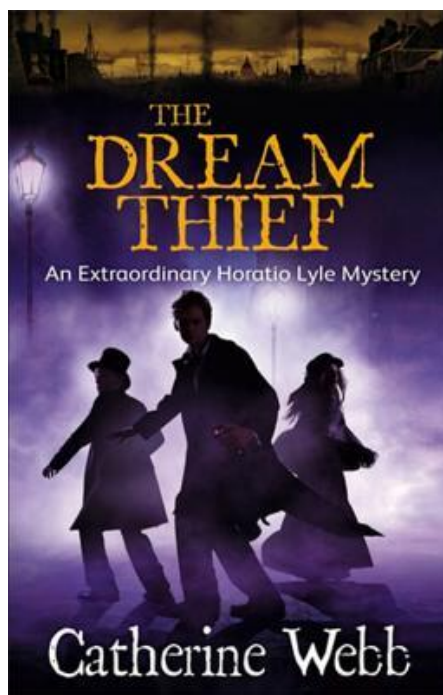




The Dream Thief

Catherine Webb

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London 1865: Lyle receives a nasty surprise late at night. A young girl on his doorstep, passed out, dying - apparently poisoned - and she's not the first. Something very, very bad is happening to the children in the East End.

Which means there's a mystery to be solved, sending Lyle, Thomas, Tate, and - naturally - Tess out into the wilds of east London. What they find is terrifying: Tess's old crowd of artful dodgers and ace pickpockets are now wandering the streets like zombies, drooling in the workhouses or plain mad in the asylums. And the only clue is a name, half-whispered in fear:

Old Greybags.

The Dream Thief Details

Date : Published 2010 by Atom Books

ISBN : 9781905654253

Author : Catherine Webb

Format : Paperback 342 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Mystery, Young Adult, Historical, Victorian, Historical Fiction, Science Fiction, Steampunk



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From Reader Review The Dream Thief for online ebook

Darren Hartwell says

Are you a fan of Doctor Who? Do you like mystery stories? Love a healthy dollop of the supernatural? If so then the Horatio Lyle series may be just the thing for you. This is the fourth book featuring Horatio Lyle and his merry band of helpers, and every book in the series so far is well worth your attention.

I first discovered this series shortly after the release of the first book, *The Extraordinary and Unusual Adventures of Horatio Lyle*. How could I not pick up a book with a title like that, especially as it is set in Victorian times and part of the blurb on Amazon read '....when Her Majesty's Government calls, Horatio swaps his microscope for a magnifying glass, fills his pockets with things that explode and sallies forth to unravel a mystery of a singularly extraordinary nature. Thrown together with a reformed (i.e. 'caught') pickpocket called Tess, and a rebellious (within reason) young gentleman called Thomas, Lyle and his faithful hound, Tate, find themselves pursuing an ancient Chinese plate, a conspiracy that reaches to the highest levels of polite society and a dangerous enemy who may not even be human'.

My feelings on finishing this book were a little mixed - whilst I had enjoyed most of the plot, the fantastically written characters and the beautiful quality of the prose, I was a little unsure about the supernatural element as the synopsis hadn't really made this clear. However, there were more than enough plus points for me to pick up the sequel when it was released, with another catchy title - *The Obsidian Dagger: Being The Further Extraordinary Adventures of Horatio Lyle*. This book upped the creepy factor, expanded on the supernatural element, and developed the relationship between the main characters perfectly - and this time the supernatural element was not only expected, I was looking forward to it.

Now we are on book four (book three, by the way, is probably my favourite of the series so far, but that is probably the testosterone speaking as it features a massive underground super-machine, and being set in Victorian times it is all steam, cogs, pistons and so on). In case you have not yet heard about this series then first off we have Horatio Lyle - a Victorian scientist/inventor/detective/self-styled protector of all that is good in his beloved city. In the first book the sleuthing was carried out somewhat reluctantly, at the request of HM Government, but as the books have progressed Horatio has witnessed the evil that man will stoop to (especially those in power) more and more and now the investigating becomes almost second nature, although perhaps this time it is mainly because it is children who are being harmed. I mentioned these books as possibly appealing to fans of Doctor Who, and that is perhaps because Horatio Lyle's personality reminds me very much of the David Tennant and Matt Smith incarnations of this iconic character. Like Doctor Who, Horatio Lyle has a very strong sentimental side to his personality - he hates to see people hurt, whether it be his fellow humans, all the mysterious Tseiqin (don't ask me to explain - far too much risk of spoilers). Even when faced with extreme, life threatening danger at the hands of the most evil of foes, he would still rather incapacitate this foe rather than kill them. He is also somewhat eccentric - his passion for science and invention is what really makes him feel alive. Yes... the more I think about it, the more I can see him being played by Matt Smith, not that that would ever happen - far too similar to his current role.

Like Doctor Who, Lyle also has a couple of 'assistants' in his adventures - Cockney orphan Teresa 'Tess' Hatch and upper-class son of a Lord, Thomas Edward Elwick. Without these two characters this series of books would be sorely lacking in many areas. Unusually for a book aimed at young people, the main character Horatio Lyle is an adult but calling Tess and Thomas secondary characters almost feels like I am doing them a disservice. It is these two that bring life and humour to the story, through their banter with each other and with Lyle. In fact, the dialogue in these books is amongst the best you will find in a YA novel by any author. They also give Horatio's character far more depth than we would have seen in their absence, and in this book we find him questioning his role in their lives (and Tess's in particular) even more. Is he now a

father figure for Tess? Should he be risking her life so readily? Does he actually have a choice when it comes to involving the two children in his adventures, or will they just involve themselves against his wishes?

This book is probably the creepiest of the series so far. There is no master criminal type trying to take over London or seeking destroy a whole race of people. Instead we have Old Greybags, and what he is doing to children is despicable. There can be little worse than putting children into a permanently comatose state so he can steal their dreams. And yet, I couldn't help but feel sorry for him at times. More I cannot say without spoiling the plot for you.

As ever the quality of Catherine Webb's writing is exquisite. This is, after all, the lady who writes adult fantasy novels under the name Kate Griffin, and brought us the stunningly written *A Madness of Angels* and *The Midnight Mayor*. She certainly doesn't dumb down her writing for this younger audience, and I would guess that this book is most suitable for the 13+ age group, or very confident readers who are a little younger than this. This is not just because of the complexity of vocabulary, but also the style of writing in general. When the author is setting a scene, or describing the London she so obviously loves with a passion, she often switches to the present tense, a device that many young readers may find a little unusual, and maybe even confusing. These really are books for teens who love reading, those who will re-read a paragraph more slowly if they haven't quite followed it the first time and then savour the quality of the descriptions of people, places and events.

Oh yes.... and the action scenes are also as good as pretty much anything else out there, and there are lots of them. Enough said!

At a push, this book could be read as a stand-alone, but you would be ruining your enjoyment of the other three books. I would therefore recommend you read them in order and enjoy the way the characters develop as each adventure unfolds.

Anna Bergmark says

I have a confession to make: I like likable characters. I enjoy enjoyable stories. Smiling at them puts a smile on my face, and suspense - yes, you're quite right - leaves me all giddy and... well, suspended. And what does this mean? It means I'm gonna miss this series something awful. Smart, fun, fast paced. And warm. Cause surprise, surprise! Feel good makes me feel oh so goooood. So see ya later Tess and Tate! Thank you and God bless!

Tyas says

Being ~~obsessive about~~ a fan of the Victorian scientist-cum-sleuth, Horatio Lyle, I snatched this book eagerly when I saw this in the bookstore - although the cover made me cringe a bit, since I like the original designs of the first three books.

The book doesn't start amazingly. It sounds a bit too similar with the previous books, but after that bumpy beginning, the story paces on with confidence and I found myself drowned in ~~Horatio Lyle's awesomeness~~ the mystery of children missing in a freak circus where a resident *creature* stole their dreams. And yes, Horatio got hit, hurt, kicked, bled - the usual, and.. hmmm, he started to feel something he'd never felt before towards the opposite sex! And I don't complain because the object of his affection is just WAY TOO COOL.

Another Horatio Lyle mystery that left me rolling on the floor wanting more.

Aliyah says

This book is perfect for the people that love mysteries and or crime investigations. This is the 4th Horatio Lyle mystery book. The setting of the book is in London, 1865. Horatio and his crew have been battling the Tsequin (their enemy), a spiritual group of individuals. That had emerald green eyes that are mostly set on evil bound. In the story, the adventures have to find one of the Tsequin, GreyBags, who has changed into something even more evil, who has accessed the community of London's poorest children. One of the central features of 'the dream thief' is Mr Majestic's Electric circus, which attracts children like a magnet.

Overall this book has a really enjoyable play and addition to the series. I recommend this book to children that are 8-12yrs old. This book will really catch your attention of your feet.

Erin Britton says

The Dream Thief by Catherine Webb is the fourth outing for former Special Constable and rather reluctant hero Horatio Lyle. As the industrial revolution races on across England, Horatio Lyle wishes nothing more than to devote himself to assisting modernity and the forward motion of the Empire through his scientific experiments and his passion for inventing. Unfortunately for Horatio, his reputation as a great detective precedes him and, whenever Her Majesty's Government comes calling, he finds himself plunged into intrigue, danger and life in the criminal underbelly of Victorian London.

London, 1865, and The Dream Thief opens with a nasty surprise for Horatio Lyle and his ward, the almost totally reformed young pickpocket Tess. They discover a young girl exhibiting all the signs of having been poisoned passed out on the doorstep of Horatio's house. This time there is no need for government persuasion; attacks on the children of his city are not something that Horatio could ignore. Their investigations into the apparent poisoning lead Horatio and Tess to Tess's former home, a dilapidated workhouse that certainly hasn't improved during her absence. While an explanation for the fate of the young girl they found is not forthcoming, Horatio and Tess quickly discover that something sinister is afoot and that something very, very bad is threatening the children of the East End.

Forging ahead with their investigation, Horatio and Tess (aided as ever by upper crust adventurer Tom and Horatio's faithful dog Tate) venture deep into Tess's old stomping grounds and discover that a terrifying fate has befallen her old crowd of pickpockets and sneak thieves: the children are either 'wandering the streets like zombies, drooling in the workhouses or plain mad in the asylum.' It's not just Tess's friends who are affected either, children across the district are turning up with their memories in shreds and their minds near destroyed. The only clue left for Horatio to work with is a name, half-whispered in fear: Old Greybags.

The Horatio Lyle adventures have always been a mix of crime and the supernatural but The Dream Thief is by far the spookiest of the series. Horatio [I defy anyone to spend any length of time contemplating a detective named Horatio without imagining a ginger haired fellow taking off his sunglasses to stare at the Miami sun as he engages in a fine bit of 'smell the fart' acting] is a great detective but he is, first and foremost, a scientist who always searches for the rational explanation behind any mysterious event. The mystery of Old Greybags is therefore certainly his most difficult challenge to date. Catherine Webb presents these supernatural elements of the story in a way that is delightfully spine-tingling but still suitable for

readers at the younger end of the age spectrum – there should be no nightmares after reading. The mystery element of the story and the methods which Horatio Lyle employs in the course of his investigation are as inventive and convincing as past readers of the series will expect. Webb has certainly done a great deal of research into her characters and the world which they inhabit. There is also a nice amount of humour and friendship to be found in The Dream Thief which should help to keep all readers entertained. All of the familiar characters from Webb's previous novels are back while she also provides an interesting and moving insight into Tess's past.

The Dream Thief could be read as a standalone novel but would inevitably provide spoilers for earlier books in the series so that those new to Horatio Lyle might be best off beginning with The Extraordinary and Unusual Adventures of Horatio Lyle and working through the series in order.

Fatima says

It was slow.
Very slow.

Ellen says

I found this the darkest story of series. Even though there were many parts that were very exciting (hence the 3 stars) I found it exceedingly creepy and the idea of someone harming so many children was hard for me to read.

Sharon says

This is a really funny series. I was hoping for more books but I guess that won't happen.

While funny, this book is the least enjoyable of the lot.

Tanita S. says

Another fun Horatio Lyle - a little different from her usual style, but satisfying.

Andaleeb says

Currently the last in the Horatio Lyle series, The Dream Thief brings Tess's past back in the form of Sissy Smith: an old friend from the workhouse Tess had dared to escape. Sissy's appearance is marred by the fact that she isn't able to wake up. Tess's desire to help the friend she left behind drives her, Horatio and Thomas first to the workhouse that was once Tess's home, where they discover that Sissy isn't the only child suffering from the inability to wake up, and their discoveries there eventually lead them to...the circus.

(view spoiler)

As much as I would love another book to follow up *The Dream Thief*—perhaps something that references the plan to eradicate the Tsequin that appeared in the *Doomsday Machine*?—I don't think there will be one anytime soon. After all, it's been 4 years since this book has been published and the author seems to have moved on.
