

“The Children Act”

By Helen Lutz

Over the years I've had many jobs, especially as the wife of a member of the military. When I was little I wanted to be a Marine, a priest or president; none of those worked out. In college I was on track for studying law, but settled for degrees in political science and sociology when I got married and moved out of the country. There are lots of jobs I've never wanted like surgeon (don't like blood), custodian (don't like dirty toilets) or being a judge (the glass is always half empty – rarely a win-win) who must now be canonized or castrated by the members of the Senate and FBI (not cool).



Emma Thompson plays London High Court Judge Fiona Maye in the film “The Children Act.” In any court of law making decisions are tough, but especially tough when children are involved. As the movie opens Judge Maye is hearing a case regarding conjoined twins. The parents love both children, however, the doctors testify that can't continue to live as they are and in the operation to separate them one will die. Fiona steps into the shoes of King Solomon and must decide between right and wrong based solely on the law, not morals, not emotions. It's heart wrenching – no win.

Married to Fiona, Jack (Stanley Tucci), an American literature professor, acts as a sounding board helping her think through the life changing decisions she's forced to make on a daily basis. Fiona Maye, a highly respected judge, works day and night reviewing case law; always holding her emotions at bay. Her lack of emotion also holds her husband at bay as he tries to help her separate her personal life from professional – not an easy task.

Fiona's hearings don't get any easier when a case comes before her regarding a 17 year old boy named Adam (Fionn Whitehead) who is fighting leukemia. Under normal circumstances there are various treatments which yield good results, but do require blood transfusions. Unfortunately Adam and his parents are Jehovah's Witnesses and must refuse blood transfusions based on their religious convictions. Since Adam is not yet 18, he is still considered a minor and without a blood transfusion will not live to see his birthday. The hospital seeks a court order permitting them to give Adam the life saving transfusion against his parents and his own wishes. What is right and what is wrong?

Judge Maye breaks protocol and visits Adam in the hospital. Here she meets a very sick young man with a love for life and music and poetry. “The Children Act” tells the story of how the court has the responsibility to consider what's best for the minor; is it life or certain death? How does a judge play God?

In the case of Adam, the law is clear and Adam's life is saved. Now Fiona must live with her decision as Adam sees her as a savior of sorts and stalking takes on a whole new meaning. Director James Marsh brings the characters to life in “The Children Act” as we see firsthand what goes into making decisions that no person should ever have to make as well as some of the consequences. On a scale of one to four Hart Beats I give “The Children Act” TWO 1/2 HARTS. One of my favorite characters is Judge Maye's Clerk Nigel (Jason Watkins) who provides the comic relief giving some levity to the story.