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Approx. 7,000 Words

TOUCH OF EVIL

by Evie Rhodes

Jimmy Owens ran as fast as his eleven-year-old legs would carry him. His mother was going to kill him. He should have been home long ago from his errand to pick up eggs from the store. He had stopped to talk with his friends on the corner block. His mother would be furious that her baking would be delayed.

Jimmy looked up at the darkened Saturday afternoon sky. It looked like it was going to pour at any moment. He hadn't worn his rain slicker, so if he didn't hurry he would be drenched.

He paused on the corner to wait for the light. He decided he'd take a short cut through the cemetery. Sometimes he and the other kids cut through the cemetery on their way home from school.

He lived on Mahl Ave. in Hartford, Connecticut. The two and three story homes in the area had been mostly revitalized. The cemetery was the oldest patch of land left untouched in the neighborhood.

The light turned red. Jimmy scurried across Main Street and darted through the old black wrought iron gates of the cemetery.

Just as he darted past a tall monument there was a high-pitched shriek. The sky turned pitch black. His heart thundered in his chest. The blood pumped in his ears. He willed his legs to move faster, but one of his feet got stuck. He looked down. His foot was sinking. Something was pulling it into the ground.

"Oh God," he muttered as he yanked at his pants leg trying to free his foot.

A glob of something wet landed on his cheek. It hadn't started to rain yet, though lightening was beginning to flash. He touched his left cheek drawing back a hand filled with spittle.

Someone had spit on him. He looked around there was no one there. He yanked his foot again. It was free. Whatever had been holding his foot was gone.

Just as he realized he was free to run again, a howling screeched through the air. What felt like an eerie bony finger

touched his chest, though there was nothing in front of him. His insides shivered. And, the glob of spittle was now running down his cheek.

Jimmy screamed as he forced his legs to run. At that moment the skies let loose, thunder rolled through the cemetery with the sound of a sonic boom. Torrents of rain fell in the graveyard turning everything to mud. It looked as though the tombstones were sinking in the mud, disappearing from the cemetery.

"Ma!" Jimmy screamed as he ran.

He arrived on the back porch of his house drenched in his own sweat. His skin was clammy. He was wet as a seal. He shivered from head to toe. He listened to see if there were any sounds coming from the kitchen. He had to pull himself together before facing his Mom.

"Oh God. Not again," he said as he heard the familiar strains of haunting music. He hated when she got in one of her spiritual moods. Particularly this one. It was downright creepy. He didn't need creepy today. He was scared to death. It would take hours before she would lift herself from the mood of chariots that carried people home.

He dried himself in the small hall outside of the kitchen so as not to freak her out. In the kitchen he put the eggs on the table. He opened the carton. Just as he suspected a couple

of them had gotten broken. He'd just tell her he had tripped or something.

He went into the bathroom, threw on the light and stared wide-eyed at himself in the mirror. His eyes had opened so wide in fright that they dominated his narrow face, creating a picture of shock.

The rain had all but washed away the spittle. But, he felt his skin crawling. He stuck his face under the faucet, scrubbing it in an effort to wash away the dirty feeling of someone's spit on his face.

Passing his mother's room he saw that the windows were wide open. The curtains were blowing in the breeze. Rain was streaming through the window.

His mother lay on her back just like she always did when she listened to this song. Her eyes were open. Her arms were folded across her chest. She always chose to do this on rainy, eerie days. He hated it. Walking in the room he looked at the stereo set. The music grew louder as if in answer to his dislike.

"Mom," he called.

She didn't stir. She looked dead. He caught his breath. Her chest wasn't moving. He watched for the rise and fall of it. There was nothing. Usually he could see her shallow breathing.

"Mom," he yelled as fear gripped him. He shook her.

"Mom!" Slowly she turned to look at him.

"What's the matter Jimmy?"

"Nothing," he mumbled. "I just wanted to make sure you were okay."

"I'm fine baby boy." She peered at him closely noticing he looked ashen or perhaps frightened. "How about you?"

While she was in a concerned mood would be a good time to tell her about the eggs. "I tripped and fell Mommy. I broke a couple of eggs. I'm sorry."

She ran a hand across his forehead. It was feverish, downright hot to the touch. "That's okay baby. Things happen. But don't take so long next time. Okay?"

"Okay."

"You're hot. Are you coming down with something?" She put a hand to his throat.

"No. I feel fine Mom. I was just running that's all." Anxious to get away before she got a real good look at him he kissed her on the cheek, hurrying from the room. Distancing himself from that eerie music.

He loved gospel music. In fact he went to services at Faith Congregational Church every Sunday. He always sang at the top of his lungs along with the Choir. He just didn't like that old, scary sounding music. It gave him the heebie-jeebies.

For some reason that particular song along with his Mom's way of listening to it made his insides jittery. He escaped into his room where he could figure out what had happened to him and get away from that haunting music.

That night at dinner he had a hard time concentrating. His mother looked at his plate frowning. "Jimmy eat your food. You love spaghetti why aren't you eating it?"

He continued to push the food around his plate. "I don't know. I don't feel really hungry."

"Does that mean you don't want any of my famous butter pound cake either?"

He smiled. "Could it wait until tomorrow Mommy? My stomach feels a little funny."

His mother sighed, "Okay. Why don't you lay down for awhile maybe you'll feel better."

He left the table. In his room he decided to put on 101 Dalmatians his favorite movie. He needed to watch something happy. As he stuck the tape in the VCR he caught a glimpse of a shadow from the corner of his eye. He jumped; turning but there was nothing there.

In the kitchen he could hear his mother humming. Things were normal he was just imagining things. He plopped in the tape, settling in for watching the cute spotted doggies that he loved so much.

He was so exhausted his eyes grew heavy, closing of their own accord before he was a third of the way through the movie. His mother came in and turned off the television. She tucked the covers under his chin, kissing him softly on the cheek.

He looked exhausted. He must be coming down with something. She touched him to find his skin was still clammy. She decided to see how he was doing in the morning.

In the middle of the night he found himself in the cemetery again. The moonlight cast shadows among the many stones and mausoleums. The ground turned to quicksand sucking him under. He screamed. There was no one to hear him.

Underneath the ground he was dropped into what appeared to be a hallway. It was a long, dark corridor of space. There wasn't a sliver of light. A presence felt but unseen was behind him. He couldn't help it. He started to cry. He was so scared. And, he didn't know what to do. His whole body trembled.

He yelled out, "Don't touch me! Please! Don't touch me!" He sat up to find he was in his own room. Exhausted he lay shivering in his bed. His eyes closed. In the morning he had no recollection at all of the previous night. He didn't know why his pajamas had dirt on them.

Sunday morning he crammed down bacon, eggs and toast with jelly. He was in sunny spirits. He appeared to have gotten

over his jitters. "Mom I need money for the basket," he said with his mouth full of food.

"I know. Stop talking with food in your mouth. I told you about that." She placed some money on the table.

He swallowed his food before attacking the next item. "Don't forget I'm going to Aunt May's after church."

"I know baby boy you go every Sunday."

Aunt May was a relic in the tight knit neighborhood. She was seventy-five-years old. Every Sunday after services he went to her house to read scriptures to her, as her eyesight wasn't too keen anymore. At least when it came to reading.

He was an advanced reader, although he was in the sixth grade he read at a ninth grade level so he was Aunt May's chosen reader. It was a Sunday afternoon ritual. He read. She cooked and baked. He loved the time he spent with her. There was no one like Aunt May. There just wasn't.

He grabbed the money from the table. "Okay Mom I'll see you when I get back."

His mother kissed him on the forehead. "Say a little prayer for me."

"I always do Mom." He smiled then shot out the back door.

In church that morning he sang at the top of his lungs along with the choir. Albeit a bit off key. A few glances were

tossed his way. He didn't care. He sang and sang loudly. Maybe it would wash away the darkness that had touched him.

At the designated time he arrived on Aunt May's front porch. She was sitting in her rocker waiting for him as usual. Aunt May was an astonishing looking woman.

Her hair was blue-silver. She had dreadlocks that hung to her waist. Amazingly for a woman her age her hair was still relatively lustrous and thick. Most likely because she cared for it with natural herbs and ingredients.

She didn't bother with chemicals or straightening ingredients. She never had. She preferred a more natural way of life.

Her skin was a creamy cocoa brown, almost translucent in nature. It was smooth and for the most part unlined. She always wore the same housedress with a full apron tied around it. Her clothes were highly starched and pressed. She'd used the same launderer for more than thirty years.

Everyone in the neighborhood called her Aunt May. She was everyone's Aunt May. Her spryness of spirit, her gentle kindness was the subject of many a conversation. She was also known for her second sight. She'd been born with a caul over her face. They always said black babies had a second sight when they were born with that extra film covering their face.

In Aunt May's case it was nothing but truth. She had been known to dig some black folks out of deep, hot water with her vision. It was their best-kept secret.

Today as she looked at Jimmy Owens she was deeply disturbed. Although she said nothing as the boy came to hug her.

They went inside the study where he read the required scriptures, Proverbs and Psalms. Aunt May's favorites. When he was finished reading she said, "You can't ever go wrong reading Proverbs and Psalms, Jimmy. The Proverbs hold knowledge and wisdom. Psalms has all the prayers and praises. My Lord that David was a praying man." She chuckled.

She peered over her trifocals at him. "Always follow God's wisdom, Jimmy. Give him his respect by praying. Salute him with praises. If you do that then he'll always be there for you. You can count on that. Uh-huh."

"Yes Ma'am," he replied.

"What's your favorite scripture?" Aunt May removed the trifocals cleaning them on the hem of her apron.

He scrunched up his nose. "I like the one where Peter walked on the water." He paused. "Except then he fell in. I think that'd be really cool to walk on water."

"Do you know why he fell in?"

"Naw. I guess he just wasn't paying attention."

Aunt May couldn't help smiling. "Sure he was. He fell in because he lost his faith. The reason he was able to walk on the water is because when Jesus told him to come to him by walking on the water he believed he could."

"Once he started walking on the water he was so astonished he couldn't believe he was doing it. Child if he had kept on believing he'd a kept on walking."

"Wow! That's awesome. Too bad Peter fell in. I wish Jesus would let me walk on the water. That'd be hot!"

Aunt May smiled once again. "Maybe one day you will. When the time comes all you've got to do is believe."

Aunt May gazed at the slight youth. Jimmy was a bit tall for his age. He was skinny which was why Aunt May was always trying to put a little meat on his bones.

Luminescent light brown eyes stood out in his face. He had heavy sweeping black lashes. He wore his hair in twists, which served to accentuate the fine bone structure of his face. He was a very handsome young boy. One day he would grow into a dangerously handsome young man.

Aunt May batted her eyes behind the trifocals. She loved this little boy. He had one of the sweetest spirits she had ever seen. He was the kind of kid you wanted to sweep up in your arms to love and protect. Aunt May pulled herself from her reverie. "Are you ready for dinner and dessert?"

He laughed. "Sure it smells good in here Aunt May." The smell of warm, fresh baked corn muffins were already wafting into his nostrils.

"What are we having?"

"Well, I've got some barbecued chicken. It's falling off the bones I tell ya. I've got macaroni and cheese, collard greens and corn muffins. Once you've finished that off we can move on to sweet potato pie."

"Yeah. I'm ready." He was as ready as could be Aunt May was an excellent cook.

After dinner and dessert Aunt May walked him to the door. She leaned heavily on her cane. Setting the cane aside she put both hands on the boy's cheeks looking into the depths of his eyes.

When she touched him a deep dark foreboding swept through her right arm. An electrical current was generating from his left cheek. It was so strong it caused her to remove her hand. Upon removing her hand she saw that his cheek was marked. There was a small hoof mark embedded in his skin. It was not visible to the natural human eye.

Angered Aunt May put her hand back on his cheek suffering a fiery hot electrical shock but she refused to remove her hand this time. She bent down to kiss his forehead. Her arm aching

in agony she gazed over the top of his head out onto the porch before releasing him for a last time.

He hugged her. "Bye Aunt May. Thanks for dinner and dessert.

"You're welcome baby. Don't forget to give your Mama that slice of pie. You know how she loves my sweet potato pie."

"I won't. See you next Sunday Aunt May."

Aunt May only nodded then she watched as he ran down the street toward his home.

When he was gone she went to stand on the back porch. From her property she could see the old cemetery. "Dear Jesus," she uttered.

She knew without a doubt that at some point Jimmy Owens had cut through that cemetery. And, when he had he had somehow come in contact with a force that had been rumored about many years ago. But, that Aunt May knew to be true. That force had come to fruition before in the form of the flesh.

"Mercy, mercy me," she said. Then the old woman went to her study. Upon entering she dipped her fingers in a silver stern set by the door which held holy water. It had been in the exact same spot for more than one hundred years. Her mother had left her the property.

Aunt May's mother had been a humble and pious woman. She'd never entered the study without dipping her fingers in the holy water and making the sign of the cross.

Aunt May went to a drawer of the 1880 German Biedermeier roll top desk. She pulled out an old parchment of translucent paper attached to a scroll. Putting a wobbly finger to the text she scanned the document with her fingers. The secret of the document was encoded in Braille. It was going to be a long night.

When he arrived home he gave his mother the sweet potato pie. He did his homework, took a shower and then went to bed.

At the stroke of midnight a loud rattling awakened Jimmy's mother. She sat straight up in bed. Listening. There it was again. It was coming from Jimmy's room.

She jumped out of bed making her way to her son's room. It sounded like a wind gale was trying to tear into the boy's room. There was no sign of this in any other part of the house.

She touched the doorknob to open the door. The doorknob was blazing hot. It scorched her hand. She looked down at her hand to see a nasty blister already forming.

"Jimmy!" she called banging on the door.

"Jimmy open the door. It's Mommy." There was no answer. Not able to imagine why the doorknob was hot she ran to the

kitchen to get a dishtowel. She could hear her blood pounding in her ears. Something was wrong.

She turned the knob with the towel still it wouldn't open. Finally panicked she threw her weight against the door. The howling against the windows in the room was growing louder.

"Jimmy," she cried out "Jimmy!" She slammed her shoulder against the door. It didn't give an inch.

She heard a noise behind her. She nearly jumped out of her skin. By now she was crying as well as very frightened. Something was going on in her boy's room. He wasn't answering and she couldn't get in. Turning she saw Aunt May.

"Aunt May how did you get in here?"

"It don't make no never mind Danielle. I'm in." Aunt May's shoulders drew taller as she gathered the cane in front of her. She stared into Danielle's eyes.

"Danielle behind that door lies a touch of evil. Something you've never seen before. Jimmy is in great trouble, child."

Danielle wept. "No Aunt May. It's just that the door is stuck. If I could just get it open-" Before she could finish her sentence there was a terrible howling. Then the sound of shattered glass behind the door.

A wind tunnel blew from underneath the door so hard it tossed both women backward.

Danielle grabbed Aunt May. She was frightened out of her wits. Aunt May pulled a cross from her pocket putting it around Danielle's neck. "Whatever happens hold tight to this. Wrap your hand around it and don't let go of it. No matter what you see in this room Danielle stand strong. Hold onto this cross. Keep the name of Jesus firmly in the forefront of your mind."

Danielle was trembling. But she wrapped her good hand around the cross. Tears streamed down her face. She swallowed hard.

"Do you understand what I'm saying girl?"

Danielle nodded.

"Tonight the chariot is going to swing low but there's nothing sweet about it and it didn't come from heaven. Stay in back of me. Remember what I said it's going to be very important to Jimmy's survival."

Danielle took a step in back of the old woman. Aunt May leaned on her cane walking closer to Jimmy's bedroom door. Danielle followed her.

When she reached the door she gazed heavenward, then threw her head back. Before she could speak a red scrawling slowly drew its message on the door. "DON'T OPEN THE DOOR!"

Aunt May put her hand on the doorknob. The sound of many banshees screeching greeted her. She turned the knob. It was no longer hot. The door popped open.

Danielle gasped. Her fingers tightened on the cross. Shards of glass covered the room. It was stuck in the walls, on the closet doors and in the rug. It looked like ice crystals had formed all over the room. Where the windows used to be there was a gaping hole.

Sitting in the middle of this chaos with his back turned was Jimmy. He was sitting ramrod straight. Not a muscle moved. Danielle was scared. She wanted to see his face. She had never in her life witnessed this posture on her son.

There was a deep presence of authority surrounding him. She could feel waves of blackness emanating from him although his back was turned.

Aunt May stepped through the door. Danielle hung back. A voice laced with a bottomless growl spoke rising from the boy's throat. "Get out old woman you don't belong here."

"Neither do you." Aunt May took a step closer to Jimmy. "Jimmy turn around." There was no movement. Wind blew through the gaping hole where the window used to be. Aunt May forged forward. "Jimmy I said turn around."

He did without ever getting to his feet. He was sitting in an old Indian sprawl. His entire body whipped around. When they could see his face it was all Danielle could do to keep from fainting.

Aunt May only nodded. Jimmy looked like a hundred-year-old man. His skin was full of wrinkles. His head was completely bald. But it was his eyes that told the story. They were completely black. It looked like black marble had been stuck in his eye sockets. From this vantage point he gazed at the two women.

Danielle took a step forward as she stared incredulously at the being. "You're not my son! Jimmy! Where's my son?"

Aunt May put up a hand to block her. "Stand still Danielle!" She halted.

The old man spoke. "You want to see your son?" Instantly the image changed. Jimmy looked at them with pure agony streaming from his eyes. There were red welts all over his body as though he had been whipped. He never moved his lips but his eyes spoke volumes.

He was encased in what was the equivalent of a spiritual bubble.

The metamorphosis of the old man was again in front of them. The room grew dusky, black. Then normal light returned. There was a sharp intake of breath as Danielle tried to control her shaking. She was stunned as well as speechless.

Aunt May pointed her cane at the old man's chest. "You have tried to mark a child of God. As such you will not be successful in this vessel."

The old man tilted his head. "You're quite feisty in your old age Maybelline."

Danielle frowned but said nothing.

"Perhaps I should show you a mirror. You're standing on an illusion."

"I'm standing on truth. Spirit has always been more powerful than flesh. You know that Claude."

The old man chuckled. "So you think you know who I am?"

"I would say that's one of your many names."

The old man's eyes glittered. The bedroom door slammed shut behind them. His eyes turned cat green before returning to black marble.

He peered beneath the veneer of Aunt May seeing the vision of her running her hand over the scroll. "Hmmm."

Aunt May stared into the dark marble of his eyes. She was immediately transferred to a dark tunnel. There wasn't a sliver of light. The darkness was alive, vibrant and seething. In the midst of the darkness she could barely make out a hovering form.

Finally recognizing the form the words "Oh God" flew unbidden from her lips. The bubble that Jimmy was encased in was sitting in the middle of the tunnel.

He was being held in deep spiritual imprisonment. And, with each moment that passed Claude was closer to claiming him.

He needed to be freed from the bubble. There was only one way to accomplish that.

Aunt May looked into the twin tunnels of black marble.

"Claude you've been dead for fifty years."

The bald wrinkled one shook his head. "Merely sleeping Maybelline. Waiting for the fountain of youth to cross my path. You know a great deal about slumbering. Your Jimmy ventured into the void. He awakened me."

"So you marked him?"

The hoofs print on Claude's right cheek vibrated turning blood red at her spoken words.

There was a loud intake of breath from Danielle. She clutched the cross closer. One name shouted through the recess of her mind. Jesus.

"As it should be," he said.

Aunt May turned her back on Claude. She looked at Danielle. A rumbling erupted from Claude's being shaking the room. Aunt May ignored it.

"Claude was a weak man when he lived Danielle. He lived and died in this very neighborhood. He's buried in the cemetery over there." Aunt May pointed in the general direction.

"He was old, mean, crotchety and evil. He made a deal with the devil. Wanted to live forever so he could continue enticing young ones into damnation. Over the years he lived he turned a

few heads. He spit on your child, marking him as the vessel through which he can live again.”

Aunt May took off her trifocals. She wiped them on the bottom of her apron hem. “I want you to know he made the wrong choice.”

Tears streamed down Danielle’s face. Her fear was palpable. She sniffled.

“Your boy is not weak. Merely scared, Danielle.”

Claude had had enough. His monument rose in the room where Jimmy’s bed used to be. In great prominence it ascended. Aunt May turned again to face him. There was no fear in her.

Claude for the first time rose to his feet. Rolls of flabby, wrinkled flesh unfolded. His skin turned charcoal black. He presented Jimmy once again. The identical hoof marks on each of their cheeks glowed. Then there was a merger. The two joined as one. All that was left was the charcoal black of a man.

Danielle promptly fainted.

“The chariot is swinging low tonight as you’ve said. It will not return empty,” Claude said.

Suddenly there was a loud snap in the room. The translucent parchment scroll appeared. It hung in the air between the two of them. Then it snapped shut with utter finality.

Aunt May smiled. "Jesus. You do remember him?"

Claude blanched. His charcoal black flesh quivered.

"The secret of the scroll. You know what's on there." A howling wind carried away the last of Aunt May's words.

Claude was pissed. The room descended as though it were falling from a great height. Aunt May was knocked off her feet. The room plunged deeper and faster.

Aunt May yelled out, "It says if I knock."

The room spun around. Still Aunt May went on. "And, any man answers."

The walls from the room divided. Only the floor on which Aunt May was lying along with Danielle was left.

Aunt May hyperventilated. She closed her eyes, calmed her breathing and grabbed hold of her cane climbing to her feet in the tilting, plunging room.

Her voice grew strong, mighty like a rushing wind. "I will come in and sup with him. That meant man, woman or boy Claude. This boy has heard that knock. And he answered!"

A force backhanded Aunt May in the mouth. "Shut up you stupid old woman." Aunt May reeled. But, she held on to her cane for strength.

"Come forth little Jimmy," Aunt May called stretching forth her cane.

At her words she stood at the end of the dark tunnel. She could see the bubble in the center. The live red welts on the boy's body were pulsating. Invisible lashes slashed, ripped and cut into his skin.

Aunt May made eye contact with Jimmy. The darkness in the tunnel grew more alive. The banshees were screeching. The merger Claude had put forth was nothing more than a deceitful illusion. He could not merge with this child. Jimmy was still separated from him, alive within the bubble.

"Jimmy!"

"Yes," he said. His voice was tiny but she could hear it.

"Jesus wants you to walk on the water baby. Look directly in front of you. You will see it. Concentrate."

Blood was streaming from the corners of Jimmy's eyes. He was praying. He prayed so hard, rivulets of sweat mixed with his blood. He prayed until he saw a crystal clear stream. It was stretched out in front of him exactly as Aunt May said.

More lashes landed across his back. A stinging cord wrapped itself around his neck, squeezing. The oxygen was quickly depleting from his lungs. He was in mortal agony.

Aunt May's voice came again. "You remember Peter?"

"Yes Aunt May," Jimmy squeaked out. His voice was barely a whisper.

"Okay baby start walking."

Jimmy stood. The crystal clear stream of water came crashing through the bubble. He took a tentative step. The water embraced him, supporting his weight.

Calmness swept over him. The pain subsided. Joy filled him. He took another step. Lifting his head, looking heavenward he walked. And, through the darkness he could see the light. Tears streamed down his cheeks.

The healing properties of the water splashed over him. The blood red welts began to fade. He could see the formation of Aunt May surrounded in light her arms outstretched toward him.

Claude yelled out a last time, "No!"

The banshees screeched again. A female spirit in Gaelic Folklore who's wailing was a warning that one of them would die. The black charcoal flesh turned to dust. As it did the hoof mark on Jimmy's cheek disappeared. It was a final death. Jimmy kept on walking.

"This is hot Aunt May! I'm doing it. I'm really doing it!"

Crystal clear water rained down on him washing away the remaining welts. The blood from his skin seeped into the water. The darkness faded turning to light just as he put his hand in Aunt May's at the end of the stream.

Danielle awakened to find Aunt May cradling Jimmy in her arms. His room had been restored. Danielle rushed over hugging the two of them. Together they wept.

Finally, Danielle looked at Aunt May. "I. . .I don't know how to thank you."

Aunt May patted her hand. "Child a gift is never any good unless you use it."

Out in the cemetery one of the monuments sunk into the ground never to be seen or heard from again. Although Jimmy was cradled in Aunt May's arms against her bosom he saw the large stone sink.

He too had been born with a caul over his face. Unbeknownst to him with this gift came great burdens. The ability to see things that others could not.

A patch of dirt leveled out over its spot. The last thing he saw was the carving of the name Claude Jackson disappear beneath the earth.

He heard the familiar strains of someone singing the haunting spiritual. However he was no longer afraid. The sheer power of the music wrapped itself around him, transporting him to an apparition in time that only those with a spiritual sight beheld. He discovered it was not a scary but a beautiful place to be.

Meanwhile he was wrapped against Aunt May in a bosom of love. She too was caught up in the haunting spiritual. His mother gazed over their heads into the mirror. She shut her eyes.

Jimmy shivered remembering the crystal clear stream of water. He could still see the brilliant light. He had seen all the reflections of the rainbow.

"All you've got to do is believe right Aunt May?"

Aunt May cradled him closer. Then she nodded. "That's all you've got to do is believe Jimmy."

"I do."

As the last strains of the song were spirited away, Danielle who had also heard the haunting spiritual said, "Godspeed."

Several days later Jimmy made his way to school. He decided against cutting through the cemetery. He would never cut through there again.

As he walked outside of the black wrought iron gates a gravesite near the corner caught his eye. It was blooming with colored flowers, the most prominent being the white lilies that were in full bloom springing up all around the grave.

Jimmy couldn't help it. His curiosity got the best of him. He ventured close enough to the gate where he could read the

tombstone inscription. It read: Maybelline Riley (Aunt May) A Gifted Child Of God.

Jimmy's heart skipped a beat. Quickly he scanned the inscription for the date. His whole body broke out in a cold sweat. He trembled. Aunt May had been dead many years before he was ever born.

Suddenly he recalled the old spiritual, the soft voice had been singing about going home. Aunt May had been there. He had been so caught up in the power of the music its total implication had escaped him.

He remembered how translucent her skin was. How when he touched her, it was like touching a feather. How when people talked about her it was always in the past tense.

Yet she had been there for him. He had gone there every Sunday and she had been there. She was there for only he and his Mom to see.

Finally he remembered looking in the mirror, seeing only the image of he and his mother reflected back. Deep inside he had known but he hadn't wanted to accept. The burden of the second sight. Blessed and burdened.

Jimmy gasped. He rose to his feet. As he did a wind blew the lilies back and he could see there was something nestled inside the lilies, lying at the base of the stone.

He stooped down reaching his hand through the gate. He stretched his fingers forth until he could touch the object. It was a scroll. Jimmy ran his fingers across it discovering he could read the encoded message in Braille. On it were the same words that had saved him from darkness.

Next to the scroll was a Bible. It was open to the 23rd Psalm.

The haunting of Aunt May's words washed over him. "All you've got to do is believe Jimmy." An old woman's belief had transcended the parallels of time, of life and of death.

Her belief had been strong enough to lay the foundation for his. Then, he had come into his own. It had risen him above a touch of evil. Amen.

THE END