

100 Cupboards

N. D. Wilson

REVIEWED BY: Ryan Lee

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are!® Charity

www.bethestaryouare.org

Every kid has a room in the house they're not allowed to go into, upon pain of grounding and severe parental punishment. Every kid likes to imagine that there's a very good reason for this, and not just parents being parents. In N. D. Wilson's novel *100 Cupboards*, there is a very good reason Grandfather's old bedroom is off limits. It happens to contain the nexus for a group of cupboards that serve as portals to other worlds. Unfortunately, the cupboards themselves do not stay locked up, and instead begin to branch out into the neighboring rooms.

Henry York is a twelve-year old boy from the city who is sent to live with his uncle, aunt, and three cousins in a Kansas town also named Henry after his parents are kidnapped for ransom. His uncle Frank is an eccentric man who runs a secret online store (secret only from his wife) selling oddities such as tumbleweed, and his aunt Dottie is the typical rural wife concerned only with making sure her kids are fed well and cared for. His cousins are the mature-for-her-age Penelope, the gossipy-and-irritating Anastasia, and the normal-enough Henrietta. His first few days see him settle into the normal summer routine, playing baseball with kids who don't know he's bad at it and playing with his cousins to appease his family-oriented aunt. Then, in the middle of the night, something pokes through his wall. In a few days, a hole in his wall has revealed an astonishing array of ninety-nine cupboards of different shapes and sizes. There are two knobs that appear to open them, and between the two there are thousands of combinations, making it very difficult to guess what combination opens which lock. Still, Henry and Henrietta are drawn in by their curiosity, and spend time fiddling with the locks, until eventually one cupboard opens and they can see an entirely different room with a strange man walking around.

So begins a strange, surreal adventure for the two young cousins and the rest of their family. *100 Cupboards* is, if nothing else, an interesting read. I wasn't very enthusiastic about reading what seemed to be another run-of-the-mill fantasy novel, and indeed the book seems very plain until almost the very end, where the plot takes a sinister turn unusual for a children's book, and almost in the vein of Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Events that appeared to be innocuous and innocent suddenly take on a new, more meaningful tone and thus give the novel more depth than it previously appeared to have.