

# THE AWAKENING

## Chapter 37 — Narrator Script (Booth Ready)

by Kate Chopin · narrated by Mike Vendetti & Kathy Verduin

### Adèle Ratignolle

#### NARRATOR

#### ★ BEAT — Monsieur Ratignolle at the drug store — Edna arrives

*Open with a quiet domestic bustle that sits oddly against what Edna has just left: the pigeon-house, Robert, the declaration. Monsieur Ratignolle's grateful pharmacist precision — 'dropping a red liquid into a tiny glass' — is almost comic in its ordinariness. Move upstairs and into the salon with increasing unease. Adèle in labor — drawn, haggard, her beautiful hair 'coiled like a golden serpent' — is a managed portrait of suffering. The nurse's cheerful practicality is a counterweight; read her refusal to take things seriously as competent professionalism, not callousness.*

Edna looked in at the drug store. Monsieur Ratignolle [*rah-tee-NYOL*] was putting up a mixture himself, very carefully, dropping a red liquid into a tiny glass. He was grateful to Edna for having come; her presence would be a comfort to his wife. Madame Ratignolle's sister, who had always been with her at such trying times, had not been able to come up from the plantation, and Adèle [*ah-DEL*] had been inconsolable until Mrs. Pontellier so kindly promised to come to

her. The nurse had been with them at night for the past week, as she lived a great distance away. And Dr. Mandelet [*mahn-duh-LAY*] had been coming and going all the afternoon. They were then looking for him any moment.

Edna hastened upstairs by a private stairway that led from the rear of the store to the apartments above.

The children were all sleeping in a back room.

Madame Ratignolle was in the salon, whither she had strayed in her suffering impatience. She sat on the sofa, clad in an ample white peignoir [*pay-NWAHR*], holding a handkerchief tight in her hand with a nervous clutch. Her face was drawn and pinched, her sweet blue eyes haggard and unnatural. All her beautiful hair had been drawn back and plaited. It lay in a long braid on the sofa pillow, coiled like a golden serpent. The nurse, a comfortable looking Griffe woman in white apron and cap, was urging her to return to her bedroom.

ADÈLE RATIGNOLLE

There is no use, there is no use. We must get rid of Mandelet; he is getting too old and careless. He said he would be here at half-past seven; now it must be eight. See what time it is, Joséphine.

The woman was possessed of a cheerful nature, and refused to take any situation too seriously, especially a situation with which she was so familiar. She urged Madame to have courage and patience. But Madame only set her teeth hard into her under lip, and Edna saw the sweat gather in beads on her white forehead. After a moment or two she uttered a profound sigh and wiped her face with the handkerchief rolled in a ball. She appeared exhausted. The nurse gave her a fresh handkerchief, sprinkled with cologne water.

ADÈLE RATIGNOLLE

This is too much! Mandelet ought to be killed! Where is Alphonse? Is it possible I am to be abandoned like this—neglected by every one?

The nurse exclaimed at the idea of neglect. Wasn't she there? And here was Mrs. Pontellier leaving, no doubt,

a pleasant evening at home to devote to her? And wasn't Monsieur Ratignolle coming that very instant through the hall? And Joséphine was quite sure she had heard Doctor Mandelet's coupé. Yes, there it was, down at the door.

Adèle consented to go back to her room. She sat on the edge of a little low couch next to her bed.

★ **BEAT — Doctor Mandelet arrives — Edna witnesses the birth**

*This is the chapter's harrowing interior. Doctor Mandelet's ease among suffering — 'too well convinced of her loyalty to doubt it' — is the calm of a man who has seen this a thousand times. Edna's gathering dread is Chopin's subject: her memory of chloroform and stupor and awakening to new life is rendered as something nearly dissociated, as if someone else's experience. Her 'flaming, outspoken revolt against the ways of Nature' must be read as something fierce and genuine — not hysteria, but clear-eyed horror. Do not smooth this over. Adèle's final whisper — 'Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!' — should be spoken exhausted, almost accidental: it lands as a death sentence even though it is offered in love.*

Doctor Mandelet paid no attention to Madame Ratignolle's upbraidings. He was accustomed to them at such times, and was too well convinced of her loyalty to doubt it.

He was glad to see Edna, and wanted her to go with him into the salon and entertain him. But Madame

Ratignolle would not consent that Edna should leave her for an instant. Between agonizing moments, she chatted a little, and said it took her mind off her sufferings.

Edna began to feel uneasy. She was seized with a vague dread. Her own like experiences seemed far away, unreal, and only half remembered. She recalled faintly an ecstasy of pain, the heavy odor of chloroform, a stupor which had deadened sensation, and an awakening to find a little new life to which she had given being, added to the great unnumbered multitude of souls that come and go.

She began to wish she had not come; her presence was not necessary. She might have invented a pretext for staying away; she might even invent a pretext now for going. But Edna did not go. With an inward agony, with a flaming, outspoken revolt against the ways of Nature, she witnessed the scene of torture.

She was still stunned and speechless with emotion when later she leaned over her friend to kiss her and

softly say good-by. Adèle, pressing her cheek,  
whispered in an exhausted voice:

ADÈLE RATIGNOLLE

Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the  
children! Remember them!

— *END OF CHAPTER 37* —