

THE AWAKENING

Chapter 2 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

Edna Pontellier

NARRATOR

★ BEAT — Edna and Robert — twin portraits on the porch

A quiet, almost still chapter — pure character study. Chopin pauses the action to paint Edna and Robert side by side, deliberately drawing them as twins: same coloring, same youth, same easy openness. Read slowly. No tension yet — the surface is companionable summer indolence. The faint heat of what's to come lives entirely under the surface; do not pre-figure it with vocal weight. Edna's eyes — yellow-brown, contemplative — are the chapter's center of gravity.

Mrs. Pontellier [*pon-tel-YAY*]'s eyes were quick and bright; they were a yellowish brown, about the color of her hair. She had a way of turning them swiftly upon an object and holding them there as if lost in some inward maze of contemplation or thought.

Her eyebrows were a shade darker than her hair. They were thick and almost horizontal, emphasizing the depth of her eyes. She was rather handsome than beautiful. Her face was captivating by reason of a

certain frankness of expression and a contradictory subtle play of features. Her manner was engaging.

Robert rolled a cigarette. He smoked cigarettes because he could not afford cigars, he said. He had a cigar in his pocket which Mr. Pontellier had presented him with, and he was saving it for his after-dinner smoke.

This seemed quite proper and natural on his part. In coloring he was not unlike his companion. A clean-shaved face made the resemblance more pronounced than it would otherwise have been. There rested no shadow of care upon his open countenance. His eyes gathered in and reflected the light and languor of the summer day.

★ **BEAT — Idle talk — the wind, the children, Robert's Mexico**

Chopin lets the conversation drift the way a real summer-porch conversation drifts — from the immediate (the water, the wind, the twins' overture) to the wider (Robert's plans, Edna's girlhood, her sister's engagement). Keep the pace unhurried, almost lulled. Robert's repeated 'going to Mexico' that never quite happens is a quiet joke against himself — don't push it. When Edna talks about Mississippi and Kentucky, the warmth is genuine but distant — she is describing a self she barely still owns.

Mrs. Pontellier reached over for a palm-leaf fan that lay on the porch and began to fan herself, while Robert sent between his lips light puffs from his cigarette. They chatted incessantly: about the things around them; their amusing adventure out in the water—it had again assumed its entertaining aspect; about the wind, the trees, the people who had gone to the Chênrière [*shay-NYAIR*]; about the children playing croquet under the oaks, and the Farival [*fah-ree-VAHL*] twins, who were now performing the overture to “The Poet and the Peasant.”

Robert talked a good deal about himself. He was very young, and did not know any better. Mrs. Pontellier talked a little about herself for the same reason. Each was interested in what the other said. Robert spoke of his intention to go to Mexico in the autumn, where fortune awaited him. He was always intending to go to Mexico, but some way never got there. Meanwhile he held on to his modest position in a mercantile house in New Orleans, where an equal familiarity with

English, French and Spanish gave him no small value as a clerk and correspondent.

He was spending his summer vacation, as he always did, with his mother at Grand Isle. In former times, before Robert could remember, “the house” had been a summer luxury of the Lebruns [*luh-BRUHNZ*]. Now, flanked by its dozen or more cottages, which were always filled with exclusive visitors from the “Quartier Français [*kar-TYAY frahn-SAY*],” it enabled Madame Lebrun to maintain the easy and comfortable existence which appeared to be her birthright.

Mrs. Pontellier talked about her father's Mississippi plantation and her girlhood home in the old Kentucky blue-grass country. She was an American woman, with a small infusion of French which seemed to have been lost in dilution. She read a letter from her sister, who was away in the East, and who had engaged herself to be married. Robert was interested, and wanted to know what manner of girls the sisters were,

what the father was like, and how long the mother had been dead.

★ **BEAT — Edna dresses for dinner; Robert joins the children**

A brief, almost cinematic close. Edna's single spoken line — about Léonce — is glanced rather than felt; she is already turning inward, toward the room, toward dinner, toward the social rituals that fill her days. Robert's drift toward the children is unforced and tender. End softly; this chapter is a held breath before things begin to move.

When Mrs. Pontellier folded the letter it was time for her to dress for the early dinner.

She glanced in the direction whence her husband, Léonce [*lay-AWNS*], had disappeared, and said:

EDNA PONTELLIER

I see Léonce isn't coming back.

Robert supposed he was not, as there were a good many New Orleans club men over at Klein's.

When Mrs. Pontellier left him to enter her room, the young man descended the steps and strolled over toward the croquet players, where, during the half-hour before dinner, he amused himself with the little Pontellier children, who were very fond of him.

— *END OF CHAPTER 2* —