

Switch

by
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Switch is a work of fiction and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Chapter 1

It's a fine line between pleasure and pain.
You've done it once; you can do it again.
Whatever you've done, don't try to explain.
It's a fine, fine line between pleasure and pain.
Divinyls, Pleasure and Pain

Joey Berger squeezed her hands even more tightly around his throat; his eyes opened wider, his gasps came more quickly. She knew he was surprised by the unexpected strength in her slim body as she pinned him down; they always were.

He writhed beneath her. The veins in his forehead pulsed; his eyes began to bulge slightly.

She tightened her grip on his throat another notch, squeezing a bit harder, while being careful not to dig her long acrylic nail tips into his flesh. The bruises were one thing, and inevitable, but it was unacceptable for a professional to leave bloody scratches in such a visible location.

"You know what you have to say if you want me to keep going," she whispered, her mouth millimeters from his ear. She loosened her grip slightly.

"Fuck," he gasped. "Jesus. Just fuck me!"

"That's not right, and you know it. Try it again."

"Please! *Please* fuck me, please keep doing that, the strangling thing, please don't stop!"

"Alright then," she said.

She did as requested, raising her body up above him, slamming her hips into his, his cock inside her, the twin straps of the tight black leather bustier she was poured into framing the lips of her pussy.

His orgasm arched his back and the veins in his face began showing purple through his skin; he moved his hands from her wrists to her breasts, pointy in their cages of leather straps, her nipples thrust forward.

She finally released his neck, placing her palms instead on his shoulders.

"Fucking awesome!" he said with enthusiasm. "Jesus. Fucking totally fucking awesome!"

"I told you," she said. "I'm worth every penny."

* * * * *

One week after Joey graciously accepted compliments from a very satisfied Jason Simons in her private room at the rear of Switch, her soon-to-be-opened strip club on the fringe of Doylestown, Laura Greggor stood holding a nearly-empty glass of Sauvignon Blanc in her hand on the deck outside the country club in the heart of the same town and pondered sex, life, pain, men and fate.

Debbie Bloom--also carrying a wine glass--opened the atrium door that led to the main reception hall and joined Laura on the deck, yanking the door shut behind her.

"Just shoot me, the band is playing, *Once, Twice, Three Times a Lady*," she said. "If Tommy and Celeste stare deeply into each other's eyes through one more schmaltzy old ballad I think I'll hurl."

“Tell me about it,” Laura said. She leaned forward, resting her forearms on the deck rail, and looked out over the fairway leading to hole ten and the parking lot beyond. “I’m seriously thinking about sneaking out to my car and bailing. If I didn’t love Tommy so much, I’d shuck off my heels, climb over this railing and just run the hell away.”

“Well you certainly sound glum,” Debbie said. She propped her elbows on the railing as well. “I thought I was the only one who despises weddings.”

Laura made a sweeping, dismissive gesture with her left hand, encompassing the deck, the clubhouse, the course, and all that surrounded them. “Sucks,” she said.

“I take it that appraisal refers to more than merely wedding receptions and any cover band with the word ‘All-Stars’ in their name.”

Laura nodded. “Life,” she said. “Like I said, sucks.”

Debbie nodded solemnly as well. “I’ll drink to that,” she said, and initiated the gesture that welcomed a toast. They clinked their glasses together. A bit of wine sloshed out of Laura’s glass and trickled down the front of her lime green silk dress. She ignored it, tipped up the glass and finished the wine.

The two women remained side-by-side and silent for a few minutes.

“Isn’t that Joey?” Debbie asked. She used her glass to point toward the parking lot.

Laura squinted. “Yeah, I think it is.”

“I’m surprised Tommy didn’t invite her. I thought they broke up on good terms.”

Laura raised an eyebrow. “Have you spoken to Celeste, aka Cindy James, much? That is one determined young lady. I somehow doubt that even Tommy could sneak inviting his ex-girlfriend past her.”

“Whoa! Did you see that? Joey just almost slammed that guy’s car door shut on his hand!” Debbie said.

“He’s chasing her to her car,” Laura said. “Can you hear what they’re yelling?”

“No,” Debbie said. “We’re too far away! Damn, she’s locked herself in her car and he’s pounding on the window. Do you recognize the guy?”

“No,” Laura said. “But he better watch himself. Joey’s another very determined girl. She’ll run him over if he’s not careful.”

Her voice was surprisingly nonchalant, Debbie noticed, and she remained leaning casually against the rail.

“What’s going on?” a girlish voice asked from behind them. It was Debbie’s daughter, Danielle, who’d left the reception for the deck, as well. “What are you guys looking at?”

“Brawl in the parking lot,” Laura said. “The usual.”

“That couple over there? Hey, he’s, like, totally going to bust in her window. Shouldn’t somebody dial 911?” Danielle asked.

“I see three of the country club cop golf carts closing in on them,” Laura said. “So I suppose it’s all under control.”

In the parking lot, the man who was arguing with Joey continued to thump his fist against the driver’s side window of her car even as she began backing out of the parking space.

“Jesus, she’s definitely going to run over his foot,” Debbie said.

“What an asshole,” Laura said. “Deserves what he gets.”

“Oh my God, we’re witnessing a real life *assault*!” Danielle said. “Awesome!”

The distinctive squeal of tires on macadam pierced through the twittering of birds and the muffled thump of the band’s speakers. Joey’s car lurched forward, then jerked to a halt as the man ran around in front of it. He began pounding on the windshield.

The three women watched as uniformed security guards slowly approached the altercation from three different directions. The man moved away from Joey’s car; he began talking to two of the guards. The third guard knocked on the window of Joey’s car; she rolled the window down, the guard leaned forward, speaking to her.

After a few minutes, Joey got out of her car. She, the man and the guards all clustered together. The man pulled out his wallet, flipped it open. The guards turned away, each retreating to their own golf cart, then all of them drove slowly away.

Joey and the man stood close together. They spoke for a few more minutes. He touched her arm; she didn't pull away. They kissed. He draped an arm around her shoulders and they strolled casually to his car; they both got in.

"I can't believe she's leaving with him," Laura said. "What's she thinking? He's violent, clearly some kind of psycho. And married, as well, that much is clear."

"Why do you think that?" Danielle said. "That he's married? I think it's all kinda sweet. It's just a little lover's quarrel, then they made up. They're in love, and I don't think he's married."

"Give me a break!" Debbie said. "Sweetie, grow up! Who meets in a parking lot in the middle of the afternoon except a married man and his girlfriend? I'm not worried about Joey, though. That girl can take care of herself. I'm worried about the *guy!*"

"Mom! That's so unromantic!"

"Your mother's right," Laura said. "Oh, he's married, all right. Did you see how smooth the slimeball was, paying off the country club cops like that?"

"I didn't see any money," Danielle said. "I think he just showed them his ID. He's very handsome, don't you think? How old, maybe forty-five? Did you see that car he was driving? How much does one of those cost, exactly? He's probably some big shot in town. That girl was lucky to meet a guy like that. I bet it'll all work out. It's just love, you know?"

Laura continued to stare morosely out at the parking lot. "I have a bad feeling about this," she said.

"You're just in a crappy mood," Debbie said. "Dani's probably right. Look how fucked up the world is, what we just witnessed probably *is* true love, and we're just too cynical and jaded to recognize it."

"There's nothing cynical about being creeped out by an arrogant, pushy man," Laura said. "Guy's dangerous. Situation's dangerous. Joey should know better."

"Oh, they're playing *I Love the Nightlife!* I love this song!" Danielle said. "The band is pretty good, don't you think? They're covering all that cool old throwback stuff. I'm going to go dance!"

"She's still such a little girl sometimes," Debbie said as she watched Danielle walk away. "Innocent. And, 'cool old throwback stuff'? Give me a break, they're oldies, and not good ones, at that. Why kids are fascinated by disco is lost on me, that was bad music *then*, for God's sake, now it's just sad, is what it is. Pathetic. So, what's going on with you? When the DJ is on he's playing some good music, that hip-hop stuff you like. And normally you're the queen of the dance floor."

"Not in the mood," Laura said.

"Well, duh, I see that. The question is, what mood *are* you in, and why?"

"Jack," Laura said, after a pause, her voice a monotone.

"You're not jealous because Celeste was grinding him a little, are you? Because I think she was just kidding around with the dirty dancing thing. I mean, she was doing the same thing to Howard McKinney, for God's sake, who is the biggest stuffed shirt I know. Did you catch his wife glaring at him, by the way? A priceless wedding reception moment. Now there's a man we can agree to be worried about."

"Oh my God. You don't know," Laura said. She finally turned away from the railing and stared at Debbie. "Neither one of them has told you."

"What?" Debbie asked. "Told me what?"

"I can't fucking believe it."

"Okay, sister, spill! Enough with the innuendos already. What can't you fucking believe?"

"That they haven't told you. That's just incredible. Look, don't faint on me, but the deal is . . . you're not going to believe this, but Jack and Christine made another baby together. While Trevor was missing, evidently it was some heat-of-passion, weird time regression thing. Or so he says. Bob left Christine when she told him--packed up his twenty kids or however the hell many there are, I never did

get them all sorted out--and he moved out. Oh, and Jack wants to be the best father in the world. But still live with me, of course, because even *he* isn't masochistic enough to want to live with Christine again. And the best part is that I'm supposed to accept all of that as being the new normal. While I was getting dressed tonight he showed me these itty-bitty baby tee shirts he'd bought, blue, of course, because even though they don't know the kid's gender yet, he's convinced it will be another boy. He asked if I know anything about car seats, for God's sake. That's why I'm in a fucking bad mood, because once again my life is channeling a freakin' soap opera."

Debbie simply stood there for a long moment, staring not at Laura but at a point somewhere in the sky above and slightly to the left of Laura, a place that seemed to have a complete grip on her attention.

She brought her gaze back to Laura; she put her glass of wine down carefully on the deck rail; she staggered a bit backward, caught herself, stood quite still.

"Baby," she said, simply.

"Yeah," Laura said in a grim tone. "You gonna drink that?" She gestured to the glass of Chardonnay Debbie had abandoned.

"No," Debbie said. Her voice was flat. "Knock yourself out."

Laura picked up the glass, brought it to her lips. "If only I had a two-by-four," she said before draining the contents in one long gulp, "trust me, I would."