

# The Thief - By Gavin Burgess

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## **Parental Note:**

This story is intended for young teens. It contains content which some parents may deem unsuitable for less mature children. It is suggested that parents review the contents of this publication prior to making it available to their children.

# The Thief

There's been a theft! I've got to tell you. You might have not even noticed that it's gone but one of the most important things you have has been stolen. And the thief is sneaky, I can tell you that. He'll strike again and you'll never even notice. He does it every day and every day he gets away with it. He's so clever that you don't even realise what he's done. Stop and think for a moment! What's been missing from your day, every day, for as long as you can remember? Nothing huh? You think? Well that just tells you how sneaky this thief really is! He's already taken so much from you and you still haven't noticed. And maybe you don't even care, which is the saddest part of it all. There's a story about the devil. It says that the devil visits you like your best friend. He makes everything look great and while he's stealing your soul you feel like you're having the best time in the world! Well this thief isn't the devil, but he'd probably like to be, and even if he isn't he just might be the devil's best friend. Even if you don't believe in the devil it makes no difference because what this thief takes is the same either way. Well what does he take? Haven't you noticed yet? Come on my friend! Think! Think hard because this thing has been taken from you every day of your life and you don't even realise it's gone. But it is gone, and every time it's taken it's gone for good! This is something you just can't get back! It's really really gone, way gone, far far gone. Caput! Extinct! Exterminated! Obliterated! Really... Just gone! Forever! Gone! Get it? It's gone!

So what's missing? What's been stolen? What is gone? You still don't know, do you? Come on! Think! When you were four what did you have that you just don't seem to have so much of any more? And when you get home from

school, what is the thing you spend the most time doing? This is a clue! Come on my friend! Think! Have you ridden your bike through the park today? Have you felt the touch of the sun, or the purifying wash of the rain? Have you run through the grass with your friends? Have you skipped rope? Are you a boy who's looked at the legs of the girl you really like, or a girl who's admired the muscles on the cutest boy at school? Have you read a book about far away places or amazing people who do exciting things? Have you climbed a tree? Or built a fort, or undressed a doll and teased her until she cried imaginary tears? Have you flown with the Wright Brothers in your mind or journeyed under the sea with Captain \*Nemo? Have you snuck into the kitchen and made yourself the strangest treats, or brought a friend home from school and dressed up like mystery characters from another planet? Well have you? If you have, well, good, because maybe the thief hasn't got you yet! If you haven't then what have you done today instead? Think! This is a clue to finding the thief. Do you know who he is yet? I think maybe you do! And what has he taken? Come on! You tell me! You're starting to understand, aren't you? I really hope you are! I really, really do!

Let me guess; you got home from school and grabbed a quick snack and rushed into the lounge, where the TV is! You did, didn't you? What did you watch? Did it change your life? What really happened? Maybe you even watched something you'd seen before. Outside people were having fun with their friends. One of your mates was reading a book instead and he went to

*(\* Did you know that Nemo was once a captain and not just a fish? – G.B.)*

far away places he'd never seen before. You went to the same place you went last night, and the night before that, with the same people, not even real people like the guys riding their bikes in the park or the little girls making mud pies for their dolls by the river, but imaginary people who looked, not like you may have imagined them, in the way that your mate reading a book imagined the people he read about, but like someone else wanted you to imagine them. You didn't even have to think did you? No! It was all done for you! Just sit back and switch off your mind and think what I tell you to think, and do what I tell you to do, and ask your Mum to buy you the things that I show you because I want your parents' money too, even if it means you eat baked beans for Christmas dinner! Yes, I am the thief! Do you know who I am?

Is this all too weird for you? Well let me show you people who fly through the air and turn into machines and concrete statues that come to life and cry real tears! Let me show you people who can be shot and stabbed and dragged behind trains and run over by busses without sustaining anything more than a scratch. It's all true, I promise it is, and you'll believe me even though you know it's all lies. You want to believe! I know that you do! I'm your life! Without me you'd have only ridden your bike through the park, only felt the touch of the sun, or the purifying wash of the rain, run through the grass with your friends, skipped rope, seen the legs of the girl you really like, or admired the muscles on the cutest boy at school. You'd have done no more than read a book about far away places or amazing people who do exciting things, or climbed a tree, or built a fort, or undressed a doll and teased her until she cried imaginary tears. You may have flown with the Wright Brothers in your mind or journeyed under the sea with Captain Nemo, or snuck into the kitchen

and made yourself the strangest treats, or brought a friend home from school and dressed up like mystery characters from another planet, but you wouldn't have had me, and you'd have been left with all that time! The time when you could have done all those exciting things, with your friends, and your brothers and sisters, and your parents who will be gone far, far too soon! You see, I am the thief! I've taken your time! Now I think you know who I am! I'm television and I am going to be your god!