



PHOTO BY JULIUS CHIU

Dear Reader,

Elders love to impart the adage *Your children are your greatest teacher*. Of course, there's no way to truly understand what that means until you have them yourself. Now, as a proud mother of two terrific kids, I finally get it. My firstborn, Nova, came into the world at home, her celestial name meaning a burst of bright stars appearing suddenly, releasing a powerful astrological energy. I never anticipated that Nova would live up to her name so poetically, bringing newness to my perception of neurodiversity and the magic of the brain. Her first grand mal seizure was at one year old, accompanied with a fever, thus being diagnosed as a febrile condition. "As long as a fever is connected to the seizure, she'll likely grow out of it," our neurologist assured us. But alas, at five years old, she began convulsing with no fever in sight. Nova has generalized epilepsy caused by a genetic mutation in her SCN1a gene. Our family, including her little brother, Ozzi, ever patient through her journey, discovered the most about Nova's condition through Nova herself. After the initial growing pains of finding the correct medication, Nova surprised us. She began to advocate for herself, educate those around her, and explain the beauty of her neurological electrical charges as sparkling wires crossing. She inspired this book. In solidarity, I was grateful for the wide breadth of knowledge shared by neurodiversity expert Dr. Maureen Dunne to ensure the sensitivity and accuracy the subject deserves. *All About Brains* is an honest, peer-to-peer, joyful conversation about pediatric neurodiversity through the lens of a neurodiverse comrade. All brains carry neurological uniqueness, but only some of us are lucky enough to have those qualities shine through.

With love + compassion,
Lake Bell