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Cry, Heart, But Never Break



Synopsis

Aware their grandmother is gravely ill, four siblings make a pact to keep death from taking her away. But Death does arrive all the same, as it must. He comes gently, naturally. And he comes with enough time to share a story with the children that helps them to realize the value of loss to life and the importance of being able to say goodbye. Glenn Ringtved is a best-selling and award-winning Danish children's author, whose books have been widely translated. Charlotte Pardi is a well-beloved Danish illustrator, who has created numerous books since her first picture book in 2000. Robert Moulthrop is a published playwright. He lives in Greenwich Village, New York City.

Book Information

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

"Now comes a fine addition to the most intelligent and imaginative children's books about making sense of death; the crowning jewel of them all, even." -- Maria Popova, Brain Pickings "Rich and affecting." -- Mark Levine, The New York Times "In this empathic picture book, [...] Pardi creates a cozy, lived-in ambiance in her pencil and watercolor art." Publishers Weekly "The removal of any parental buffer in this episode reinforces the salutary suggestion that children are resilient enough to be in death's presence without fear. [...] Gentle, wistful reading for times of imminent loss." Kirkus Reviews

Glen Ringtved: Glen Ringtved is a best-selling Danish children's author, whose books have been widely translated. Charlotte Pardi: Charlotte Pardi is a well-beloved Danish illustrator, who has created numerous books since her first picture book in 2000. Robert Moulthrop, an award-winning author and playwright, lives and works in New York City. Two short story collections *To Tell You The Truth* and *Elvis's Dog* have been critically acclaimed. *Jack, The Prince of Ireland*, his play for children, was first performed at Manhattan Children's Theatre."

In this beautifully illustrated picture book, four siblings have been lovingly cared for by their grandmother, but one day she receives a visitor: Death. Instead of having "a heart as dead and black as coal", it turns out Death is kindly, with a heart "red as the most beautiful sunset" and filled with a love of life. In an effort to help the children, he tells them a story about Sorrow and Grief, and how these two brothers end up marrying two sisters, Joy and Delight. The couples live and die together, for they cannot be without one another. In the end, Death takes the grandmother, but the children remember his wise and beautiful words, "Cry heart, but never break." They live out their lives with good memories of their grandmother and what she meant to them. I loved this book, and admit I cried like a baby when I read it the first time. Glenn Ringtved (a Danish author, this is the translation of the original book he wrote for his children about 15 years ago) has done a wonderful job crafting a story that deals with such a serious and sensitive topic. There's no shying away from the reality of the grandmother's death, and the sorrow it brings the children. But he also shows beautifully how death is not a monster, but a natural part of life, and how our hearts can bear up under the weight of loss. Charlotte Pardi's illustrations are a perfect match. Highly recommended. PS I just love how the children keep giving Death cups of coffee to distract him :-)

Read at the New York Society Library. Glenn Ringtved usually writes funny and tricky stories. This thoughtful story breaks the mold -- when his mother was dying, he struggled to explain what was happening to their grandmother to his young children. She suggested that he tell them: "Cry, Heart, but never break." Her message: loss and sadness must be embraced not resisted -- death is an essential part of life. The story begins outside the "small snug house" where four children live with their grandmother. Death, who has come for the old lady, leaves his scythe by the door. He is clearly trying to avoid scaring the kids, and he sits down at the kitchen table. Only Leah, the youngest, dares to look straight at him. The illustration of this scene is marvelous; Death looks crestfallen, distressed and yet committed to his task. Text and illustration work incredibly well together -- a metaphor for how

essential both life and death are interwoven."Some people say Death's heart is as dead and black as a piece of coal, but that is not true. Beneath his inky cloak, Death's heart is as red as the most beautiful sunset and beats with a great love of life."Death tells a story to help the children understand. Two boys meet two girls and they fall in love, two perfectly balanced couples: Sorrow and Joy, Grief and Delight. "It is the same with life and death| What would life be worth if there were no death?"Deep philosophy here, with echoes from Montaigne, Updike, others."The curtains were blowing in the gentle morning breeze. Looking at the children, Death said quietly, "Cry, Heart, but never break. Let your tears of grief and sadness help begin new life."Wonderful.Robert C. RossMarch 2016.

If I wrote as much about this book as I'd like to, then my review would contain more words than the book.I bought it on recommendation of a favorite blogger. I lost someone important to me a little over three years ago. It is a book I wish I'd had then when I was in the midst of my grief. That said, I shed some tears when I read it after it arrived, more than three years after my loss.It is a poignant look at dying and grieving. It will be useful for adults as well as children. It is beautifully written -- simple, elegant. It is beautifully illustrated.It is one of the books that I will keep forever and then my children will get it. They will keep it forever as well.

Favorite book of all time. Not only is it amazingly gentle with the subject of death, the illustrations are beautiful. As I recently lost my mom, I came upon an article on this book and knew I had to have it and even though (I guess) this book is for kids. The book continues to help me with the closure of my loss and I encourage everyone who is struggling with grief (how I am) to get this beautiful piece.

This is a great book to help especially young to middle grade school children understand death as a part of life. The death character is comforting and patient with the children as he explains why Grandma has to go with him. I bought three copies, one for children who have just lost their grandmother, one for my church library, and one for my grandsons who will eventually face the same life event.

I love this book. It is sad but also helpful. I learned so much and it helped me understand my own daughter's death so much better. It is another piece in the puzzle of understanding and coping with loss. I love the illustrations. So talented and gentle. Beautiful book.

This is one of the best children's books I've read on the topic of death. The visuals are stunning and the message clear, concise, comforting, and informative for a child (and the adult reading with their child. The title alone, Cry, heart, but don't break, is on its own a profound message. I recommend it to my clients with children.

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