

## Previously in Pages & Co.

In *Tilly and the Bookwanderers*, Matilda Pages discovered that she was a bookwanderer and that she could travel inside of her favourite books. While looking for her missing mother with her best friend Oskar, she discovered that her father was a fictional character and that she was half fictional herself.

In *Tilly and the Lost Fairy Tales*, Tilly and Oskar came up against the powerful Underwood siblings who had taken over at the British Underlibrary and were secretly harvesting book magic to try to steal the immortality of stories for themselves.

In *Tilly and the Map of Stories*, Tilly and Oskar followed a series of clues to try and find the mysterious Archivists in a journey that took them deep within layers of Story. While searching they encountered the Sesquipedalian, a train that is powered by imagination and home to the inscrutable Horatio Bolt and his nephew Milo.

At the Archive they found Artemis, the Bibliognost, who showed them a hall of Records where every bookwanderer's journey is recorded and kept, all powered by potent book magic deep within

*The Story So Far*

Story. However Story has noticed Tilly too, and her bookwandering abilities remain unpredictable and unusual.

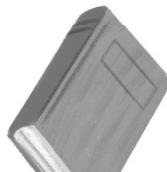
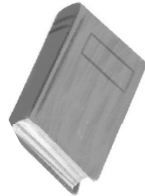
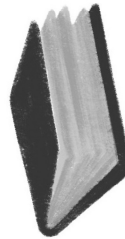
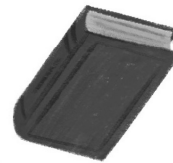
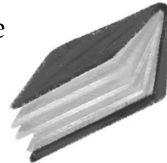
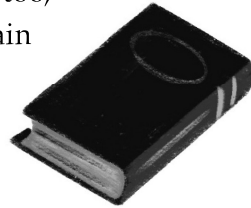
Tilly managed to stop the Underwoods by unbinding all the Source Editions housed at the British Underlibrary. This means that many books are now free from the fear of being tampered with and changed forever. But not all Sources are stored in London, and now Tilly's abilities aren't so secret anymore. Meanwhile, the Sesquipedalian and its inhabitants are caught up in forces that

Tilly has

yet to

even

encounter...





## PROLOGUE

The book arrived at Pages & Co. wrapped in brown paper and string. It was addressed to Archibald Pages and covered in a colourful array of mismatched stamps. Archibald's granddaughter, Tilly, had picked up the bundle of post that morning and brought it through from the bookshop the Pages owned to their private family kitchen. Archie didn't notice it until the shop had closed its doors and he was sitting with a cup of tea, sorting through the stack of bills, letters and books sent from publishers.

'What's this then?' he asked, turning the package over in his hands. It had been wrapped very precisely, with the brown paper in sharp creases, only a little

*The Book Smugglers*

tattered from its journey.

'It was just in with the post,' Tilly said. 'Are you expecting something exciting?'

'Not that I can remember,' Archie replied. 'Although this does *look* rather exciting, doesn't it? The stamps would seem to suggest it's from . . . Italy, I think? How curious.' He took out his penknife and neatly sliced through the tape at one end, peeling back the paper with the satisfying crinkling noise that comes from brown paper in particular. Archie pulled out a hardback book that was rather worse for wear – its dark-green cloth cover was frayed at the edges, and several of the pages were visibly ripped and stained. On its spine, in faded gilt lettering, was the book's title, *Il meraviglioso mago di Oz*, and its author, L. Frank Baum.



'An Italian edition of *The Wizard of Oz*,' Archie said appreciatively, stroking the

*Prologue*

edges of the pages in admiration. 'I was right about the stamps. But I don't think we know anyone in Italy – do we, Elsie?'

He directed this last question to his wife, Tilly's grandma, as she entered the kitchen.

'I don't think so,' she said. 'Is that something you've ordered online and forgotten about again?'

'Not this time,' Archie grinned.

'Did it come with a note?' Tilly asked.

'Good thinking,' Archie said, opening the cover to reveal a small rectangular card. All that was on it was a symbol printed in black ink: a circle with a line that crossed it horizontally with a dip in its centre, like the outline of a flying bird, or a simple drawing of an open book. Archie turned it over, but there was nothing else printed on it.



'How strange,' he said, turning carefully through the pages but not finding anything else tucked inside. 'I've never seen this symbol before; it doesn't mean anything to me.'

*The Book Smugglers*

He stood up and started rifling through the rest of the post to see if there was anything else that had come from Italy, but it was just the book and the card. Archie sat down heavily, his face pale.

‘Goodness, you look exhausted,’ Elsie said, coming over and putting a cool hand on his forehead. ‘And you’re burning up.’ It was a warm day but nowhere near hot enough to produce the rapidly gathering beads of sweat on Archie’s skin.

‘Just overworked, I’m sure,’ Archie reassured her. ‘I’m not getting any younger after all! But I do feel a bit peculiar, now you come to mention it – maybe I’ll just have a quick lie-down.’

He stood up but quickly wobbled on his feet, and Elsie had to help him up the stairs to their bedroom.



‘He fell straight asleep,’ Elsie said when she returned to the kitchen, looking worried. ‘And something else strange . . . As I put him to bed, I noticed that his fingertips were purple.’

*Prologue*

'Purple!' Tilly repeated in surprise.

'Yes, as though he'd been picking blackberries. I wonder if he's touched something he's allergic to . . .' She tailed off as both she and Tilly turned to stare at the mysterious book lying on the table.

Elsie gingerly picked up the brown paper it had come in.

'But he can't be allergic to paper or books or anything like that, can he?' Tilly asked. 'Surely he'd know that already, what with working in a bookshop and all.'

'The book looks very old,' Elsie pointed out. 'Perhaps it has some kind of glue that he's sensitive to, or it's come into contact with something unpleasant somehow?'

'But not on purpose?' Tilly asked nervously.

'Goodness, no,' Elsie said. 'I mean, surely not.' She paused and glanced worriedly at Tilly. 'Although he does know how to get people riled up,' she went on. 'And, well, it's not as though we haven't made more than our fair share of enemies in the bookwandering



*The Book Smugglers*

world over the years. But no, who on earth would be sending your grandad something poisonous or dangerous?’

But Tilly wasn’t convinced, and she could see by the look on her grandma’s face that neither was Elsie.

‘Well, let’s just put this somewhere safe,’ Elsie said briskly, picking up the book with some kitchen tongs and sliding it into a large plastic sandwich bag. ‘And when Archie wakes up, we can see if he has any idea who he’s irritated this time.’

**But, two weeks later,**

**he was still**

**a s l e e p .**