



*Reluctant Press* presents:

# Mitchell's Switch

Briana Vermont



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID McKINLEY

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A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

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# Mitchell's Switch

**By Briana Vermont**

Illustrations by David McKinley

## **Chapter 1: Grounded!**

"You have *got* to be kidding me!" Michelle whined. "This is a joke, right?"

"I'm sorry, Michelle," replied her mother. "But this is not a joke to us. We have rules in this house, and your father and I expect them to be obeyed." Michelle's father stood at her mother's side, looking stern.

"But your rules are ridiculous," Michelle continued. "I was in by 10:30 Thursday night. That's only half an hour late. And it's not like I was out drinking, or stealing cars! I was at Nadia's, finishing up our history assignment! Would you rather I had nothing to hand in on Friday, and I failed history?"

"We would rather you didn't leave your homework until the night before it's due!" said her father, joining in the conversation. "And we would rather you showed a little respect for your parents, by following the few simple rules we have. Rule number one is 'home by 10:00 on a school night'! We've warned you enough times; this time you're going to learn we mean what we say. For the rest of the weekend, you're grounded!"

Michelle's father was not good at confrontation, especially with his daughter. He usually gave in long before things got to this point. But this time, he really wanted to make his point. Rather than listen to any more of her arguments, and take the risk that he might give in once again, he turned and stormed out of the kitchen to his workroom in the garage.

"Every rule is rule number one around here," Michelle mumbled to herself, then turned back to her mother. "Mom, you've got to make him see reason," she tried. "I'm eighteen years old! None of my friends has a curfew!"

Michelle's mother led her to the kitchen table, and sat down with her. "Michelle, you've got to realize, not everything that happens is about you. When you're out late, your father has to wait up for you. You're not the only one who has to get up in the morning, you know. He has to get up for work by 6:00, an hour before you get up for school. When you're late, it's very hard on him."

"He doesn't have to wait up for me," Michelle muttered.

"The fact that you can say that shows how little you know about your father," replied her mother. "He couldn't possibly *not* wait up for you."

"What about Mitchell?" asked Michelle. This was one of the oldest tricks in the Sisters' Playbook: As a last resort, you can always get your brother in trouble. "He stayed out till 11:00 a bunch of times last week. And he's almost a year younger than me. Why isn't he grounded?"

"He told us in advance that he would be late. He needed extra time to work on a project with Steve. We knew where he was, what he was doing, and when he would get home. And whenever he is going to be late, he always calls to let us know what's happening. And, unfortunately for you, your father has no trouble sleeping when Mitchell is out of the house."

"That is so totally unfair," sulked Michelle.

"No one said life was fair," her mother pulled from the Mothers' Playbook (the chapter titled, 'Infuriating Platitudes'). "You could learn a lot from Mitchell. Why don't you try to be a little more like your brother?"

This was a phrase that should have been struck from the Playbook long ago. Why mothers think it will help, to be told that your brother is better than you, is a mystery that may never be solved. At any rate, Michelle reacted as teens down the ages have all reacted; she got angry all over again.

"More like Mitchell? How could I possibly be any more like Mitchell? He's supposed to be my little brother, but he's in most of my classes so I can't even get away from him! And you gave us practically the same name! What were you thinking?"

Michelle's grandfather was 'Mitchell Alexander Everett', and he had always wanted a grandson named after him. When Michelle was born, she had six older cousins, all girls. It looked like the poor man might never have a grandson, and so when another granddaughter was born she was named 'Michelle Alexandra Everett'. Then, as the universe never passes up a chance for a good joke, Michelle's mother's misplaced confidence in the Latex industry resulted in a son less than a year later. He was named 'Mitchell Alexander Everett'.

Both Michelle and her brother took after their mother. They both had her soft features, striking eyes, and thick, wavy brunette hair. When they were young, people often mistook them for twins, they were so close in age and appearance. Their mother thought this was adorable, of course, and encouraged their similarity. She dressed them in clothes that suited both boys and girls, and allowed Mitchell to grow his beautiful hair.

Now that they were older, Michelle had asserted her independence by choosing to wear dresses and skirts, and never leaving the house without makeup. No one ever mis-

took her for Mitchell any more. Mitchell, on the other hand, generally dressed in T-shirts and jeans, like any other male teenager. He still had his long hair, but it tended to be more unkempt than Michelle's. However, despite the differences people still remarked on their similarity. This drove Michelle crazy.

"I should be more like Mitchell," said Michelle with disdain. "You should be telling him to be less like me! At least tell him to get a haircut, so people stop mistaking him for me!"

"Oh, his beautiful hair," said her mother wistfully. "You're right, it's probably time to do something about it. Your father certainly has been after me to get it cut for a long time, and Mitchell really doesn't take proper care of it. I just don't think I'm ready."

"Hello, Mom?" said Michelle. "We're talking about me, remember? You can't possibly ground me tonight. I've got plans; I've been looking forward to tonight for weeks! You don't know what this means to me. Please, just talk to Daddy!"

"I don't see any reason to let you go out tonight," her mother replied seriously. "You've got to learn, you're not the only person in this house. Until you learn to be considerate of others, and to understand your actions from other people's points of view, we're going to need rules, and consequences to the rules. I'm sorry, but you're grounded for the weekend, little girl."

"I made promises to people! I can't back out now!" Michelle tried.

"Then you'll just have to break those promises, just like you broke your promise to your father and me," her mother replied. "But I suggest you call your friends and let them know your plans have changed; that would be the considerate thing to do."

"So what am I supposed to do here all night?" Michelle asked.

"Mitchell is staying home too. It would be fun to have a family night, like we used to. We can get out a game to play."

"Thanks, but I think I'd rather sit in my room," said Michelle as she stood to leave.

"Suit yourself," said her mother to the empty room.

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"So, whatcha got planned for tonight?" asked Steve.

"Planned?" replied Mitchell. He pulled the phone so the cord would stretch to his bed, then lay back as he spoke. "Nothing planned. Probably play some video games." Mitchell didn't bother to ask what Steve would be doing. Steve had to spend every other Saturday night with his Dad. Mitchell couldn't imagine spending that much time with his Dad, but Steve didn't seem to complain much.

"You're not going to play Weird Wars, are you?" asked Steve.

"Probably," said Mitchell.

"No, don't do it. You're already two levels ahead of me. And I don't want to skip any quests to keep up. Wait till we can both be online tomorrow night, okay?"

"Yeah, sure, I guess I can do that. I don't know what else to do, though. Everything else is so lame. I just started a new quest, I'm supposed to rid a forest of these werewolf things, then Master Quan will tell me where I can find..."

"Hey, don't tell me!" Steve yelled into the phone. "I told you, I want to catch up, then we can figure it out together."

"Okay, okay. I guess I'll just pull out my old Game Station, try some of those old games."

"You know who you could play with?" said Steve, an obnoxious tone entering his voice.

"No!" cried out Mitchell. "Don't even say it, Steve!"

"She is so fine, you should play with that..."

"Steve, don't go there! You know that's so sick..."

"Totally hot babe you live with!"

"Dude, that's so gross! That's my sister you're talking about."

"I can't help myself," said Steve. "Every time I think of her, I lose my mind."

"Well, be careful. You don't have much to start with."

"If she lived in my house, I'd be all over her, sister or not. Oh yes, she's so fine, I would be all over her like cream on smooth, smooth pudding..."

"You are completely warped, dude. And you haven't taken into account the fact that she totally can't stand the sight of you."

"That's not true. She's playing hard to get, that's all. It's all a game, a game of love and conquest."

"Oh look, here she is right now," said Mitchell. "Michelle, Steve's on the line. He says he's madly in love with you, and wants to know how you feel about him."

Mitchell passed the phone back and forth between his hands, then placed the receiver back on his shoulder. In his best impersonation of Michelle he said, "Steve, you creepy little pervert, leave me alone or I'll get a restraining order."

"Ha!" laughed Steve. "Pretty good, Mitchell, but I know that wasn't her. She would never call me that."

"Who are you trying to kid?" asked Mitchell. "She called you a creepy little pervert right to your face just last week."

"All part of the game, pal. When she said that she meant, 'Soon I will be your willing love slave!'"

"You're deluded, man. But persistent, I'll give you that."

"Hey, I gotta go, man," said Steve. "My Dad just got here. So I'll talk to you tomorrow?"

"Sure, talk to you tomorrow," said Mitchell. He stood and placed the receiver back on his desk, then turned to leave his room. The way was blocked by Michelle.

"Hey, Mitchell," she greeted him.

"Oh, yeah, hey Michelle," he replied. "Look, uh, you didn't happen to, uh..."

"Overhear everything you just said?" she finished his sentence for him.

"Oh, I guess, yeah, about that," he began to explain. "Sorry Michelle. I know, it looks bad, but really, I wasn't making fun of you. It's just Steve, you know what he's like."

"Oh yes," said Michelle. "Don't sweat it, little bro. I know exactly what Steve is like. What's more, I completely approve of the way you handled him. Any time you want to borrow my personality in order to tell off that twisted little piece of monkey excrement, please go right ahead."

"Thanks, Sis," laughed Mitchell. "Monkey excrement, that's a good one." Mitchell made to step forward into the hallway, but Michelle held him back.

"Listen," she said, looking up and down the hallway to make sure they were alone. Michelle stepped into Mitchell's room quickly, shutting the door behind her. "I need to ask you for a small favor."

"A *small* favor?" said Mitchell suspiciously. "That's interesting. I don't think I can recall you ever asking for a *small* favor before. Outrageous, criminal, or the occasional simply huge favor, yes, but never before small."

"Well trust me, this is small."

"Yes, I generally have to start by trusting you," Mitchell replied. "Okay, but just so you know, if it turns out to be huge, you just don't have a lot of credit in your favor account."

"No credit?" cried out Michelle, forgetting not to raise her voice and momentarily distracted from her purpose. "Who saved your bacon last month when you dented Dad's car?"

"Are you saying that not ratting on me was a favor?"

"I was the one who got it fixed, for free, before anyone found out."

"No you didn't. I took it to Brian Brentwood. He hammered it out in auto shop."

"Only because I agreed to go out with him."

"You wanted to go out with him."

"Trust me, I did not want to go out with Brian Brentwood."

Mitchell stopped to think where this conversation left them. After a few quick calculations, he said, "Okay, you're right. You have one, small to medium sized favor coming to you."

"Thanks," Michelle replied conspiratorially as she pulled Mitchell over to the bed and sat down. "And trust me, it really is small. See, a guy I really like has two tickets to see the Harsh Mellows, in concert, over in Stouffville tonight. Mitchell, I can't miss this! Except Mom and Dad have grounded me for the weekend."

"So you want me to go to the concert for you?" asked Mitchell in mock-seriousness. Thinking briefly he said, "Okay, I can do that for you."

"No, you moron," said Michelle.

"Ah, then you want me to speak to our parents, get them to see reason," he said, still maintaining a serious expression on his face. "I will do this for you, although I don't guarantee they'll respond."

"Could you stop being an idiot for just one minute?" Michelle implored. "Mom expects me to sulk in my room all night. All I need you to do is help me sneak out of the house, then sit in my room after I leave."

"Sit in your room and do what?" Mitchell wanted to know.

"Sit in my room and do whatever," Michelle replied in exasperation. "I've got the same as you. TV, DVD, Internet, video games. Just do whatever you planned to do in your own room." Michelle thought over what she had just said and was compelled to add, "Within reason."

"This is not a small favor," said Mitchell.

"What, asking you to play video games for a couple of hours?" replied Michelle.

"Lie to our parents, assist in the escape of a detainee, be an accessory to breaking the rules," Mitchell listed off the crimes on his fingers.

"Okay, so maybe it's small to medium? It's still covered."

"Plus, your room is pink."

"So, are you going to do it or not?" Michelle asked.

"Yes," said Mitchell after a moment's thought, taking Michelle by surprise. "But this is huge, so in return you owe me one medium favor, plus a future third round draft pick."

"I don't even know what that means."

"So we have a deal?"

"Deal," said Michelle. "I'll tell you the plan, but first, you have to get in the shower and wash your hair."

"Wash my hair?" asked Mitchell.

"If Mom or Dad get a look at that bird's nest on your head, they'll know it isn't me," explained Michelle. "Come on, we need to get moving."

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"G'night, Mom," said Mitchell from the front door. "I'm going over to Steve's for a while."

"Oh?" said his mother as she came out of the kitchen. "I thought you were staying home. Wasn't Steve seeing his father tonight?"

"His, uh, plans fell through. We're going to play some games, maybe watch a movie."

Mitchell's father came into the front hallway. "You're not staying over there tonight. You know I need you here, tomorrow morning?"

"I know, Dad," Mitchell replied. "I'll be home around 11:00, maybe 11:30."



"Just make sure you are," said his father as he went back to his TV.

"Bye bye, honey, have fun," said his mother as she gave him a hug and a quick kiss on the cheek. "My goodness, look at your hair, it looks so nice. Mmm, it smells nice too."

"Uh, thanks, I just washed it," he replied. "I used Michelle's Fournier Glucose shampoo."

"Did she help you to brush it out and style it?" she asked.

"Uh, yeah?" Mitchell replied, not sure if Michelle's plan was unraveling already.

"I could tell, it's just the way she styles her own hair," said his mother. "She must be bored, having to stay in all night. Poor thing. But you should learn to keep it this way, it looks so nice."

"Yeah, okay, thanks Mom," said Mitchell, as he turned red with embarrassment. "Look, I really have to go."

"Okay, have fun!" said his mother, then closed the door behind him. Michelle appeared at the top of the stairs in her pink flannel pajamas and shorty bathrobe.

"Mom?" she called down. "I'm going to my room, okay?"

"Okay, sweetie," said her mother. "Thanks for letting me know. I'll look in on you later, okay?"

"You don't have to do that," said Michelle. Then she turned away from the stairs, and walked down the hall to her room.

Mitchell and Michelle's mother walked into the family room, where their father was watching television from the couch. "That boy's hair is out of control," he said. "You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I know," she replied sadly as she sat beside her husband. "You know I'm not ready to see him cut it, though."

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Michelle walked down the hallway, past the door to her bedroom, then looked around to make sure no one saw her entering her brother's room. As she shut the door quietly, the window opened behind her and Mitchell put his head through.

"So far, so good," said Michelle as she helped her brother through the window. Mitchell dropped from the window, rolled onto his bed, then sat upright, with the skill of someone who had done this many times.

"Okay, so you be sure to be back by ... whoa, hey, what are you doing?"

Michelle unbuttoned her pajamas, and whipped off her top without warning, then pulled off the pants. Fortunately she was dressed underneath in a tiny silver mini-dress.

"You didn't think I was going to a concert in my pajamas, did you?" she asked.

"No, but you might have warned me," said Mitchell, still trying to recover from the shock.

Michelle sat on the edge of the bed, and put on a pair of pantyhose as Mitchell looked on.

"Here," she said, noticing him watching, and handing him the pajamas. "You've got better things to do than watch me put on pantyhose. You need to change into these."

"Wait, no, I'm just going to sit in your room, you didn't say anything about wearing your pajamas."

"Mom just told me, she's going to look in on me later. I told her not to, but still, she might. How are you going to explain if you're sitting there in jeans and a T-shirt?"

"Yeah, but Michelle..."

"They're brand new, never worn, I'm the one who should be upset. You know, I could have brought you a nighty! Now hurry up, I need to go."

The two turned their backs on each other, as Mitchell began to undress. "Don't look," he said as he removed his pants.

"Trust me, I have no interest in looking," Michelle replied. She opened her purse, and pulled out a lipstick to touch up her makeup.

"Okay, I'm ready," said Mitchell. Michelle turned around, and stifled a giggle as she saw her brother in pink flannel jammies and her cute little pink bathrobe, with his long hair styled like her own.

"You look great," she said. "But then, why wouldn't you? You look just like me. Except..."

Michelle pressed her brother against the wall, then used her lipstick to color his lips glossy red.

"Hey, that's not necessary," said Mitchell as he tried to fend her off.

