

Zeus	Master of the master	Master of the slave	Amphitryon
	Master of the slave	Slave of the master	
Hermes	Slave of the master	Slave of the master	Sosie
	Master of the slave	Slave of the slave	

## THE SWITCH

(1944)

Virgilio Piñera

Translated by Mark Schafer

Their friend made ready for the two couples. The lovers would at last be united in the flesh. He had prepared everything with exquisite taste, insisting only that in exchange for the immense joy he was providing them everything must be consummated in absolute darkness and in the strictest silence. So, when the lovers arrived, he informed them that the lighted room where they stood was the last they would contemplate during their unforgettable, carnal night. Formal courtesies were exchanged, and they made their way through a small gallery to the immense doors that led, said the friend, to the two nuptial bedrooms.

Already the walk through that gallery had been consummated in absolute darkness. The friend (who had no need of light) announced that they had reached the entrance to human paradise, and that at his signal, the doors would open to admit the eternal lovers, separated until now by the inevitable tricks of fate.

Suddenly, a wave of terror animated them: it seems a gust of wind abruptly lifted the woman's gowns. Terrorized, they abandoned their lovers and pressed themselves madly against the breast of the friend, who was standing in the center of that strange assembly. Smiling slightly, and without retracting his order, the friend took them by the wrists and spun them around so that each came to rest in the arms of the wrong lover. The men were waiting like well-trained stallions, silent and tense. Order was soon re-established and at a signal from the friend, the doors opened and the crossed lovers passed through.

There, in the carnal chamber, they lavished the most refined and unprecedented caresses on each other. In grateful and loving respect for the vow they had taken, they did not even begin to utter a single sound, but made love until they had drained (as they say) "the cup of pleasure." All the while, the friend remained in a lighted room, torn with anguish. Soon the lovers would leave their rooms, and,

seeing the horrible switch, their love would be extinguished by the disturbing knowledge that it had been consummated with objects absolutely indifferent to them.

The friend began to think of various means of repairing the breach: he immediately rejected the idea of carrying the women to a common room, then restoring them (now properly switched) to their respective lovers. That was a partial solution; for example, either of the women might suspect that something was amiss in the passage from a dark room to a lighted one. Suddenly, the friend smiled. He clapped his hands and two servants appeared instantly. He whispered a few words into their ears and they disappeared, returning shortly armed with small golden needles and enormous silver scissors. The friend examined the instruments and immediately directed the servants to the nuptial doors. They entered and, groping in the darkness, took hold of the women and quickly cut off their tongues and poked out their eyes, then did the same to the men. Relieved of their tongues and eyes, they were brought before the friend, who was waiting for them in his well-lighted room.

There he let them know that, desiring to prolong that memorable, carnal night, he had ordered two of his servants, armed with needles and scissors, to take out their eyes and cut off their tongues. Hearing this statement, the lovers immediately recovered their expressions of ineffable happiness and through their gestures let the friend know the profound gratitude that possessed them.

For years they lived in uninterrupted joy. Finally, the hour of their death arrived and, perfect lovers that they were, they were stricken by the same fatal ailment and died in the same moment. Learning of this, their friend smiled slightly and decided to bury them, restoring to each lover his beloved and thereby to each beloved her lover. This he did, but in their ignorance, the lovers joyfully continued their unforgettable, carnal night.

Aase Berg

Translated by Johannes Göransson

Nanoblack horses, vantablack net-fishing for the Polaris pearl. A hard, dull synthetic pearl. Or *Pinctada margaritifera-cumingi*, grown in mussels in Tahiti. Local pollution gives the pearl its colour. The core of the true pearl from Bahrain is not a grain of sand. Small holes in the oyster shell indicates a parasite. In the soft parts of the slow-slacking intestinal flora of the hover-horse. Along the silk roads of the ocean, the blank pearl of the motor men's helmets whil in the same moonlight, the same foam.