

THE HAPPINESS THIEF

Synopsis

Within a Dickensian fairytale world, ten-year-old Emily Kinderman's happy childhood takes a drastic turn for the worse when the arrival of a mysterious children's plague coincides with her father's untimely death.

Unable to cope without her father, she inadvertently allows her younger brother to fall victim, not to the children's plague (as adults would believe) but to a mischievous and frightening magical man, who violently steals the boy's happiness by sucking the golden liquid out of his heart with a magical glass straw.

Horried at what she has witnessed, Emily tries to warn the town, but not even her mother will believe her story. Frustrated and riddled with guilt, Emily runs away from home on a quest to find the identity of this horrible thief, promising the frozen wide-eyed husk of her little brother, that she will get his happiness back no matter what.

With the help of an eccentric old curiosity shop owner and two resourceful orphans from the streets, Emily learns that the thief is in fact Irvin Whittlestick the once famous ringmaster of The Amazing Magical Whittlestick Circus. He mysteriously disappeared more than 100 years ago, after tragedy struck his world famous circus.

Emily and her new found friends decide to form a crude plan to lure the Thief and trick him into giving her brothers happiness back, but this is soon thwarted by the arrival of infamous Scuttle Brothers, who offer to find more happy children for The Thief in return for three bags of gold. Just enough to get their father out of jail.

Meanwhile Emily has deduced that if happiness is keeping Irvin alive then perhaps tears could destroy him. Strapping a hidden hot water-bottle full of children's tears, to a particularly happy child's chest, she manages to convince him to get kidnapped by the Scuttle Brothers. But when the boy is finally brought before the Thief, the tears have no effect and the boy's happiness is quickly drained from his soul.

With all hope lost, Emily is forced to confront the Thief herself, at the top of the town's clock tower. There she bravely offers to sacrifice her happiness for her brother's, but the Thief simply laughs, explaining that she is the most miserable girl he has ever met.

"Well then make me happy!" she exclaims. To a born entertainer, this is something he cannot refuse and by the end of a spectacular performance, he has her laughing with joy. But it is only skin deep and so instead of sucking out happiness, he sucks her misery. Poisoned, he stumbles off the edge of the clock tower, falling to his death. As his body hits the ground it explodes, sending hundreds of happiness orbs into the night sky, that return to the hearts of all the sick children of the town. One of which is Emily's little brother.