

The Attic Door  
Donna Mann

Doors! Geordie loved doors! They opened up new spaces for him. They flung wide open inviting him to go through the entrance into new areas.

Coming to Grammie's for holidays was special for Geordie. Sometimes he came with cousins and other times he came all alone. When he visited by himself, he had lots of chances to open doors and explore. There were so many of them. There were doors that led to stairways, both going up and going down. There were doors that opened into long hallways and even to stair steps. There were doors that opened outside on to a little veranda and a double door that lead to a big patio.

He especially liked the little short door that when opened showed lots of pipes and motors. He often thought he'd lie on the floor and play in there like he'd seen Poppa do a few times.

Geordie had gone through every door in Grammie's house, except for that little square one and an old grey door on the second floor. He'd often looked at that door, even touched the white stone knob a few times and wondered if it would turn. The door looked old-fashioned with its scarred wood panels and faded scuff marks along the bottom. There was a little crack in a panel, but Geordie couldn't see anything when he looked through.

He often wondered why Poppa hadn't painted that old grey door. It looked ancient – so different from the rest of the house that had been painted and varnished and shone like a mirror. Geordie knew that door must lead out to the older part of the house, but that shouldn't make any difference. It could still be used, but Grammie said they didn't need that area, so they just kept it shut off from the rest of the house. She called it . . . the attic.

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Directly under that attic, Geordie often played in a nice sunny room. One day he was lying on a soft mat with Kitty, when some little pieces of fluff and sawdust fell right in the middle of his Lego bricks. He looked at them and then rolled over to look up at the old tin ceiling above him. He listened carefully. Yes, a shuffle or maybe something was dragging across the floor above him. But, that was impossible as it was only the attic up there and Grammie said it was never used.

Geordie wanted to ask Grammie, but couldn't find her. Maybe she was out in the back garden pulling weeds. He knew Poppa was in his driving shed working on his tractor, which meant Geordie was all alone – well, except for Kitty.

Immediately, Geordie decided to go to the attic. With every step upward, he drew closer to the old grey door. He tiptoed down the long dark hallway like he might disturb someone. Kitty

strutted along in front of him as if she knew exactly where he was going. Geordie put his hand on the white stone knob. It felt cold and hard as he gripped it. He slowly turned it, but nothing happened. Kitty meowed as if telling Geordie how to do it. He tried again, but it wouldn't budge. It gave no sign of opening. Then Kitty turned around and walked away from Geordie, tail straight in the air, as if she knew he wouldn't get in, so they might as well go and play in a different place.

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Geordie went back to playing with his Lego bricks. Soon, Grammie came to the kitchen to make lunch and Poppa came in to the kitchen to eat his lunch. Geordie asked them about the sounds he'd heard from the attic.

Grammie laughed. "It must be your imagination."

Poppa added, "You're hearing things, boy."

Geordie shrugged his shoulders.

He asked, "Grammie, is that attic door locked?" She nodded towards the keys hanging on a big brass rack. "I don't really know, 'cause nobody ever goes in there."

Geordie asked Poppa, "Why haven't you ever painted the door to make it look like the rest of the house?"

Poppa laughed. "Well, son, I guess because it's not like the rest of the house – so it might as well look different."

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Geordie sighed and decided to leave the table. "Thanks Grammie for lunch. It was nice." He went back to playing with his Lego. Very soon after he lay down on the soft mat, little pieces of sawdust and fluff began to fall on the castle he was building. Geordie frowned. What is that?

He walked into the living room and saw his poppa asleep in his big comfortable chair. His favourite game show played nosily on the television. Geordie looked for his grammie, but she wasn't around anywhere. He went over to the huge key rack and took off three big keys, and then he walked to the staircase and began to climb. Kitty ran up ahead of him and on the top step, she turned and meowed as if she knew exactly what he was going to do.

He walked down the long dark hallway toward the old grey attic door, put his hand on the white stone knob and turned it, ready to insert a key. Slowly the latch drew back from its metal frame with a clunk. That was strange. It opened. Realizing he didn't need the keys after all, he slipped them into his pocket and pulled the old grey door wide open. Kitty slipped past Geordie, running into the large open space of the attic as if she knew exactly what they were going to do next.

Geordie peeked in. Sun rays filtered through the window glass showing dust particles in the air. The attic looked tidy – everything piled along the edge of the large room. He looked around again wishing there was more to see. What there was, looked old and discarded.

“Yuck. This is weird,” Geordie said, staring at the walls and ceiling. Well, he guessed it really wasn’t a ceiling, but the upside-down side of the roof. He decided there wasn’t anything strange about the attic room, and that Poppa was right. It wasn’t like the rest of the house; it was dull, dusty and drab.

Geordie wished he’d opened that door a long time ago and satisfied his curiosity. He was disappointed. He didn’t know what he thought he’d find, but what he did find was not worth the time he had taken to wonder what was behind the big door. Kitty scooted out of the attic and down the steps as if to announce that Geordie had opened the door and gone into the attic.

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He followed Kitty, hung the keys back up on the hook and went back to play with his Lego. He no sooner lay down on his rug than little pieces of fluff and sawdust dropped onto his castle. Again he heard the same noises, this time it was like a rhythm . . . one, two . . . one, two.

He went back to playing. “I’m not going to pay any attention,” he murmured. But, his curiosity persuaded him differently. He got up and walked slowly past his sleeping poppa toward the staircase. He looked around again for his grammie, but she was nowhere to be seen. Kitty ran past Geordie, climbing the stairs as if she was excited at making a great discovery.

Geordie followed and then walked down the long dark hallway toward the attic door. When he reached it, he put his hand on the white stone knob and pulled it – expecting it to open immediately as it had the previous time, but it didn’t move. Geordie tried again, but it wouldn’t budge. Kitty looked up at him and meowed as if she was disappointed too. Confused, Geordie wondered why it had opened and now it wouldn’t. He looked at the attic door. It looked the same now as it had twenty minutes ago. What was different?

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He sat down on the floor and looked at the door. He thought back to the other times he’d come up here. Once he’d come, like just this time and tried to open the door – but it wouldn’t open. Then he brought the keys, not just one but all three. And even though he hadn’t used any of them, the door had opened.

“Hmm. I was prepared the last time and didn’t even need a key . . . and this time, I don’t have a key, but I need it,” Geordie said aloud.

All at once Geordie laughed. Kitty looked at him as if she had it all figured out and wondered if Geordie had finally solved the puzzle. He got up, raced downstairs, past Poppa, over to the key

rack and picked all three keys off, and stuffed them into his pocket. Turning around, he spotted Poppa's flashlight on a side table. "Ah ha! This time, I'm going to be really prepared," he said as he grabbed the flashlight and raced back upstairs. Kitty ran ahead of him and then when he passed her, she ran behind him. Down the long dark hallway they went to the old grey attic door. Without even taking any of the keys out of his pocket, Geordie put his hand on the cold white stone knob, turned it . . . and pulled the door open. Then he switched the flashlight on.

Geordie looked around the grand room with the sunlight filtering through the attic windows, rays dancing in the air like sparkling diamonds. The pine floor looked like a huge ball room. Teddy bears, toy soldiers and all kinds of dolls, along with fairies and elves twirled and paraded, laughed and chatted with each other. Nobody even looked towards Geordie or Kitty.

Then out of the corner of his eye, Geordie noticed something move. He turned his head and saw Grammie sitting a large chair, smiling.

"Welcome, Geordie, and Kitty too," she said. "You finally figured out how to open the door."

"I did, Grammie, but this . . . all this, I can't figure out." He pointed across the room.

"Oh, you mean, why you didn't see this the first time you came in?" Grammie asked.

"Yes, there were only boxes lined up and it was so dusty and . . ."

"Sometimes Geordie, what we expect to see fools us from seeing what's really there. Sometimes, we need to take a closer look at things." Grammie laughed. "Now, don't you like surprises?"

"Oh, but I do," Geordie said. "And, I don't want to miss anything."

"That's my boy," Grammie said.

Kitty meowed as if she had figured all of this out long ago.

"Kitty, you didn't know this all the time, did you?" Geordie asked. Turning toward Grammie, he asked, "Did she learn it from you, Grammie?"

"No matter. Like I said, we don't use this room much, but that doesn't mean the room isn't used." Grammie winked at Geordie. "Look, I think Kitty wants to join in the fun."

### Thinking Time

I'm so glad you wanted this story. Do you think Geordie learned some important lessons in the attic? Like maybe how important it is to be prepared for lots of things. Being prepared might even help you return your homework on time or organize your sports equipment for your games.

Do you think Geordie's Grammie wanted him to keep an open mind and to think about lots of possibilities? That kind of attitude will always help you have a wide understanding in every situation. You might even get surprised like Geordie and that would be fun.

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