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## Stained Glass

Amara E. Keizer-Quintanilla  
*University of Central Florida*

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## Stained Glass

My favorite was always the third floor—I found myself drifting towards those stained glass windows. There was something about the deep shades of orange that made me feel so melancholic, but also so... at peace. That's why I suggested it, you know. The third story was my favorite, and it still allowed some talking so my group decided to humor me. They liked it well enough, didn't mind it unless I had been staring out too long, so that's where we met once a week.

That's why I hadn't noticed the first time it happened, probably. I was lost in thought, glancing at the windows, hadn't noticed the pinpricks on the back of my neck the way Michelle had. We all thought she was being silly, even as the nights went on and she said it was getting worse. Three weeks in she went to go find a book on Derrida and never came back. We thought she had dropped out, that four coffees a day finally got to her. Five weeks in and it was Loise. Six, Marquis.

Seven and there was barely a group left. One of the twins complained about someone being behind the bookshelf. He thought it might be his ex-girlfriend following him again so he went to look. After an hour his brother went after him. A few days later their mother texted asking where they were and I had to say I didn't know.

Then it was just Marie, me, and a book on Foucault, when the hairs on the back of my neck burned. I suddenly, desperately wished we had studied in the mornings, that I hadn't insisted we get there just before sundown to watch the glow of a setting sun through the windows. An hour in I saw a reflection in the stained glass. I looked behind me and there was

nothing. Marie glanced up at me but didn't say anything— she knew better than to ask what was wrong.

An hour passed, and it was still dark. Another, and it was well past the end of our study session, but neither of us wanted to get up. Then I... I don't know what happened. The lights went out and I reached out to grab Marie but instead there was this sensation of flesh— looking up, all I could see were teeth. I couldn't even scream, I just heard Marie yell "*Help!*" and I ran, away, away, away. Then it was so quiet, my footsteps noiseless as I ran down the staircase.

It was behind me, I knew, but I wouldn't look back, and the only thing illuminating the second floor was the light through the front doors. I saw that reflection again as I barrelled towards the exit, falling, scraping my arms against the concrete. I looked up. There was nothing except the moonlight shining against the glass doors and the wail of sirens in the distance.

It's still there. I haven't gone back to the third floor since.