

Net Switch Excerpt

FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 2008: Dear Friends,

The unbelievable happened to me three weeks ago. I know I'll lose it every so often as I tell you about it, so please be patient. After I saw Richard, days passed without hearing from Arcane. I grew weary of constantly looking over my shoulder and hoped he had lost interest in terrorizing me. The next thing I knew it was Memorial weekend. I took that day off to head out of town to clear my conscience and rebuild my independence. By six that morning, miles separated me from home, the wind playing with the blaring radio. My arms flailed around the car as I screamed along to the song "Crazy" by Gnarl's Barkley. It was an hour into the drive when all of a sudden my tire blew, (I couldn't believe my bad luck) forcing me to pull over and call for road service. They told me it would take at least an hour before someone could make it out.

It wasn't fair. All I wanted was one weekend to get away from the past months. I slammed my hands on the steering wheel and then rested my head on the tops of them. It was the last thing I deserved after all I have been through. A special weekend filled with new ways to relax awaited me at the end of this worn road. My head gradually rose, my eyes scanning the never ending highway. It made me think of the unknowns that lay ahead. Fear. Anger. I missed the monotony of life before Arcane, when nothing was a surprise. When the only fear I clung to was the thought of another lonely weekend. Now, I always feel angry and my anger flies out and grabs at the easiest victim it can find—a Tasmanian Devil in disguise.

I'm unsure if I am describing myself or Arcane.

Weather reports had predicted a bright day for my travels, but it turned out the sun took the day off, leaving a congested sky of clouds. Out in the distance I could hear an animal wailing as though the air curled around the sound and flipped it around. An uncontrollable shiver came over me, even though I had the windows closed. I leaned down to the floor on the passenger's side to get a water bottle. When I sat back up, I saw a car in the rearview mirror sitting behind me, the dark windows prevented me from seeing inside. Everything around me got darker... I can't be sure if it was my imagination or not. It didn't matter though. I knew it was him—I could feel it.

My eyes shot to the door locks, but before I could lock them, the passenger side opened. Instinctively, my body shoved against the door, still frantically clicking the door lock. *Click. Click.* My worst fear slid into the passenger seat, closed the door and looked straight ahead without saying a word. I pressed my back harder against the door without taking my eyes off him.

"Tsk, tsk. Going somewhere, Sydney? I don't remember getting an invite," he said in a low, even tone.

Similar to my hand still grasping the door handle, my eyes refused to veer away from him. The rest of him remained still as he turned his head toward me and smiled.

"I've missed you, Sydney."

My tears blinded me. I felt the bile slosh around in my throat, so I swallowed fast. Arcane enjoys this and I give him the power to continue on. He makes me fear him, and this fear is what stopped me from striking back.

Punch the shit out of him.

“Are you mad at me?” he asked.

Every nerve in my body swelled and increased my internal heat. Images of what he did to Richard—to ME—flashed in my head and before I could stop myself I started hitting him. I slapped his face and arms, pulled his hair and screamed that I hated him. I jabbed my nails into his skin, like stabbing an ice pick into ice, until I felt his skin accumulate under my nails. Strands of his hair tangled between my fingers. Good! I was inflicting some pain on him. But he laughed...and that laugh triggered a fury inside me, so I put more power behind my punches. My body lashed out at him until Arcane got tired of me and grabbed my wrists, holding them out between us.

“Let go, you asshole!”

I pulled my arms toward me, but I couldn't shake his hold. My hands opened and I looked at the strands of his hair stuck between my fingers...streaks of blood on them and his face. With a twisted smile, I shifted my amusement from my hands to his face. I smiled. It felt so good to smile. For that split second, I didn't think about the consequences of my satisfaction.

Anger shifted from me to Arcane when my smile zapped him. Clamping both my wrists in one hand, he grabbed my neck with his other and threw me up against the window, applying pressure to my windpipe. My eyes widened when he cut off my airflow. I was able to free one of my hands to grab at his wrist, but this only made him apply more pressure. My hand hit his arm and then everything went black.
