

THE GREEN CARNATION

Adapted by Frank J. Morlock From the novel by Robert Hichens

THE GREEN CARNATION

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Etext by Dagny

Characters:

Betty, Lady Windsor, a hostess about forty years of age
Emily, Lady Locke, her widowed cousin, about twenty-eight years of age
Esme Amaranth, a wit, writer, and dandy, in his forties
Lord Reggie Hamilton, a dandy and follower of Mr. Amaranth

Scene: A drawing room in a country house, circa 1894.

Scene: A late Victorian drawing room in an English country house not far from London. Lady Windsor and her cousin, Lady Emily Locke, enter, throwing off their cloaks.

Emily

It's been a delightful evening.

Lady Windsor

Do you think so? I thought you would like Lord Reggie.

Emily

I meant the music.

Lady Windsor

Oh, Faust is always nice.

Emily

I think it's a mercy something stands still nowadays. London is not the same London it was ten years ago, when I left.

Lady Windsor

I should hope not. Why Aubrey Beardsley and Mr. Amaranth had not been invented then one never heard of Ibsen and Shaw and women hardly ever smoked, and

Emily

and men did not wear green carnations.

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Lady Windsor

You act as if you dislike our times. Do you really object to the Green Carnation?

Emily

I'm not sure. Is it some sort of secret sign? Everyone who wore it revolved around Mr. Amaranth like satellites around the sun.

Lady Windsor

They wear it to be original and to draw attention to themselves.

Emily

By their dress? I thought that was the prerogative of women?

Lady Windsor

Oh, but men have women's minds, just as women have men's minds, these days. It's the modern thing to do.

Emily

I hope not. Has Lord Reggie got a woman's mind?

Lady Windsor

Oh, he's absolutely fearless.

Emily

That's better.

Lady Windsor

For example, if he wanted to do something absolutely depraved, he would do it shamelessly.

Emily

He's not afraid to be wicked?

Lady Windsor

Oh, no indeed. Not in the least. How many of us can say as much? Do you like Lord Reggie?

Emily

He has a beautiful face. How old is he? Twenty?

Lady Windsor

Oh, nearly twenty-five. Three years younger than you are.

Emily

He looks astonishingly young.

Lady Windsor

Oh, yes. He says his sins improve his complexion.

Emily

Did he say that, or Mr. Amaranth?

Lady Windsor

Mr. Amaranth said it first, I believe. But, about Lord Reggie?

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Emily

Then, pretty Lord Reggie is just a copy cat.

Lady Windsor

Oh, no he's marvelous in his own right.

Emily

Who started the fashion of the Green Carnation?

Lady Windsor

That was Mr. Amaranth's idea. He wears it because it blends with the color of absinthe.

Emily

It sounds rather silly to me. They must be dyed.

Lady Windsor

Of course. That's why they are so original. Nature will soon begin to imitate them. However, she has not started yet.

Emily

That is lazy of her. (back to the subject of Lord Reggie) Has he a mother?

Lady Windsor

Who?

Emily

Lord Reggie.

Lady Windsor

Oh, he has two.

Emily

Two?

Lady Windsor

Practically. His own mother divorced his father, who is a perfectly horrid man. And his father's second wife wrote him a letter the other day, saying she was prepared to be a mother to him. So you see, he has two.

Emily

Do you know her?

Lady Windsor

No. Nobody does. But I believe she is very tall and religious if you notice, it is generally short squat people who are atheists and they say she does a great deal of good among the rich. She has actually converted some to Christianity, and you know, that's very hard.

Emily (pondering)

Then, she is a good woman?

Lady Windsor

Lord Reggie is very fond of her. He spent a day with her last year, and he was so pleased with her that he's

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planning to do it again this summer. He's even going to introduce her to Mr. Amarith, and he wouldn't do that unless he thought very highly of her.

Emily

Do you believe in Mr. Amarith?

Lady Windsor

Oh, certainly. He gives one ideas and that is very convenient. People who keep cudgeling their brains for ideas are always so stupid. Mr. Amarith gives you enough ideas for a week, at least.

Emily

I suppose he gives Lord Reggie all his thoughts?

Lady Windsor

Oh, he supplies half London. Hush, I think Lord Reggie and Mr. Amarith are coming now.

(Enter Lord Reginald Hamilton and Mr. Amarith. Both wear Green Carnations, and both affect extravagant fashions.)

Reggie (bowing)

We simply couldn't go to bed without telling you how much we enjoyed the evening.

Emily

The opera was magnificent.

Amarith

I wonder they don't have morning opera from twelve to three; one could have breakfast at eleven and arrange a lunch party between the acts.

Emily

Oh, but one would be fit for nothing afterwards.

Amarith

Quite so. How beautiful! Half London thoroughly unfitted for any duties whatever. It makes me so uneasy to meet with people doing their duty. I find them everywhere. It is impossible to escape them. Duty destroys the mind. In fact, it is fatal to all higher feelings.

Emily

Now, you are laughing at me, Mr. Amarith.

Lady Windsor

Oh, no, Emily. Mr. Amarith never laughs at anyone. He makes others laugh.

Amarith

Humor moves me to tears. There is nothing so utterly pathetic as a really fine paradox. Truth is always inappropriate.

Reggie

Exactly, Esme. That is why I laughed at my mother's funeral. Anybody can cry. I forced my grief beyond tears.

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Emily

Surely people were shocked?

Amarinth

When are they not shocked?

Reggie

They said I was heartless. But, one cannot choose carefully with deliberation. Deliberation is fatal to one's personality. When I am what is called wicked, it is my mood to be evil. I never know what I shall be at a particular time. There are moments when I desire squalor.

Lady Windsor (uneasily)

Yes, moods are delightful. I have as many as I have dresses, and they cost me nearly as much. They cost my husband a good deal but fortunately, he can afford them. But I never go slumming. There are so many microbes there. I can't imagine why microbes flourish in the slums nothing else does. And so, a mood that cost me typhoid or small pox would be really silly, wouldn't it? Will you excuse us? I want to show Emily something. Come, Emily.

(Exit Lady Windsor and Emily.)

Amarinth (after they have gone)

How tiring women are. They always let one know they are up to the mark. Isn't it so, Reggie?

Reggie

Yes unless they have convictions. Lady Locke has convictions, I fancy.

Amarinth

Probably. But, she has a great deal besides.

Reggie

How's that?

Amarinth

Don't you know why Lady Windsor especially wanted you here tonight?

Reggie

To polish your wit with mine?

Amarinth

No, Reggie. Lady Locke has come into an immense fortune, lately. Lady Windsor is trying to do you a good turn.

Reggie

H'mmm.

Amarinth

It's a pity I am already married. I am paying for my matrimonial mood now.

Reggie

But, I thought your wife only lived on potted meats and stale bread?

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Amarinth

Unfortunately, that is only a canard invented by my dearest enemies. What do you think about it, Reggie? Could you commit the madness of matrimony with Lady Emily Locke? You are so wonderful as you are, so complete in yourself, that I scarcely dare wish it. You live so comfortably on debts, that it might be unwise to risk the possible discomfort of having money. Still, if you ever intend to possess it, you had better not waste time.

Reggie

Do you know my theory of money?

Amarinth

No. What is it, Reggie?

Reggie

I believe that money is gradually becoming extinct. It is vanishing off the face of the earth like the Dodo. Soon, we shall have people saying that money was seen at Richmond like the Loch Ness Monster, or that a bird watcher heard two capitalists singing in the woods near Esher. One hears that money is tight, a most vulgar condition for money to be in, by the way. Do you want money?

Amarinth

I suppose I do but I am afraid of spoiling myself.

Reggie

Marriage hasn't changed you.

Amarinth

Because I have not let it. My wife began by trying to influence me and has ended by being influenced by me. She is a good woman, Reggie and wears large hats. Why do good women wear large hats? Someone told me the other day that the Narcissus Club had failed because it did not go on paying. Nothing does go on paying. I know I don't.

Reggie

I hate paying anyone, even when I have the money. There is something so sordid about it. To give is beautiful. I said as much to my tailor yesterday. He had the impertinence to reply, "I differ from you, sir, in toto." How horrible the spread of education is.

Amarinth

It will spoil England if it continues. It has already spoiled America. People say we are so wicked, Reggie. I wish I could feel wicked. Only saints feel wicked, they're always repenting. It must be delightful. It's the only reason I can think of for putting up with the inconveniences of sanctity. The stars are so unjust.

Reggie

Are you going to get drunk tonight, Esme? You're so splendid when you are drunk.

Amarinth

Don't know yet. Never do. To get drunk deliberately is as foolish as to get sober by accident. Reggie, are you going to make this marriage?

Reggie

Do you want me to?

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Amarinth

I never want anyone to do anything. But, I should be delighted no longer to pay for your suppers. But marriage might make you develop, and then I should lose you. Don't develop, Reggie. Whatever you do, don't develop. The secret of my success is that I never develop. I was born epigrammatic and I shall die with a paradox on my lips. Do not marry unless you have the strength to resist orthodoxy and be a bad husband.

Reggie

I have no intention of being a good one.

Amarinth

When you marry, you make vows and nothing is so damaging to personality as keeping promises. To lie finely is an art. To tell the truth is to act according to nature. Nothing on earth is so absolutely middle class as nature.

Reggie

Only people without brains make good husbands.

Amarinth

Lady Locke would make a good wife.

Reggie

Yes. It is written on her face. The worst virtues are those that cannot be concealed.

Amarinth

Yes we can conceal our vices, if we like, for a time, at least. But virtue will out.

Reggie

Oh, Esme, when you are drunk, I could listen to you forever.

Amarinth

Remember my epigrams, dear boy, and repeat them to me tomorrow. I am dining out with Oscar Wilde, and that is to be done only with prayer and fasting. It is not easy to be wicked. To sin beautifully, as you sin, Reggie, is one of the most complicated of the arts. There are hardly six people in a century who can master it. To commit a perfect sin, Reggie, is to be great. The works of man perish. But what sin, that has ever been invented, has been demolished? There are always new human beings springing into the world to commit it, to find pleasure in it.

Reggie (ecstatically)

Esme, you are great.

Amarinth

How true that is. In conceit lies salvation. We do not hoodwink ourselves into modesty.

Reggie

Hsst. The ladies are coming back.

(Emily and Lady Windsor return with some food.)

Lady Windsor

Have some buns, everyone. Lord Reggie? They are so wholesome.

Reggie

Wholesome things almost always disagree with me. If I ate one, I should almost infallibly lose my temper.

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Amarinth

Curious! My temper and my heart are the only two things I never lose. Losing things is a very subtle art. Almost anybody can find things. So few people can lose anything really beautifully.

Lady Windsor

I wish I could find some money. Times are so very hard for the rich, don't you think so? I shall soon have to give up my carriage, or your brother. I can't keep them both up.

Amarinth

Poor Teddy! Have his conversational powers fallen off?

Lady Windsor

Oh, no he still talks rather well. He is a superb raconteur I shall miss him much.

Emily

The profession of conversationalist is so delightful. I wonder more people don't take it up.

Reggie

The true artist will always be an amateur.

Lady Windsor

Conversational powers are sometimes so distressing.

Emily

At least I have none. Otherwise, I should be quite hopeless. Like Mr. George Bernard Shaw

Lady Windsor

Oh, he means well.

Amarinth

I am afraid so. People who mean well always do badly. Good intentions are invariably ungrammatical.

Reggie

Good intentions have been the ruin of the world. I have no intentions.

Emily

Then you will never marry.

Amarinth

To be intentional, is to be middle class. It is quite mistaken to think the artist should stuff his beautiful empty mind with knowledge of any kind. I have written a great novel on Iceland yet, I couldn't find the place on the map. I only know that it has a beautiful name, and I have written a beautiful book about it. Like a seacoast in Bohemia. This is an age of identification in which our God is the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

Reggie

These strawberries are good. I should finish them, only I hate to finish anything. Finishing things is so commonplace. It is more original not to.

Emily

You are very fond of originality?

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Reggie

Are not you?

Emily

Oh, no. I've lived among soldiers.

Reggie

Soldiers are never original. They think it unmanly. They know nothing about anything or anybody which would be charming only they think they know everything.

Emily

You must have been unfortunate in your experiences.

Reggie

Perhaps so. I tried to be manly. I talked about Kipling and Conrad, which is a sure sign of manliness but, they only wanted to talk about machine guns and horses.

Emily

You have finished the strawberries after all.

Reggie

So I have. We, none of us, live up to our ideals. Nothing is so limited, as to have an ideal.

Emily

But, you look as though you have many.

Reggie

Oh, never believe what you see in a person's face. Faces are only masks given us to conceal our thoughts. No more preposterous thing has ever been put forward than that of the artist revealing himself in his art.

Lady Windsor

Mr. Smith, the curate, is coming tomorrow. You must remember to be very high church.

Reggie

I don't know how to be high church. How does one do it?

Lady Windsor

Oh, just abuse the evangelists. There is nothing to it.

Reggie

If I were anything, I would be a Roman Catholic.

Emily

Would you like to confess your sins?

Reggie

Immensely. There's nothing so much fun as telling people about your wickedness. Curiously enough, good people love hearing it. Strange. Sinners take absolutely no interest in good people.

Amarinth

Society loves one thing more than sinning.

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Emily

What is it?

Amarinth

Administering injustice.

Emily

I am sure Lord Reggie has a great deal of good in him.

Amarinth

Not enough to spoil his charm. You know, I was reading the Bible recently. I had no idea it was so artistically written. There are passages in the book of Job that I should not be ashamed to have penned myself.

Emily

I wonder if authors know how dangerous they may be in their writing.

Amarinth

One has to choose between being dangerous and being dull.

Emily

But, some books have made suicide quite the rage. Take Hedda Gabler, for instance.

Reggie

True. A number of most respectable ladies, without the vestige of a past among them, have put an end to themselves lately. To die naturally has become quite unfashionable.

Amarinth

No doubt the tide will turn presently.

Lady Windsor

I suppose Ibsen and Shaw are responsible for a good deal.

BLACKOUT

When the lights go up, it is sometime the next day. The drawing room is occupied only by Mr. Amarinth, who is in a somewhat languishing attitude. Emily enters.

Emily

Why, what's the matter, Mr. Amarinth?

Amarinth

Ah, Lady Locke. I was just contemplating the vanity of life. Why have I never set the world ablaze? I have plied the bellows most industriously, and I have made the twigs crackle, and yet, the fire splutters a good deal. You have a beautiful soul, and I have a beautiful soul. Why should there not be a sympathy between us?

Emily

Some circumstances have been unkind to you, perhaps?

Amarinth

That could not hurt me for I am no philosopher, and never take facts seriously.

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Emily

Are you a pessimist?

Amarinth

I hope so. Optimism destroys the soul. Nothing is so unattractive as goodness except, perhaps, a sane mind in a sane body. To believe is very dull. To doubt is intensely engrossing. People become pessimists to save themselves from intellectual annihilation.

Emily

Your notions are very odd.

Amarinth

Let me put it to you another way. Could you love a man you felt you could understand?

Emily

Certainly. Especially if he were difficult for others to understand.

Amarinth

The moment we understand a human being, our love spreads his wings preparatory to flying away.

Emily

You go very far in your admirable desire to amuse.

Amarinth

I think not. Doubt and jealousy fan affection into passion. Women used to understand this but now, men are waking up from their slumber and becoming inscrutable. Lord Reggie is an example of what I mean.

Emily (guardedly)

Lord Reggie is very unusual.

Amarinth

Lord Reggie is unlike everything except himself. He would make any woman unhappy. How beautiful.

Emily (irritated)

Is it always a sign of intelligence to be what others are not?

Amarinth

Dear lady! Intelligence is the demon of our age. Mine bores me horribly. I am always trying to find remedies for it. I have experimented with absinthe, but I gained no result. I have read the collected works of Karl Marx. They are said to sap the mental powers. They did not sap mine. Cocaine has proved useless and leaves me positively brilliant. What am I to do?

(Enter Lord Reggie.)

Reggie

What is that about intelligence?

Emily (leaving)

Unfortunate man! You should treat your complaint with the knife. Become a popular author. (she is gone)

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Reggie

What ails her?

Amarinth

Reggie, Lady Locke will marry you, if you ask her.

Reggie

I suppose so.

Amarinth

Will you ask her?

Reggie

I suppose so.

Amarinth

Have a carnation, yours is wilting.

(Reggie takes a new carnation from Amarith, and fixes it in his buttonhole.)

Amarinth

So, you are to be a capitalist, Reggie? Will you warble in the woods near Esher? Will you flout to the great god whom stockbrokers worship so vulgarly? Vulgarity has become so common, it has lost all its charm. I shall really not be surprised if good manners come into vogue again.

Reggie

You are marvelous, Esme. You are like a scent in the air. You make people aware of you who have never seen you, never read you.

Amarinth

What shall I give you for a wedding present, Reggie?

Reggie

Esme, what do people do before they propose? There must be some absurd way to lead up to it? I can't just whistle at her. I'm sure she will expect something.

Amarinth

My dear Reggie, women always expect something. They are like the sons of the nobility. They live on their expectations.

Reggie

What am I to do? I really can't just put my arm around her waist. One owes something to oneself.

Amarinth

One owes everything to oneself. I also owe a great deal to other people, which I hope I shall not live long enough to repay.

Reggie

But, how shall I propose my proposal? How did you do it?

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Amarinth

I did nothing. My wife proposed to me, and I refused her. Then, she put up something called the banns, and told me to meet her at a certain church on a certain day. I declined. Would you believe, she came to fetch me? To avoid a scene, I went with her. Voila tout.

Reggie

I must trust my intuition then?

Amarinth

I'd rather you trusted your emotions.

Reggie

But, I have none for Lady Locke. How could you suppose so?

Amarinth

It is the privilege of incompetence to suppose. The artist will always know. Go to Lady Locke, and tell her that you do not love her, and will marry her. That is what a true woman loves to hear.

Reggie

Are the creatures so perverse?

Amarinth

It's the secret of their charm. I believe she is coming back. I shall vanish. (Amarinth exits quickly)

Emily

I'm sorry, I was rude in leaving so quickly.

Reggie

You seem to have frightened Mr. Amarinth off.

Emily (regarding his carnation)

How do you manage to keep that flower alive so long?

Reggie

I don't understand.

Emily

Why, you've worn it two days.

Reggie

This? No, Esme and I have some sent down every morning from a florist's in Covent Garden.

Emily (surprised)

Really! Is it worthwhile?

Reggie

I think it's the only sort of thing that is worthwhile. I worship little details. Let others worship what they call great things.

Emily

Is it an emblem?

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Reggie

Certainly not. I wouldn't have such a thing about. I hate mementos. I prefer to forget things. There is nothing more beautiful than to forget, except, perhaps, to be forgotten.

Emily

Then, why do you wear it?

Reggie

Because it is beautiful. Isn't that reason enough?

Emily

But, the color is not natural.

Reggie

Not yet. Nature has not followed art so far. Nature requires time.

Emily

Nature is going to quite a vulgar extreme today. It is decidedly too hot.

Reggie

Esme invented this flower two months ago. Only a few wear it.

Emily

Who?

Reggie

Those who are followers of a higher philosophy.

Emily

What is that?

Reggie

To be afraid of nothing. To dare to do as one wishes to have the courage of one's desires.

Emily

Mr. Amaranth is the high priest of this philosophy, I suppose?

Reggie

Esme is the bravest man I know. He sins more perfectly than I do. He escapes those absurd things, consequences. His sin always finds him out. He is never at home to it by choice. Why do you look at me so strangely?

Emily

Do I look at you strangely? Perhaps, it's because you are so unlike the men I'm accustomed to. Your aims are so different.

Reggie

That is impossible, Lady Locke.

Emily

Why?

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Reggie

Because I have no aims. I have only emotions.

Emily

Are you one of those who make a god of their temperament?

Reggie

Temperament should guide one's life, of course.

Emily

The blind leading the blind.

Reggie

It's beautiful to be blind. Those who can see are always avoiding the things that would give them the most pleasure. Esme says that to know how to be led is a much greater art than to know how to lead.

Emily

I don't care to hear the epigrams and opinions of Mr. Amarith. His epigrams are his life. If he were silent, he would die.

Reggie

You're not being fair. He's going to give a speech to some school children. Will you hear it?

Emily

I suppose so.

Reggie

You don't know him at all, really.

Emily

And you know him far too well.

Reggie

You sound just like my father.

BLACKOUT

When the lights go up, Amarith is standing on an improvised podium or pulpit. Lady Windsor, Emily, and Lord Reggie are seated. If possible, there should be some children listening, too.

Amarith

Dearly beloved. I have come before you to speak of the art of folly. That is to say, the art of being foolishly beautiful. The art has been practiced in all ages, among all peoples, from the pale dawn of creation, to the golden noontide of this century. Always, throughout the circling ages, man has, to some slight extent, aspired to folly, as Nature strives to imitate art. We are only beginning, only beginning, to understand the beautiful art of folly. But the mind of man has stubbornly clung to fallacies that have greatly interfered with the sublime progress of folly. To give only a few instances. For century upon century, we have been told that children should obey their parents, that the old should direct the young, and that Nature is the mother of beauty. Men have stopped up their ears to the alluring cries of folly have gone to their graves with all their sublime absurdities still in them, unuttered, repressed. Folly has been trampled by the swinish majority.

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(Lord Reggie has been giving signs of enthusiasm throughout this portion of Esme's speech. Emily has listened with increasing uneasiness. Lady Windsor has applauded whenever she thought her social duty required it.)

Amarinth

But, at last there seems to be a prospect of better things the flush of a wonderful dawn in a hitherto shadowy sky. I believe, I dare to believe, that a bright era of undisciplined folly is about to dawn over the modern world. Therefore, my children, recognize your exquisite potentiality for foolishness. Wisdom has had its day. The stars are beginning to twinkle in the violet skies of folly. It is not given to all of us to be properly foolish. The ill effects of heredity are to be seen everywhere. Even the influence of myself, of Lord Reginald, of Oscar Wilde, and of a few, a very few, others has so far failed to root up the pestilent plant of wisdom from the retentive soil of humanity. Many still (looking at Emily) are content with the old virtues, still timorous of new vices. To know how to disobey, is to know how to live. It has hitherto been the privilege of age to rule the world. In the blessed era of folly, that privilege will be transferred to youth. It is very difficult to be young, especially up to the age of thirty and very difficult to be foolish at any age at all. But, we must not despair. I am absurd. For years I have tried in vain to hide it. But, I am not without hope. My absurdity is, at last, beginning to win me a measure of recognition. A few, a divine few, are beginning to understand that absurdity (What is absurdity, but the perfection of folly?) has a glorious future before it. I have brought the art of preposterous conversation to perfection. But, I have been greatly handicapped in my efforts by the folly of a world which persists in taking ME seriously. Bishops declare I am a monster, and monsters declare I ought to be a bishop. All this, because I was born to be absurd. Because I have lived to be absurd. I married to be absurd. I shall die to be absurd. Someday, the exquisite art of folly will take its place with painting, music, and literature. Strike the words virtue and wickedness from your dictionaries. There is nothing good, nothing evil. Despise the normal. Shrink from nature. Remember, folly is true wisdom. Amen. Go to French plays, they will do you so much harm. May the god of foolishness bless you all the days of your life.

(Enthusiastic response from everyone except Emily, who sits rigid and furious.)

BLACKOUT

When the lights go up, we are back in the drawing room. Emily and Lord Reggie enter in a tete a tete.

Emily

What a blessing a short memory can be.

Reggie

Didn't you like the lecture, then? I thought it splendid so full of imagination, so exquisitely choice in language and feeling.

Emily

And, so contrived and self conscious.

Reggie

As all art must be.

Emily

Art! Art! You almost make me hate that word.

Reggie (shocked)

You could hate art?

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Emily

Yes. If it is the antagonist of nature. No, I did not like the lecture, it was absurd. Tell me, Lord Reggie, are you self consciously absurd?

Reggie

I hardly know. I hope I am beautiful. To be beautiful is to be complete. That is all I wish for. Esme said today that marriage was a brilliant absurdity. Will you be brilliantly absurd? Will you marry me?

Emily (after a pause and with deep feeling)

I cannot marry you. I am not brilliant, and therefore, have no wish to be absurd. You don't love me. I think you love nothing. I might fall in love with you, but I can never love an echo and you are an echo.

Reggie

An echo is often more beautiful than the voice it repeats.

Emily (furiously)

Not if the voice is ugly. You imitate Mr. Amaranth. I believe he merely poses, although what he is, is quite impossible to say. Do you merely pose? Who are you, really? Are you what I see?

Reggie

Expression is my life.

Emily

Then, what I see is you?

Reggie

I suppose so.

Emily

Then, never ask a woman to marry you. Men like you do not understand women. If you took that hideous green obscenity out of your coat not because I asked you but, because you genuinely hated it, I might give you a different answer. I want a natural flower to wear over my heart. Are you angry with me?

Reggie (peevd)

You talk like an ordinary person.

Emily

I am ordinary. I think, in the future, I shall try to be more ordinary than I already am. Someday, perhaps, you will throw away that green carnation.

Reggie (lightly)

Oh, it will be out of fashion soon.

(Emily turns on her heel and walks away. After a moment Amaranth walks in.)

Amaranth

So, you have been refused, Reggie. How original you are. I should never have expected that of you. When did you decide to be refused? You managed it exquisitely. Ah, Reggie. You will not be singing in the woods near Esher. Reggie, give me a gold-tipped cigarette, and I will be brilliant. I will be brilliant for you, as I have never been brilliant for my publishers. I will talk as no character in my plays has ever talked, let me be brilliant, dear boy, or I shall weep for sheer wittiness, and die as so many have died, with all my epigrams still in me. Come.

THE GREEN CARNATION

(Lord Reggie and Mr. Amarith go out, arm in arm, as the curtain falls.)

CURTAIN