

*S Y N O P S I S*

# **KATIE**

## **Up & Down The Hall**

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

**By 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.)” –Glenn Plaskin*

For families and animal lovers everywhere, *KATIE: Up & Down The Hall* is the heartwarming story of how five 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

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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)

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 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, Plaskin making new neighborhood friends, and building new bonds in his neighborhood while remembering not what he had lost, but the gifts that had been given to him.



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.

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## About the Author: Glenn Plaskin

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."

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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.

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