



Sherry Lee lives with her partner, Kevin, on the third floor of a ten-story building in Toronto. Their unit overlooks redbrick houses, backyards and a huge, embracing black walnut tree. It is a wonderful place to live. They walk almost anywhere they need to go, they have a lovely community of friends in their building and nature is abundant in their neighborhood. Sherry's god-dog-child, Livy, lives one floor up with her main human, Daphne. Sherry has worked in the book industry for most of her life and has many books! She has a particularly fabulous library of children's picture books she began collecting many years ago when she worked at The Children's Bookstore.

*Sherry's debut picture book, **Going Up!**, is concerned with many of the things she values most: community, diversity, fun, food and animals! In spite of the fact that she grew up in a beautiful rural setting, she has lived in the city now for much longer. She experiences the city as equally beautiful to the country but in its own unique ways. There are so many different ways to live; welcoming each other with respect is the most important thing of all.*

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Tinlids' Maria Martella interviewed Sherry in May 2020 for this Spotlight.

Maria Martella: What inspired you to write this picture book?

Sherry Lee: A few years ago, I was moving into a five-story condo building with my West Highland Terrier, Grace. When we entered the elevator for the first time, she looked about anxiously when the small room began to move! This was her first time on an elevator! At that moment, I realized that there were a lot of dogs and children for whom moving into a multi-level building is a new experience. And of course for many children this is what they have always known. It occurred to me that there are so few picture books that reflect that experience. So often in books for children there is an assumption that everyone lives in a house. It is really quite a silly notion, isn't it? There are so many ways to live and so many places where people sleep and eat and live. Some live in tents, some in high-rises, and some don't have a place to live other than the street. It took me some time to figure out exactly where the story would go but the genesis of it was that first elevator ride for my dog.

MM: Do you love surprise parties? Have you ever thrown one or had one thrown for you?

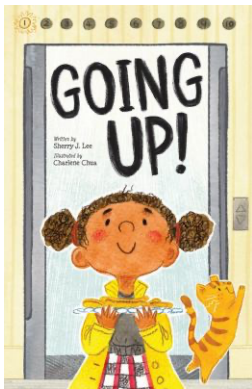
SL: You know, that's a good question. And upon reflection, I think that I don't really like planning surprise parties all that much. Parties, yes! But surprise parties are harder. For starters, it's difficult for me to keep secrets. And then one has to figure out all the logistics while not letting the guest of honour know about it. It adds some pressure. I think the party Francesca Pianalto plans for Olive works very well because she keeps it very simple!

MM: What's your favourite go-food to bring to a party?

SL: I like bringing a fruit crisp with ice-cream. Mostly I fill it with apples but I like to throw in a little surprise for the taste buds -cranberries or rhubarb, for example. In addition, I am known for making chai from scratch which I bring in a large stainless steel thermos.

MM: I love what's happening in the elevator. I keep discovering little surprises. Like the bee getting in and out and what she takes with her. The look of the dog, who seems irritated by the smug cat. All the characters are so lively. Do you have a favourite?

SL: I would have to say that my very favourite character is Pippo Santucci. I love his name. I love that he wears all black and looks tough but is actually a sweetie-pie. And I love that he loves knitting!



GOING UP!

SHERRY J. LEE

9781525301131 HC \$15.99

Today is Olive's birthday party, and Sophie and her dad have baked cookies. Sophie's dad holds the platter so Sophie can push the elevator button for the tenth floor. But on the way up, the elevator stops to let the Santucci brothers get on. Then on the next floor, Vicky, Babs and their dog, Norman, get in. And as the elevator ascends, it keeps stopping, and more neighbors squeeze in to the crowded space: the Habibs, the Flores family, Mr. Kwan, Vi Tweedle with her Chihuahua, Minx. Everyone is going to the party!