

The Forbidden  
Book Club  
**The Bowerbird  
Blues**





## Book 2

# The Bowerbird Blues

Everything went black. The children could hear each other, but they couldn't see. And then, fine lines started to appear, like somebody was sketching a world before them. They saw a small town surrounded by a forest. They saw birds navigating through the sky. And then, they saw themselves. The richer that the detail got, the more they felt they were in that picture. Then, they found themselves in a new world.



Darren, Lachlan, and Skink all looked to Ada.

“Well, let’s head into town and see where that takes us,” she suggested.

When they got into the town, it seemed much like other small towns that they had been to on road trips. It looked a little old-timey, but aside from that it was much the same. As they walked down the main street, a policeman was walking up the other way. He gave them an odd look and Ada started to wonder what they could have done wrong already. He approached. “You lot are new.”



Ada wrinkled her nose. “Yeah.”

“I won’t be harsh on you, seeing that you don’t understand.”

“What don't we understand?” asked Darren.

“The way that things are around here,” the policeman replied.

He looked over all of them, and Darren noticed that he was paying attention to certain items.

“You’re going to need to give over a few things, or I’ll have to write you up,” the policeman said.

He pointed out Lachlan’s shirt, Darren’s laces, and a bracelet on Skink’s wrist.

“I don’t understand what we’ve done wrong,” Ada said as Lachlan wriggled out of his shirt and the policeman wrenched the bracelet off Skink.

All of them were blue. The policeman gave them a white shirt and laces when they surrendered the items, but he didn't have a new bracelet for Skink.

"Blue's bad news in this place," the policeman replied. "And we've gotten to a point where we simply can't allow it."

The policeman left with their things. Ada saw an old lady watching them. She walked over to her. "Can you tell us more about what just happened?"

She had a far-away look.



“You put us in danger,” she said.

“What do you mean?” Lachlan asked.

“The blue...it feeds him...the one who makes the sadness. He takes it all and turns it into grief and hurt. I can’t tell you more. But the birds can,” she said as she walked away.

The children looked at each other.

“Well, we have to find out what that was all about,” Darren said, frowning.

“I might have the answer,” Skink said, producing a small, blue hair tie from her pocket.



They walked just outside of the town and put the hair tie on the ground. Then, they hid in the bushes. Before long, a bowerbird came.

“I know about these,” Darren said. “They take blue things to decorate their nests.”

“Skink,” Ada said, “you know what to do.”

Skink focused on the bowerbird and started to transform. She took to the sky and followed the bird who had taken her hair tie. Then she led the rest of them to the nest.





At first, they thought it looked like a wreck. Then they looked closer. Lachlan wrestled a few things out of the tangled nest. He found old photographs. A broken toy sword. A small wrought-iron figure. All of it had blue paint in sections. Sometimes there were small dabs. Sometimes the item was evenly-coated.

“What do you think all of this is?” Ada asked the others. “What was that the lady said about a man making sadness?”



“People fill their heads with a lot of things to stop from feeling sad,” Darren said. “I think, at first, they wanted to be away from these memories. That they saw the birds taking blue things and found a way to rid themselves of the pain.”

“And over time they started to think it was the blue that was making them sad. Not the things that they sent away,” Ada said.

Skink was looking at the things in the nest, keeping quiet. She fluttered up to Lachlan’s shoulder. He looked at her and smiled.

“It’s good to feel things that you don’t want to sometimes,” he said softly to his sister.



Ada and Darren nodded, then they knew what they had to do. They went back to town and told everybody that they had chased off the wretch. They brought them to the bowerbird nest. When people saw their things decorating the nests, they began to collect them. A lot of time had passed.

A young man came to collect the sword. An old lady took the photograph and held it close. Little children took the wrought-iron figure when they saw that nobody else was there to collect it. As they watched the treasures being taken home, the world broke up into lines again and less and less detail until it was dark.

