

Unclean

by Tawnysha Greene

The first time Momma shows me
a demon is during revival week
at church. Pastor lines us all
in front of the altar, slaps his hands
on our foreheads, makes us fall
back in Jesus' name.

Ushers cover Momma's legs with blue
sheets as she weeps on the floor, speaks
in tongues, like the people before us do.
The piano man plays, sings the same
song as more fall under Pastor's hand.
Momma wakes, says, *the Holy Spirit is here.*

The song is long and, me, sister fall
asleep on the seats. Momma stands, hands
outstretched to the altar, to those who cry,
dance when Pastor talks in God's language.
The song lasts until morning and Momma
wakes me up, tells me, sister to follow.

She takes us past the praying bodies on the floor,
blue sheets in a heap, shows us a lady who does not
fall under Pastor, does not pray in his language.
Pastor motions for the ushers to come, to lay
hands on her, too. Momma says, *she doesn't have
the Holy Spirit, the spirit in her is bad, full of demons.*

The lady is on the floor now, ushers, Pastor
on top of her. They push her head back,
pin arms to the floor. *Be delivered in Jesus'
name. I cast you out,* they say. She says nothing.

Shoka loma lameh moda kadem simoda hada,
they say. *They are praying in the Spirit,* says Momma.

For two years, Momma doesn't show me anymore
demons, not until two ladies move in across our street.
Momma spies on them through the window as they water
their lawn, check mail, walk their dogs. *They're bad women,*
says Momma. *Women like them have demons,* she says,
to make them like that. They are unclean, not like God.

For a long time, I do not understand what she means,
only that she would point them out when we go
to the grocery store, to the movies, them together,
whisper, *demon*, and say the same words Pastor said
during revival. *Soka loma lameh moda kadem simoda hada*
and I would see the demon lady from revival when I saw

the two ladies from across the street. *Soka loma lameh,*
on the floor, limbs twisted, *moda kadem simoda hada,*
eyes rolled back, *soka loma kameh hada,* mouth open wide.

