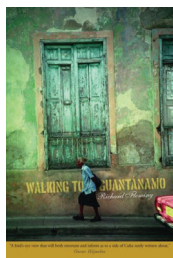


This youthful exuberance and optimism at times, unfortunately, verges on the puerile: they leer at beautiful girls and speculate at what may be hidden by veil and burka. In Tibet, as if in some dream-like, languid male fantasy, they are seduced and bedded by two comely women whose husbands are conveniently away. Younger readers will often find them reminiscent of those San Dimas surfers, Bill and Ted of the Excellent Adventure fill-in-name-of-country series of movies—the older set will be reminded of some hackneyed Hollywood “Road to...” film.

Nevertheless, this is a book well worth reading, filled as it is with adventurous stories and wonderful photographs taken by Belliveau. Most striking is the unselfish nature of the people the authors meet on their way. Were it not for those who fed them or warmed with their kindness and ever-ready cups of hot chai, they would never had made it to Iran, let alone China. The book is a touching record of the beauty and charity of the human spirit, a charity undeterred by want, hunger, war, and grief. (December) *Arturo Mantecón*



Walking to Guantánamo

Richard Fleming

Commons Books

Hardcover \$27.00 (351pp)

978-0-9814579-1-8

While reading a travel memoir, you of course want an intriguing location for your virtual visit. You also want a knowledgeable writer for your guide—and an engaging voice, because it's the personality-behind-the-words that actually becomes your traveling companion. In Richard Fleming's *Walking to Guantánamo*, readers are treated to all three of these elements in spades. But even more importantly, and this is something this reviewer never fully appreciated, readers instinctively want a surrogate who'll do the things that we'd like to *think* we'd do.

This doesn't mean bungee-jumping from waterfalls, but rather lingering in doorways from which the sounds of enticing music or fascinating religious rituals emanate. It means inviting oneself into situations and being affable enough to gain the trust of truly interesting people. This is not a flashy skill, but it's one that comes so naturally to Fleming that he himself overlooks it; *Walking to Guantánamo's* pages are full of self-doubt as to both the compelling nature of his adventures and his own ability to add value by writing about them.

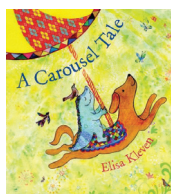
Yet it's precisely Fleming's "being himself" and not seeking out the gimmicky as he trekked by foot across Cuba that make his account anything but, forgive the expression, pedestrian. While the toll on his body eventually necessitated using a variety of conveyances (everything from donkey carts to dangerously overloaded open-backed trucks), Fleming's goal in walking, to

meet as many everyday people as possible, ends up being achieved anyway. The other thing the self-deprecating author seems oblivious to is how his prior experiences and expertise provide the perfect lens through which to view Cuba. Indeed, the themes of Afro-Cuban musicology, Caribbean spiritual practices, and, of all things, bird-watching, coalesce into a thrilling portrait of the island's natural and cultural worlds.

With a gift for Chanderlesque simile, Fleming's prose is, at worst, a joy to read, and at best a laugh-out-loud experience. On the political side, Fleming treads lightly, saving most of his analysis for the epilogue. He is unconvincing only when seeming to justify the decapitation of a goat during a Vodou ceremony. Readers hardly need a rationale invoking the popularity of Chicken McNuggets in the U.S. Again, and this time to a fault, the author has misjudged the extent to which we've become his *compadres* during his epic journey and thus have little reason to judge him. (October) *Peter Gutiérrez*

Children's

PICTURE BOOK



A Carousel Tale

Elisa Kleven

Tricycle Press

Hardcover \$15.99 (40pp)

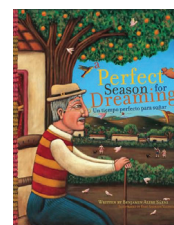
978-1-58246-239-4

Ernst, a little blue crocodile, loves to ride the carousel in the park. While his favorite wooden animal is the honey-colored dog with the moveable tail that wags, his more pragmatic big brother, Sol, pronounces that the tail is simply loose and should be fixed. When a disappointed Ernst starts kicking a scrap of wood after the carousel has closed for the season, he realizes that the scrap is actually the dog's tail.

With the permission of the carousel keeper, a kind elephant, Ernst decides to care for the tail until spring. He paints a cheery face and glues colorful wings on it, transforming the wood into a fanciful bird. Despite Sol's admonishments, Ernst revels in making the bird its own carousel and playing with it in the falling snow. Recognizing the boy's artistry, the carousel keeper lets Ernst keep his handiwork once spring arrives, and together they find an apt replacement for the dog's tail.

Author and illustrator Kleven designs a feast for the eyes with detailed collages, rendered with patterned papers, watercolors, ink, pastels, and colored pencils. Whimsical, brightly colored images swirl across the pages. Readers will linger over the illustrations to savor the details and find such hidden treasures as a reference to Hans Christian Andersen. Following *Ernst* and *The Puddle Pail*, this is the third book starring the adorable blue crocodile.

Kleven has produced numerous other books with magical creatures and charming events, such as *The Apple Doll*, *The Paper Princess*, and *Sun Bread*. She has also illustrated multicultural, regional, and inspirational titles, including *Abuela*, *City of Angels: In and Around Los Angeles*, and *Angels Watching Over Me*. Kleven once again allows Ernst to connect to his inner world and build his creativity and independence. In the elephant carousel keeper, he even finds an adult who appreciates and nurtures his artistic spirit. Their delightful story and friendship will encourage children to develop their own imaginative passions and remind adults to let these inventions soar. (March) *Angela Leeper*



A Perfect Season for Dreaming / Un tiempo perfecto para soñar

Benjamin Alire Saenz
Esau Andrade Valencia,
illustrator

Cinco Puntos Press

Hardcover \$17.95 (40pp)

978-1-933693-01-9

With the arrival of summer, seventy-eight-year-old Octavio Rivera "had a feeling that he was about to have the most fantastic dreams of his life." Each afternoon his dreams are indeed incredible, as a guitar, kissing turtles, winged pigs, coyotes dressed in mariachi outfits, and other outlandish objects fall from a giant piñata. At first Octavio tells no one, but as his dreams become more vivid, he yearns to share them with someone he trusts. He doesn't dare tell his son or daughter-in-law, who will only think he is crazy; nor his younger brother Marcos, who will only think such dreams are for children; nor his best friend Joe, who will only tell him to avoid eating too many gorditas and chorizo. The man finally realizes that there is only one person who loves dreams as much as he does—his six-year-old granddaughter, Regina.

Octavio's bilingual story is accompanied by surreal, full-page illustrations, reminiscent of Mexican folk art. Influenced by Diego Rivera and Rufino Tamayo, plants, animals, and people fly and float through the sky in the bold acrylic paintings, while Octavio blends into his surroundings, his head becoming part of a hilltop or his body carried on the back of a hummingbird.

A self-proclaimed "fronterizo," a person on the border, author Benjamin Alire Saenz was born, and today lives, on the United States-Mexico border. The American Book Award-winner is a poet, essayist, and author for adults, young adults, and children. His other picture books include *A Gift from Papa Diego and Grandma Fina* and *Her Wonderful Umbrellas*. Illustrator and professional artist Esau Andrade Valencia was born into a family of artists in Mexico, and has exhibited throughout North America.

The traditional artwork is a fitting complement to Saenz' folktale-like prose. Just like Regina, young readers will marvel at the beauty, richness,