

Tom Doyle  
2102 17th St. NW  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 234-8755  
tmdoyle2@yahoo.com

about 5300 words

## GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

by Tom Doyle

Two boys stared, but Katie kept dancing. She checked her sweater and skirt, then ran a hand over her hair, just to make sure she didn't look as freakish as the boys made her feel. Nothing--she wouldn't be junior prom queen, but she hadn't sprouted a moustache either. The boys still staring? Yep.

Katie kept moving, distracted, a little off the beat. She stepped tentatively, not wiggling her hips.

The closer boy, Bill, danced in their cluster of a dozen Fellowship Club friends. Katie liked Bill--he combined Christian with cute, and a quick kiss at evening's end wouldn't have been a sin. But Bill made her nervous. He had been trying to get next to her since she had

participated in healing his sprained ankle at Christian soccer camp. In Jesus's name, two soccer squads had laid hands on Bill, but he seemed particularly interested in Katie's touch.

Had he guessed Katie's sin? Couldn't have. She hadn't told anyone; she hadn't really done anything.

The other boy, Tally, worried her more. He stood farther away, slouching, not dancing. Not her type--nice enough in class, but he hung out with Satanists and stoners. Tonight, his blue eyes shot straight through the couples dancing between them and straight through her to the end of the world. The Antichrist would have eyes like that.

OK, OK, enough with the drama. Not *the* Antichrist, maybe *an* antichrist, most likely just a teenage boy in jeans that had faded unfashionably through use. But his stare sure creeped her out.

At least he kept away, near the underlit far wall and exit to the parking lot that his friends preferred. The other cliques occupied their traditional places; the lines of the basketball court roughly marked their divisions. The Christian Fellowship flocked near the gym's half-court line and the protruding stairs to the stage. Being center stage was part of bearing witness.

Still, maybe, even from a shadowy distance, Tally had guessed her sin too. Soon everyone would know.

Time to stop being paranoid. She had told God she was sorry, and she would never do it again, and that was that. What she had done was like Moses striking the rock twice, but God had forgiven Moses, and God would forgive her.

A slow song. Katie and her friends took a break and admired the banner decorations they had contributed to this junior class fall mixer: "Juniors Rule!" and "Dance, Warriors, Dance." Bill walked up with a stutter step and stood close to Katie.

“Are you OK? That son of a witch is still ogling you,” said Bill.

“What’s that?” asked Katie, uncertain she had heard correctly over the metal love ballad.

“Well, that’s what Tally is. His mom’s a witch.”

Bad, bad topic--too close to her sin. “Oh, come on. Nobody’s mom in Bloomfield Hills is a witch.” As a freshman, Katie had seen Tally’s mom picking him up after school, a rainbow of silks with crystals dangling from her ears, wrists, and neck. “I think the witchiepoo outfits just mean she’s a New Ager, or ex-hippie.”

“Pastor Chuck says that’s the same thing as a witch.”

“Whatever.” They both kept right on smiling, bearing witness of how happy they were to the unsaved kids.

Bill laughed. “Yeah, whatever. You wanna dance?” Unusually forward, Bill reached for her lanky bare arm.

She moved her arm, tucking back a stray strand of hair. “Tally isn’t so bad.” Oh shoot. She shouldn’t defend creepy Tally; Bill would only wonder why. But it was the argument at hand, and she didn’t want Bill so close to her.

“Right,” said Bill, no longer smiling. “Then why’s he partying with Satan Boy and Slut Girl?”

Yep, there they were, Pete and Laura talking with Tally. Pete wore a black T-shirt with the great horned god in a pentacle; Laura wore as little as she could get away with. Playing devil’s advocate wasn’t getting any easier. “Pete only acts that way to tee-off his parents. And to bait us.”

“We become what we pretend to be,” said Bill, voice strained with concern. “Whatever he thinks he’s doing, he’s putting his soul at risk. I don’t like him much, but I don’t want him to

go to hell. Let's pray on it." He reached again for her hand.

The music changed for the faster. "After this song," said Katie. She and her friends lined up on the floor again, all doing the same moves together. Bill grinned at her as they danced. Too much attention. She nodded back, but focused on keeping in step with the girls around her. At least Tally wasn't staring now.

###

"Dude, why you scoping out the God Squad?"

Tally couldn't answer Pete, 'cause that would mean admitting that he was scoping out one particular girl. Then Pete would snort at her overpriced cashmere sweater (not tight enough) and designer skirt (not short enough). He would not notice how her dark hair flowed around her pale face and neck. He would not see how Katie glowed.

Tally had missed discovering her light before, in the press of people in classrooms and corridors. Tonight, she had good contrast gainers. The chaperones had dimmed the gym lights to a twilight compromise. Like a full moon disco ball, Katie illuminated the dull circle of preppie dancers around her. He had never seen anyone so bright. She was thinking about the blond guy's ankle last summer...

"I know, I can't stand them either," said Pete. "Fucking God Squad. Look at them, in a herd, like cattle, to be safe. Dancing all together, so dancing with no one. When are they going to grow up?"

Tally nodded even though Pete, like Tally's mom, always read him wrong. How Tally regarded Katie and her friends wasn't the problem. Whenever Tally approached a girl, he could tell if she would rather be with some other guy or just be with her friends, which meant very few dates indeed. With Katie it was worse--from across the gym, she broadcasted how desperately

she wanted Tally to stay away.

A good Who song came on, not really danceable, so they all did the Detroit bop--anarchic jumping about like a concert audience or punk guitarists. Laura said, "You should ask someone to dance."

Tally shook his head. "Maybe later." He envied the ability to dance or chat with someone in the face of barely concealed disinterest. He craved the ability to touch someone without shame, without stealing her intimate knowledge through mere contact.

Tally continued to jump and spin in Pete and Laura's orbit and around the other black-clad metal heads until the song ended. "Whew, that got me winded," said Pete. "Want to go outside for a toke?"

"Not tonight," said Tally. He glanced reflexively back at Katie, who still glowed brightly. For once, he didn't want to dim his senses down. "You guys go ahead though." A little buzz for Pete and Laura might make their moods more pleasant to view.

"We should stop smoking so much," Pete said to Laura. "It always improves our psychic connection when we stop."

Tally leapt at this possibility. "Can you guys really read each other's minds?" Signs pointed to "no"--their lights weren't strong--but Tally never read his friends closely. Poking around their skulls would be an invasion, and they might get a peek inside his too. Maybe they had a private channel between them, enhanced by continuous contact.

"Sure, we're psychic," said Pete. Laura stayed silent, her disinterested brown eyes avoiding the boys.

"What's it like?" asked Tally. Did it resemble what he could do?

"It's like really knowing the soul of a person, and thinking of the same things at the same

time,” said Pete. “Like having one brain, and completing each other’s sentences and shit.” Laura studied her lace-up stiletto boots.

“Oh,” said Tally. Not like him at all. If he focused, Tally could tell exactly what a person thought, and it was never the same thing as him. Pete was probably talking shit again, like they all did. But Tally couldn’t stop now. He was so goddamned sick of being alone. He would tell them everything. “It’s just that, sometimes, I know what people really want, or what they’re really thinking.”

Laura’s eyes acquired obvious interest and a little fear. But Pete laughed at him. “Dude, you’re about the least psychic person I know. You should loosen up.”

Tally laughed too. Easier than crying. Easier to let it slide. Pete needed his monopoly on his supposed intuition--as shitty as it was, it gave Pete assurance with Laura, and a perceived edge over Tally. Tally would give his friend this edge. He was grateful to Pete and Laura because he could hide behind their weirdness from their classmates’ attention. But he wished he could talk to them, to someone, about the psychic shit.

Pete nodded towards the God Squad again. “Onward Christian soldiers, dancing as to war. Let’s go have some fun.” He flashed heavy metal devil’s horns with both hands.

Tally didn’t want to get anywhere near Katie, and he didn’t want Pete to bother her either. “Too easy,” he lied. “Like shooting dead horses in a barrel.”

But Pete was already bopping over towards the Born Agains. No surprise there. Satanism for Pete meant that “As Pete wills shall be the whole of the law.” As what Pete willed was to get high, make out with Laura, and play guitar, Pete’s Satanism was usually pretty cool. But Pete didn’t appreciate anybody judging him--not his parents, and not prissy kids who condemned him for stuff they hadn’t dared to try.

Laura followed Pete, and Tally followed behind them, hoping his friends would screen him from Katie's dismay.

###

"Here they come, the infidel horde," said Bill, hamming it up like some Crusader captain.

Katie gave a nervous little laugh. Then she whispered, "Let's keep it cool and Christian, OK? We don't want to help them ruin this dance for us." And Katie didn't want Tally on her side of the gym any longer than necessary. "Please?"

Pete and Laura were bounding towards them with Tally bringing up the rear, a black-attired incursion into the pink-and-green zone. Katie wasn't scared of stoners, Satanists, or sluts-- she felt pity and wanted to help them. But Tally made her want to curl up and hide, and she didn't know why.

Pete slithered up close to their line dance, waved his devil's horns in their faces, and yelled, "Hail, Satan!" He stuck out his tongue like the guy from Kiss.

Katie covered her mouth to stop the laughter. "That's very scary!" Sometimes sarcasm was no sin. A few girls giggled, a few guys snorted and made mocking finger crosses at him. Pete couldn't hide his disappointment. He rolled his eyes back into his head and babbled some Latin and random bits from the Book of Revelation, and fewer people paid attention. Just the same stuff as last year, and most of the Fellowship Club had grown up since then.

Bill and two girls held hands and murmured prayers. Silly under the circumstances, but at least Bill hadn't groped for *her* hand, and Pete didn't seem to notice the prayers as much as the giggles.

She darted a look towards Tally. She dreaded to find his blue eyes glaring back at her again. But Tally slouched quietly behind Pete and Laura, eyes to floor, almost as if he was

considerate of her feelings.

A “freak me baby” song came on, and Pete pulled Laura up close to him. They ground up against each other and shook their behinds vigorously in front of Katie’s group. Katie hoped the chaperones would intervene, but they were on their way outside to hunt for drinkers, chatting each other up and ignoring the action. Tally tapped at Pete, then Laura, as if he was scared to touch them for too long. “Dudes, come on, cut it.”

Bill grinned with clenched teeth in a fashion that only bore witness to his anger. He walked up to the couple and coughed. “Could you maybe dance somewhere more private?”

Laura licked her lips, then puckered for a kiss. Pete said, “You don’t own this part of the gym.”

Bill winked back at Katie, then prayed out loud, holding his palms open toward Pete and Laura, hamming it up like Pastor Chuck. “Lord, please remove Satan’s trash and his slutty girlfriend and their crappy sex show from our midst, and return them safely to their crappy houses in their crappy neighborhood. Amen!”

Not very cool or Christian. Both Pete and Laura turned towards Bill, and Katie wasn’t sure which of them would hit Bill first. Katie sidestepped in front of Bill, her back to the couple, stretching her own smile to the breaking point. “Bill, you wanna dance?”

Katie took Bill’s hand and put another on his shoulder, and pushed him backwards. Surprised, Bill nearly tripped over his own feet. Katie stole a glance around at Pete and Laura. Tally had firmly grabbed their shoulders, and was saying something into their ears.

Bill finally put his hand on her waist and made some dance steps. As Katie turned with him, she saw Pete and Laura sway away, waving their pronged fingers in salute. Tally still faced Bill to cover their retreat. Where did his virtues come from? Considerate, and now loyal.



But not smart. On their next turn, Tally approached her and Bill. "I'm sorry about all that," he said, eyes roving everywhere but her direction, as if she was too ugly to behold for an instant. "Thank you."

Then Bill stopped dancing, and everything went to hell.

###

Still playing pastor, Bill reached out and patted Tally on the arm, as if Tally had thanked him instead of Katie. Tally didn't want this pure blond jock to touch him, didn't want to see his born-again thoughts, but didn't react quickly enough. So he saw, in graphic detail, what was on Bill's mind.

Ah, screw this shit--too fucking much to take right now. He shook his head clear and strained to keep the disgust off his face. He was done for the evening. Katie would have to fend for herself. He turned to go, out the door and all the way home.

Bill must have seen his reaction, and like everyone else read it wrong. "Whatcha leaving us for, Taliesin? Has your mother come on her broomstick for you?"

The last eight-hundred-pound straws. No one but Tally's mother had called him "Taliesin" in ten years. Bill must have seen his school records. Mom had sacrificed his pride to the New Age, then her own dignity and money. He was so damned pissed at her, but she didn't deserve shit from this holy prick. Fuck it--they all thought he was creepy anyway. Time to give them a real reason to shun him. He sighted his gaze on Bill and fired back.

"Why don't you just say it, Bill? You want to fuck Katie. Whether she wants it or not, like an animal, till she begs for mercy. You want it so bad it keeps you up at night. You almost think Jesus is telling you it would be OK, but you know that's bullshit. Say it with me Bill. 'I want to fuck Katie Bridges sideways.'"

Tally read them all in a flash--Katie's horror at the truth, Bill's fury. He could feel Pete and Laura coming up behind him. Whaddya know, they cared a little. That was nice.

This time, Tally was ready. Bill's intent only showed a second before he swung, but that gave Tally a half-second to duck to the right. Bill's fist blew past his ear. Cool.

Smack! Tally had forgotten about Pete's face behind him.

Bill's swing carried him too far, and he tripped forward into Tally. Tally fell back against Pete, who was holding his hands to his nose. Like the final domino in the chain, Pete tumbled backwards, comically flailing his arms at the last instant as if putting on a show.

Thwack! Pete's head came down on the edge of the stage stairs with hard, wet sound. Tally and Bill rolled off him. Then Pete slumped the rest of the way to the ground.

Laura bent over Pete, ready to shake him awake. Tally got up on his knees and gasped, "Don't move him." He didn't need any extra perceptions to know shaking was a bad idea.

Some blood dripped from Pete's nose, but that was only on the outside. Tally put his hand on Pete, and felt a whole lot of wrong on the inside. Shit, he couldn't sort it out. Maybe a weak artery had burst. Pete's glow was fading, flickering. At this rate, it would be gone in minutes.

His friend would be dead in minutes, and it was his fault.

"Shit!" Tally covered his ears, but Katie's thoughts were a blinding scream in his head. Something about her sin, and Bill's ankle again.

A small crowd of students had gathered. At least one of the preppies would have a cell, but he needed to get Laura out of the way. "Call an ambulance."

"But, but, I want..."

"Do it. Now." He held her eyes for a moment, and she ran for the hallway phone. An

ambulance would be too late, but he would try everything anyway.

Tally stood up. “Nobody touch him,” he told the crowd, and they backed a step away.

He strode quickly over to Katie. No hesitation, because he didn’t care anymore if she hated him. Pete’s life was all that mattered.

Bill had retreated next to Katie. He waved his arms in front of him, trying to ward Tally off. “I didn’t mean it,” he said. “It was an accident.”

But Tally ignored him. “Katie, Pete’s brain is hurt. It’s getting worse. In a couple minutes he’s going to die. You’ve got to fix him. Please, heal Pete.”

###

Katie inched away from Tally. He had lost his slouch and aged a decade, as if he had shed a child’s mask. She should have run when Pete fell, run and not looked back. Now it was happening again, only worse.

No, it couldn’t be. No way Tally could diagnose brain damage, no way he could know about her. She would stay calm, and normal, and everything would be fine. She nodded slowly, humoring Tally. “We should pray together. But it’s Jesus who does the healing.” Or didn’t. But not her.

Bill nodded vacantly. “Yes, prayer. You go. I’ll pray from here. If I touch him again, they might think I... It was an accident.” Then he closed his eyes and mumbled a stream of words to Jesus. Definitely not very cool, Christian, or helpful to Katie.

Katie turned to her friends. Some had fled outside to find the chaperones. But as long as even one other person joined her, it would be OK. “Let’s lay hands on him and pray.” She stepped towards Pete. No one followed her.

Bill opened his eyes in sudden awareness. “Who are we kidding?” he said, miserably.

“He’s got to have faith. Jesus isn’t going to heal a Satanist.” Or help a son of a witch.

Tally’s eyes shone like unblinking crystals. They grew larger, closer to her. She looked away, towards Pete, but it she still saw Tally in her mind. He was speaking silently to her, but she could hear what he was saying. Pete didn’t need Jesus or anybody else. Just her.

Alone, Katie pushed through the crowd around Pete. She knelt beside him and laid her hands gently on his head. She felt warm blood bathing her hands. She pulled her hands away. Nothing on them. This was wrong. A sin.

She laid her hands on him again. She would try to do it right this time. She prayed to Jesus. “Help him.” *Help me*. She felt no response.

“Whatever you’re thinking, it’s just distracting you.” Tally was kneeling down beside her. She remembered Bill’s ankle last summer. Under the cover of numbers and Jesus’s name, power had flowed from her to heal Bill’s leg. She had felt that power spring from her alone, not her friends, and not Jesus. Or so she had thought then, and that thought was sinful pride, the worst offense against God.

But maybe it was also true. Hadn’t that been why Bill had dogged her since? Unconsciously, he knew where his healing had come from. And now Tally expected her to do the same thing again.

No real choice. She couldn’t knowingly let anyone die. She stopped praying, and got to work.

Katie concentrated hard, the way she did when the soccer ball flew towards her in goal. Soon, she couldn’t hear the music or the other kids, only Pete’s breathing. She smelled Pete’s goatish boy odor of new and vintage sweat. Heat ran down her arms, into her hands. She heard Tally tell her where to reach, tell her when Pete’s light got better. Her hands burned, pouring heat

into Pete's skull. It felt scary but right, so she kept her hands steady, no matter how damned tired she got. Tired.

Everything went blank.

Then Tally was fanning her face with his hands. "Katie, let go. The ambulance is here."

Katie let go. Her head hurt; she wanted to lie down on the floor and sleep. But she had to move out of the way for two medics rushing about Pete. They crouched next to him with their large plastic cases.

"God damn it!"

Like Bela Lugosi from his coffin, Pete sat up, swearing. The crowd gasped; Bill yelled; the medics fell back on their butts. Pete's wide eyes darted around, confused. He held up a hand, motioning the medics to wait. Ever so slowly, he stood up. The medics checked his pupil response and turned his head to examine it, then asked him some questions.

The chaperones had reentered with the medics. They also had some questions. Pete said, "I fell." They smelled his breath, and in another miracle didn't detect any intoxicants. Had she fixed that too? No matter--everyone was happy. The medics smiled. "He might as well stay here where you can watch him. Just make sure he doesn't pass out." They shook their heads, and left the gym.

A fast song came on; some kids were dancing again. For most folks, the show was over.

But after this, her friends surely knew her sin. Katie had seen a lot happen through simple prayer. Sick people grew better, sinners repented. But this was way beyond. Pete's unbelieving brain had been broken, badly. That kind of major healing didn't happen overnight through prayer, if at all. Except in the gospels, it never happened instantly. Everyone knew that.

Would they call it the sin of Moses, or witchcraft? Katie wasn't sure herself.

Bill said, "Praise the Lord!" Katie's friends echoed faintly with guilty praises and amens. They were still confused. Someone would soon point out the obvious.

The usual round of hugging followed. Her head still splitting, Katie felt too dizzy and freakish to hug anyone. Besides, all this chest pressing should be saved for those you really care about. Meanwhile, Pete strolled away with his girlfriend without even a thank you, after Katie had ruined her life and soul for him.

A shock on her bare arm startled her. Tally had tapped her with his finger. "Thank you," he said. And then he hustled after his friends. That much spirit in a finger.

More hugs. Katie could barely breathe. Finally, a new Fellowship member gushed as she squeezed Katie: "That was amazing, what you just did, without any help."

There, someone had finally said it. Almost a relief. "I've sinned," Katie said, "I'm sorry. I --"

Bill, waiting patiently for his hug, interrupted. "That's right. The miracles don't come through us sinners. The only true miracles come through Jesus."

Katie gaped at him, then nodded. Everyone else said, "Amen!" They didn't get it. She could hide again behind the lie that the healing had come from all of them together and the Holy Spirit, and not only from her. Otherwise, if the government didn't drag her off to Area 51, everyone would still treat her like a valuable or dangerous monster, and freaks had no friends. No thank you.

But the gospel truth was that her hands were still cooling from their fire, and she hadn't felt that heat from anyone else or Jesus. Just an energy from within her that maybe had always been there. She might accept that God was working that way, indirectly, through her nature and not her prayers, but she didn't think her friends would understand that anytime soon. They still

believed what she had: that all spiritual power came specifically from either God or Satan, and what felt like a natural, neutral energy could only be satanic, whatever good it did.

The Fellowship Club praised God a few more times, blasé, as if cranial arteries regularly knit in seconds. Then it hit her--they couldn't know how mortally Pete had been hurt. None of the students knew. Even if she wanted to tell them, they would never believe it. She forced a smile. No bearing witness to this.

But she knew. And Tally knew.

Bill, who did not know, whose thoughts about her were pretty nasty for any religion, still waited for his hug. He could wait until the Rapture, which she no longer believed was coming soon. Not for her.

She was utterly alone, except perhaps for a boy who could see way too much of her, even with his eyes closed. No, she would tell Tally to keep away. Better to act normal and feel alone with her old friends than to have someone around who saw what only God should see. She would tell him tonight.

###

Tally hurried after Pete, anxious to make sure he had healed completely. Pete was pissed. "Dude, can't believe you let her touch me. Extremely uncool. Now they'll think I owe something to that Jesus wimp."

Laura was even unhappier. "And you made me call the ambulance for nothing. What if we had been high? We would have been so busted."

His friends owed him better than this. So Tally gave his principles a vacation and drilled deep into their skulls. He saw that they had no psychic ability at all--nothing beyond common intuition. He also saw that they knew something strange and scary had happened, but they denied

it. Fear and denial, but only a rehearsal. They would be worse when Tally really faltered, when people found out what he could see. They would not be there for him at all. Too much stuff they wanted to hide.

So he just shook his head. "Sorry. I'm glad you're OK." No need for a scene--until Tally revealed his ability, he could casually hang with them. But he felt like cold shit, and even more alone than before. "You're right," he said to Laura, "I think I'll find someone to dance with now."

From all that had happened this evening, Tally now knew for certain that only one light in the whole school was bright enough to have abilities like his. He scanned among the hugging Born Agains for Katie. She was staring at him. Healing Pete, she had burned like a solar flare, and she wasn't much dimmed now. Creepy, her staring like that. Like gazing in a mirror. So they gazed at each other, and that was that.

Katie would lie to her friends about needing some air, then exit towards the athletic fields. She would expect Tally to follow, so he would make a circuit around the gym and follow.

He found her sitting on the football bleachers. He sat down next to her, close enough to smell her good-girl perfume. The Michigan fall air was cold, the stars were sharp crystals who heard no prayers.

"So what do we do now?" he asked.

"Nothing."

Tally's stomach lurched. He wanted to appeal this sentence, to fight her and the whole damned school, but he only said, "OK."

They were silent again, not looking at each other, for as long as Tally could stand it. But this was his one shot.



“Since we’re going to do nothing,” he said, “could you fix me first? After that, I’ll do whatever you want. I don’t want to see all this stuff any more. I’m so tired of seeing different, of being different.” He wiped the chilled dampness off his eyes.

She turned to face him. She’d been crying too. “I can’t fix you.” She spoke slowly with too much sadness and anger together. “I can’t even fix me. It would be wrong. We have gifts of the Spirit.”

“Some gift.” Tally shook his head. Great--a new wall in his high school prison. This didn’t make any sense. “If it’s a gift, then we can’t really do nothing, can we?”

“Maybe I wasn’t clear. I don’t think *we* do anything.”

Another blow to Tally’s gut. But she was more divided than her words, so no quitting now. He whispered, “I can see it, you know, like a light. We’re the only two at this school that have it this strong. Maybe the only two anywhere.”

“I think there must be more. There’ve been others before.”

“But they aren’t here,” said Tally. “And the light’s stronger when we’re together.” That sounded a little too close, so he added, “When we use it together.”

She paused, her finger across her lips, considering. “We believe different things.”

“Do we? I’m not a New Ager or Satanist, if that’s what you mean. I’m not anything. And you’re not as Born Again as you were, are you?”

“I don’t know.” She held her head in her hands. “I’m not sure. What do you want, anyway? Just because I’ve got questions doesn’t mean, well, that I’m suddenly all sex, drugs, and heavy metal.”

“Oh.” He hadn’t thought about what he wanted. “I don’t want, I mean, I don’t need... Could I just, for a second, hold your hand?”

She frowned at him. She knew. Just touching for them would be a terribly intimate thing. Probably as sinful as making out.

“You don’t understand,” she said, palms up as if to push him away. “I’m not letting you see my entire soul and all my sins. It’s too much.”

“God, no!” Tally’s eyes went wide with horrified embarrassment. She thought he wanted all that on a first date? “You’d see me too. I’m not ready for that. I just think it would be nice for your light and mine to be, um, together. We might feel a little of what each other was feeling. Maybe I... maybe we wouldn’t feel so damned alone.” Suddenly, the frustration of trying to explain hit him. Why was everything so difficult? “Isn’t there some jazz in the Bible about not keeping your light under a bucket?”

Katie’s gaze went up toward the sky like she was praying for patience. “Yes, there’s some *jazz* about not keeping your light under a *bushel*. Not really applicable to us here, now.” Then, she focused on him, and Tally felt as if she could see everything without having to read his mind. “Maybe we can talk about that later, because everything else you’ve been doing seems right.” With a blinding glow, she gave Tally a very gentle, nervous smile. “So, in the meantime, what the heck.” She reached out and took his hand.

###

END