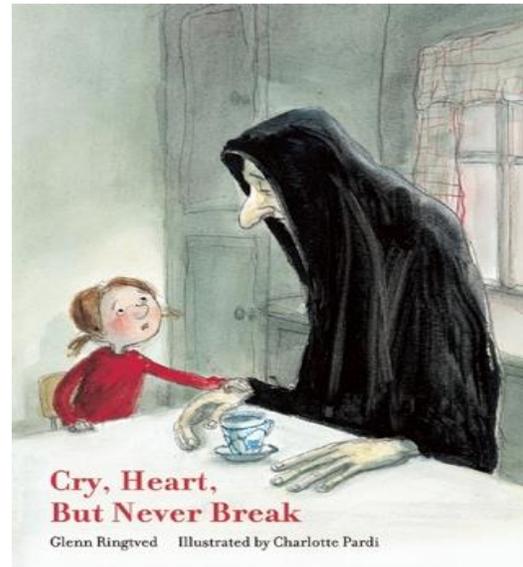


December 21, 2016

Spotlight on Books:

Cry, Heart, But Never Break by Glenn Ringtved;
illustrated by Charlotte Pardi

Who wants to talk with children about death? Most of us are terrified of our own mortality as well as of that of our loved ones. For this reason, we either sugar-coat the topic or sweep it under the carpet. This may explain the dearth of material on the subject in picture book format.



Cry, Heart, But Never Break evolved from best-selling Danish children's author Glenn Ringtved's need to communicate with his children about his own mother's death. The author's spare text is tenderly complemented by Charlotte Pardi's warm watercolour illustrations. From the first image depicting a dark sky above an old sagging house with a scythe leaning near the door, we have a sense of foreboding. This feeling deepens inside the house when we meet the four children who are keeping vigil over their sick grandmother.

Easily recognizable as the grim reaper is the shrouded figure who sits at the table with the children. They ply Death with coffee into the night with the goal of deterring him from his grim rendez-vous with their beloved grandmother. Ultimately, they come to accept that they can delay but not forestall death. Death is transformed over the course of the story from a dreaded entity to someone who is devastated by but resigned to his mission. Through parable Death teaches the children about the importance of accepting that our days on this sweet earth will end. Wise counsel is imparted from which the children derive peace.

"...What would life be worth if there were no death? Who would enjoy the sun if it never rained? Who would yearn for the day if there were no night?"

Loss is profoundly sad but we can make sense of it if we integrate it into our lives which are still unfolding. *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* gives parents and educators support in grappling with their own fears and can enable them to open discussion with children about death. It is available for check-out from Yellowknife Public Library. *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* is on several lists of best books of 2016 which proves that the best children's books are superb fare for all ages.

- *Review prepared by Deborah Bruser, Library Manager*