

The Gospel According to Prissy

by Barbara Casey

EXCERPT

Laramie Larkins Kruger drove up to the hospital emergency door. It was the second time in twice as many weeks. The hand that had been holding a bloody towel against the left side of her face somehow managed to push the car door open. Her other hand rested in her lap, limp and useless. A hospital orderly standing outside by the front entrance saw her. He crushed his half-smoked cigarette into the concrete container of sand provided and quickly located a wheelchair for her.

“Jesus, Ms. Kruger, what have you gone done to yourself now? You been working on that old house again, haven’t ya?”

Lara closed her eyes and let the strong hands of the orderly gently position her into the wheelchair. “Thanks, Ben.”

“I told you to call me next time you needed something done and Mr. Kruger wasn’t around to take care of it. Didn’t I? Didn’t I say that?” He pushed her through the emergency entrance and over to the sign-in window where an elderly woman smiled and handed her a form.

“Back so soon, Mrs. Kruger?”

Lara stared at the piece of paper that had been secured to a clipboard, but her eyes wouldn’t read the print. She couldn’t pick up the pen anyway. Ben took the clipboard from her and began filling in the information next to her name: Age, 31; Time, 1:15 p.m.; Insurance, on file; Nature of Visit, cuts and bruises caused by accident. It was always the same.

Lara and Jake had been remodeling the old Victorian home they bought when they moved to Rocky Mount six months earlier. Everyone knew they were doing it. In a town the size of Rocky Mount, nothing went by unnoticed. Since they were doing a lot of the work themselves, it was easy just to say she slipped off a ladder, a rotten floorboard gave way, something had fallen on her – whatever. No one questioned her answers.

“My, my. Looks like you got scraped up pretty good, Mrs. Kruger.” The elderly volunteer worker smiled sympathetically and took the form Ben had just filled out. “What happened this time?”

Lara tried not to grimace from the pain. It felt like one of her ribs was broken. “I yanked too hard on the door of that old shed in back we’re trying to convert into a garage and it gave way.” The lie came easily.