

A Broken Ankle, Canasta, and a Weirdly Sexy Jesus Sighting

by Angela Kubinec

It kind of started when Miz Sarah had a disagreement with Dr. Chang regarding her reading glasses, which he insisted she should only use for reading but which she felt she needed to wear all the time, making her depth perception bit skewed. If you go back a ways it wasn't the fault of Miz Sarah's glasses much more than it was Miz Eleanor's overly shallow steps into the sunken den, because when the house was constructed in the seventies, the contractors did little annoying things like that to save a few bucks. Of course, if you go back far enough, you could kind of blame it on Miz Eleanor's children who insisted on moving her into a smaller house after their father died under circumstances which are never discussed. Bottom line is, Miz Sarah was talking and not exactly looking when she stepped into the den, or rather spilled, as the step she was anticipating simply wasn't there.

Her ankle turned a funny way for a second, causing her shoe (which was one of those low heeled clogs older women wear to avoid shoelaces and heels) to hop under the end table. Miz Eleanor immediately snatched Miz Sarah's arm to try to pull her up, and for a moment I imagined Miz Eleanor on top of Miz Sarah, due to the resistance Miz Sarah was giving. "No, no Miz Eleanor. Let's just let her rest a minute and let her decide if she's really hurt or not," I urged.

"Oh, I've fallen several times," Miz Sarah said, "and every time I break another bone. It's nothing to worry about. I even baked that strawberry cake with just my left hand that time, remember, Eleanor? Of course, I left the mess I made for someone else to clean up." We all laughed in an understated manner.

“Well, do you *think* it's broken?” Miz Eleanor asked, and Miz Sarah replied, “No, usually when I break something it swells up a lot faster. Maybe it's just sprained. Do you have an Ace bandage?”

Miz Eleanor trotted, sort of, to the rear of the house and came back with the bandage, which she wrapped in an expert fashion, having had several sons and grandsons who played sports. I wondered how many times the thing had been washed and if it had any stretch left in it at all. Miz Sarah decided it was time to attempt standing, and at this point I interceded. “Miz Sarah,” I said, “we want to help you, but we can't risk hurting ourselves, too. You need to roll so that your knees are on the floor and your hands are resting on this chair. Then put your good foot on the floor and push yourself with your arms until you can stand. We'll be right beside you here to steady you if you start to fall again.”

I got a little glance from Miz Eleanor, who I felt expected me to yank Miz Sarah off the floor. I have a bad back of my own and no such intentions. That's what happens when you are fifty-six and dealing with a couple of eighty-something-year-old widows who are hell-bent on playing Canasta. They think you are a teenager, and tolerate you mostly because a club member is sick and they need someone to take her place at the table.

Anyway, Miz Sarah decided that if the foot could rest on a little stool with some ice on it, and the other “girls” would agree to rotate to their next partners around her so she didn't have to move, she would play anyway. After all, it couldn't get any *more* broken, and since Miz Eleanor, the hostess, had received a last-minute cancellation, there would be no one left to substitute if Miz Sarah left. A whole afternoon of card playing would be ruined. Miz Eleanor brought Miz Sarah a couple of Tylenol, and Miz Sarah, being ever gracious, refused to have anyone call her daughter.

When both game rotations ended, it was time to go, and I was left with Miz Eleanor and Miz Sarah. Miz Sarah could not stand, her “good” leg being too weak to hold her up. Her daughter could not be reached. She refused to be taken anywhere in an ambulance. Miz Eleanor had the brainstorm to call one of the church Deacons,

and when he answered, she disposed of the requisite hi-dear-how-are-you-and-everybody-else-you-live-with stuff and said "Sarah has fallen and we need you over here."

The man, clearly in his seventies, arrived in minutes, clutching his heart lightly. "Don't worry Sarah, I'll just pick you up and put you in your car."

"But that's her driving foot," Miz Eleanor interjected, "and how's she supposed to get in the house with all those steps?"

The Deacon said, "Well, Eleanor, you drive her car and I'll just follow you over there in my truck and carry her in the house."

"She," meaning me who is too young to have a name, "can follow and bring you back home."

"But there's eight steps! Are you sure you can do that?" Miz Sarah said, sounding a bit nervous, finally.

So, long story short, that's what the man did. Really. He had Miz Sarah circle her arms around his neck. He lifted her like a bride and carried her to the car, putting her in the passenger seat like some kind of rag doll, only more stylish. Then, when we all reached her house, he hoisted her out, and toted her up the steps, counting to seven. "I thought you said there were eight," he sort of cooed and I could feel him smile at her, even though I was standing on the driveway outside the garage. It looked effortless. Stunning, even. Like Clark Gable in *Gone With the Wind* minus the slaves and fire. Like Adrian and Rocky in *Rocky II*, only classier. Like *An Officer and a Gentleman*, only well, much older. It was incredible, honestly; you should have been there.

We went inside, and Miz Sarah was tucked into her recliner by the Deacon while Miz Eleanor went to fetch the walker. "Are you sure you don't need me to help you go to the bathroom before we leave?" Miz Eleanor asked, and I felt like I was watching two little girls simultaneously being two grown women, while bearing witness to a seventy-plus-year-old Jesus. I think he could have walked on water, and snatched a drowning Peter from the waves. I wanted to kiss him on the lips like a deranged Magdalene, and beg him to

carry me over a threshold, too (both my previous attempts having ended up as piggybacks).

Miz Eleanor got in my car, as she had been driving Miz Sarah's car earlier, and we headed back to her house.

“Good Lord, that man is strong,” I nearly shouted, “When he was thirty-five he must have been a *sight to behold.*” Actually, he was a sight to behold right then. Miz Eleanor has, in spite of her age, confessed to noticing every good looking man she sees. “Yes, he worked for the FBI, you know. Wore nice suits all the time. Comfortable in a tie. It's something you never forget,” she said, and I knew immediately why she had called him first.

