



The Stolen Chapters (Story Thieves Book 2)

By James Riley



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Owen, Kiel, and Bethany confront secrets, stolen memories, and some very familiar faces in the second book in the *New York Times* bestselling series, Story Thieves—which was called a "fast-paced, action-packed tale" by *School Library Journal*—from the author of the Half Upon a Time trilogy.

Owen Conners's whole life changed the day he found out his classmate Bethany was half-fictional, and could take him into any book in the library. Which story would they jump into next? Another fantasy, like the *Kiel Gnomenfoot, Magic Thief* books? Maybe something with superheroes? Owen's up for anything except mysteries—those just have too many hidden clues, twists that make no sense, and an ending you never see coming.

Then Owen wakes up in a real-life mystery with a memory that's been erased and too many questions. How did Kiel Gnomenfoot lose all of his magic? Where is Bethany? And who's the annoying guy wearing the question mark mask and Sherlock Holmes hat, taunting Owen and Kiel that Bethany is in grave danger?

Bethany is trapped in a hidden room that's slowly filling with water, and she can't escape until her friends find her. But is she imprisoned by more than just chains and a locked door? What's she hiding from Owen and Kiel?

Maybe some mysteries just shouldn't be solved...

Please note: The black bars in the first nine chapters are intended.



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4–6—The second installment of the series, in which regular kid Owen meets Bethany, a half-fictional girl who can travel into and out of books, starts out with a bang and an explosion. Owen and Kiel, who's a fictional character from Owen's favorite series, wake up inside of a mystery—Owen's least favorite genre. Bethany is nowhere to be found, though a strange kid in a Sherlock Holmes hat claims that she is in great danger if Owen and Kiel can't figure out the mystery of where she is and why. Unfortunately, the pair face several problems: Kiel has lost his magical powers, the mysterious kid has blown up the library, the police are after Owen, and neither of them can remember anything that happened before they woke up. Owen has to face his worst fears and courageously save his friends in this lively sequel that will keep even the most reluctant readers on the edge of their seats. VERDICT A must-buy where there are fans of the first book.—Terry Ann Lawler, Burton Barr Library, Phoenix

Review

A fictionalcharacter's megalomaniacal scheme to insert himself into every novel everwritten precipitates a merry chase through meta-realms in this brain-crackingsequel. Following nine pages that are blacked out except for a few tantalizingwords, putative protagonist Owen ("nonfictional" dweeb) and KielGnomenfoot (cocky hero of a popular fantasy series) start off Chapter 10 in aburning library. With no memory of recent events, they are informed by maskednemesis Doyle Holmes (fictional descendant of Sherlock) that their bestieBethany (half-fictional and able to travel at will between books and the "real world") will be permanently out of the picture in two hours. Things skid toward further catastrophe in a whirl of captures, rescues, cliffhangers, flashbacks and point-of-view switches, redacted and renumberedchapters, oblique digs at "real" novels, conflicting motives, andhackneyed literary tropes—many of which are subverted by the charactersthemselves on the way to a dizzying round of climactic twists. What with cameosand ongoing plotlines, readers are well-advised to keep the previous volume tohand for reference. By the end, Bethany and Owen, having demonstrated laudablequantities of guts and wits, swear off book-diving forever. Fat chance, as theauthor, in his alter ego as "nobody," emerges into view to start thenext episode (and dramatize the acknowledgements). Likely to leave more than afew punctures in even the most levelheaded reader's sense of reality. (Metafictional fantasy. 10-13) (Kirkus Reviews September 15, 2015)

Owen and Bethany are back in this twisty, mystery-filled follow-up to Story Thieves (2015). Cleverly starting several chapters in, Riley begins with Owen and Kiel, who have had their memories wiped and must save Bethany from drowning in exactly 90 minutes. Readers will be just as confounded as the heroes as they try to figure out what's happening in the real world—or is it the fictional world? Riley includes many clever nods to classics, and in the metaliterary narrative, Bethany and Owen discover that Story Thieves, the first volume in the series, is being published in the fictional world and that an author, James Riley, is mysteriously writing about their adventures. Can Owen and Bethany stop all the fantasy madness before fiction takes over real life? The search is still on for Bethany's missing father, ensuring further volumes, and the twists and turns in this volume are sure to keep readers coming back for more. (Booklist Online October 5, 2015)

About the Author

James Riley

James Riley lives in Virginia. He is the author of *Half Upon a Time*, *Twice Upon a Time*, and *Once Upon the End* as well as the Story Thieves series.

Vivienne To

Vivienne To has illustrated several books, including The Underland Chronicles by Suzanne Collins and the Randi Rhodes, Ninja Detective series by Octavia Spencer. As a child, she had two pet mice escape. She currently lives in Sydney, Australia, with her partner and her ginger cat. Visit her at VivienneTo.com.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Ames:

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Jorge Raines:

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Daniel Gordon:

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