THE AWAKENING

Chapter 24 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

Léonce Pontellier **Edna Pontellier** **Robert Lebrun** **Madame Lebrun** **Parrot (off-stage voice — French)** **Adèle Ratignolle** **Monsieur Ratignolle** **Mademoiselle Reisz** **Victor Lebrun** **Mariequita** **Monsieur Farival** **Doctor Mandelet**

NARRATOR

★ BEAT — Father and husband depart — Edna's mixed partings

The chapter opens with departures, but the emotional tones differ sharply. The quarrel with the Colonel should feel noisy, stale, and exhausting rather than tragic; his rhetoric about authority is heavy and out of date even before he speaks it. Edna's reaction to her husband's departure is gentler and more complicated — let her temporary tenderness register honestly. The key is contrast: she is glad to be rid of the father, but not so consciously glad to lose Léonce. Read the paragraph about her tears and solicitude simply; Chopin insists that these feelings coexist.

Edna and her father had a warm, and almost violent dispute upon the subject of her refusal to attend her sister's wedding. Mr. Pontellier declined to interfere, to interpose either his influence or his authority. He was following Doctor Mandelet's advice, and letting her do as she liked. The Colonel reproached his daughter for her lack of filial kindness and respect, her want of sisterly affection and womanly

consideration. His arguments were labored and unconvincing. He doubted if Janet would accept any excuse—forgetting that Edna had offered none. He doubted if Janet would ever speak to her again, and he was sure Margaret would not.

Edna was glad to be rid of her father when he finally took himself off with his wedding garments and his bridal gifts, with his padded shoulders, his Bible reading, his "toddies" and ponderous oaths.

The Colonel, before departing, asserted that Léonce was too lenient by far, that authority and coercion were what was needed—put your foot down good and hard; the only way to manage a wife—and Léonce should take his word for it.

Mr. Pontellier followed him closely. He meant to stop at the wedding on his way to New York and endeavor by every means which money and love could devise to atone somewhat for Edna's incomprehensible action.

The Colonel was perhaps unaware that he had coerced his own wife into her grave. Mr. Pontellier

had a vague suspicion of it which he thought it needless to mention at that late day.

Edna was not so consciously gratified at her husband's leaving home as she had been over the departure of her father. As the day approached when he was to leave her for a comparatively long stay, she grew melting and affectionate, remembering his many acts of consideration and his repeated expressions of an ardent attachment. She was solicitous about his health and his welfare. She bustled around, looking after his clothing, thinking about heavy underwear, quite as Madame Ratignolle *[rah-tee-NYOL]* would have done under similar circumstances. She cried when he went away, calling him her dear, good friend, and she was quite certain she would grow lonely before very long and go to join him in New York.

★ BEAT — The empty house becomes her own

This is one of the novel's purest freedom passages, and it must be read with bright quietness rather than triumph. The 'radiant peace' and the 'big, genuine sigh of relief' are not rebellious slogans but bodily facts. Let the house tour feel tactile and fresh — chairs, shutters, garden paths, damp walks, flowers, the little dog, all newly discovered as if she were living inside her own life for the first time. The tone is

intimate, curious, almost childlike, yet entirely adult in its relief. Do not hurry; the chapter breathes here.

But after all, a radiant peace settled upon her when she at last found herself alone. Even the children were gone. Old Madame Pontellier had come herself and carried them off to Iberville with their quadroon. The old madame did not venture to say she was afraid they would be neglected during Léonce's absence; she hardly ventured to think so. She was hungry for them—even a little fierce in her attachment. She did not want them to be wholly "children of the pavement," she always said when begging to have them for a space. She wished them to know the country, with its streams, its fields, its woods, its freedom, so delicious to the young. She wished them to taste something of the life their father had lived and known and loved when he, too, was a little child.

When Edna was at last alone, she breathed a big, genuine sigh of relief. A feeling that was unfamiliar but very delicious came over her. She walked all through the house, from one room to another, as if inspecting it for the first time. She tried the various

chairs and lounges, as if she had never sat and reclined upon them before. And she perambulated around the outside of the house, investigating, looking to see if windows and shutters were secure and in order. The flowers were like new acquaintances; she approached them in a familiar spirit, and made herself at home among them. The garden walks were damp, and Edna called to the maid to bring out her rubber sandals. And there she stayed, and stooped, digging around the plants, trimming, picking dead, dry leaves. The children's little dog came out, interfering, getting in her way. She scolded him, laughed at him, played with him. The garden smelled so good and looked so pretty in the afternoon sunlight. Edna plucked all the bright flowers she could find, and went into the house with them, she and the little dog.

Even the kitchen assumed a sudden interesting character which she had never before perceived. She went in to give directions to the cook, to say that the butcher would have to bring much less meat, that they

would require only half their usual quantity of bread, of milk and groceries. She told the cook that she herself would be greatly occupied during Mr. Pontellier's absence, and she begged her to take all thought and responsibility of the larder upon her own shoulders.

★ BEAT — Dinner alone, Emerson, and a new restfulness

The close should feel hushed and luxurious in modest ways: candlelight, good wine, a comfortable peignoir, scraps for the dog, Emerson in the library, a late bath, the eiderdown. Read the dining-room description with slow pleasure — the solemn shadows beyond the candles, the tenderloin, the marron glacé — because this private comfort matters. Her thoughts of Léonce and the children are real but light, passing through the larger sensation of being left to herself. End with complete repose. The final sentence should settle softly, like bedding turning warm.

That night Edna dined alone. The candelabra, with a few candles in the center of the table, gave all the light she needed. Outside the circle of light in which she sat, the large dining-room looked solemn and shadowy. The cook, placed upon her mettle, served a delicious repast—a luscious tenderloin broiled à point. The wine tasted good; the marron glacé seemed to be just what she wanted. It was so pleasant, too, to dine in a comfortable peignoir *[pay-NWAHR]*.

She thought a little sentimentally about Léonce and the children, and wondered what they were doing. As she gave a dainty scrap or two to the doggie, she talked intimately to him about Etienne *[ay-TYEN]* and Raoul *[rah-OOL]*. He was beside himself with astonishment and delight over these companionable advances, and showed his appreciation by his little quick, snappy barks and a lively agitation.

Then Edna sat in the library after dinner and read Emerson until she grew sleepy. She realized that she had neglected her reading, and determined to start anew upon a course of improving studies, now that her time was completely her own to do with as she liked.

After a refreshing bath, Edna went to bed. And as she snuggled comfortably beneath the eiderdown a sense of restfulness invaded her, such as she had not known before.

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