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Secret Origins (Story Thieves)



Synopsis

Bethany travels to a new fictional world to rescue her father in this third 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 and Bethany have sworn off jumping into books for good. But they didn’t make any promises about not jumping through strange portals that lead to a comic book world. Jupiter City was once filled with brightly costumed superheroes and villains, but nowadays, there’s nothing left but the Dark. Even the villains are terrified of the Dark’s shadows, and most of the heroes have either disappeared or been lost to mind control. The one hero who might have stopped all of this, Doc Twilight, has been imprisoned by the Dark. But who is Doc Twilight really? And how can Bethany and Owen defeat the Dark without superpowers of their own? They’ll definitely need the help of some old friends and new allies to bring the light back to Jupiter City, and find out the truth behind the Dark. It all comes back to Bethany’s own secret origins. What really happened when her fictional father disappeared years ago? Who is Nobody, and why is he writing these *Story Thieves* books? And what kind of supervillain name is The Rotten Banana?

Book Information

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Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

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.

Secret Origins 2> The evil King of All Stories held his enormous eraser to Bethany's head as she tried to escape. "It's too late, heroes!" the king told Owen, Kiel, and Charm. "There's nothing you can do! Now I'll erase the parts of Bethany's life story that make her a good person, thereby turning her into my evil minion. Then, together, we'll invade the nonfictional world and rule everything!" "Let her go!" Owen shouted. "Or you won't like what comes next." The evil King of All Stories sneered. "You? The nonfictional hero who's saved the fictional world more times than I can count? You have no power here, boy." "Don't I?" Owen took out paper and a pencil and began writing. The King of All Stories drops his eraser. The king's eraser immediately dropped out of his hand. "What?" the king shouted in amazement. "But how?" "Through the power of words!" Owen shouted. "Books are magical, and so is writing!" He wrote something else on the paper. The King of All Stories lets Bethany go, then trips on his own feet. The king let go of Bethany, then spectacularly wiped out on his next step, doing a front flip before landing hard on his back. The Crown of Stories fell off his head and rolled a few feet away. The Crown of Stories appears on Owen's head, Owen wrote. Immediately, the crown disappeared from the ground, then reappeared on Owen's head. It was exactly the right size, as if it were made for him all along. "No!" the former king shouted from the ground. "You can't do this to me. This is all I had!" "Not true," Owen said, turning to his former archenemy. "This isn't you, Your Majesty. You're not meant to be evil. Someone's rewritten your story, just as you tried to do for Bethany." "I'm not?" the former king said. "Then what was I meant to be?" "A father," Owen said quietly, then wrote something on his paper. The former King of All Stories turns back into his real self. Instantly a bright light filled the room, then spread out over the entire Kingdom of Stories, blinding anyone who happened to be looking at the castle at that moment. The light enveloped the former king, raising him into the air in a completely awesome way. The light became too bright to look at, and they all covered their eyes except Owen, who wrote himself sunglasses that made him look even cooler. Then abruptly, the light disappeared and everything went dark. "Looks like this

story, "Owen said, pulling off his sunglasses, "just started a new chapter." Bethany slowly stepped past Owen, her eyes on the figure on the ground. The former king was no longer dressed in royal robes. Now he wore normal clothes, and his hair had turned the same shade as Bethany's, a bronzish red. The man shook his head, then slowly pushed to his feet, his mouth hanging open. "Bethany?" he said, his eyes widening.

"Dad?" she said, not believing it. "It's me, Beth," her dad said, holding out his arms. "You've saved me! I never thought I'd be able to turn back to my true self, but you've done it!" Bethany ran forward and jumped into her dad's arms, knocking them both to the ground. "Dad!" she shouted. "I can't believe it's you! Owen, you did it!"

"I've never seen anything so sweet," Kiel said from Owen's side, rubbing his eyes. "I have," Charm said, looking at Owen as her hand slipped into his. The white paw of a black cat touched Owen's hand, and he stopped writing. Spike, Owen's fictional self's former cat, glanced up at Owen from his desk with a look that said, Really?

"Too much?" Owen asked his fictional cat. Spike just blinked his eyes slowly, leaving his paw on Owen's hand. "I have," Charm said, looking at Owen with affection. Spike dug his claws into Owen's hand, and Owen sighed.

"Fine." "Really?" Charm said, stepping away from the other two. "No one else thinks this is a trap? I'm the only one?" Spike took his paw off of Owen's hand and began to purr contentedly as he closed his eyes to nap again.

"You know, I'm the one who's writing this," Owen said.

"And it's not exactly easy. Maybe at least hold your judgment until it's done?" Spike briefly opened his eyes, then closed them again, completely unmoved. Owen absently scratched his cat's stomach, reading over what he had written. Ugh. Why was it all so bad? Did every writer have this problem? Everything just seemed so . . . obvious. Make the villain Bethany's dad? It'd been done a thousand times. He began to idly tap the keys without pressing them while he stared off into space. When he glanced back at the computer, though, there were new words. Apparently he'd been typing without realizing it?

"Owen," said a man who appeared out of nowhere, with no features or details anywhere on his body. The mannequin-looking man had his back to the Owen in the story as he spoke to the real Owen. "Stop this at once. You're manipulating fictional characters' lives. Do you have any idea what you're doing here?"

Owen's eyes widened as he read the lines, while at his side, Spike began to growl, low and menacing. Owen hadn't just written those words . . . had he? And then more text appeared on the screen, without Owen even moving his hands. "Do not write again," Nobody said. "I don't want to have to tell you this twice." And with that, he disappeared. A chill went through Owen, and he quickly reread the last few lines. What had just happened? Was that really Nobody? And if so, was Owen actually messing with real fictional people's lives? Had he just created another fictional Owen? He quickly highlighted the entire story, ready to hit the delete button, then froze. What if he had created new people, and was now going to delete them? Would that take them out of existence somehow? His finger hovered over the button as he looked to Spike for an answer. But now that Nobody was gone, the cat seemed to have returned to his nap, not paying any attention. Should he delete the story, or was that worse? If only there was someone he could ask.

"OWEN!" shouted someone from mere inches away. Owen screamed and tumbled out of his chair, while Spike tore away across the room, hiding under the bed. His heart racing, Owen turned to find Bethany's head sticking out of a piece of paper on his desk, and he gave her the dirtiest look he could. "Don't do that! You scared me half to death!" She'd given him a page from a book she kept hidden under her bed. In case of emergencies (fictional characters escaping their books, libraries burning down, that kind of thing) she could jump in one page, move to the next part of the story, then pop out of his. But it was not meant for terrifying him!

"Good, you should be scared!" she said, breathing heavily. "Because that guy is back on the street again, the one who keeps watching my house!" Owen groaned loudly. "Seriously? This again?"

"Oh, is my being stalked by a crazy person boring to you?" Bethany asked, giving him a sarcastic look. "Get over here and help me spy on him!" She moved her head to the side, and one hand popped out of the page. Owen shook his head. "No way. Remember what happened last time I came over to check on this guy?"

Bethany rolled her eyes. "He wasn't there, but only because he must have seen us coming!"

"And the time before that?"

"That one, I got the car wrong."

"And we terrified that poor old lady!"

"Then she shouldn't be acting so suspiciously!" Bethany yelled, her hand flying around wildly. "Who sits in their car for ten minutes at eleven at night?"

"She couldn't get it started!"

"That's what she wanted us to think," Bethany said, glancing around suspiciously. "Hurry up, or he might leave again!"

"Which would mean he's not actually spying on you," Owen

said, sighing. “Bethany, it’s been a while since we jumped into a book.” “Two months, three weeks, and four days, actually. Now come on.” “And I know it’s been hard on you. But you’re kind of acting . . . different now.” Bethany’s face froze, and she pulled her hand back into the page. “What? What are you talking about? Don’t you get it? This could be Doyle, or Fowen again. Maybe Fowen got out of the book where I left him and is back for revenge. Or maybe Doyle remembered everything that happened and wants to figure out how I jump into books. If Kiel were here instead of running off to find out who he is without magic, he could just cast a spell or something to find out who this guy is. But without him, we’re going to need a good plan.” Owen groaned again. “No more mysteries. Please? Fowen and Doyle are both still in the fictional world where we left them. And whoever’s parked outside your house is probably one of your neighbors, which would explain why he’s on your street.” “You think I’m making this up, don’t you?” Bethany said, looking suspicious. “Not . . . entirely. I just think you used to jump into books every night, and now, well, your imagination doesn’t have as much to play with, so it’s messing with you.” She gave him an evil look and started to say something, then stopped, shaking her head. “Maybe you’re right. I might have a little bit of cabin fever or something. I’ll just go to bed and forget all this. See you tomorrow?” “Yeah, of course,” Owen said, breathing a sigh of relief. He’d been worried about saying something for weeks now, but she’d been getting more and more frantic to find something exciting in their fairly boring lives, and it was out of control. “And Bethany? Only use that page for emergencies. I might not have clothes on or something!” Bethany rolled her eyes, then waved good-bye and disappeared. Owen slowly got back into his chair, and Spike came trotting out from under the bed, then jumped into his lap. He petted his cat for a moment, then sighed. “Bethany’s going after the guy in the car, isn’t she?” Spike just purred in response. “Fine,” Owen said, and set Spike on his bed. “I’ll go, but this guy better be a murderer or something, or I’m going to be really annoyed!”

great series for my kid, can’t wait for the next one.

my grandsons love this series.

My son and I are really enjoying this series. The only bad thing is you can't put the book down because it's so engaging, then the author leaves you on a cliff for an entire year while you wait for the next book to be written. It's still questionable whether good triumphs over evil, or if we'll have read 5 books before we find out the morals are questionable. Personally, when you are writing kids books, in my opinion they need to end with a good moral. We're waiting to see what happens here. For sure, I'll be buying the next two books to find out. For now all I can say is write faster, Man!

My granddaughter was thrilled. She loved the series.

It leaves you on the edge of your seat. I really like this series it is funny, an adventure, and a little scary.

My 4th grade daughter enjoyed it.

I don't really know but my grandson sure like it for a bday gift

good read

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