

STAINED GLASS

A Short Story by Christine Gillam

"I've told you what happened. It's the truth."

I sat at the table in a cold, windowless room at the police station. Two very angry policemen were looking down at me as if they wanted to bash my head in. I didn't know why they wouldn't believe me.

"You're lyin' and it ain't gonna work! Your sister-in-law is missing and your brother is dead. We know you killed them both and we are gonna see you fry for this!" said cop #1.

"Tell it again", said cop #2.

So I did.

It all started a year ago. I had gone to live with my older brother, Stan, and his wife, Olivia, after my parents died. I have always been very sickly, physically, and was unable to take care of myself. I had contracted Scarlet Fever at a very young age and suffered from a heart condition as a result. I had to be very cautious of contracting any type of airborne illness, as there were few medicines I could take. Stan was 10 years older than I and we had never been close. He had always been very athletic, lifting weights and playing sports. I don't think he had spent 10 minutes with me my whole life.

Stan resented my moving in with them. He said I faked it for attention. But mom and dad had tied his \$140 million inheritance into him taking care of me. Should he refuse, the entire \$280 million dollar estate reverted to me. I would also get it all if he died first.

Olivia, on the other hand, was wonderful. She played cards with me and shared her love of books and music. She was a very beautiful woman, with long red hair and green eyes. I immediately fell in love with her.

The house was a large, two story colonial. Because of my health, my room was on the first floor. Stan and Olivia shared a room directly above mine. I had never been upstairs, but I could hear them sometimes, walking around, talking, making love. I would be lying if I said I wasn't jealous of their relationship.

After I had been there a few weeks, I started noticing loud noises coming from their room. Fighting noises. Glass being broken, shuffling, yelling, crying. I knew then that he beat her. The first time I heard it I tried talking to Olivia the next morning, but she refused to speak about it. She hugged me briefly and I noticed the bruises on her arm - old ones and new ones. What could I, a weak, sickly, 18-year-old do against my healthy older brother?

Two days ago, the noises became excessively violent, and I knew I had to risk going up the stairs. I had to do what I could to protect Olivia. Maybe just my presence and the fact that I knew what he was doing would be enough to calm him down. So I left my room and started up the stairs. I struggled to climb them, but had to do so slowly. The closer I got to the top, the louder the voices got. I could hear their words.

"Stan, please, no!"

Smack.

"sleeper."

Smack.

"You'll hurt the baby."

Oh, God. She was pregnant! I had to hurry!

"It's not mine. Who have you been sleeping with?"

The smack was a little louder and harder this time.

"Only you! Only you. Stan, please, stop!"

I could hear that she was crying now. Her sobs interrupting her words and making her harder to understand.

As I got to the door I heard a loud thump, and knew she had hit the floor. I opened the door in time to see him grab her roughly by the arms and lift her up.

"No!" I cried out. "Stan, please stop!"

He looked at me. I trembled in fear. The man glaring at me looked like my brother, but his eyes! His eyes! They were cold and hard and, evil! I knew I had made a mistake, but it was too late to turn back now. I should have called the police.

I looked at Olivia, almost limp in his grip. Her pale pink nightgown was torn and covered in dark, red blood. The left side of her face was bruised and she had a cut on her lip. She had bruises on her neck as well. I couldn't tell where all the blood was coming from.

"You f*ing brat. Is it yours? Did you f*ck my wife?"

The impossibility of this question almost made me laugh as I remembered my difficulty coming up the stairs. Me? Make love to a woman? To Olivia? The excitement would certainly kill me. I hadn't even had the nerve to try masturbation yet! I knew that to tell him this would be another mistake, so instead I said,

"Stan, why would Olivia want to be with me when she has you?"

This appeared to be the wrong thing to say, too. He threw Olivia away from him and started coming towards me. Suddenly, there was a loud crashing sound and we both turned to look in the direction he had thrown her. There was a large, stained glass window in their bedroom. Now it was filled with a gaping hole. Colored glass lay everywhere. We could see Olivia falling out of the window. We both went to grab her and both of us missed. We leaned out the window and watched the woman we both loved hit the ground. Her body was twisted grotesquely and she stared up at us with horrified eyes. I fell to the floor. Sure this was the end. I held my head in my hands and waited for my heart to stop beating.

"Get up."

His words came through the fog that was my brain, but I was slow to react.

"Get up. We have to bury her. You walked your pitiful a** up the stairs, now you can help me cover up this mess."

"No, Stan, we have to call the police."

"Yeah. That would suit you fine. Then you'd be \$280 million richer, wouldn't you?"

He pulled me up by the back of my shirt and dragged me down the stairs. I still waited for the death that didn't come. When we got outside, he told me to pick her up. She felt amazingly light, but it still took all the strength I had lift her. I cradled her in my arms and followed him. Her body was still warm and I couldn't believe she was gone. I kissed her bruised cheek.

"Hurry up, runt."

We went to the back of the house and Stan went to the shed and got a shovel. I laid what was once Olivia down on the damp grass and straightened her nightgown. I closed her eyes. Stan thrust the shovel at me and told me to dig. I did as I was told, still hoping for the death that would not come.

After a while, he helped me. I think he got tired of waiting for me to finish. When the hole was big enough he told me to pick her up and put her in. I lifted her up and put her in the hole. My tears fell on her face. Her eyes flew open and she grabbed my hand, scratching the back of it. I screamed, and passed out.

When I awoke, I was in my room. Stan was sitting beside my bed waiting for me to wake up. When he saw my eyes open, he grinned evilly at me.

"You whimp", he said. "I knew you'd flake out. I was hoping you had died. But since you didn't, I don't have to tell you to keep your mouth shut or you'll be sorry. Oh, and don't expect me to baby you like our parents and my dear, departed wife did. A little self-reliance should toughen you up some."

And then he left.

Last night a loud crash from upstairs startled me awake. I climbed as fast as I could up the stairs to my brother's room. Deja' Vu swept over me and I could feel myself starting to sweat. Surely, this time, I will die, I thought, but kept climbing.

I threw open the door of my brother's room just in time to see him jump out of the same window he had thrown Olivia.

I went to the phone on the table beside the bed and dialed 911. The result of that call has me sitting at this table with two huge cops staring down at me.

"I guess he couldn't live with the horror of killing his wife and unborn child. And that's the end of my story", I told them. "That's the truth. All of it."

Neither of them said a word, just stood there staring at me. Then they turned and left me sitting in that room, alone.

After what seemed like an eternity, they returned. Both looking meaner than

ever.

"You're free to go. Your story checks out. We found the body of your sister-in-law buried in the back yard. We checked out your medical history with your doctor. There's no way you could have been physically capable of killing either of them, based on her injuries and the way your brother died."

I went back to my brother's house. There was no where else to go.

I woke up with Olivia standing over me. She was beautiful again. All her bruises were gone and she glowed like sunshine. She reached down and touched my cheek and smiled. I smiled back at her, thinking it was a wonderful dream.

"Thank you for killing him for me", she whispered. "I knew you could do it." Then she touched her stomach that held her child with her right hand and placed her left hand over my chest. I felt my heart beating in my chest, no longer weak, but strong and healthy. Then she faded away. I knew that I would be able to live a long healthy life from now on. The spirit of Olivia's child rested within me.

As I went to sleep, I once again saw the shock in my brother's eyes as he realized I had just pushed him out of the same window he had, just the day before, sent my beloved Olivia to her death.