
GREEN CHALK

"Then you may go to bed, Antoinette."

"Good night, madame."

"Good night," Claudia said.

She did not dry herself after she had had her bath—it would have been ridiculous to have tried to dry a wet canvas with a bath-towel, besides the picture would have become smudged—instead she ran dripping into the adjoining bedroom, laughing a little because she was so beautiful. A long string of green glass beads lay among the brushes and bottles and boxes on the toilet table. This Claudia held up for a moment to the electric light, and then, having smiled at the clear transparency of its colour, she wound it into the hair which lay like a red purple cloud against the snowy whiteness of her skin.

She sat on the floor in front of a high, narrow mirror, hanging on the wall. Bending forward, she kissed the reflected lips and laughed again because she was so beautiful.

She sat like this for a long time, only her own spasmodic laughter breaking the silence in the room, until a step sounded outside and Philip came in.

"Don't touch me—I'm wet!"

Philip stood still in the centre of the room and exclaimed:

"Wet! Why on earth don't you dry yourself? You'll catch cold."

He saw that his wife's naked back was shaking with laughter, and heard her say:

"Don't be silly! How can a picture catch