

The man with the iron-gray hair rose and approached her. A reputable man, the sort of man who sat on boards of directors and held public positions. She turned to him confidently.

"I don't understand this at all," she said, with dignity. "My cousin and my aunt do not seem to recognize me. Is my aunt ill? Are you a doctor?"

"Now, young lady," said the iron-gray man, "that's better. We don't want any unnecessary trouble about this—and there won't be any if you're sensible. But you see, we know who you are."

Lucinda stared into his hard eyes for a moment as the room swam beneath her feet and righted itself. "Then you know I'm Lucinda Charden," she said.

"Now, that's just the trouble," the iron-gray man said. "We hoped we wouldn't have to go into that."

"But you don't understand!" said Lucinda. "And I don't understand this—this horrible silence! Billy! Aunt Fol! Say it isn't true!" There was no reply. "But I am Lucinda Charden!" she said.

The iron-gray man sighed. "All right, young woman," he said. "We hoped to get through it without that. But if you ask for it, you'll get it. You realize, of course, that you're making a serious charge. I'm Colonel Babcock, Police Commissioner of New York City."

"It isn't a charge," said Lucinda indignantly. "It's the truth! I'm Lucinda—"

"Just a minute!" barked Colonel Babcock. He turned deferentially to Aunt Fol. "Miss Charden," he said soothingly, "do you recognize this young woman as your niece, Lucinda Charden?"

Aunt Fol's face was flushed. "Of course that—that person isn't my niece! My niece Lucinda is right beside me on this sofa. Yes, 'Cinda dear, and though it's all perfectly awful I'm glad it's happened really because I've kept telling you about impostors and you never would believe me, and now, thank goodness, I hope you're getting a little more sense."

"Thank you very much, Miss Charden," said Colonel Babcock. "Do you recognize this young woman as your cousin?"

Billy shook his head. "I do not." "Oh, oh, oh!" said Lucinda, her world crumbling around her.

Colonel Babcock jerked his head. "Mr. Wilcox?" he said to the man in the big shoes.

"I have seen Miss Charden eleven times in the past two years in the office of the Charden Estate," said Mr. Wilcox in the mechanical, businesslike voice of a dictograph. "Cannot claim anything but a business acquaintance with Miss Charden but I certainly know her by sight. This young woman is not Miss Charden. There is a decided resemblance, though Miss Charden's hair and eyes are much darker than

LITTLE PRICE

By BETTY L. KNOWLES

*When I consider Love and its brief hour—
A melody, flung to an evening star;
A stab of sweetness deep enough to scar
Its etching on the heart of every flower;
A surge of beauty, fading as it glows;
The sudden flame of meteoric light;
A solitary echo in the night—
I wonder that the power of love still grows.
Can one dear hour be worth the bitter tears
Of loneliness and everlasting pain?
The answer surely must be no—and yet
Brave Pyramus is smiling through the years,
And Sappho's heart still sings its sweet refrain,
And death seems little price to Juliet.*

this young woman's. However, there is an entire dissimilarity of personality. I am prepared to swear that this young woman is not Miss Charden."

Lucinda put up her hands as if to brush away a net of cobwebs, closing around her. For the first time since she had entered the room she felt afraid.

"I demand to see Mr. Janeway," she said stubbornly.

"Mr. Janeway is in bed with a cold or he would be here," said Colonel Babcock. "Of course you can see him if you want. But frankly, what is the use?"

"Oh, you'll be sorry for this!" said Lucinda, gasping.

"None of that, young woman!" said Colonel Babcock, with a rasp in his voice. He turned to Aunt Fol. "Miss Charden," he said gallantly, "you've been very brave, and

we all appreciate it. But we don't want to expose you to further unpleasantness. If you and Miss Lucinda Charden would like to retire—"

The terror tightened, gripping Lucinda's heart. It wasn't a joke; it wasn't even cobwebs, now. It was a net of invisible wires of steel that tightened while she struggled helplessly.

"Oh, Aunt Fol!" she said. "Dear Aunt Fol, don't leave me, please! You can have her, too, if you want her—I'm sure she's been kind to you. But don't leave me alone with them!"

As she stared at the older woman with desperate hope, she saw for a moment something wake in her eyes—puzzlement, confusion. Then it passed, and she was just a tired old woman who hated unpleasant experiences.

"I'm—tired," said Aunt Fol, in a queer, cracked voice. "'Cinda, take me to my room. I want to lie down."

"Yes, dear," said Nora Malloy, helping her to her feet. "There." She turned for a moment. "Thank you, Colonel Babcock—and you, too, Mr. Wilcox. I'm very grateful," she said earnestly, in Lucinda Charden's voice. "I'm sorry my aunt is upset," said Nora Malloy. "I'm not. It's just too divine. Having someone else say they're you. Don't hurt the poor thing," she said lightly. "I'd even like to talk to her afterward if you think... It's some kind of neurosis, I suppose."

"No, no, my dear Miss Charden," said Colonel Babcock gallantly. "You've already done more than your part."

Lucinda wanted to scream, to shout, to draw fingernails across that smooth face that was so like her own. But she mustn't do that. She must be dignified. They'd never believe her if she wasn't.

"By the way, there'll be highballs and things on the terrace when you gentlemen are through," said Nora Malloy. "And let me know if I'm wanted, Billy."

"All right, 'Cinda," said Billy. "Swell girl." Then the old woman and the younger one were gone.

"And now," said Lucinda, her heart shaking with terror, "may I ask the reason for this preposterous masquerade?"

"Oh, we'll give you all the rope you want," said Colonel Babcock jovially. "Sit down, if you like. I'd have had you arrested at the station, but both Mr. Shaler and Miss Charden made particular requests that the matter be handled as privately as possible."

"I suppose you really are the police commissioner?" said Lucinda, suddenly.

Colonel Babcock laughed. "If you want to telephone headquarters—"

"Perhaps I'd better break in for a minute," said Billy Shaler. "As I told you, Colonel Babcock, when

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