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The Switch ((Unabridged CD))



Book Information

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Authors, A-Z > (L) > Leonard, Elmore

Customer Reviews

This gripping crime story is about two wealthy and two ambitious pairs of people in Motown, Detroit in the late 1970's. Real estate developer Frank and his cute wife Margaret ("Mickey") have been married for 15 years, but cracks are appearing. Frank is drinking too much, verbally abusive and not always where he claims to be. Mickey is a sweet, non-confrontational, faithful wife devoting much of her time to their 13-year old son Bo, a tennis talent. She is a tennis mom. Ordell Robbie (OR) gives his old friend Louis Gara (LG) a tour of Detroit when he is released from prison to show him what is new, incl. the derelict tenements renovated with his help. OR supplied much of the building materials and appliances by arranging them to be stolen from other building sites. He has done pretty well over the years and thinks he can do still better. He knows the man he deals with in his materials racket is a straw man. The real big man is not on any billboard or letterhead, but taking monthly trips to the Bahamas to move a small fortune from his cash-paying renters beyond the grasp of the tax authorities. OR and LG agree simple blackmail is not enough to force the tycoon to turn over a cool million to them. So they decide to kidnap his wife. And she is Mickey...Will it work? How will she react? Will Frank pay? How will the crime duo's third accomplice, an American neo-Nazi, perform? Elmore Leonard (EL) is a superlative writer. He combines a deep fascination with senseless violence, human stupidity and doomed individual ambition with awesome plotting skills and dialogues. His often sorry protagonists come across as completely authentic. He has rightly been called the Grand Master of American crime writing. Every one of his books (many turned into Hollywood films) is a great work of entertainment and a study of America's underclass.

This is possibly the most enjoyable Leonard novel I have read. It really is superb, mixing violence

and humour to great effect. The story is streamlined, with no unnecessary characters or plotlines, and the jokes are very funny. The ending is especially enjoyable, the type of ending you wish for but know that the author won't deliver...unless it's Elmore Leonard. It really ties things up nicely, and there's not a cliché or stereotype to be seen. That's what makes Leonard so enjoyable...it's believable people doing believable things. Funny, clever, engrossing. I couldn't put it down, and that's a cliché I don't mind using...

For anyone who saw "Jackie Brown" or read the Leonard novel on which it's based, "Rum Punch," try to get your hands on this far superior first-appearance of the loveable criminal trio, Ordell Robbie, Luis Ganza, and "that fine big woman," Melanie. This simple story of a loveless marriage whose seams truly start showing when the docile, country club wife, Mickey is kidnapped by Ordell and Luis is good, solid, 70's era Leonard. Mickey's marriage is many ways a mirror image of the married couple at the center of Leonard's previous "marital troubles cum crim" novel, "52 Pickup." Her husband is a brute who flies to the Bahamas to dally with his street savvy mistress, Melanie, a day before he serves Mickey a divorce summons. The husband's refusal to pay ransom becomes the epiphany for the mouselike Mickey's transformation into the smart, independent woman--in some ways, she is the chrysalis for a whole series of strong female Leonard heroines who appear in later novels. If the story sounds like the movie "Ruthless People," you can bet that the movie was probably based in part on this novel. In fact, in the vastly inferior sequel, "Rum Punch," the characters allude to the movie when recalling the events that happened in "The Switch." Frankly, the criminal trio is much more appealing here than they were in "Punch," when they became more violent, more hardened, and more clichéd. While not the best of his classic 70's novels, "The Switch" is definitely top-drawer Leonard, filled with the same sharp dialogue that has been his stock in trade for more than forty years. If you like "The Switch," I recommend you seek out "52 Pickup" and compare the ways Leonard explores the "criminal" aspects of infidelity.

A friend of mine told me about Elmore Leonard, so I decided to give him a try. Now I wonder what took me so long! His use of dialog was excellent and his characters well rounded. I have heard his endings were weak, but I thought this one was great. You don't really know the whole story until the last sentence, like a touché in fencing. I loved it, although I can see where some people would have found it rather abrupt. A little about the plot: Louis Gara and Ordell Robbie met in prison and became quick friends. When Louis got out from another stint in jail, he went to Detroit to stay with his old friend. Ordell had been busy putting a can't miss scam together. The plan included

kidnapping Mickey Dawson, a crooked land developer's wife, and holding her for a 1 million dollar ransom. Frank Dawson couldn't go to the police because he was hiding money in an off shore bank account. Add in a Neo-Nazi ex-security guard, a mistress on the side, and a hostage reluctant to return to her previous life, and what you get is an on-the-fly 'switch' in plans. A very enjoyable read! I will definitely put more Elmore Leonard on my 'to read' list.

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