

Watching Stanley Kowalski in the TV Room of Belle Haven

by Jeanne Holtzman

That streetcar named Desire, it don't hardly stop for me no more. Leastwise not while I'm awake, and I don't have to be telling no nosy aides why I make them noises in my sleep. I ain't Millie. I don't get all hot and bothered by some stinky old geezer in diapers. Millie reads them romance novels every day and when she gets to those parts, she turns all red and starts wiggling in her wheelchair. The nurses don't let her near no one's husband no more. Even demented Delores got her Depends in a twist when Millie sat near her man. There was a time. . . ages ago now, but there was a time Desire was always pulling up to my stop, and it didn't matter none who was in that car or what I was supposed to be doing, I climbed on board and rode it wherever it took me. My daddy tried beating the devil out of me, but he finally gave up. Maybe he saw he was just giving me a taste for beatings. The *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys* Father Sullivan gave me didn't do me no good neither. When I closed my eyes and kneeled down and opened my mouth, it sure as hell wasn't no communion wafer I wanted put in there. My mama told me one day it would be better if I just turned up dead, cause no good man would ever have me and the only streetcar coming for me would be one named Spinster.

That's when my mama set me up with a good man guaranteed to take care of me even after I got old and ugly. John loved me like I might break and didn't like me making no noises or moving around too much. And that was it for some fifty years. When we was first married and Desire passed by, I near burst out my door and jumped right on, but too soon babies was filling the house, tugging at my

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boobs and my skirts, and I got too weary to run. Then came the arthritis, and John's passing, and now I'm sitting here under the evil eye of that skinny-ass nurse, waiting for Stanley to yell for Stella the way John ain't never once yelled for me.

After the movie, Romano who everyone calls Romeo's gonna wheel me in to dinner. He don't use no lift, he just uses his bulging muscles to pick up the ladies. He's always winking and flirting with us old crones like we was seventeen. When he picks up Millie and pretends to carry her over the threshold, she near shits her pants. I know he's just teasing. I know. Still, I must be losing my mind like the rest of them old bats, cause sometimes when he sweet-talks me, I forget. I think I'm right back in that streetcar swaying off into the hot night with Romeo, and there ain't nothing, specially not no tailgating streetcar named Spinster, gonna scare me into going back.

