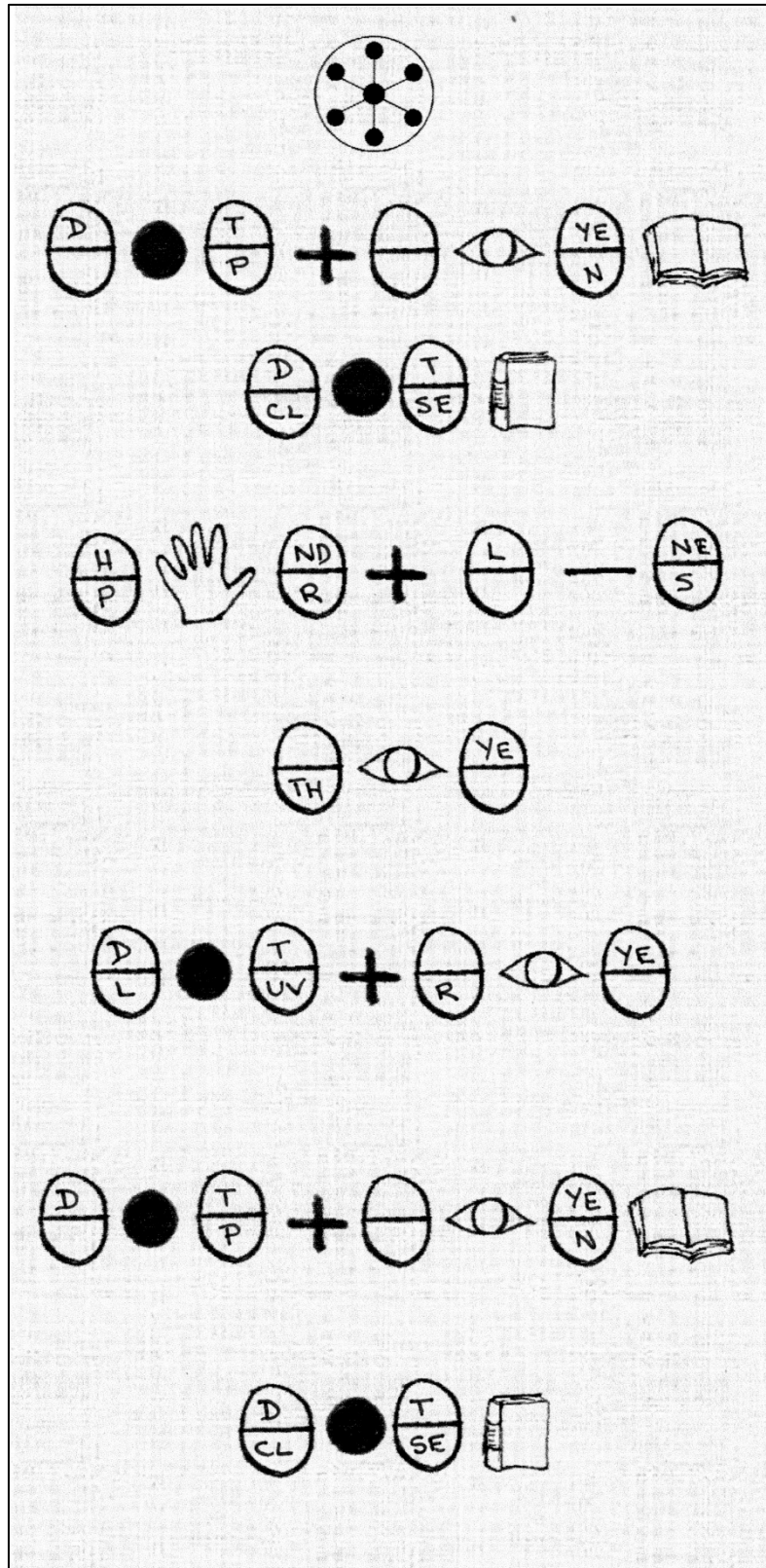
*CAITLIN PLACES THE BOOKMARK BETWEEN THE PAGES OF THE BOOK. JANET
CLOSES THE BOOK. CAITLIN MOVES TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE AND
CLOSES HER EYES; THE WEAVERS STAND IN A SEMI-CIRCLE AROUND HER.*

CAITLIN The images are forming. I can see them. *(her eyes open wide for an
instant and then close again).*

SAMUEL What can you see Caitlin? *(props or pictures representing Paris can
move across the stage or be projected onto a screen at the back).*

CAITLIN *(opens her eyes and smiles)* I think you had better brush up on your
French Story Weavers. Get ready for Paris!

Blue Bookmark that was found at The National Library.



THE STORY *(All excitedly chatting to each other).*

WEAVERS

MISS PAIGE *(holding up some D.I.D. cards).* You'll need some of these! Hope the next chute isn't too...

THE STORY DUSTY! *(laugh)*

WEAVERS

MEG *(fills in a D.I.D. card and holds it up to show the other Story Weavers)* Ready Story Weavers? We're riding the chutes to Paris!

BANG! LIGHTS OUT AS ALL ON STAGE DISAPPEAR INTO A BOOK RETURN CHUTE. LIGHTS SLOWLY BACK ON AND THE STORYTELLER FROM MULTI-STORY IS SITTING IN THEIR CHAIR WITH THE BOOK OPEN.

STORYTELLER I wonder what will happen to The Story Weavers on their next adventure. That's the end of today's story-time at Multi-Story. Our bookshop is getting ready to close. Thank you all so much for coming. I hope you have enjoyed being part of the magic inside our bookshop. Please come again. You might hear about what happens to The Story Weavers when they ride the book return chute to Paris. *(behind the Storyteller some shadowy figures creep across the stage, some figures are carrying 'stolen' paintings).*

I have a feeling that the sneaky Story Snatchers might be joined by some pilfering Picture Pinchers. How will The Story Weavers deal with them? (SHUTS BOOK WITH A BANG)

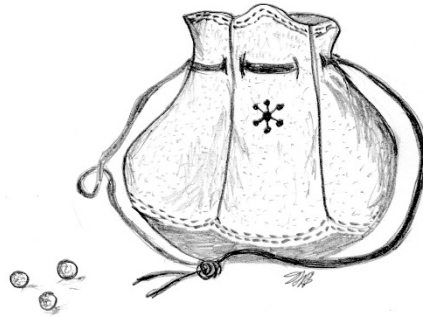
LIGHTS OUT.

SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON THE STORYTELLING CHAIR.

THE STORYTELLER HAS DISAPPEARED.

THE BOOK OF BACALEN IS PROPPED UP ON THE CHAIR.

THE END



ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT AND AUTHORS:

Born in Brisbane, Australia, A.J. Hill has always been drawn to books and their stories. The second youngest of five children, she and her younger sister, Kate, played and imagined their way through their childhood.

As a weed scientist and science communicator, stories have also helped her to teach concepts to children and adults. Her young children would often say that their mother was a 'weird scientist'!

A.J. Hill and her family live in the regional city of Wagga Wagga, Australia. Her husband and two book-loving children have perceptual dyslexia and wear tinted lenses. These lenses have changed their learning journeys.

'The Story Snatchers' was written in collaboration with her primary aged children, 'the junior authors', who write under the pen names, M.E. Grace and C. Hook (chosen because 'you all call me Chook!'). Writing the adventure series together has been a wonderful experience for the whole family. It is hoped that this series will increase awareness of and help others to understand about Irlen Syndrome and dyslexia and also support and empower those who have been diagnosed.

'Here's the thing: the book that will most change your life is the book you write.'

(Seth Godin, Author)

AND IT HAS

—and the best thing is that it has also made wonderful changes in the lives of others too! xx AJH

www.bacalenbooks.com.au

ALTERNATIVE SCRIPT WITH NARRATOR SCENE 3 pp.40-49

SPINNER THROWS A CARD INTO THE BOOK CHUTE AND CETUS APPEARS CARRYING SATCHELS FOR THE STORY WEAVERS. THE NARRATOR WALKS ON STAGE WITH A LARGE OPEN BOOK THAT THEY READ FROM. AS THE NARRATOR SPEAKS, THE CHARACTERS ON STAGE ACT OUT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE AUDIENCE. THERE IS STILL SOME DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHARACTERS IF DESIRED.

NARRATOR Spinner summons Argyros Cetus, who helps him in The Great Storytelling Library. Cetus hands each of The Weavers a satchel but does not say a word. She disappears silently into the book chute. Spinner explains how she lost her voice.

Once Cetus was a trainee Storyteller called Alexis Craft but he damaged his speech-thread trying to recite a story that he was not yet ready to tell. The Bacalen healers tried to help him regain control over his storytelling gift but he became impatient with his recovery. He has never spoken again and changed his name to Argyros Cetus.

The Story Weavers look inside their satchels. They discover many magical things...

Book translators, extraordinary dictionaries that show you the meaning of any word that you whisper into it.

Transporter bags that send story-threads back to The Yarn Room or shrunken Snatchers to The Shredding Basement.

Saga Pouches with powerful saga pods. (*shows the audience a saga pod in their hand*) Careful! (*closes their hand*) The swirling colours on the pods hypnotise anyone that stares at them for too long.

(OPTION: RETURN TO DIAGLOGUE eg. BELLA'S LINE p42 WHERE THE STORY WEAVERS START TO GET SLEEPY.)

BELLA It's so colourful

ANNA The colours swirl round and round.

CAITLIN I'm getting sleepy.

MEG Can't keep my eyes open.

LEO So tired.

MISS PAIGE No time to sleep Story Weavers (*closes her hand over the saga pod*)

THE STORY WEAVERS SNAP OUT OF THEIR TRANCE

MEGX What just happened?

MISS PAIGE (*laughs*) You were hypnotised by the swirling colours on the outside of the saga pod.

SPINNER The Story Snatchers will be hypnotised by these pods too. The moment they start to stare you crush the pod between your fingers and throw the powdery seeds at them.

SAMUEL And then what happens?

MISS PAIGE The Snatchers shrink and become small enough to be put into your Transporter Bags.

SAMUEL And then?

MEG They end up in The Shredding Basement?

MISS PAIGE Exactly Meg.

SAMUEL What EXACTLY happens in this Shredding Basement? It sounds like the torture chamber in old castles.

LEO Story Snatchers don't get shredded. Their life-plugs are removed, shredded and recoloured with creativity and imagination.

SAMUEL Life-plugs?

NARRATOR Miss Paige and Spinner explain to Samuel that everyone has a life-plug inside them. Life-plugs become colourful because they absorb all of our experiences and adventures; our creativity and imagination. But they lose their colour when people turn into Story Snatchers. When a Snatcher is sent to The Shredding Basement, their dark grey life-plugs are recoloured and they become imaginative people who enjoy books again.
(OPTION TO RETURN TO DIALOGUE; ANNA'S LINE p.45)

ANNA So how do we actually snare a sneaky Snatcher?

MISS PAIGE Nice alliteration Anna!

SPINNER The Book will tell you the plan. (*opens The Book and they all gather around looking at it*)

SAMUEL There's nothing written on the pages.

SPINNER Remember Samuel, sometimes you just need to let books speak to you.

SAMUEL What do you mean?

NARRATOR Spinner explains that story-threads in books get excited and move around trying to attract people's attention because they want to really speak to them. Only people with perceptual dyslexia are able to see the words moving. When they put on their coloured lenses, the words settle and the book becomes calm enough to speak to the reader. Spinner explains to Samuel that The Book of Bacalen was actually calling to him in the school library by making the words and sentences wriggle.

(OPTION TO RETURN TO DIALOGUE: SAMUEL'S LINE p.46)

SAMUEL It IS a magical book! Does it contain spells? Can it do magic?

SPINNER Magic, real magic is just a spark that ignites change in the world. It is woven into so many books. NOT just magical books or books about magic. A story the can stir feelings deep inside us should be treasured. When a book makes a connection with its reader that is REAL magic.

(CHANGE TO SCRIPT: INSERT REVISED LINE FROM THE BOOK TOP OF p.48)

THE BOOK *(sound of somebody clearing their throat)* I don't like to interrupt a good story Spinner but time is ticking. The Story Weavers must learn how to speak to books and use their gifts.

NARRATOR The Book of Bacalen begins to speak to them. The Story Weavers listen and read its pages in amazement. The Book has a plan to snare

the Snatchers. They are to go to Meg's bookshop and find some good books. There is a traitor in the Great Archives. The traitor has stolen the ancient Archetypes and is leading The Snatchers. The Story Weavers must also look for magical bookmarks that have fallen from unravelled story-vessels. The bookmarks will give them clues to where the stolen story-threads are being re-woven. Miss Paige will take them to Multi-Story in the book return chute.

**(OPTION TO RETURN TO SCRIPT: MISS PAIGE'S LINE
BOTTOM OF p.48)**

MISS PAIGE D.I.D. card ready Meg?

MEG Ready (*holding up a card*). The Book, 1 Bookworm and 6 Story Weavers for Multi-Story!

SPINNER Send me a message in your Transporter Bag if you need me. Safe travels and watch for Snatchers.

ANNA (*to Samuel*) Got to admit, book chutes are a NOVEL way to travel!

BANG OF CHUTE CLOSING AND DARKNESS ON STAGE AS THEY ENTER THE BOOK RETURN CHUTE.

(RETURN TO ACT 2: SCENE 2 - MULTI-STORY).

NOTES:

