

THE AWAKENING

Chapter 27 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

Edna Pontellier

Alcée Arobin

NARRATOR

★ BEAT — Arobin visits; Edna reclines by the fire

Warm, intimate, slightly drowsy. Edna is in an unusually good mood — tired but glowing — and Arobin is curious about it. Set the scene with a firelit ease; his fingers in her hair should feel unhurried, sensory, not urgent. His voice is practiced charm, hers is frank and a little playful. Keep the physical details present but quiet — the touch of his fingers, her closed eyes — don't lean into them. The pleasure here is mutual and a little dangerous, but nothing announces it yet.

Edna was tired by that time, and was reclining on the lounge before the fire, when Arobin [*AR-oh-ban*] asked:

ALCÉE AROBIN

What is the matter with you? I never found you in such a happy mood.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Don't you know the weather prophet has told us we shall see the sun pretty soon?

ALCÉE AROBIN

Well, that ought to be reason enough. You wouldn't give me another if I sat here all night imploring you.

He sat close to her on a low tabouret, and as he spoke his fingers lightly touched the hair that fell a little over her forehead. She liked the touch of his fingers through her hair, and closed her eyes sensitively.

★ **BEAT** — **Edna wonders what kind of woman she is; Arobin deflects to Reisz**

The philosophical heart of the chapter. Edna's self-questioning is genuine and a little startling even to herself— read it with quiet seriousness, not anxiety. Arobin's dismissal of her introspection is smooth, even fond, but clearly evasive; he'd rather talk about her than think with her. When Edna quotes Mademoiselle Reisz's speech about the bird and strong wings, let the words land with their full weight — slow down, let the image of the 'weakling bruised, fluttering back to earth' sit a moment. Arobin's response ('I've heard she's partially demented') should be thrown away, almost comic in its deflection. Edna's rebuke is calm and certain.

EDNA PONTELLIER

One of these days, I'm going to pull myself together for a while and think—try to determine what character of a woman I am; for, candidly, I don't know. By all the codes which I am acquainted with, I am a devilishly wicked specimen of the sex. But

some way I can't convince myself that I am. I must think about it.

ALCÉE AROBIN

Don't. What's the use? Why should you bother thinking about it when I can tell you what manner of woman you are.

His fingers strayed occasionally down to her warm, smooth cheeks and firm chin, which was growing a little full and double.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Oh, yes! You will tell me that I am adorable; everything that is captivating. Spare yourself the effort.

ALCÉE AROBIN

No; I shan't tell you anything of the sort, though I shouldn't be lying if I did.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Do you know Mademoiselle Reisz?

ALCÉE AROBIN

The pianist? I know her by sight. I've heard her play.

EDNA PONTELLIER

She says queer things sometimes in a bantering way that you don't notice at the time and you find yourself thinking about afterward.

ALCÉE AROBIN

For instance?

EDNA PONTELLIER

Well, for instance, when I left her to-day, she put her arms around me and felt my shoulder blades, to see if my wings were strong, she said. 'The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth.'

ALCÉE AROBIN

Whither would you soar?

EDNA PONTELLIER

I'm not thinking of any extraordinary flights. I only half comprehend her.

ALCÉE AROBIN

I've heard she's partially demented.

EDNA PONTELLIER

She seems to me wonderfully sane.

ALCÉE AROBIN

I'm told she's extremely disagreeable and unpleasant. Why have you introduced her at a moment when I desired to talk of you?

EDNA PONTELLIER

Oh! talk of me if you like, but let me think of something else while you do.

★ **BEAT** — **Eyes meet, lips meet** — **the first kiss that matters**

The climax of the chapter and one of the novel's pivotal moments. Begin with Arobin's jealous observation — his voice lower, more intent now, the practiced ease shading into something more real. The narration describing their sustained mutual gaze should be read very slowly, almost held. Do not rush toward the kiss; let the silence between them accumulate. The final two sentences — 'It was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming torch that kindled desire.' — are the chapter's entire weight. Read them simply, without sentimentality or sensationalism. Let the declarative plainness do the work.

ALCÉE AROBIN

I'm jealous of your thoughts to-night. They're making you a little kinder than usual; but some way I feel as if they were wandering, as if they were not here with me.

She only looked at him and smiled. His eyes were very near. He leaned upon the lounge with an arm extended across her, while the other hand still rested upon her hair. They continued silently to look into each other's eyes. When he leaned forward and kissed her, she clasped his head, holding his lips to hers.

It was the first kiss of her life to which her nature had really responded. It was a flaming torch that kindled desire.

— *END OF CHAPTER 27* —