

THE AWAKENING

Chapter 11 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

Léonce Pontellier

Edna Pontellier

NARRATOR

★ BEAT — Léonce finds Edna; her first refusal

Short, taut, entirely composed of dialogue and its surrounding silence. Léonce's questions are domestic, slightly drowsy, not yet alarmed — read them with the mild irritability of a man who expected to find his wife in bed. Edna's monosyllabic responses are not defiant yet, just distant. The description of her eyes — bright, intense, no sleepy shadows — is crucial; give it weight. Léonce's 'Come on' is casual command rather than cruelty, which makes her resistance all the more remarkable.

When her husband discovered her lying there, having walked up with Madame Lebrun [*luh-BRUHN*] and left her at the house, he spoke to Edna [*ED-nuh*] with mild surprise:

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

What are you doing out here, Edna? I thought I should find you in bed.

His wife did not reply.

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

Are you asleep?

he asked, bending down close to look at her.

EDNA PONTELLIER

No.

Her eyes gleamed bright and intense, with no sleepy shadows, as they looked into his.

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

Do you know it is past one o'clock? Come on,

and he mounted the steps and went into their room.

“Edna!” called Mr. Pontellier [*pon-tel-YAY*] from within, after a few moments had gone by.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Don't wait for me,

she answered. He thrust his head through the door.

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

You will take cold out there. What folly is this? Why don't you come in?

EDNA PONTELLIER

It isn't cold; I have my shawl.

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

The mosquitoes will devour you.

EDNA PONTELLIER

There are no mosquitoes.

★ **BEAT — Edna's will blazes — she refuses to yield**

The psychological hinge of the novel. Chopin steps back from dialogue to examine what is happening inside Edna, and it is vertiginous: she does not know why she is staying out, only that she cannot do otherwise. Read the interior passage — 'not with any sense of submission or obedience... but unthinkingly, as we walk' — with grave, measured weight. This is Chopin's social diagnosis as much as it is Edna's psychology. When Léonce escalates from impatience to entreaty to command, each register should be distinct: his 'fondly, with a note of entreaty' is a strategic softness; 'I can't permit you' is a man genuinely bewildered that the strategy failed.

She heard him moving about the room; every sound indicating impatience and irritation. Another time she would have gone in at his request. She would, through habit, have yielded to his desire; not with any sense of submission or obedience to his compelling wishes, but unthinkingly, as we walk, move, sit, stand, go through the daily treadmill of the life which has been portioned out to us.

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

Edna, dear, are you not coming in soon?

he asked again, this time fondly, with a note of entreaty.

EDNA PONTELLIER

No; I am going to stay out here.

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

This is more than folly. I can't permit you to stay out there all night. You must come in the house instantly.

With a writhing motion she settled herself more securely in the hammock. She perceived that her will had blazed up, stubborn and resistant. She could not at that moment have done other than denied and resisted. She wondered if her husband had ever spoken to her like that before, and if she had submitted to his command. Of course she had; she remembered that she had. But she could not realize why or how she should have yielded, feeling as she then did.

She addressed him by his name, Léonce [*lay-AWNS*], with finality:

EDNA PONTELLIER

Léonce, go to bed. I mean to stay out here. I don't wish to go in, and I don't intend to. Don't speak to me like that again; I shall not answer you.

★ **BEAT — The long vigil — cigars, wine, and the hour before dawn**

A small, almost comic standoff, but lit from within by something momentous. Léonce's cigar-and-wine routine — two cigars, then wine, then more cigars — should be read with a deadpan patience that is almost funny. But what is happening to Edna is not comic: she is waking out of a dream and back into the weight of reality. Let that passage breathe — the ' stillest hour of the night,' the copper moon, the ceasing owl — it is elegiac, heavy, the morning after something has irrevocably happened. End on the small tender exchange: 'Are you coming in, Léonce?' and his answer through the cigar smoke.

Mr. Pontellier had prepared for bed, but he slipped on an extra garment. He opened a bottle of wine, of which he kept a small and select supply in a buffet of his own. He drank a glass of the wine and went out on the gallery and offered a glass to his wife. She did not wish any. He drew up the rocker, hoisted his slippereed feet on the rail, and proceeded to smoke a cigar. He smoked two cigars; then he went inside and drank another glass of wine. Mrs. Pontellier again declined to accept a glass when it was offered to her. Mr.

Pontellier once more seated himself with elevated feet, and after a reasonable interval of time smoked some more cigars.

Edna began to feel like one who awakens gradually out of a dream, a delicious, grotesque, impossible dream, to feel again the realities pressing into her soul. The physical need for sleep began to overtake her; the exuberance which had sustained and exalted her spirit left her helpless and yielding to the conditions which crowded her in.

The stillest hour of the night had come, the hour before dawn, when the world seems to hold its breath. The moon hung low, and had turned from silver to copper in the sleeping sky. The old owl no longer hooted, and the water-oaks had ceased to moan as they bent their heads.

Edna arose, cramped from lying so long and still in the hammock. She tottered up the steps, clutching feebly at the post before passing into the house.

Edna turned her face toward her husband and asked:

EDNA PONTELLIER

Are you coming in, Léonce?

LÉONCE PONTELLIER

Yes, dear. Just as soon as I have finished my cigar.

he answered, with a glance following a misty puff of smoke.

— *END OF CHAPTER 11* —