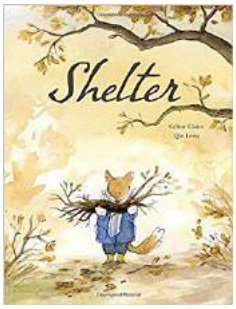

Shelter
Written by Celine Clair
Illustrated by Qin Leng
Published by Kids Can Press, 2017, 42 pp
ISBN: 978-1-177138-927-3

Shelter is a picturebook for our times, illustrating the universal theme of how caring for others is vital. The simple story starts, "It's morning. And as the day stirs, the animals do too." At breakfast everyone catches up on the latest news. When a bird goes from home to home with the news, "A STORM IS COMING!" the animals set to work provisioning their homes with food and firewood. When the wind begins to pick up, they are ready to survive the storm. Only Little Fox wonders, "What if others are still outside?" Soon two bear brothers, one small and the other grown, emerge from the fog, walking towards the animals' homes. "Everyone watches them from their windows and wonders: What are these strangers? What are they doing here? What do they want?" Then the brothers knock, asking to share the warmth, food or light. Each family turns them away, saying they have no fire, no food and no light, and the bears should "try next door." The illustrations in ink and watercolor reveal each animal family is lying. After the brothers are turned away, they try to find shelter from the storm. Little Fox goes out in the storm and gives them a lantern. The snow starts to fall and there is enough for the brothers to make a cozy igloo. Meanwhile, the fox den collapses. The foxes save themselves, but are thrust out into the storm. Little Fox is able to grab a jar of cookies. Then he sees a light and the family follows that light, the lantern that Little Fox gave the bear brothers. Little Fox asks, "In exchange for some cookies would you share your shelter with us?" The brothers invite them in, offering to share their tea and they use the cookies for dipping. The last illustration shows the two families gathered around the lantern enjoying tea and cookies.

Qin Leng's illustrations embrace and enhance the story with pictures that show the cold and icy nature of the storm, but also the warm and cozy homes of the animals when they are ready for the storm. Leng uses white effectively as background when she shows several pictures of the busy animals on one page. Subtle colors highlight other pages where an individual scene is shown. The final image of the two families sharing food and shelter extends the loving message of the story. The raging wind and heavy snow fall provide the background for the scene of the two families gathered around the light and enjoying tea and cookies together. The last words provide a satisfying ending, "And that is how two strangers come to share their humble shelter on a storm winter's night when the moon could not be seen."

Celine Claire lives in a small village in France where she taught elementary school. While she has written many books for children, *Shelter*, a Charlotte Huck Award for Fiction recommended book for 2017, is the first to be translated into English. The illustrator, Qin Leng, has illustrated many books. She was born in Shangahi, lived in France, and now currently lives in Toronto, Canada, where she works as an animation designer. That experience is demonstrated in her illustrations where the animals engage in lively activities.

Shelter is an excellent read-aloud. The story is primarily for young children in preschool through

second grade. However, it has possibilities for all ages in exploring and evaluating moral values. Reading it aloud to a variety of age groups would provide an opportunity to explore the theme of caring for others.

Several other books also feature this theme. Sharing them as a textset would allow even more opportunities for consideration and discussion. The following titles would work in a textset: *Wolf In the Snow* by Matthew Cordell (2017) was the Caldecott Winner for 2018; *Stone Soup* by Marcia Brown (1947) was a Caldecott Honor Book from 1948; and finally, *Love* by Matt de la Pena (2018) would other books to pair with *Shelter*.

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