

**DRESSED TO
KILL, JOBETH
WILLIAMS
FINALLY
SHAKE
HER
EARTH-
MOTHER
IMAGE**



SWITCH



JoBeth Williams (top right, with Ellen Barkin, and above) plays murderous Margo—funny, sexy and glamorous—in the newest comedy from director Blake Edwards.

As stories about the wrath of a jilted lover go, *Fatal Attraction* was one of the more chilling. After all, trying to destroy a man's marriage is one thing, but boiling his pet rabbit is big-time revenge.

But not vicious enough, apparently, for Blake Edwards. *Switch*, the newest comedy from the sultan of slapstick (*S.O.B.*, *Victor/Victoria*, *The Pink Panther*), is about the wrath of not one but three jilted lovers. And this time the women are not bothering with any symbolic bunny sacrifices. The only animal this trio wants to execute is the man himself.

"This guy played by Perry King," explains actress JoBeth Williams (*Poltergeist II*, *The Big Chill*), "is a 36-year-old bachelor, a complete womanizer. At the beginning of the movie, three of his ex-girlfriends, me being the ringleader, get together and try to kill him, because he's treated them all so badly." Before they can finish the job, however, the cad wakes up one morning to find himself in the body of a woman (Ellen Barkin).

In *Switch*, Williams plays the murderous Margo, who goes in for

haute couture clothes and lots of jewelry. "I call her overdressed for every occasion," says Williams. Except when she's underdressed, of course. Like the moment she opts to do a striptease, right down to black lace underwear.

"It's a funny, glamorous, sexy part," Williams told Lawrence Van Gelder in *The New York Times*. "Let's just say she ends up going to bed with the devil. Literally."

Clearly *Switch* — which also costars Jimmy Smits of *L.A. Law* fame — is a change of pace for Williams, who has specialized in mother roles up to now. Her TV-movie *Baby M* and two *Poltergeist* performances are probably the best known, but she was also seen as the struggling mother of three in *Desert Bloom* (1986), a haunting tale of a troubled family set in Nevada in the 1950s.

There is a kind of cruel irony in that stereotype, because for some years now JoBeth Williams and her director/husband, John Pasquin, have been attempting to have a child. Besides enduring all the usual tests, charts and temperature-taking in an attempt to conceive, Williams underwent surgery as well as artificial insemination, subsequently suffering a miscarriage, then an ectopic pregnancy.

"You look around," the 39-year-old actress told *Ladies Home Journal*, "and see 15-year-olds getting pregnant who don't want to. You see people with six children who only wanted two. And you say, 'What the hell is wrong with me? Why am I being singled out? Why am I being punished?'"

Eventually Williams found psychological relief at least, through RESOLVE, a national network that provides information and comfort to those suffering from infertility. After participating in the network, she decided to talk publicly about her own infertility. "I wish I had known five years ago that there was a support group out there," says the

actress, who adopted a baby boy three years ago. "And I decided that the best way to help people gain that kind of information is to go public. I want to help people realize that this is a medical problem and not an embarrassment."

As for her maternal image on-screen, well, that's a different story entirely. "The thing that attracted me to the role in *Switch*," she says, "is that I would like to blow my mother image out of the water." The odds are with her. If masterminding a murder and doing a striptease don't do it, nothing will.

— Lyle Slack

