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*I Cannot See the Holy Ghost*

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*Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters* is an international literary journal dedicated to publishing works encompassing, but not limited to, the Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The Journal is especially dedicated to presenting the arts and letters of those communities that have long been under-represented within the creative discourse of the region, among them: Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, Maroon societies, and the Asian and Amerindian societies of the region. Calabash has a strong visual arts component.

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## I CANNOT SEE THE HOLY GHOST

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I don't like the church my grandmother goes to. There are no statues in this church and the metal chairs are not comfortable. And today, Titi Nelly, the aunt that cries all the time is coming with us. She cries when she watches movies or the news, and she cries when she puts on this Spanish song about a man losing his mother. Sometimes she sings the song and cries at the same time. I don't like her very much because when Mami leaves me with her, she makes me sit on the couch and won't let me get up. The other day I tried to read while the TV was on and she made me put my book away.

So now instead of playing with my friends I am in a dark church. The only thing I like is that I have a tambourine. I don't play it too good, but I like the way it sounds. Sometimes I play it so much that I get little blisters filled with water on my palm. But now the singing has stopped and the pastor has his eyes closed and is asking those who would like a visit from the holy spirit to come up front.

Like always Titi Nelly walks to the front where the pastor is praying. He puts his hand on her forehead and prays. Titi Nelly has her eyes closed too. The pastor prays louder and faster and Titi Nelly falls back. A man in a suit behind her catches her and gently puts her body down. The Holy Spirit has touched her and now she is sleeping with god.

Today I want to sleep with the Holy Spirit. I walk up to the front. I have to wait on line. The man before me is big. So big that two men in suits stand behind him and when he falls back, they catch him. They will only need one man to catch me.

I can smell the holy water. It helps me breathe deep. My heart is beating fast.

The pastor holds his hand against my forehead. His hand is wet. “Dios te pido que le salve la vida a esta niña.” He is praying so fast that I can not understand what he is saying. I hear *God*, and *Witness* and *Salvation*, but I am not getting sleepy. I am not sleepy at all and I want to be sleepy and fall and sleep on the floor like everyone else. But nothing is happening. I roll my eyes back trying to see the Holy Ghost. But I don’t know what he looks like. Maybe he has feathers and wings. No, Leli, that would make it an angel, and the Holy Spirit is not an angel. Maybe it’s a little boy. Whatever it is, I want to see it and sleep with it. I want it to put its hand over my eyes and put sleep in me. And then I want it to lie down next to me and to look at me while I sleep. I want it to look at me and think that I am pretty, prettier than Yolanda and Mimi.

But as far back as I roll my eyes in my head I can not see the Holy Ghost. I am going to fall anyway. I don’t care if no one is there to catch me.

I let myself fall. I feel fingers under my armpits and hands helping me to the floor. I am not asleep. The Holy Ghost won’t come inside my body. I pray to God to forgive me for lying. I just wanted the Holy Ghost inside me. I open my eyes a little and watch someone else faint. I close my eyes. Inside my head there is red and a belt. There’s a brown belt. It is my stepfather’s belt. I think the Holy Ghost wants a brown belt to hit me to sleep. But now there will never be a Holy Ghost. Because now I am definitely going to

Hell. The red flames are going to burn my hair first, and then my fingers and toes. It will burn my stomach and between my legs last.

The red flames make me cough and I open my eyes and get up. The man who helped me fall rubs my back and smiles.

When I get back to my seat my grandmother hugs me. “Mi niña, Dios te ha visitado.” God has visited you.

I hold my breath against her stomach and wish that I could go inside it.