

Glass

by Tawnysha Greene

Before we go into the Christian bookstore, gaze at rows of multi-colored Bibles, wooden angels without faces on glass shelves, Momma kneels in front of us, holds our hands closed, flat in front of our chests, says, *make shopping hands*.

We wander the aisles inside and Momma buys Jesus shirts, bumper stickers, praise and worship CDs. We walk past coloring books of Bible heroes, watch Jesus multiply fish and bread on the television, our hands clasped, as if praying.

Momma takes us to the candle store next door where everything smells sweet as she opens, closes glass lids, lets us lean our faces close, smell pumpkin, lavender, trees. Momma likes the white ones, ones that smell of cream.

We go to the Christmas store last where angels, red reindeer made of glass line the aisles and Momma says she'll buy us a peppermint candy cane if we are good, don't touch things in the store.

She talks to the lady behind the counter who rings up the candy canes, holds them out to us, calls us sweetie, darling. We unclasp our hands, reach for the candy, and as Momma drives home, lick red stripes off the canes.

When Momma's belly gets big, we stop going to the stores with Jesus movies, candles, candy canes. We go to the doctor with Momma, hide behind the white curtain, turn our backs, close our eyes when the doctor looks at the baby.

At night, the baby comes and Daddy takes us to a room where we see him in a glass box, tubes going in and out, and I go to reach inside, but Daddy catches my wrist, holds me back, says, *shopping hands*, and I remember what Momma says

would happen if we touched the angels, red reindeer made of glass. *They will*

break if you touch them, says Momma. They will fall and shatter to pieces.

