

THE AWAKENING

Chapter 14 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

Edna Pontellier

Robert Lebrun

NARRATOR

★ BEAT — Etienne delivered; Ratignolle's report of the day

A brief, busy domestic scene: Madame Ratignolle delivering the sleepy, naughty Etienne, filling Edna in on the day's news. Keep the tone brisk and domestic — Adèle is caring but also a little performatively put-upon. The detail that Léonce went to Klein's to look up a cotton broker is quietly funny, and Adèle's vague recollection of the financial purpose ('securities, exchanges, stocks, bonds, or something of the sort') is fond female irony. Her urgency to get back to Monsieur Ratignolle, who 'detested above all things to be left alone,' closes the scene with affectionate satire.

The youngest boy, Etienne [*ay-TYEN*], had been very naughty, Madame Ratignolle [*rah-tee-NYOL*] said, as she delivered him into the hands of his mother. He had been unwilling to go to bed and had made a scene; whereupon she had taken charge of him and pacified him as well as she could. Raoul [*rah-OOL*] had been in bed and asleep for two hours.

The youngster was in his long white nightgown, that kept tripping him up as Madame Ratignolle led him

along by the hand. With the other chubby fist he rubbed his eyes, which were heavy with sleep and ill humor. Edna took him in her arms, and seating herself in the rocker, began to coddle and caress him, calling him all manner of tender names, soothing him to sleep.

It was not more than nine o'clock. No one had yet gone to bed but the children.

Léonce [*lay-AWNS*] had been very uneasy at first, Madame Ratignolle said, and had wanted to start at once for the Chênier. But Monsieur Farival [*fah-ree-VAHL*] had assured him that his wife was only overcome with sleep and fatigue, that Tonie would bring her safely back later in the day; and he had thus been dissuaded from crossing the bay. He had gone over to Klein's [*KLYNZ*], looking up some cotton broker whom he wished to see in regard to securities, exchanges, stocks, bonds, or something of the sort, Madame Ratignolle did not remember what. He said he would not remain away late. She herself was suffering from heat and oppression, she said. She

carried a bottle of salts and a large fan. She would not consent to remain with Edna, for Monsieur Ratignolle was alone, and he detested above all things to be left alone.

★ **BEAT — Robert's farewell — Edna waits for Léonce, singing**

The emotional close of the Chênrière day. Robert helping Edna lay the sleeping child is intimate, quiet, and matters. His parting line — 'All but the hundred years when you were sleeping' — keeps the enchantment alive as he departs. After he leaves, the chapter gathers toward Edna's interior: she stays outside in the warm dark, not wanting to sleep, turning the day over in her mind without quite understanding what is different in herself. The last image — Edna singing Robert's song, the refrain haunting her — should be soft and suspended, not resolved. Chopin ends the chapter open, as if the music hasn't quite ended yet.

When Etienne had fallen asleep Edna bore him into the back room, and Robert went and lifted the mosquito bar that she might lay the child comfortably in his bed. The quadron had vanished. When they emerged from the cottage Robert bade Edna good-night.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Do you know we have been together the whole
livelong day, Robert—since early this morning?

she said at parting.

ROBERT LEBRUN

All but the hundred years when you were sleeping.
Good-night.

He pressed her hand and went away in the direction of the beach. He did not join any of the others, but walked alone toward the Gulf.

Edna stayed outside, awaiting her husband's return. She had no desire to sleep or to retire; nor did she feel like going over to sit with the Ratignolles, or to join Madame Lebrun and a group whose animated voices reached her as they sat in conversation before the house. She let her mind wander back over her stay at Grand Isle; and she tried to discover wherein this summer had been different from any and every other summer of her life. She could only realize that she herself—her present self—was in some way different from the other self. That she was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment, she did not yet suspect.

She wondered why Robert had gone away and left her. It did not occur to her to think he might have grown tired of being with her the livelong day. She was not tired, and she felt that he was not. She regretted that he had gone. It was so much more natural to have him stay when he was not absolutely required to leave her.

As Edna waited for her husband she sang low a little song that Robert had sung as they crossed the bay. It began with “Ah! si tu savais,” and every verse ended with “si tu savais.”

Robert's voice was not pretentious. It was musical and true. The voice, the notes, the whole refrain haunted her memory.

— *END OF CHAPTER 14* —