



Enchanted Lion Books is the winner of the 2017 (Mildred L.) Batchelder Award for *Cry, Heart, But Never Break*, written by Glenn Ringtved, illustrated by Charlotte Pardi, and translated by Robert Moulthrop. Publisher Claudia Bedrick delivered these acceptance remarks at the ALSC Book and Media Awards Program on Monday, June 26, 2017, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

For more information about the Batchelder Award, visit <http://bit.ly/batchelder-award>.



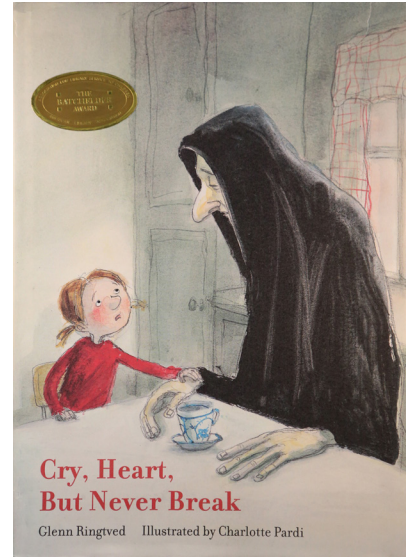
Batchelder

AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Good morning. I am honored to be here to receive the Batchelder Award for *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* by Glenn Ringtved, illustrated by Charlotte Pardi, and translated by Robert Moulthrop. The Batchelder committee has my enormous thanks for this recognition, and my appreciation, too, for their truly excellent selection of honor books.

With the 2017 Batchelder Award going to a 15 year-old Danish picture book whose main character is Death, many of us are left wondering, “How in the world does such a thing happen?” From a certain point of view, this can only be seen as random good luck, because so many teeny, tiny chance things had to come together for it to be true. And yet, there is an account to be given of how such a book comes to be published. In his writing on the natural world, Aristotle counsels us to stay true to the phenomena, and so I will. These are the facts.

The story begins with a man leaving his New York City apartment and heading out into the streets. It was late June 2011, and Robert Moulthrop, the book’s translator, was feeling a combination of cabin fever and writer’s block, so he decided to grab a deli sandwich and head for Central Park. Once there, he chose a bench on the west side of the softball fields at the southern end of the park. Soon, a family, consisting of a father, mother,

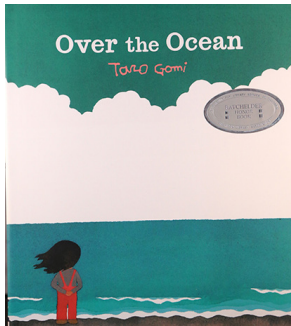


and two older teenage boys, sat down nearby. They were looking at a map and didn’t seem to be speaking English. Robert went over and asked if he could be of any help. In the process, he noted that they all were sitting on benches that commemorated First Responders who had died on 9/11, which got the conversation going. It turned out the family was looking for the John Lennon memorial. They spoke for a moment about Lennon’s life and death. Then they chatted about this and that: how it was the family’s first time in the US (they came from Denmark), that they were on their way to LA, Las Vegas, and California’s wine country, that Robert as a California native would email them with recommendations, and so

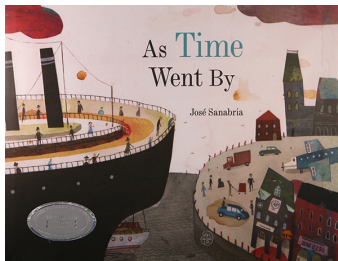
Enchanted Lion Books, based in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, is an independent publisher of illustrated books and fiction for readers of all ages. They have published books in translation from around the world and have created many books with authors and illustrators as well.



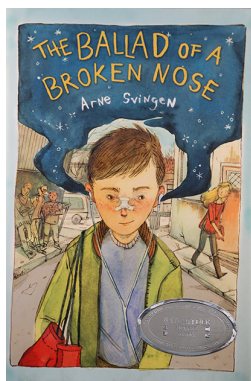
2017 BATCHELDER HONOR BOOKS



Over the Ocean
Gomi, Taro
Illus. by the author
Trans. by Taylor Norman
Chronicle



As Time Went By
Sanabria, José
Illus. by the author
Trans. by Audrey Hall
NorthSouth



The Ballad of a Broken Nose
Svingen, Arne
Trans. by Kari Dickson
McElderry/Simon & Schuster

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on. It was only when they were ready to part that Robert told the father, Glenn Ringtved, that he was a writer, and Glenn responded that he was, too. That evening, Robert emailed Glenn recommendations on what to do in California and invited the family to visit him on their return to New York. Glenn and his family took Robert up on his invitation, and thus they met again. After a “let me show you a bit of New York” day, Glenn and Robert sat down to talk and it was then that Robert discovered that Glenn was a well-known, award-winning Danish author of children’s books, and that his work had yet to be translated into English. Glenn mentioned *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* and how he came to write it when his own mother was dying. (The details of that story being: Glenn cried when he learned the news of his mother’s impending death; his mother counseled him to embrace his grief but not to fall apart—to let his heart weep, but never break; and it was this good advice that led him to write *Cry, Heart...* in order to explain his mother’s death to his then-young children). All of this resonated deeply with Robert and together they decided to try their hand at making a translation of the book for the US market.

Nearly a year later, at BookExpo 2012, I met with Robert’s theatrical agent Joanne who knew little about the children’s book market, but had emailed me out of the blue because she had heard or read somewhere that I was publishing books in translation. As a small independent publisher, I don’t always answer all of the emails I receive from agents and aspiring authors looking for advice. But I answered Joanne’s because I had recently published a book about death from Norway called *My Fa-*

ther’s Arms Are a Boat, and I was feeling in the mood for another really good book about death. That year, 2012, Enchanted Lion still couldn’t afford booth space at BookExpo, so we didn’t have a presence, but Joanne and I met there all the same, and just like Robert and Glenn in Central Park, we sat down on a bench and talked. We met as two strangers about a ten-year-old Danish book about death, and everything just seemed to make sense. Death’s hands and face were riveting, his coffee habit and the children’s ingenuity appealed to me, and the language of the text was beautiful. And in reading the book, I discovered that it wasn’t exactly about death, but about life in all of its gorgeous, bitter-sweet finiteness. And that its importance lies in the reminder it gives us that we live our lives in the face of finitude. And that what we have simply in being alive—the wind in our faces, a certain cast of light, the touch of a loved one’s hand—is so very precious because we know that the moment of losing it all is only a matter of time.

Two writers meet by chance in the park; another two strangers meet on a bench inside the Javits Center, and we all say *yes*—let’s do this book together. And that is how a book first published in Denmark in 2002 came to be translated into English and published here in 2016.

As a publisher, it’s been a true honor to bring this book into the world and to see it resonate so deeply with readers everywhere. In selecting and publishing a book, every editor and publisher hopes and dreams that it will take on life in the world. That it will somehow claim space for itself in a sea of books and come to matter. When a book in translation does that, we are given very good evidence, I think, that works in translation are



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not actually about foreignness, as is suggested from time to time. Rather, books in translation, just like books in their original language, are about the startling, rich, often surprising adventure of the collective human imagination. Translated texts travel across all borders; over, under, and through all walls. In doing so, these works come to remind us that despite the world's many languages, the babel, the differences of place, custom, and tradition, we not only *can* understand each other, but marked by birth and death, love and fear, and hard-wired neurologically in very precise ways, we often are more familiar with each other than we recognize at first. David Whyte, the philosopher-poet, has observed that innocence is not naivety but the ability to be found by the world you are inhabiting. To that I would add that translation itself, and really all literature, is first and foremost about the beautiful innocence of openness. It's about listening and perhaps discovering that sometimes

the most foreign voice you've ever heard or will ever hear is in fact your own, and that the most familiar belongs, perhaps, to a writer who died a hundred years ago half way around the world. Or perhaps to a guy born in the 1970s in Denmark who channels his own mother's voice and tells you, "Yes, feel your grief, it's okay, but there's no need to let your heart break. For your loved ones will live within your memory, and when the breeze blows the curtains and the light falls in a certain way, you will feel good, and life will go on.

My heartfelt thanks to ALSC for its incredible work and the 2017 Batchelder committee, chaired by Dr. Jamie Campbell Naidoo, and comprised of members Nathaniel Halsan, Dr. Nancy Johnson, Carol Phillips, and Linda Sawyer. Their collective feeling for and commitment to books in translation has been enormously encouraging. My thanks as well to all of the librarians across the country who

work daily, tirelessly, and with enormous hope to share diverse books of all kinds with their young readers. For it's that very sharing of books that remains one of our best approaches to creating a more just, more thoughtful, and more decent world. To Andrew Carnegie who bequeathed \$5.2 million dollars to New York City nearly 120 years ago for the establishment of 65 branch libraries in a city packed full of immigrants, the library symbolized "the unity and summit of all knowledge, the bones, the binding sinews, the flesh and heart of any society that could call itself strong." To Carnegie it was no exaggeration to say that the public library, "outranks any other thing that a community can do to help its people." Since that time, the public library has come to occupy a central place in our democratic society and it remains a living institution thanks to the American Library Association, to ALSC, and to all of you.



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2017 BATCHELDER AWARD COMMITTEE

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Nathaniel D. Halsan, Sacramento, Calif.

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