

THE AWAKENING

Chapter 29 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

Edna Pontellier

Alcée Arobin

NARRATOR

★ BEAT — Edna moves without asking — feverish preparations begin

Open with urgency and a kind of reckless momentum. Edna has not waited for Léonce's opinion; she simply acts. The prose here is breathless and declarative — read it with forward drive, no hesitation. The image of the 'forbidden temple' is brief but should land; give it a half-beat of pause before moving on. This is a woman burning her bridges with evident pleasure.

Without even waiting for an answer from her husband regarding his opinion or wishes in the matter, Edna hastened her preparations for quitting her home on Esplanade [ES-pluh-nahd] Street and moving into the little house around the block. A feverish anxiety attended her every action in that direction. There was no moment of deliberation, no interval of repose between the thought and its fulfillment. Early upon the morning following those hours passed in Arobin's society, Edna set about securing her new

abode and hurrying her arrangements for occupying it. Within the precincts of her home she felt like one who has entered and lingered within the portals of some forbidden temple in which a thousand muffled voices bade her begone.

Whatever was her own in the house, everything which she had acquired aside from her husband's bounty, she caused to be transported to the other house, supplying simple and meager deficiencies from her own resources.

★ **BEAT — Arobin arrives, mounts the ladder, earns the dust-cap**

A scene of physical comedy and easy intimacy. Edna is splendid and absorbed, refusing to be caught in any sentimental attitude after the night before. Arobin's good humor is genuine here — he adapts, pulls off his coat, dons the dust-cap grotesquely. The maid Ellen's laughter is charming background texture. Keep this beat light and energetic; the domestic bustle is the point. Edna's refusal to be alone with Arobin, keeping Ellen in the room, is a small quiet note — read it without emphasis but don't let it disappear.

Arobin found her with rolled sleeves, working in company with the house-maid when he looked in during the afternoon. She was splendid and robust, and had never appeared handsomer than in the old blue gown, with a red silk handkerchief knotted at

random around her head to protect her hair from the dust. She was mounted upon a high stepladder, unhooking a picture from the wall when he entered. He had found the front door open, and had followed his ring by walking in unceremoniously.

ALCÉE AROBIN

Come down! Do you want to kill yourself?

She greeted him with affected carelessness, and appeared absorbed in her occupation.

If he had expected to find her languishing, reproachful, or indulging in sentimental tears, he must have been greatly surprised.

He was no doubt prepared for any emergency, ready for any one of the foregoing attitudes, just as he bent himself easily and naturally to the situation which confronted him.

ALCÉE AROBIN

Please come down. I insist.

He held the ladder and looked up at her.

EDNA PONTELLIER

No. Ellen is afraid to mount the ladder. Joe is working over at the 'pigeon house'—that's the name Ellen gives it, because it's so small and looks like a pigeon house—and some one has to do this.

Arobin pulled off his coat, and expressed himself ready and willing to tempt fate in her place. Ellen brought him one of her dust-caps, and went into contortions of mirth, which she found it impossible to control, when she saw him put it on before the mirror as grotesquely as he could. Edna herself could not refrain from smiling when she fastened it at his request. So it was he who in turn mounted the ladder, unhooking pictures and curtains, and dislodging ornaments as Edna directed. When he had finished he took off his dust-cap and went out to wash his hands.

Edna was sitting on the tabouret, idly brushing the tips of a feather duster along the carpet when he came in again.

ALCÉE AROBIN

Is there anything more you will let me do?

EDNA PONTELLIER

That is all. Ellen can manage the rest.

She kept the young woman occupied in the drawing-room, unwilling to be left alone with Arobin.

★ **BEAT — Dinner talk, the coup d'état, and a charged farewell**

The tone shifts from comic to slightly charged. The dinner conversation — Edna's bravado about crystal, silver, champagne, and letting 'Léonce pay the bills' — has a reckless glee; read it with relish but also with the faint shadow of her isolation underneath. Arobin's teasing about the coup d'état is fond and knowing. The final exchange at the foot of the stairs is the chapter's best moment: Arobin pressing, Edna's laughing refusal, her eyes giving him both courage and torment at once. End on that ambiguity — don't resolve it.

ALCÉE AROBIN

What about the dinner? The grand event, the coup d'état?

EDNA PONTELLIER

It will be day after to-morrow. Why do you call it the 'coup d'état?' Oh! it will be very fine; all my best of everything—crystal, silver and gold, Sèvres, flowers, music, and champagne to swim in. I'll let Léonce pay the bills. I wonder what he'll say when he sees the bills.

ALCÉE AROBIN

And you ask me why I call it a coup d'état?

Arobin had put on his coat, and he stood before her and asked if his cravat was plumb. She told him it was, looking no higher than the tip of his collar.

ALCÉE AROBIN

When do you go to the 'pigeon house'?—with all due acknowledgment to Ellen.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Day after to-morrow, after the dinner. I shall sleep there.

ALCÉE AROBIN

Ellen, will you very kindly get me a glass of water? The dust in the curtains, if you will pardon me for hinting such a thing, has parched my throat to a crisp.

EDNA PONTELLIER

While Ellen gets the water, I will say good-by and let you go. I must get rid of this grime, and I have a million things to do and think of.

ALCÉE AROBIN

When shall I see you?

he asked, seeking to detain her, the maid having left the room.

EDNA PONTELLIER

At the dinner, of course. You are invited.

ALCÉE AROBIN

Not before?—not to-night or to-morrow morning or to-morrow noon or night? or the day after morning or noon? Can't you see yourself, without my telling you, what an eternity it is?

He had followed her into the hall and to the foot of the stairway, looking up at her as she mounted with her face half turned to him.

EDNA PONTELLIER

Not an instant sooner.

But she laughed and looked at him with eyes that at once gave him courage to wait and made it torture to wait.

— END OF CHAPTER 29 —