

P R O P O S A L

## KATIE

### Up & Down The Hall

*The True Story Of How One Dog Turned Four Neighbors  
Into A Family*



**By Glenn Plaskin**

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P R O P O S A L  
**KATIE: UP & DOWN THE HALL**

*The True Story Of How One Dog Turned Four Neighbors Into A Family*

**Glenn Plaskin**



Some of the best things that happen in life are purely accidental. An intuition or spontaneous decision can take you almost *anywhere*, including to a profoundly close friendship that develops when you least expect it. That's what happened to me. One day, with a brand-new puppy in my arms, I impulsively knocked on my next-door-neighbor's door, anxious for advice about how to train her. Whether it was serendipity, luck, chemistry, or sheer proximity, that brief encounter, and the events that followed it, would change my life (and my dog's) forever.

For families and animal lovers everywhere, *KATIE: Up & Down The Hall* is the heartwarming story of how four neighbors living in a New York City apartment building are brought together by the purchase of a remarkable cocker spaniel.

Based upon a widely-read article published in *Family Circle* ("Granny Down The Hall") here is the transcendent tale of how three generations of strangers and a dog create their own little family amidst the pressures, haste, and intensity of big-city life.

At the center of it all is Katie, an astutely intelligent spaniel with an unforgettable face who becomes a celebrity in her New York City neighborhood. There she is, alternately racing up and down an eighty-foot hallway between apartments, pushing open doors with her paws, or trotting outside along the Hudson River, surrounded by her "pack" of human friends. Through her soulful eyes, we witness nearly fifteen years of antics and family adventures spanning everything from Hollywood high times to the terrors of 9/11.

In the tradition of *Marley & Me* and books focused on the magic of mentor friendships, such as Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays With Morrie*, *KATIE* is revealing in its reflections on the definition of family relationships and the unique power of a dog's love.

It all begins with just a random meeting between a younger man and his octogenarian neighbor, Pearl, whom he nicknames "Granny Down the Hall," their attachment cemented by a blond-haired puppy. We see how the author and "Granny" form a profound familial bond that soon blesses all in its sphere, including a three-year-old boy, Ryan, and his single gay Dad, John, who also happen to be living down the same long hallway in their building in downtown



*John, Ryan, Granny, Katie & Glenn*

Manhattan, just opposite the World Trade Center.

In a poignant and often dramatic narrative, bestselling author and celebrity interviewer **GLENN PLASKIN** describes this unusual journey from friendship to family, a modern story broadly appealing to a mass audience with life lessons for all. In fact, the 250-page book succinctly captures an account so compelling

that it inspired one of the nation's largest school systems<sup>1</sup> to use the original *Granny Down The Hall* essay as a teaching tool, demonstrating the magic of a dog's love and ability to unite and heal.

With an audience of millions who have already read a condensed first installment of the story, here we have the cinematic 10-chapter book that traces one family's compelling adventures, from luncheons with film stars and costumed dog parties to medical emergencies and the tragic aftermath of 9/11—a pivotal event that forever changes the fate of this little family.

Through it all, we witness a *family circle* that embraces and transforms each of its members, providing safety, comfort, and connection to all. Particularly noteworthy is the vivid blending of different lifestyles and generations. The motherless boy needs a female presence and finds a grandmother; his dad, with no parents of his own, inherits a mother. The author discovers a confidante. Granny, childless, adopts everyone. And the beguiling Katie wraps her paws around all.

In an increasingly frenetic culture where “real” families are often scattered and relationships strained, this uplifting tale dramatically demonstrates how a surrogate family formed with people in close proximity can become just as close as a biological one.

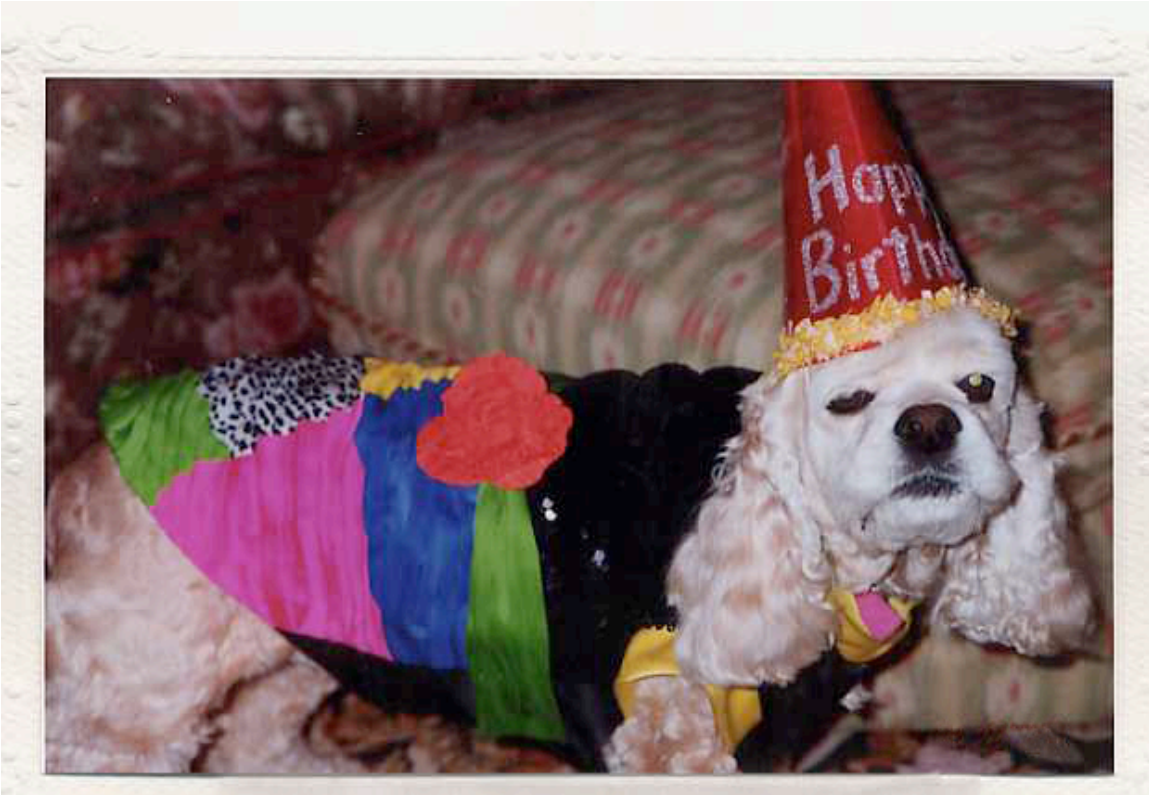
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The book's narrative is built around Katie, the magnetic cocker spaniel whose domain is an eighty-foot, red-carpeted hallway--the site of dog races, obedience-training sessions, Halloween parades, and a passageway to parties and late-night exchanges of confidences. With an uncanny instinct for responding to the needs of her pack, she merrily trots up and down her territory at will, navigating from apartment 3G (homebase) to 3C (Granny) to 3P (John and Ryan), pushing open the doors purposefully left ajar and bringing the entire group together with her inimitable intelligence and sensitivity. Dignified, almost regal in demeanor, her canine antics include fashion modeling, using the TV's remote control, sitting posture-perfect at the dining table (paws delicately

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<sup>1</sup> Texas: [www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/guides/study/G9ReadingE-SG.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/guides/study/G9ReadingE-SG.pdf)

around her food bowl), expertly eating corn on the cob, charming celebrities (Katharine Hepburn, Peter Jennings, Bette Midler,



and Ivana Trump among them), and racing neighborhood kids down the hallway.

Not least important is Katie's special affinity for the elderly, a group of eighty-to-ninety-year-old women (humorously eccentric neighbors) who become the recipients of Katie's healing touch. When any of her dear friends are sick or grieving, Katie lies right next to them with her paw protectively on their chest.

Other than her master, the principal object of Katie's love, of course, is Granny. Widowed after 60 years of marriage, she gradually heals from her loss by forming this day-to-day relationship with her neighbors. "Oldest Granny," as she is also nicknamed, gradually finds herself thriving in a new family--making dinner for everyone, babysitting, and planning holiday events, thus breaking her isolation and rekindling her interest in life.

In fact, much of the action is centered in Granny's dining room--the family group gathering around her mahogany table to savor her uniquely homespun dishes, the recipes for which are included here as well. Her baking and cooking

become expressions of caring and create a cozy atmosphere that glues the family together.

Still physically and mentally acute at 90, (and carrying her own grocery bags), the vivacious Pearl--a Bronx native with a love of travel, theater, gardening, and cooking--turns out to be a fountain of wisdom and practical advice to her neighbors, sharing her "pearls" to one and all.

As time passes, we witness the unique partnership that develops between the author and Granny, particularly at a time when he has a serious accident, and later, when he becomes disabled. Barely able to move for months, it is Granny who nurses him back to health and inspires him to return to work. She becomes his muse, best friend, and trusted advisor, while he becomes the grandson she never had.

Finally, at the story's end, we experience, as all families do, the inevitable loss that comes with illness and death. In a wistful narrative, we see Katie and Granny growing old together, though their infirmities never dim their devotion to one another. The twosome nap and eat together and go out on walks, though both are increasingly frail. In a climactic chapter, we witness Katie's final days after 9/11 and the harrowing scene of her being put to sleep.

Pearl, who never completely recovers from 9/11, is deeply depressed by Katie's passing and her health deteriorates. Her surrogate family never leaves her side. Granny's final night is captured vividly here, as she decisively declines life-saving surgery.

After her death, it isn't long before John and Ryan, now 13 years old, move away to France, leaving the author bereft and alone. Although they periodically keep in touch, the relationship is never the same, for Pearl, the matriarch of the family, is gone along with Katie, the twin spirits that had kept them all united.

Suddenly, the long hallway that had held such joy is empty and silent. Left behind is a profound vacuum.

But life, as always, continues, and the depression and sense of loss slowly fade as our story ends with a renaissance of spirit, the author adopting a brand-new puppy, a black-and-white cocker spaniel, appropriately named Pearl.



This is an inspirational story of love and loss that strikes a universal chord, leaving the reader alternately entertained, exhilarated, and deeply moved by a demonstration of unity and caring. **Here is the abiding love of family, *in whatever form we find it, greater than any loss, a love that may not last forever, but one that lives always within its surviving members.*** Indeed, although the family, in a physical sense, could not survive the inevitability of death and changing circumstances, the memory of their unique bond could never be forgotten.

\* \* \* \* \*



## About the Author: Glenn Plaskin

Barbara Walters: *“Wonderfully at ease in his writing, relaxed and revealing about those he interviews. In just a few sentences, we get a full impression. This is not easy.”*

Liz Smith: *“Beg, borrow, or steal these wonderful Glenn Plaskin interviews. They’ve become a must for insiders. Glenn can get it all out of them every time.”*

Best-selling author and veteran journalist **Glenn Plaskin** specializes in writing inspirational essays, human interest stories, psychology articles, and in-depth celebrity interviews. His published books include **Horowitz:** *The Biography of Vladimir Horowitz* and **Turning Point:** *Pivotal Moments in the Lives*

*of America’s Celebrities*, a book featured on *Oprah* and *Larry King*, based upon the author’s syndicated column written for the New York Daily News and Tribune Media Services.

A long-time contributing editor at *Family Circle*, with more than 50 self-help articles published in recent years, “Glenn,” writes Susan Ungaro, the magazine’s former editor-in-chief, “is a master at celebrity interviews and service journalism—with a true gift for creating a compelling story that grips the reader from beginning to end.”

\* \* \* \* \*

A native of Buffalo, N.Y. Plaskin was first trained as a classical pianist, studying under the renowned Kennedy Center honoree Leon Fleisher. With a dramatic



change of career in his mid-20's, he began writing culture profiles for the *New York Times*, securing his first book contract at age 26.

He was encouraged in his writing by then-Doubleday editor Jacqueline Onassis, who would later write: "I've known Glenn for some years and am his great admirer. He's witty, articulate, and has this uncanny ability to draw people out and gain their confidence."

His literary debut was a *cause célèbre*—the first-ever biography of the legendary pianist Vladimir Horowitz—published in the U.S., Canada, England, France, Germany, Japan, and Finland.

Plaskin's *Horowitz* book was hailed by the *New York Times* as "a well-researched biography that will throw much light on Horowitz the man and the artist." The *Los Angeles Times* opined: "It is done well, even masterfully." The *Chicago Tribune*: "An absorbing well-written and well-balanced portrait...as delicious as a good detective thriller."

Thereafter, the author established himself as one of the nation's leading celebrity interviewers. As the Celebrity Service International wrote: "When it comes to the brutally competitive world of celebrity journalism, no one is more successful at nailing down the big names than entertainment reporter Glenn Plaskin."

Among Plaskin's interviews with film stars, politicians, TV personalities, and media figures are classic profiles of *Calvin Klein, Diane Sawyer, Harrison Ford, Meryl Streep, Al Pacino, Robert DeNiro, Mary Tyler Moore, Katharine Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, Nancy Reagan, Edward Kennedy, Peter Jennings, Danielle Steel, Paul Newman, Carol Burnett, Donald Trump, Leona Helmsley, Christopher Reeve, Michael Jackson, Diana Ross, Bill Gates, Colin Powell, Bill Cosby, Mike Wallace*, among hundreds of others as seen on his web site, [www.glennplaskin.com](http://www.glennplaskin.com)

His features have appeared in *Family Circle, Playboy, Us, W, Redbook, Cosmopolitan, Ladies' Home Journal* and hundreds of U.S. and foreign newspapers.

In recent years, Plaskin has gone beyond celebrity interviewing to writing articles and books focused on service, self-help, and inspiration. He has worked with many of the leading figures in this genre, as seen on the following page.

Plaskin, a resident of New York City, is surrounded by more than 300 dogs in his Battery Park City complex, a neighborhood that inspired this book and the remarkable events in it.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Glenn is a brilliant writer—passionate, perceptive, and inventive. His use of language reveals the soul of a poet.*

*Anthony Robbins*



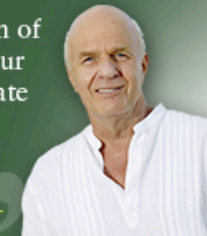
Glenn is a uniquely thoughtful writer and editor with an intuitive, spirit-driven approach. His *Family Circle* articles about happiness and gratitude are classics. I always look forward to working with him – and so will you!

*Deepak Chopra, M.D.*



Glenn is one of my all-time favorite interviewers – a man of vision who is thorough yet easy to speak to. After an hour with Glenn, I am the one who is inspired! He is passionate and includes himself enthusiastically in a peaceful interchange – and follows through with a printed article that makes everyone concerned exceptionally proud.

*Dr. Wayne Dyer*



When Glenn first interviewed me, I was struck by his sensitivity, the depth of his questions, and his ability to establish instant rapport. His elegant writing and ability to capture the message was without peer.

*Marianne Williamson*



Glenn is a wonderful and insightful writer; extremely creative and so much fun to work with. Working with him was one of the easiest writing experiences of my life. I highly and enthusiastically recommend him!

*Richard Carlson, Ph.D.*



*I love working with Glenn!  
He's a sharp writer, a thoughtful interviewer and a kind, heart-centered man.*

*Cheryl Richardson*



Glenn Plaskin is a truly gifted, polished writer—an immortal master of words. Whatever he writes and then polishes contains his magic and automatically becomes best sellers.

*Dr. John F. Demartini*



## **MARKETING & DEMOGRAPHICS**

From John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley* to John Grogan's *Marley & Me* (now dramatized in a motion picture starring Jennifer Aniston and Owen Wilson), dog-related books have been at or near the top of nonfiction best-seller lists for decades, while motion pictures from *101 Dalmatians* to *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* strike a common chord of delight.

For families and dog lovers everywhere, *Katie: Up & Down The Hall* is the heartwarming story of how one remarkable dog turned strangers into a family. The legacy of this 28-pound spaniel is that family is where you find it, and that the power of a dog's love can triumph over anything.



**KATIE: UP & DOWN THE HALL** is targeted directly to:

- a family-based audience, which in the U.S. today accounts for \$4 billion in annual sales of books and related products
- dog-and-animal lovers everywhere, including 115 million U.S. pet owners, with 44.8 million dogs. [According to the American Pet Product Manufacturers Association, expenditures on pets in the U.S. will top \$40 billion in 2008.]
- a general Inspiration & Self-Help audience—a secondary market of 126 million Americans who annually spend \$8 billion on self-help books and products that inspire

With universal appeal, **Katie** is marketed as a family story for both teens and adults, blending the humor and charm of classic dog-related books

with the magic of mentor relationship books, such as *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*, Mitch Albom.

***In the tradition of dog classics:***

*Amazing Gracie: A Dog's Tale*, Dan Dye and Mark Beckloff  
*Good Dog, Stay*, Anna Quindlen  
*Lost & Found*, Jacqueline Sheehan  
*Rescuing Sprite: A Dog Lover's Story of Joy and Anguish*, Mark R. Levin  
*A Dog Year: Twelve Months, Four Dogs, and Me*, Jon Katz  
*The Art Of Racing In The Rain*, Garth Stein  
*Merl's Door: Lessons From A Freethinking Dog*, Ted Kerasote  
*Just Gus: A Rescued Dog and the Woman He Loved*, Laurie Williams  
*A Three Dog Life*, Abigal Thomas

**GENERAL MEDIA OVERVIEW**

An established media personality with extensive experience promoting his books and celebrity profiles, **Glenn Plaskin** has, over two decades, appeared in numerous radio, newspaper, and TV interviews. These include *Today*, *Oprah* and *Larry King*—all likely vehicles for the marketing of *Katie*, together with programs such as the homespun *CBS Sunday Morning*.

In addition, as the author has written a nationally-syndicated column, "Turning Point," printed alongside Joyce Brothers and Ann Landers, newspaper coverage vis-à-vis interviews and serializations are key as well.

- **Book Launch Party**: Plaskin would utilize his wide range of publishing and celebrity contacts to launch his book at people-and-dog events, inviting a host of his celebrity dog-loving colleagues and friends.
- **Personal Appearances**: The author would appear with his new cocker spaniel at book signings, on TV, and at other promotions, such as the Westminster Dog Show, Broadway Barks, Pet Fashion Week, and Animal Care Affair Gala.
- **Web Coverage**: Both a web site and blog will be devoted to *Katie*.
- **Gift Merchandising**: *Katie* could also be contemplated as a gift item on QVC and in other TV-and store-related promotions.
- **Food Promotion**: As "Granny's" recipes appear in the book, *Katie* will be promoted on food-related programs by dog-loving TV hosts such as Martha Stewart (CBS) and Paula Deen (Food Network).

- **Ancillary Products:** Children's book, Katie toy, cookbook, calendar, TV movie.

**family answer book generations**



**The little family (l. to r.): John, Ryan, Granny, Katie (now a dowager at 12) and Glenn.**

# Granny Down the Hall

## From Friendship to Family

By Glenn Plaskin

**S**ome of the best things that happen in life are purely accidental. A friendship sometimes develops when you least expect it. That's just what happened to me.

There I was, living alone in apartment 22G in a New York City high-rise. Just 45 feet down the hall in 22D was a 76-year-old woman named Pearl and her husband, Arthur. One day I bumped into Pearl in the hall and we introduced ourselves. I mentioned I was thinking of buying my first dog. Pearl said their dog, Brandy, had just died, and she offered a bit of advice to get me started. Over the next 12 years, that brief encounter blossomed into a loving friendship nurtured by proximity and mutual chemistry.

*Contributing editor Glenn Plaskin often reports on human interest stories.*

**Getting to Know Her**

A few months after meeting Pearl, I got my dog, a blonde cocker spaniel I named Katie. I took the mischievous runt of the litter straight to Pearl's apartment, where the puppy climbed right up into her arms and licked her face. It was the first of the daily visits that continue to the present.

Each morning, as I leave for work, Katie pads down the carpeted hall to 22D. When Pearl opens the door, Katie scoots between her legs into the cozily cluttered apartment.

"How's my girl?" asks Pearl, a smile in her hazel eyes. Oblivious to the greeting, Katie leaps onto a chair in order to reach the piece of toast always waiting for her at the corner of the dining room table. At Pearl's, Katie has also acquired a taste for honeydew melon and apples, and has become an expert at eating corn on the cob (side

to side without missing a kernel) and watermelon (avoiding the seeds).

After her various snacks, Katie jumps onto Pearl's bed and snoozes soundly on her nightgown. Although I never intended for my dog to become part of Pearl's household, our routine evolved quite naturally.

**The Way She Is**

"Granny," as I nicknamed Pearl, is now a spry 88, sturdily built, rarely sick, and she still does all her own shopping, cooking and cleaning. Granny can be feisty one moment, girlish the next. She's conservative about money, clipping store coupons, yet immensely generous, whether she's taking clothes to the homeless or making dinner for friends at loose ends. Prim about her personal business, she has a crisp sense of humor and relishes a risqué joke. She has compassion for people's frailties and a cautious realism born of the Great Depression.

Although 40 years separate us, I always feel that Granny is ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶

Scott Jones

22 **Family Circle** 4/3/01



Granny instructs Ryan in the art of cooking—one of her truly great talents.

▶▶▶▶▶ From page 22 a contemporary. She's up-to-date on tennis, golf, baseball, showbiz gossip and the stock market. She avidly listens to radio and TV news, talks about the wonders of the Internet and "the magic" of the fax, while also reminiscing, with carefully preserved programs in hand, about Broadway plays she saw in the 1920s and '30s. She's a shrewd judge of character and, on occasion, has given me the thumbs up or down on a prospective date or friend. Overall, she's just a great gal!

Born in New York City in 1912, Pearl was a bright, vivacious girl who had little interest in her studies but a lot of interest in boys. In fact, in 1935 she married Arthur, "the boy next door." During their early years together, Pearl worked as a secretary ("I earned \$12 a week and sent my mother \$5") while Arthur sold women's apparel wholesale. A close couple who rarely argued, Pearl and Arthur remained active travelers and theatergoers, even after retirement, and surrounded themselves with young people. Indeed, a 3-year-old boy named Ryan, who lived down the hall in apartment 22P, became one of their best friends. Ryan, now 10, is the son of my friend John, a single dad.

### The Good Group

And so, we all began having spontaneous breakfasts and dinners together. During the day Arthur sometimes watched cartoons with Ryan and fed his "girl," Katie, chunks of apple as they both stretched out on his lounge chair. In the evenings Granny fried up her wickedly delicious paprika chicken cutlets and put out her home-baked apricot-and-plum tarts or chocolate pie. Our little band also went out to dinner occasionally and to the movies. We

## As for Pearl, she simply **adopted** us all!

traded apartment-building gossip and shared major holidays.

One day, after we'd all had dinner together, a pleasant thought dawned on me: Granny and Arthur, Ryan and John, and Katie and I had formed our own little "family" right in the building. In 1990 I'd lost my grandmother, Essie, with whom I'd been extremely close.

Now Pearl was, in essence, my new Granny. And Ryan, with no grandparents of his own, had quickly adopted Pearl and Arthur. It was touching to see him throw his arms around

Granny's neck. "He's a great hugger; he's my boy!" beamed Pearl. Ryan's dad, John, also adopted Granny, and loved talking with her about the challenges of raising a young son. As for Pearl, with no children of her own, she simply adopted us all!

### Through Thick and Thin

Then one day in the fall of '94 Arthur was hospitalized with pneumonia and a cardiac condition. Now his chair was empty at our "family dinners," and we missed the sound of his baritone voice and his commonsense remarks. Every night Ryan asked about "Artur's" condition. Katie obviously missed him too, as she napped alone on his lounge chair, looking forlorn.

In January of '95, Pearl came home from the hospital late one afternoon and said it was over. They had been married for 59 years; now Arthur was dead. We all were bereft. I went with Pearl to a Westchester cemetery in the teeming rain and mud slides, holding her arm as she made her way to the grave. "That," Pearl recalls, "was the worst day of my life." Saying goodbye to Arthur was the only time I ever saw Pearl cry.

I believe that having young neighbors was healing for Pearl, and soon she was making dinner and sitting for Ryan again. She and Ryan grew ever closer. Today she picks him up after school, walks him to play dates or soccer practice, helps with his homework, teaches him card

games, spoils him with Krispy Kreme doughnuts, watches TV with him, then sends him on home.

"Some days, when Ryan gets off the school bus," Pearl muses, "he runs over and hugs me. His friends just stand there looking kind of cockeyed, and I say, 'Do any of *you* have a Granny?' They shake their heads no and come over to me. I hug them all." Do they like it? "Yes, they do!"

Granny and I have grown closer too. When one of us is sick, the other gets groceries. When the snow and ice make walking impossible for her, I bring in the food. When I had a back injury, she brought ice packs and soup. When Katie was mysteriously bleeding one night, she went with me to the animal hospital. And when I had a bike-riding accident and was taken to a hospital emergency room, it was Granny who came immediately. Likewise, when she was struck by a taxi, but was miraculously unharmed, I picked her up at that same emergency room and took her home.

Sometimes I wonder, *What if I hadn't wound up in the only vacant apartment on the 22nd floor? Would I ever have known Pearl?* Each of us has joined together to form a family circle. Through bad health, accidents, electrical outages, harsh winters, happy birthdays, holidays and everyday, we share a bond of love that brings us comfort, support, security—and fun.

When Granny turned 85, I invited 30 people over to celebrate. That day I re-nicknamed Pearl "Oldest Granny," and amid the chocolate cake and helium balloons, I asked "Oldest" if she'd ever had such a big birthday party. "I've never *had* a birthday party," she said. "Don't do it again!" We will anyway, on her 90th. ■



Happy birthday to "Oldest Granny" on her 85th. And many, many more!

Scott Jones (top left).

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS OUTLINE**

***KATIE: UP & DOWN THE HALL*** is organized into ten chapters--plus an Introduction and an Epilogue.

***Introduction:***                      **An Unbreakable Bond**

**CHAPTER ONE:**                      ***THE PUPPY OF MY DREAMS***

**CHAPTER TWO:**                      ***A KNOCK AT THE DOOR***

**CHAPTER THREE:**                      ***HOLLYWOOD HOUND***

**CHAPTER FOUR:**                      ***SICKNESS COMES, KATIE HEALS***

**CHAPTER FIVE:**                      ***THE ACCIDENT***

**CHAPTER SIX:**                      ***THE KID***

**CHAPTER SEVEN:**                      ***PARTY GIRL***

**CHAPTER EIGHT:**                      ***THE DAY OUR WORLD STOPPED***

**CHAPTER NINE:**                      ***THE FINAL DAY: A FAREWELL TO KATIE***

**CHAPTER TEN:**                      ***'OLDEST' SAYS GOOD-BYE***

**EPILOGUE:**                      ***A BRAND-NEW LIFE***

-SAMPLE CHAPTER-

## The Final Day

- A Farewell To Katie-

*"We have no right to ask when sorrow comes, 'Why did this happen to me?' unless we ask the same question for every moment of happiness that comes our way."*

-Author Unknown-

The cold winter morning began deliciously, with Katie burrowed under the heavy down comforter, snoring away softly as she leaned into my chest, warm as a little oven.

An expert snuggler, Katie, as always, had her wet black nose pressed up against me, and her comically-long spaniel ears draped across one of my arms.

Waking up next to her, even after all those years, was incredibly comforting. Her mere presence could wipe away a bad dream or any lingering worry.

And so, on what turned out to be the last day of her life, we began it, as always, procrastinating about getting out of bed.

On many mornings, especially when she was in the midst of a happy dog dream, Katie would often wake *me* up with the swat of her tail against my stomach, her eyes--framed by long blond lashes--blissfully sealed shut.

But on this day, something was wrong. My dog was just too still, and I found myself trying to wake *her* up.

"Come on, sweetheart," I whispered, nudging her gently. "Ready to go?"

In days when she was much healthier, she'd play a game: Just one eyelid would open, slyly, then quickly close again, her decision firm.

*No way!* She'd then playfully slide further down the bed, head pointed down toward my feet.

But now, after months of being so sick, she wasn't moving at all.

Katie had always been a regal dog, headstrong and imperious, and nothing was going to budge her, especially today. Yet I tried again, raising the pitch of my voice into a seduction that had worked in the past. "Come oooooon, doggie. You can do it!"

*No!* She briefly opened her eyes, but slid further away.

As a senior citizen of the dog world, Katie's stubborn streak had only increased with her physical infirmities. Now close to fifteen, she relied mostly on smell and memory, as she was nearly blind, her soulful brown eyes cloudy and swollen with cataracts. It was heartbreaking to see her so disoriented, her dignity bruised when she bumped into walls, a stunned look on her face. I'd pick her up, face her in the right direction, and talk soothingly to her.

Then there was Katie's arthritis, which made it painful, lately almost impossible, to walk. She would stumble on the way to her food dish, though anxious to get there. And even when I picked her up, Katie was so fragile that she would wince in pain. It was distressing to see a dog who had once raced through the park—a blur of motion—and leaped on and off the bed with ease now reduced to limping her way to the door, her wobbly legs barely able to support her.

Even more upsetting, Katie, who had always been perfectly housebroken, was now often incontinent, her head hanging sadly when she had an accident. I can still see her desperately remorseful expression. *I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do it, Dad. Please forgive me.*

And with her tail down, she would slink off to the tile floor of the bathroom, knowing that she should stay away from the carpet.

In short, watching Katie's health deteriorate and seeing her so frail was devastating—and it was wearing us both down.

On top of all this, she was also going deaf, and, like many seniors, only heard what she wanted to. When it came to a cookie, of course, her ears pricked right up. But on this blustery morning, it would have taken an entire cake to rouse her.

I was now fully alert, sitting up and worried, stroking her soft stomach while I whispered into her ear. "Katie, baby, please, let's try to get up. You can *do* it. Let's go, it's time."

Partially surfacing from beneath the sheet, only her nose above it, she stretched up a bit, motioning with her paws for me to join her back underneath. Then she licked my nose, yawning in my face, her mouth wide open, as if to say: *Dad! I'm too sick to move. Please. I won't do it—I can't.*

But, always such a good girl, she finally sat up on the bed waiting for me to get her ready. Then, as always, she held up her paws, one at a time, compliantly

slipping them into the “arm” holes of her favorite pink wool coat, resigned to the inevitable walk outside.

“Good girl!”

*Dad, I’m thirsty*, she seemed to tell me, haltingly shuffling over to her water bowl for a long drink. Then, because she was groaning in pain as we headed toward the door, I scooped her up in my arms and took her downstairs, out into the frigid air.

On countless mornings before, Katie had always bounded out to meet the day, her popularity among the many dogs in our neighborhood more than evident. Brandy, a fellow spaniel, always swiped by for a lick; Jake, a German Shepherd, would push her over on her back, nuzzling her stomach as Katie played dead.

Katie even had a friend who was a horse! Living in a neighborhood patrolled by mounted police, we often ran into Walter, a magnificent Belgian Quarter horse, who had been raised on a farm with dogs. Walter would lean down and affectionately rub noses with Katie, licking her face, his wide nostrils quivering with pleasure. The picture of this huge horse nuzzling a 28-pound spaniel was cute beyond belief, heartwarming to all who saw it.

But on this morning, Katie was despondent, her friends nowhere to be seen. As I gently set her down on the pavement, for the first time ever, she just stood there, still as a statue, shivering and immobilized, making no attempt to relieve herself. It wasn’t going to happen. Her dazed expression said it all: *I can’t go. I just can’t.*

I felt panicked and leaned down to her, stroking her neck: “Katie, come on, you can do it. *Go ahead.*”

Over the years, the phrase “*go ahead*” had become a mantra that I had repeated hundreds of times. Katie knew that this was her cue to get down to business and she always complied--but not this time. She just looked up at me hesitantly, her eyes glazed over, so vulnerable. *Please take me home.*

I knew this was the end. I just picked her up and took her back inside. For months, I’d been trying to paste and patch together another good day for her, but it wasn’t working. Her depression was evident in the droop of her head. Her moments of tail-wagging, playing with toys, playing tug of war, or smiling up at

me with her tongue hanging out were over. Some days she wouldn't even go near her food bowl.

It seemed as if she had lost interest in life, and was content to sleep the days away. With all this happening, and after months of soul-searching, I had, just the previous day, taken Katie to our vet with the intention of putting her to sleep.

"She's very thin," Dr. Suchanek told me, "twenty-one pounds down from twenty-eight." Since she was unable to stand on the exam table, the vet held her as he listened to her heart. He then calmly explained the procedure for euthanizing a dog, but after listening to it all, I said: "No, I can't do it." And I'll never forget his answer: "I think she's ready, but you're not."

And it was true. I'd been fighting the reality of the situation and really wanted to wait until Katie had a natural passing. "But your dog is in pain," the vet told me, "so letting her go is the humane thing to do."

I couldn't do it.

On the way out of his office, I optimistically bought a 20-pound bag of dog food!

When I got home, I took what was the last photo of Katie, looking so sweet and vulnerable and, with her face so much thinner, almost shrunken. Even in her pain, her brave spirit reached out to me, offering love and comfort.



For what seemed like a lifetime, Katie had been the centrifugal force of our world, our own relationships reconfigured as we spun lovingly around her. She adored her "Granny Down The Hall," the long nickname we'd given our dear

friend Pearl, who at age 90, relied greatly on Katie's companionship. With no children or close relatives, and with her husband of fifty-nine years gone, we were her family. "Katie," she said with pride, "is my girl!" Likewise, the little boy down the hall, Ryan, adored Katie and had always raced her around the neighborhood, played with her, dressed her up for Halloween, you name it. His Dad, John, was one of the few people that Katie trusted to walk her, others attempting, with no success, to pull her out on her leash.

In short, we had become a true family, one that was about to lose one of its members.

Of course, I had talked at length with Pearl (who was also in failing health) about putting Katie to sleep, but she was also firmly opposed to it. "She's not ready yet," she said stubbornly. In fact, I sometimes wondered if she was talking about Katie or herself. On the one hand, Pearl understood that Katie was ready to go, but on the other, it was impossible to say good-bye. After all, Katie and Granny were soulmates and had been together for nearly fifteen years. For half the day, every day, Granny fed Katie, walked her, groomed her, talked to her, and played with her. The bond between them was unbreakable.

And so, even on this difficult morning, Katie seemed to come to life when we got off the elevator, anxious to see her Granny, whom we had also nicknamed "Oldest."

In past years, Katie had raced down our long hallway, boldly pushing open Granny's door with her paws, trotting into the living room, grabbing a piece of crisp toast from the corner of the dining table, then jumping into Pearl's arms, covering her face with wet kisses. Hours later, Granny would feed her bits of chicken, some rice, and a delicious piece of pound cake. Katie had a great appetite, licking frosting off Granny's hand.

Then, after snacks and attentively "listening" to the daily exchanges between Granny and me (her head turning back and forth as if to follow the conversation), Katie would exit the living room and curl up on Pearl's bed to snooze soundly on her nightgown.

But on this morning, when Katie got to Pearl's door, she just weakly pressed up against it, her breath heavy. She desperately wanted to get inside—but couldn't get the door open herself.

No toast was waiting this time. Pearl was in bed under an ancient hand-made afghan her mother had made for her. I lifted Katie up and placed her right on top of Granny. "How's my sweet baby girl?" she asked, cooing with pleasure, though weak due to an intestinal infection.

"Not too good, Oldest," I answered. "Katie is really weak today. She can't walk. She can't 'go' at all. She just can't do anything...I think it's time..."

Pearl was a sturdy, practical woman and I had never seen her cry, except just once, at her husband's funeral eight years earlier. But now, tears were streaming down her face as she stroked Katie's head and just held her close.

I had desperately dreaded this good-bye and didn't know how to get up her from that bed.

Granny didn't say another word that morning. We just sat there holding the dog that had first drawn us together and kept us together for so many years. Then, a few minutes later, I silently lifted Katie up and took her down the hall for the last time.

Fortunately, waiting back in my apartment was my best friend from college, Paul, who had come for a visit from Boston to offer his support, which I was so grateful for that day. We had both been aspiring concert pianists and had stayed best buddies for 27 years. Paul had continued with his music while I had left the piano behind for writing. A great dog lover himself, Paul was not only a comfort to me, but to Katie as well.

Katie loved Paul and would nap for hours with her head on his foot, and refused to sleep with me on nights he was visiting.

"Katie is ready to go," Paul told me, putting his arm around my shoulder and pulling me close. "You can get do this," he said. "I probably would have done it a little sooner. You know, I worked at a nursing home for years, and Katie's demeanor reminds me of some very elderly people I've known. As people get near the end, there's a kind of gauzy veil that comes down between them and everyday reality. Their reactions get slow—almost as if they already have one foot on the other side."

So on that Wednesday, November 20, 2002, we set off in a taxi to the vet's office, Katie sleeping peacefully in my arms.

The vet, sensitively, had made sure that he had a large block of time so that he wouldn't be rushed by other appointments. He gently explained that he was going to first give Katie a painless injection under her skin, a sedative that would make her relaxed and calm, sending her into a twilight sleep.

Katie was shivering, looking up at me plaintively.

*Dad, what's going on? I'm afraid.*

I just whispered in her ear a refrain I'd been repeating for years. "You're a good girl...such a good girl. You're going to be fine." And I kissed her on her nose and gave her a gentle squeeze.

After the first injection, sure enough, within just a few minutes, Katie was sleeping soundly in my arms, just as she'd been earlier that day. I leaned down and savored the familiar sweet smell of her. My baby was at peace.

Then, I carried her into the room where she had always had her check-ups. And there, in the center of it, was that steel examining table that, to me, was like an executioner's booth. I remember thinking that there should be a soft towel or cushion on top of it, that its surface was too hard.

As I laid Katie down on the table, the vet promised me that she would be unaware of the final injection, that the euthanasia solution into her vein would be painless, and that within six to twelve seconds, it would take effect.

Just before he gave the shot, I put my left hand under Katie's warm stomach and the right one against her heart. I bent over and leaned in close as the needle went in. "Good girl...."

Katie took a deep breath. I could feel her heart beating, but within just a few seconds, it stopped. She was gone, her chest silent. I had listened to her breathing for many years, but now there was nothing. Katie's once-animated face—which had remained so beautiful—was now strangely sunken in ...so still.

"I'll leave you alone for a few minutes," the vet said, and he closed the door.

I bent over and let the tears come. I gave Katie a snug hug with my face and chest, stroking her back, telling her what a good girl she'd always been, and how much I loved her and would miss her. My little dog's body was still warm, but she was gone. The tears kept coming as I touched her beautiful head, which was now resting on her paws.

I didn't want to leave Katie behind on that horrible cold table. I lingered a few minutes longer, gave her a final kiss good-bye, and then forced myself to turn away. I felt like I was abandoning her. And I wondered if I'd made a mistake, if we should have waited longer for this day. This thought would haunt me for years.

I can tell you that if I could turn back the clock and have Katie home again for a week, a day, or for even an hour-- I would give anything to do it. *Anything*.

After, I left the room, it was surreal passing the receptionist my credit card to pay the fee. I asked the vet and his assistant if they would remain with Katie's body, and that they not take her away until I had left the building. I couldn't imagine what they were going to do with her.

I had chosen cremation and had declined receiving the ashes, feeling that having them would provide little comfort. After all, an urn of ashes was not the same as Katie. Yet, a few years later, I admit I would have liked to have had them. Instead, I have dozens of scrapbooks and movies that remind me of her sweet spirit.

Afterward, the taxi ride home was desolate. I sat there holding Katie's red collar, leash and gold-engraved I.D. tag. When I got back and went into Pearl's bedroom to share with her what had happened, she just closed her eyes, murmuring a sigh of profound regret under her breath, and then rolled over toward the window so she wouldn't have to deal with it.

Yet that night, her spirits revived a bit when she heard that John and Ryan were coming over for dinner, bringing a rotisserie chicken, one of her favorites. It's funny how, even at the saddest times of our lives, we still get hungry. We all sat together that night, recounting the things we loved most about Katie. I can never forget Ryan, "the child," placing his hand so sweetly on top of mine to console me, then coming over and putting his cheek against mine for a big hug. "That's my boy!" exclaimed Granny with pride.

A few feet away I noticed Katie's water and food bowls, set out, as always, on her plastic Walt Disney placemat. I turned away—and would collect them a few days later.

Later that night, Paul and I hatched what we thought was a brilliant idea. To *celebrate* Katie, why not give a special memorial concert? We would *both* play the

piano and I knew that jumping into something like this would be great therapy. So over the next few days, I furiously sent e-mail invitations, made phone calls, called a caterer and a bakery, and enlisted the always-helpful Lee, the neighbor who had saved Granny on 9/11, to coordinate all of it.

Meanwhile, I was practicing the piano furiously, willing my stiff, out-of-shape fingers to get back into shape and access those muscle reflexes needed for a Chopin nocturne and two movements of Chopin's Funeral March Sonata. Paul, always ready to perform, would play some Mozart, Debussy, and Chopin.

Katie had so many friends—a virtual cast of people she'd known over the years--that we wound up having two evenings of music, thirty people at each, with neighbors, friends, and family sitting on every available chair and cushion and window ledge. In fact, one of our neighbors on our floor, Geraldine, practically emptied her living room of chairs to help out. There was candlelight in the room. Decorating the piano were photos of Katie and her favorite black taffeta birthday dress was displayed nearby.

One of Katie's greatest fans was our longtime doorman Teddy, who moonlighted as a pastor at his local Baptist church. Teddy set such a moving tone for the evening, tenderly beginning with a prayer of thanks about how blessed we had been to have Katie in our midst and how much we all loved her.

"Katie's tender spirit will always be with us--as a comfort to us," Teddy said. "And we will never forget the way she brought us all together—how much love she gave even when she herself was in pain. She wasn't just a dog—she was a member our family." With a grin, he added: "And she'd hate to be missing all this delicious food!"

There, in the front row, was Granny, proudly sitting with all her favorite friends (most of them in their late 80's and early 90's)--Sylvia, Georgie, Ruth, Bea, Freda, and Gloria. Equally touching was a continent of *dogs*--all of them stretched out on the carpet. In addition to Jake, the German Shepherd, there was Freemont, a Wheaten Terrier; Clayton, a Labrador Retriever; and Fred, a Bichon Frisé. Alas, there was no room for her friend, Buck the horse.

Amazingly, Katie's canine friends were completely attentive, never moving an inch as the little recital unfolded. When I played the Funeral March that night, I

closed my eyes and thought of Katie's face, and realized that I could express my feelings for her better through my fingers than with words. As the music filled the room, there was an amazing sense of camaraderie that made this a happy night, rather than a sad one.

And so it was that Katie had the most fantastic send off--the overflow crowd, a scrumptious cake, her favorite friends and family together, her beloved Granny and me—all remembering one little remarkable dog and the magnificent spirit that she had left behind.



That night, as I got into bed, I was exhausted yet oddly exhilarated—deeply satisfied at the memory of what had been. At one point during the night, I heard the table skirt rustle next to me—just as it had with Katie playing under it—and only half-awake, I believed she had come back.

And ever since that night, I sense Katie around me all the time. I know it's because love is not confined to space or time. It continues on beyond the physical plane. With this blessing, I slept quite peacefully in the weeks and months that followed Katie's death. And on lucky nights, she bounds from heaven and visits me in my dreams.

As painful as it was to lose Katie, I'm always reminded that our dogs want us to be happy. They live for it. Knowing this, more than anything, would be my secret to recovering from the loss.

And on nights when I can't sleep, when the hole in my heart seems wider than I'd like it to be, I pull out a wonderful little book written by Eugene O'Neill,

titled: *The Last Will And Testament Of An Extremely Distinguished Dog*.<sup>2</sup> The narrative is written in the voice of a departed dog who offers his grief-stricken owner words of comfort, reminding humans to be happy.

*"I ask my Master to remember me always, but not to grieve for me too long. In my life I have tried to be a comfort to them in time of sorrow, and a reason for added joy in their happiness. It is painful for me to think that even in death I should cause them pain."*

Toward the end of the book, the dog writes that his memory should bring nothing but joy, that when we visit the grave, we should remember that the love that ties us together has no end: *"No matter how deep my sleep I shall hear you, and not all the power of death can keep my spirit from wagging a grateful tail."*



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<sup>2</sup> Henry Holt & Company, 1999.

# P R O P O S A L

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES

*Following the format of the sample chapter, “Amidst Crisis and Loss... Love Prevails,” subsequent chapters in **KATIE: UP & DOWN THE HALL** likewise feature dramatic, highly personal narratives, filled with poignant reminiscences, revealing anecdotes, entertaining stories, expressive detail, and lessons drawn from everyone in the little “family.”*

*Katie, of course, takes center stage, her spirit, like a magnet, drawing the entire group together, as she reigns over her domain—the 80-foot hallway that connects Glenn, Granny, John, and Ryan.*

*This 250-page compact book is illustrated with unique photographs that bring to life many of the events described in the book, making **KATIE** a treasured gift and collectible for all seasons.*

*In addition, the book also includes some of Granny’s dog-friendly treats and trademark recipes (including the tarts baked for celebrity friends) as shared meals become a principal backdrop for the story.*

*Overall, the entire package delivers a powerful message--that **family is where you find it**, and that love can bloom when you least expect it, with total strangers... right down the hall.*

### • CHAPTER ONE: THE PUPPY OF MY DREAMS

The author had always carried a to-do list, tucked into his date book, and for twenty-three years running there was a repeat entry, a three-word *note to self*: GET A DOG. But he never did. Every time he was tempted to, he pulled back, distracted by another work project, never quite ready to take the plunge. Here we learn about why any of us yearn for a pet, the immense benefits of having one, and what had stopped the author. Finally, in 1988, he was motivated to make what turned out to be the best decision of his life. What inspired it? What did it entail? And how did he go about choosing which dog to buy? We learn about a false start, when he adopts a pug puppy and returns him 24 hours later, convinced he’s made a mistake. We then find out about the author’s methodical “test-run” dog, a cocker spaniel named Dinah, loaned to him for afternoon naps by her owner, Joe. (Before the story’s end, both Joe and Dinah die, as

explained.) Finally, we meet Katie for the first time, the runt of the litter, daughter of New Jersey champion “Sweet Sue,” arriving at her new home with her favorite red rubber snake toy and a blue security blanket with her mother’s scent on it.

• **CHAPTER TWO: A KNOCK AT THE DOOR**

This is the red-letter day in September 1988 when the relationship between the author and Pearl (“Granny”) begins, at the suggestion of Joe, who had recommended that the author simply knock on her door and ask her advice about raising a puppy. We learn that Pearl’s dog, a cocker spaniel named Brandy, had recently died, leaving behind a vacuum that would soon be filled by the author’s puppy. Like many days of our lives when we take what seems like a trivial action, this knock has a fateful ripple effect on everything that follows it. Here we meet three-month Katie—an astutely clever puppy who escapes from the author’s kitchen from day one, curious to sneak out and meet her new friend down the hall. And so, lucky from the start, Katie has two homes. Brought to life here are her early days, her training and antics, and the triangulated bond that she develops between her owner, Granny, and Granny’s husband Arthur.

• **CHAPTER THREE: HOLLYWOOD HOUND**

During the next four years, from 1989-1992, the author frequently “loans” Katie out to Granny, as he is now a full-time newspaper reporter and columnist at a metropolitan newspaper, traveling extensively and relying on his trusted neighbors to take care of his dog. Each day, right after breakfast, Katie tears down the hall and remains at Granny’s until late afternoon or evening when the author returns. Unlike many dogs, Katie has the luxury of virtually never being left alone her entire life. As we hilariously see, Katie often goes on the road too, meeting some of the author’s celebrity subjects. Ivana Trump carts Katie into a board meeting



at the Plaza Hotel. Leona Helmsley sends a limousine for Katie, transporting her to the billionaire's Connecticut estate, where the dog is banned from the house, instead escaping to a vegetable garden, thereafter being kept in an air-conditioned limousine. Katie flies to Hollywood for an interview with Bette Midler and snoozes for two hours on the Divine Miss M's lap. Katie flirts with Ryan O'Neil, who dismisses her with nearly a kick. Katie lunches at Katharine Hepburn's house, the other guest being Peter Jennings. Katie appears on television, modeling the dresses given to her by Joan Rivers. And through it all, Granny is Katie's keeper, stylist, confidante, and best friend. We also meet the story's colorful cast of characters who become Katie's best friends—among them Ramon (the housekeeper whom she adores), Betty (her groomer), Ann (her walker) Paul (the college roommate), Michael (the interior designer), Martin (the retired school teacher), Scott (the book publisher), David (the TV producer), Debby (the author's sister), plus Katie's quirky veterinarians.

• **CHAPTER FOUR: SICKNESS COMES, KATIE HEALS**

Just a month after the author appears on "Larry King" and "Oprah" to promote a new book about how 120 people he interviewed overcame

adversity, he has a crisis of his own when he loses his job along with 188 others—dismissed by new management. Unable to continue his career as he had known it, the author falls into a severe depression, and sustains a physical injury that makes it increasingly difficult to walk or to move. What follows is a six-year period of disability lasting from 1993 to 1998. Here we see how *crisis becomes opportunity* when John, a single Dad, and his three-year-old son Ryan move into the author's building, expanding and consolidating the family unit. Over the years, it is Granny who will become the child's surrogate grandmother and female influence, content with his life as it is, casually referring to his "birth mother" with little care or worry.

Through this challenging period, Katie becomes a remarkably healing force, bonding everyone more closely and comforting and entertaining each member of the group. In particular, we see how the author's well-being and survival are enhanced by the therapeutic presence of his dog. Also key to the author's recovery is the buoyant presence of Ryan, "the kid" as he nicknames him, who becomes a surrogate son. In short, the reader sees how a so-called setback can actually set someone *forward*, a physical challenge allowing a shifting of values and emotional renewal.

#### • CHAPTER FIVE: THE ACCIDENT

Here we read about the author's near-fatal bike accident, an event that brings Granny, Katie, Ryan, and John closer than ever, a story that has built into it the universal message about what truly matters in life--the friends and family we can really depend upon. It also drives home the innate fragility of our existence. One day we're feeling great; the next, we're injured, or not here at all. This suspensefully-written chapter brings to life how families pull together in times of stress and crisis.

#### • CHAPTER SIX: THE KID

A year after John and Ryan move into the building, Arthur suddenly dies. After sixty years of marriage, Granny is devastated. Always emotionally sturdy as a rock, she cries for the very first time. Katie mopes

around the house for weeks, aware of Arthur's absence and mournfully lying on the gray chair where they had both snuggled together. Granny, with no children of her own, eventually recovers from her loss by bonding ever more closely to the author, Katie, John, and especially to her new pal, four-year-old Ryan. Ryan's presence is like an elixir to Granny—she is energized by his presence, becoming his number-one babysitter. The twosome, seventy-five years apart, can be heard giggling together for hours. Granny cooks for Ryan, picks him up at the school bus stop, bathes him, plays cards with him, helps him with his homework, teaches him how to cook, watches cartoons with him, you name it. We see how Granny becomes the principal female figure in Ryan's life, as the boy has no mother or grandparents. The boy's Dad, John, always on the quest for a "husband" who could become a second Dad to Ryan, finds in Granny a true friend and confidante someone he can talk with about his relationships, his job, and his concerns about his son's upbringing.



Meanwhile, Katie becomes the little boy's playmate and companion, eating bagels in bed with him, snoozing on top of him as he plays on his Game Boy, submitting to bubble baths with him, and racing him down the hallway, with Granny acting as referee. (Katie always wins.) Katie even allows Ryan to shampoo her—an honor reserved only for her owner or regular groomer Betty. The family is in its heyday, a truly cohesive unit that provides the warmth, love, and support needed by all.



- CHAPTER SEVEN: PARTY GIRL

More than any shared activity, it's *dinnertime* that brings this little family together. Granny, as we see, revels in food shopping and cooking generously-spiced main dishes and mouth-watering desserts. Some of her favorite recipes are published here, including the spectacular plum tart baked for Katharine Hepburn. Incredibly, out from Granny's tiny galley kitchen emerge mouth-watering meals, including her paprika chicken and blueberry pies and tarts. The author and Granny go on a baking kick, whipping up confections which they give away to neighbors, their time in the kitchen together both therapeutic and a point of connection.



We see how Katie is now the starring attraction at elaborately-planned parties given by the author, Granny very much part of the mix. Both Katie, now in late middle age, and Granny, heading toward age 90, are energized and mobilized by the ambitiousness of these parties. There is an elaborate Halloween party, annual birthday dinners for Katie with special doggie carrot cake, special occasion parties for friends, Thanksgivings, an 85<sup>th</sup>-birthday party for Granny, a publishing party for the author's magazine editor (complete with ballroom chairs and party favors--porcelain dolls supplied by Marie Osmond) and an engagement party for the author's sister. An entertaining group of guests at these parties becomes supporting players to a bustling household, including a debonair 80-year-old, Bud, and the author's editor, Ed, both of whom are now also valued members of the family. Katie "presides" at all parties, dressed in black satin taffeta with yellow décolleté or multi-colored sequins, expertly slipping into these get ups and then parading around the house in all her glory, knowing exactly what she is doing and why.



The underlying rationale for these parties is that they become social opportunities that break Granny's isolation and give her a purpose and focus. The author's friends become Granny's friends, though nobody relies on her more than the author. She is his most valued advisor and he depends upon her for advice about most everything—dating, friendships, family challenges, neighborhood issues, Katie's medical care, you name it. The twosome are best friends, contemporaries with a common perspective, as their age difference disappears.

At this time in the story, the author picks up speed professionally, returning to work at a magazine and writing books again too, his health restored. We see how the family closeness, particularly Katie's spirit and Pearl's ever-constant support, has prepared the author for a new life. He now writes about inspirational subjects (not celebrities) and by the time Katie and Pearl are featured in a *Family Circle* article titled "Granny Down the Hall," both have emerged as popular stars in their neighborhood and beyond. Now it's the family that has a principal influence on the author's life.

- **CHAPTER EIGHT: THE DAY OUR WORLD STOPPED**

The sunny September morning, balmy and calm, is shattered on September 11, 2001 at 8:48 a.m. by a strange-sounding explosive boom that echoes through our windows. Puzzled, the author looks out at the Hudson River but sees nothing. The phone rings: "Turn on the TV!" orders Granny. And so begins a seven-week period of trauma and displacement described in moment-to-moment detail, the tragedy of 9/11 seen through the eyes of one little family. We read about how valiantly Katie, limping and terrified, faces the horrors of that day. Before the author and his dog make it to the boat, the North Tower erupts, collapsing like an accordion, a roar of steel falling to the ground. The sky is pitch-black, with thick soot raining down, blindly enveloping them in a thick cloud of black dust. Meanwhile, we see how Granny becomes separated from the author and Katie, instead rescued by Lee, a Battery Park City resident who becomes a dear friend to the end of Pearl's life. Glenn and Katie wind up living with John and Ryan in an uptown apartment, while Granny finds refuge in a relative's home, thereafter situated in a hotel before returning home. We see how 9/11 is not only emblematic of a world filled with increasing incidents of terrorism, but an event that transforms a neighborhood, nearly breaking it apart. For the author, the events of that day also foreshadow the beginning of the end of his world as he had known it.

- **CHAPTER NINE: AMIDST CRISIS AND LOSS...LOVE PREVAILS**

Katie is now fourteen, Granny ninety, and although still vibrant in many ways, both become seriously ill. In this emotionally-charged, climactic chapter, we read about the adjustments that follow a return to Battery Park City. Unable to see or hear, and having great difficulty walking, Katie becomes deeply depressed, disabled by her limitations and frustrated by her inability to enjoy life as she had known it. Having always been a comfort to everyone around her, Katie is now most in need of comfort herself—and she gets it. In her final days, we see how Katie’s family lavishes her with love and struggles against letting go of their “girl.” Her harrowing battle with age is achingly described here, the day of her passing narrated in heartbreaking detail. Then, her spirit is celebrated in a final send-off, two memorial concerts at home with the author and Katie’s friends (human and canine) in attendance.

- **CHAPTER TEN: ‘OLDEST’ SAYS GOOD-BYE**

After Katie’s death, Granny’s quality of life worsens as both dementia and stomach ailments weaken her ability to function. With Katie gone, she seems lost in profound sadness and depression, sleeping the days away or endlessly watching the cooking channel, almost waiting for the end to come. Yet she is greatly comforted in these final two years by the generous spirit of her friend, Lee, who had saved her on 9/11, and by her full-time aide, Naia, who becomes the granddaughter Granny never had. (At last, we learn Granny’s tragic secret, the reason why she had never had children of her own. In her mid-20’s, she became pregnant, but an ovarian tumor was discovered, the baby was aborted, and she underwent a hysterectomy.) Yet, despite the support she finds from the author and Lee, Granny’s depression is compounded because Ryan and John have now left the neighborhood, eventually moving to Paris. And so, with Katie gone, and her beloved playmate Ryan absent, a horrible silence envelops her household. Nothing the author says or does seems to penetrate the

emptiness. Here we read about the final night of Granny's life, with the author at her side. The surgeon recommends life-saving surgery, but when given the choice, Granny shakes her head, no. She dies early the next morning, at age ninety-one. A celebration of Pearl's life follows, with John and Ryan and many close friends and family remembering Granny's rare, generous spirit. In her coffin, Lee places a fetching photo of Granny as a young woman, her favorite porcelain doll, the afghan her mother had made her, and of course, a photograph of her "girl," Katie. Now they can rest peacefully together. The author is leveled by loss. That long hallway which had been the scene of such pleasure and comfort, is now silent. He is left bereft and alone—Granny, Katie, Ryan, and John all gone.

• **EPILOGUE: A BRAND-NEW LIFE**

Four years after Granny's passing, there is rarely a day that the author doesn't think of the entire gang, especially Pearl, as he walks down the hallway, past her door. Blasting from the apartment nowadays is rap music, as a disc jockey has moved in. (What would she think of *that*!?) Now, more than ever, he appreciates the fragility of life, its tender pleasures and sorrows. And as he looks through scrapbooks of photos—Katie at her zenith, Ryan at his zaniest, the entire family laughing and happy together in Halloween masks—he wonders if future chapters of life will ever compare to the past ones. And yet, as we read here, one day, the author passes by a pet store and sees a black-and-white spaniel with a mischievous gleam in her eye, her tail wagging in hopes that she might find a home. Twenty minutes later, the puppy leaves the store. It's time to begin all over again, time for the life cycle to renew itself. Katie and Pearl would want it that way. And, in a moving ending to the book, we see demonstrated the human capacity for continual renewal, even as the memory of what had been fills the heart with joy.

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