

XIV

The youngest boy, Etienne, had been very naughty, Madame Ratignolle 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 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.

Leonce had been very uneasy at first, Madame Ratignolle said, and had wanted to start at once for the Cheniere. But Monsieur Farival 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, 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.

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 quadroon had vanished. When they emerged from the cottage Robert bade Edna good night.

"Do you know we have been together the whole livelong day, Robert—since early this morning?" she said at parting.

"All but the hundred years when you were sleeping. Goodnight."

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

Ch. 14

Madame Ratignolle has been taking care of Edna's two boys while Edna spent a day with Robert.

How does the use of alliteration emphasize Edna's guilt?

Tonie is Madame Antoine's son.

Monsieur Farival tried to assuage Leonce's anger by saying Tonie would accompany Edna and Robert (implying that they were not by themselves).

The same action in nature (a parent spending a Sunday away from the family) is scrutinized under a sexual double standard if a woman carries it out: she is to be scandalized.

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.

XV

When Edna entered the dining-room one evening a little late, as was her habit, an unusually animated conversation seemed to be going on. Several persons were talking at once, and Victor’s voice was predominating, even over that of his mother. Edna had returned late from her bath, had dressed in some haste, and her face was flushed. Her head, set off by her dainty white gown, suggested a rich, rare blossom. She took her seat at table between old Monsieur Farival and Madame Ratignolle.

As she seated herself and was about to begin to eat her soup, which had been served when she entered the room, several persons informed her simultaneously that Robert was going to Mexico. She laid her spoon down and looked about her bewildered. He had been with her, reading to her all the morning, and had never even mentioned such a place as Mexico. She had not seen him during the afternoon; she had heard someone say he was at the house, upstairs with his mother. This she had thought nothing of, though she was surprised when he did not join her later in the afternoon, when she went down to the beach.

She looked across at him, where he sat beside Madame Lebrun, who presided. Edna’s face was a blank picture of bewilderment, which she never thought of disguising. He lifted his eyebrows with the pretext of a smile as he returned her glance. He looked embarrassed and uneasy. “When is he going?” she asked of everybody in general, as if Robert were not there to answer for himself.

Si tu savais = if you knew

Edna echoes the song Robert sang in the boat.

Bewilder = to confuse = to disorient

“Tonight!” “This very evening!” “Did you ever!” “What possesses him!” were some of the replies she gathered, uttered simultaneously in French and English.

“Impossible!” she exclaimed. “How can a person start off from Grand Isle to Mexico at a moment’s notice, as if he were going over to Klein’s or to the wharf or down to the beach?”

“I said all along I was going to Mexico; I’ve been saying so for years!” cried Robert, in an excited and irritable tone, with the air of a man defending himself against a swarm of stinging insects.

Madame Lebrun knocked on the table with her knife handle.

“Please let Robert explain why he is going, and why he is going tonight,” she called out. “Really, this table is getting to be more and more like Bedlam every day, with everybody talking at once. Sometimes—I hope God will forgive me—but positively, sometimes I wish Victor would lose the power of speech.”

Victor laughed sardonically as he thanked his mother for her holy wish, of which he failed to see the benefit to anybody, except that it might afford her a more ample opportunity and license to talk herself. Monsieur Farival thought that Victor should have been taken out in mid-ocean in his earliest youth and drowned. Victor thought there would be more logic in thus disposing of old people with an established claim for making themselves universally obnoxious. Madame Lebrun grew a trifle hysterical; Robert called his brother some sharp, hard names.

“There’s nothing much to explain, mother,” he said; though he explained, nevertheless—looking chiefly at Edna—that he could only meet the gentleman whom he intended to join at Vera Cruz by taking such and such a steamer, which left New Orleans on such a day; that Beaufort was going out with his lugger-load of vegetables that night, which gave him an opportunity of reaching the city and making his vessel in time.

“But when did you make up your mind to all this?” demanded Monsieur Farival.

“This afternoon,” returned Robert, with a shade of annoyance.

“At what time this afternoon?” persisted the old gentleman, with nagging determination, as if he were cross-questioning a criminal in a court of justice.

Bedlam = an insane asylum

Everyone at the dinner table acts testy and nasty.

“At four o’clock this afternoon, Monsieur Farival,” Robert replied, in a high voice and with a lofty air, which reminded Edna of some gentleman on the stage. She had forced herself to eat most of her soup, and now she was picking the flaky bits of a court bouillon with her fork.

The lovers were profiting by the general conversation on Mexico to speak in whispers of matters which they rightly considered were interesting to no one but themselves. **The lady in black** had once received a pair of prayer-beads of curious workmanship from Mexico, with very special indulgence attached to them, but she had never been able to ascertain whether the indulgence extended outside the Mexican border.

Father Fochel of the Cathedral had attempted to explain it; but he had not done so to her satisfaction. And she begged that Robert would interest himself, and discover, if possible, whether she was entitled to the indulgence accompanying the remarkably curious Mexican prayer-beads. Madame Ratignolle hoped that Robert would exercise extreme caution in dealing with the Mexicans, who, she considered, were a treacherous people, unscrupulous and revengeful. She trusted she did them no injustice in thus condemning them as a race. She had known personally but one Mexican, who made and sold excellent tamales, and whom she would have trusted implicitly, so softspoken was he. One day he was arrested for stabbing his wife. She never knew whether he had been hanged or not.

Victor had grown hilarious, and was attempting to tell an anecdote about a Mexican girl who served chocolate one winter in a restaurant in Dauphine Street. No one would listen to him but old Monsieur Farival, who went into convulsions over the droll story. Edna wondered if they had all gone mad, to be talking and clamoring at that rate. She herself could think of nothing to say about Mexico or the Mexicans.

“At what time do you leave?” she asked Robert.

“At ten,” he told her. “Beaudelet wants to wait for the moon.”

“Are you all ready to go?”

“Quite ready. I shall only take a handbag, and shall pack my trunk in the city.”

He turned to answer some question put to him by his mother, and Edna, having finished her black coffee, left the table.

She went directly to her room. The little cottage was close and stuffy after leaving the outer air. But she did not mind; there appeared to be a

Parallelism: Eros (love) and Thanatos (death)
Can Edna choose to be a secret lover? Is being a widow better than being a divorcee?

A haunting reminder of the pervasive power love and death has over Edna.

What is the proper role of a Victorian woman? Does she have to honor her parents’ decisions (like the Farival twins) or accept what her marriage has chosen for her, including the fate of being a widow?

Vacationers will chew up anybody who is not at the table; see how they gossip about Mexicans in a xenophobic way. They are gossip-happy.

hundred different things demanding her attention indoors. She began to set the toilet-stand to rights, grumbling at the negligence of the quadroon, who was in the adjoining room putting the children to bed. She gathered together stray garments that were hanging on the backs of chairs, and put each where it belonged in closet or bureau drawer. She changed her gown for a more comfortable and commodious wrapper. **She rearranged her hair, combing and brushing it with unusual energy.** Then she went in and assisted the quadroon in getting the boys to bed.

They were very playful and inclined to talk—to do anything but lie quiet and go to sleep. Edna sent the quadroon away to her supper and told her she need not return. Then she sat and told the children a story. Instead of soothing it excited them and added to their wakefulness. She left them in heated argument, speculating about the conclusion of the tale which their mother promised to finish the following night.

The little black girl came in to say that Madame Lebrun would like to have Mrs. Pontellier go and sit with them over at the house till Mr. Robert went away. Edna returned answer that she had already undressed, that she did not feel quite well, but perhaps she would go over to the house later.

She started to dress again and got as far advanced as to remove her peignoir. But changing her mind once more she resumed the *peignoir* and went outside and sat down before her door. She was overheated and irritable and fanned herself energetically for a while. Madame Ratignolle came down to discover what was the matter.

“All that noise and confusion at the table must have upset me,” replied Edna, “and moreover, I hate shocks and surprises. The idea of Robert starting off in such a ridiculously sudden and dramatic way! As if it were a matter of life and death! Never saying a word about it all morning when he was with me.”

“Yes,” agreed Madame Ratignolle. “I think it was showing us all—you especially—very little consideration. It wouldn’t have surprised me in any of the others; those Lebruns are all given to heroics. But I must say I should never have expected such a thing from Robert. Are you not coming down? Come on, dear; it doesn’t look friendly.”

“No,” said Edna, a little sullenly. “I can’t go to the trouble of dressing again; I don’t feel like it.”

“You needn’t dress; you look all right; fasten a belt around your waist. Just look at me!”

Edna is deeply shaken by the unexpected news.

Do you think Robert is noble and valorous in love? Or is he prone to shun and shy away from a conflict?

“No,” persisted Edna; “but you go on. Madame Lebrun might be offended if we both stayed away.”

Madame Ratignolle kissed Edna good-night, and went away, being in truth rather desirous of joining in the general and animated conversation which was still in progress concerning Mexico and the Mexicans.

Somewhat later Robert came up, carrying his handbag.

“Aren’t you feeling well?” he asked.

“Oh, well enough. Are you going right away?”

He lit a match and looked at his watch. “In twenty minutes,” he said. The sudden and brief flare of the match emphasized the darkness for a while. He sat down upon a stool which the children had left out on the porch.

“Get a chair,” said Edna.

“This will do,” he replied. He put on his soft hat and nervously took it off again, and wiping his face with his handkerchief, complained of the heat.

“Take the fan,” said Edna, offering it to him.

“Oh, no! Thank you. It does no good; you have to stop fanning some time, and feel all the more uncomfortable afterward.”

“That’s one of the ridiculous things which men always say. I have never known one to speak otherwise of fanning. How long will you be gone?”

“Forever, perhaps. I don’t know. It depends upon a good many things.”

“Well, in case it shouldn’t be forever, how long will it be?”

“I don’t know.”

“This seems to me perfectly preposterous and uncalled for. I don’t like it. I don’t understand your motive for silence and mystery, never saying a word to me about it this morning.” He remained silent, not offering to defend himself. He only said, after a moment:

“Don’t part from me in any ill humor. I never knew you to be out of patience with me before.”

Preposterous = absurd and unreasonable

“I don’t want to part in any ill humor,” she said. “But can’t you understand? I’ve grown used to seeing you, to having you with me all the time, and your action seems unfriendly, even unkind. You don’t even offer an excuse for it. Why, I was planning to be together, thinking of how pleasant it would be to see you in the city next winter.”

“So was I,” he blurted. “Perhaps that’s the—” He stood up suddenly and held out his hand. “Good-by, my dear Mrs. Pontellier; good-by. You won’t—I hope you won’t completely forget me.” She clung to his hand, striving to detain him.

“Write to me when you get there, won’t you, Robert?” she entreated.

“I will, thank you. Good-by.”

How unlike Robert! The merest acquaintance would have said something more emphatic than “I will, thank you; good-by,” to such a request. He had evidently already taken leave of the people over at the house, for he descended the steps and went to join Beaufort, who was out there with an oar across his shoulder waiting for Robert. They walked away in the darkness. She could only hear Beaufort’s voice; Robert had apparently not even spoken a word of greeting to his companion.

Edna bit her handkerchief convulsively, striving to hold back and to hide, even from herself as she would have hidden from another, the emotion which was troubling—tearing—her. Her eyes were brimming with tears.

For the first time she recognized the symptoms of infatuation which she had felt incipiently as a child, as a girl in her earliest teens, and later as a young woman. The recognition did not lessen the reality, the poignancy of the revelation by any suggestion or promise of instability. The past was nothing to her; offered no lesson which she was willing to heed. The future was a mystery which she never attempted to penetrate. The present alone was significant; was hers, to torture her as it was doing then with the biting conviction that she had lost that which she had held, that she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded.

XVI

“Do you miss your friend greatly?” asked Mademoiselle Reisz one morning as she came creeping up behind Edna, who had just left her cottage on her way to the beach. She spent much of her time in the water since she had acquired finally the art of swimming. As their stay at Grand Isle drew near its close, she felt that she could not give too much time to a diversion which afforded her the only real pleasurable moments

Robert never calls Edna by her first name; instead, he insistently calls her “Mrs. Pontellier,” implying that he considers her as a property of Mr. Pontellier and therefore someone he should not love.

Incipient = developing, early

Poignant = intense =
heartbreaking

that she knew. When Mademoiselle Reisz came and touched her upon the shoulder and spoke to her, the woman seemed to echo the thought which was ever in Edna's mind; or, better, the feeling which constantly possessed her.

Robert's going had some way taken the brightness, the color, the meaning out of everything. The conditions of her life were in no way changed, but her whole existence was dulled, **like a faded garment which seems to be no longer worth wearing**. She sought him everywhere—in others whom she induced to talk about him. She went up in the mornings to Madame Lebrun's room, braving the clatter of the old sewing-machine. She sat there and chatted at intervals as Robert had done. She gazed around the room at the pictures and photographs hanging upon the wall, and discovered in some corner an old family album, which she examined with the keenest interest, appealing to Madame Lebrun for enlightenment concerning the many figures and faces which she discovered between its pages.

There was a picture of Madame Lebrun with Robert as a baby, seated in her lap, a round-faced infant with a fist in his mouth. The eyes alone in the baby suggested the man. And that was he also in kilts, at the age of five, wearing long curls and holding a whip in his hand. It made Edna laugh, and she laughed, too, at the portrait in his first long trousers; while another interested her, taken when he left for college, looking thin, long-faced, with eyes full of fire, ambition and great intentions. But there was no recent picture, none which suggested the Robert who had gone away five days ago, **leaving a void and wilderness behind him**.

"Oh, Robert stopped having his pictures taken when he had to pay for them himself! He found wiser use for his money, he says," explained Madame Lebrun. She had a letter from him, written before he left New Orleans. Edna wished to see the letter, and Madame Lebrun told her to look for it either on the table or the dresser, or perhaps it was on the mantelpiece.

The letter was on the bookshelf. It possessed the greatest interest and attraction for Edna; the envelope, its size and shape, the post-mark, the handwriting. She examined every detail of the outside before opening it. There were only a few lines, setting forth that he would leave the city that afternoon, that he had packed his trunk in good shape, that he was well, and sent her his love and begged to be affectionately remembered to all.

There was no special message to Edna except a postscript saying that if Mrs. Pontellier desired to finish the book which he had been reading to her, his mother would find it in his room, among other books there on the

Diversion = pastime = entertainment; in this context, referring to swimming

The use of this simile portrays Edna's "whole existence" like an unappealing garment. In fact, the author characterizes Edna's role in her life as an ugly robe the society has imposed on her. Compare this passage to Chapter 39.

Edna finds her longing for Robert's presence almost ineffable and painful.

table. Edna experienced a pang of jealousy because he had written to his mother rather than to her.

Everyone seemed to take for granted that she missed him. Even her husband, when he came down the Saturday following Robert's departure, expressed regret that he had gone.

"How do you get on without him, Edna?" he asked.

"It's very dull without him," she admitted. Mr. Pontellier had seen Robert in the city, and Edna asked him a dozen questions or more. Where had they met? On Carondelet Street, in the morning. They had gone "in" and had a drink and a cigar together. What had they talked about? Chiefly about his prospects in Mexico, which Mr. Pontellier thought were promising. How did he look? How did he seem—grave, or gay, or how? Quite cheerful, and wholly taken up with the idea of his trip, which Mr. Pontellier found altogether natural in a young fellow about to seek fortune and adventure in a strange, queer country.

Edna tapped her foot impatiently and wondered why the children persisted in playing in the sun when they might be under the trees. She went down and led them out of the sun, scolding the quadron for not being more attentive.

It did not strike her as in the least grotesque that she should be making of Robert the object of conversation and leading her husband to speak of him. The sentiment which she entertained for Robert in no way resembled that which she felt for her husband, or had ever felt, or ever expected to feel. She had all her life long been accustomed to harbor thoughts and emotions which never voiced themselves. They had never taken the form of struggles. They belonged to her and were her own, and she entertained the conviction that she had a right to them and that they concerned no one but herself. Edna had once told Madame Ratignolle that she would never sacrifice herself for her children, or for anyone. Then had followed a rather heated argument; the two women did not appear to understand each other or to be talking the same language. Edna tried to appease her friend, to explain.

"I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me."

"I don't know what you would call the essential, or what you mean by the unessential," said Madame Ratignolle, cheerfully; "but a woman who would give her life for her children could do no more than that— your

How does one differ from the other, Edna's life and her self (identity)?

The motherwoman, Madame Ratignolle cannot think of her identity separate from her

<p>Bible tells you so. I'm sure I couldn't do more than that."</p> <p>"Oh, yes you could!" laughed Edna.</p> <p>She was not surprised at Mademoiselle Reisz's question the morning that lady, following her to the beach, tapped her on the shoulder and asked if she did not greatly miss her young friend.</p> <p>"Oh, good morning, Mademoiselle; is it you? Why, of course I miss Robert. Are you going down to bathe?"</p> <p>"Why should I go down to bathe at the very end of the season when I haven't been in the surf all summer," replied the woman, disagreeably. "I beg your pardon," offered Edna, in some embarrassment, for she should have remembered that Mademoiselle Reisz's avoidance of the water had furnished a theme for much pleasantry. Some among them thought it was on account of her false hair, or the dread of getting the violets wet, while others attributed it to the natural aversion for water sometimes believed to accompany the artistic temperament.</p> <p>Mademoiselle offered Edna some chocolates in a paper bag, which she took from her pocket, by way of showing that she bore no ill feeling. She habitually ate chocolates for their sustaining quality; they contained much nutriment in small compass, she said. They saved her from starvation, as Madame Lebrun's table was utterly impossible; and no one save so impertinent a woman as Madame Lebrun could think of offering such food to people and requiring them to pay for it.</p> <p>"She must feel very lonely without her son," said Edna, desiring to change the subject. "Her favorite son, too. It must have been quite hard to let him go."</p> <p>Mademoiselle laughed maliciously. "Her favorite son! Oh, dear! Who could have been imposing such a tale upon you? Aline Lebrun lives for Victor, and for Victor alone. She has spoiled him into the worthless creature he is. She worships him and the ground he walks on. Robert is very well in a way, to give up all the money he can earn to the family and keep the barest pittance for himself. Favorite son, indeed! I miss the poor fellow myself, my dear. I liked to see him and to hear him about the place the only Lebrun who is worth a pinch of salt. He comes to see me often in the city. I like to play to him. That Victor! hanging would be too good for him. It's a wonder Robert hasn't beaten him to death long ago."</p> <p>"I thought he had great patience with his brother," offered Edna, glad to be talking about Robert, no matter what was said.</p>	<p>motherly instinct. Madame Ratignolle is the perfect embodiment of the Victorian motherhood.</p> <p>We can infer that vacationers gossip about Mademoiselle Reisz's hygiene. Here, a "theme for much pleasantry" is a euphemism for offensive jokes. "Old maids" and "spinsters" are unattractive and inferior in the Victorian worldview.</p> <p>M. Reisz has the gall to complain about the hostess's food. Save (preposition): except Impertinent = rude; saucy (slang)</p> <p>Pittance = a small amount = peanuts (slang)</p> <p>A pinch of salt = worth ("worth one's salt" = deserving one's salary)</p>
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<p>“Oh! he thrashed him well enough a year or two ago,” said Mademoiselle.</p> <p>“It was about a Spanish girl, whom Victor considered that he had some sort of claim upon. He met Robert one day talking to the girl, or walking with her, or bathing with her, or carrying her basket—I don’t remember what;—and he became so insulting and abusive that Robert gave him a thrashing on the spot that has kept him comparatively in order for a good while. It’s about time he was getting another.”</p> <p>“Was her name Mariequita?” asked Edna.</p> <p>“Mariequita—yes, that was it; Mariequita. I had forgotten. Oh, she’s a sly one, and a bad one, that Mariequita!”</p> <p>Edna looked down at Mademoiselle Reisz and wondered how she could have listened to her venom so long. For some reason she felt depressed, almost unhappy. She had not intended to go into the water; but she donned her bathing suit, and left Mademoiselle alone, seated under the shade of the children’s tent. The water was growing cooler as the season advanced.</p> <p>Edna plunged and swam about with an abandon that thrilled and invigorated her. She remained a long time in the water, half hoping that Mademoiselle Reisz would not wait for her.</p> <p>But Mademoiselle waited. She was very amiable during the walk back, and raved much over Edna’s appearance in her bathing suit. She talked about music. She hoped that Edna would go to see her in the city, and wrote her address with the stub of a pencil on a piece of card which she found in her pocket.</p> <p>“When do you leave?” asked Edna.</p> <p>“Next Monday; and you?”</p> <p>“The following week,” answered Edna, adding, “It has been a pleasant summer, hasn’t it, Mademoiselle?”</p> <p>“Well,” agreed Mademoiselle Reisz, with a shrug, “rather pleasant if it hadn’t been for the mosquitoes and the Farival twins.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">XVII</p> <p>The Pontelliers possessed a very charming home on Esplanade Street in New Orleans. It was a large, double cottage, with a broad front veranda,</p>	<p>Don = to put clothing on Doff = to take clothing off</p> <p>With an abandon = carelessly</p> <p>Amiable = friendly Think of “amigable” in Spanish</p> <p>M. Reisz cannot help being testy and critical.</p> <p>Chapters 17-30 deal with Edna’s pursuit of independence.</p>
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whose round, fluted columns supported the sloping roof. The house was painted a dazzling white; the outside shutters, or jalousies, were green. In the yard, which was kept scrupulously neat, were flowers and plants of every description which flourishes in South Louisiana. Within doors the appointments were perfect after the conventional type. The softest carpets and rugs covered the floors; rich and tasteful draperies hung at doors and windows. There were paintings, **selected with judgment and discrimination**, upon the walls. The cut glass, the silver, the heavy damask which daily appeared upon the table were **the envy of many women** whose husbands were less generous than Mr. Pontellier.

Mr. Pontellier was very fond of walking about his house examining its various appointments and details, to see that nothing was amiss. **He greatly valued his possessions, chiefly because they were his, and derived genuine pleasure from contemplating a painting, a statuette, a rare lace curtain—no matter what—after he had bought it and placed it among his household gods.**

On Tuesday afternoons—Tuesday being Mrs. Pontellier's reception day—there was a constant stream of callers—women who came in carriages or in the street cars or walked when the air was soft and distance permitted. A light-colored mulatto boy, in dress coat and bearing a diminutive silver tray for the reception of cards, admitted them. A maid, in white fluted cap, offered the callers liqueur, coffee, or chocolate, as they might desire. Mrs. Pontellier, attired in a handsome reception gown, remained in the drawing-room the entire afternoon receiving her visitors. Men sometimes called in the evening with their wives.

This had been the programme which Mrs. Pontellier had religiously followed since her marriage, six years before. Certain evenings during the week she and her husband attended the opera or sometimes the play.

Mr. Pontellier left his home in the mornings between nine and ten o'clock, and rarely returned before half-past six or seven in the evening—dinner being served at half-past seven.

He and his wife seated themselves at table one Tuesday evening, a few weeks after their return from Grand Isle. They were alone together. The boys were being put to bed; the patter of their bare, escaping feet could be heard occasionally, as well as the pursuing voice of the quadroon, lifted in mild protest and entreaty. Mrs. Pontellier did not wear her usual Tuesday reception gown; she was in ordinary house dress. Mr. Pontellier, who was observant about such things, noticed it, as he served the soup and handed it to the boy in waiting.

Jalousies = slates or blinds
Scrupulous = careful;
principled

The Pontellier mansion in New Orleans is tastefully furnished.

Social calls on Tuesdays: the role assigned to Mrs. Pontellier to keep up appearances
Mr. Pontellier treats Edna as if she were his employee who has to perform certain prescribed duties for him to his satisfaction.

Mr. Pontellier is very critical of his cook. He uses his authority

<p>“Tired out, Edna? Whom did you have? Many callers?” he asked. He tasted his soup and began to season it with pepper, salt, vinegar, mustard—everything within reach.</p> <p>“There were a good many,” replied Edna, who was eating her soup with evident satisfaction. “I found their cards when I got home; I was out.”</p> <p>“Out!” exclaimed her husband, with something like genuine consternation in his voice as he laid down the vinegar cruet and looked at her through his glasses. “Why, what could have taken you out on Tuesday? What did you have to do?”</p> <p>“Nothing. I simply felt like going out, and I went out.”</p> <p>“Well, I hope you left some suitable excuse,” said her husband, somewhat appeased, as he added a dash of cayenne pepper to the soup.</p> <p>“No, I left no excuse. I told Joe to say I was out, that was all.”</p> <p>“Why, my dear, I should think you’d understand by this time that people don’t do such things; we’ve got to observe <i>les convenances</i> if we ever expect to get on and keep up with the procession. If you felt that you had to leave home this afternoon, you should have left some suitable explanation for your absence.</p> <p>“This soup is really impossible; it’s strange that woman hasn’t learned yet to make a decent soup. Any free-lunch stand in town serves a better one. Was Mrs. Belthrop here?”</p> <p>“Bring the tray with the cards, Joe. I don’t remember who was here.” The boy retired and returned after a moment, bringing the tiny silver tray, which was covered with ladies’ visiting cards. He handed it to Mrs. Pontellier.</p> <p>“Give it to Mr. Pontellier,” she said.</p> <p>Joe offered the tray to Mr. Pontellier and removed the soup. Mr. Pontellier scanned the names of his wife’s callers, reading some of them aloud, with comments as he read.</p> <p>“The Misses Delasidas.’ I worked a big deal in futures for their father this morning; nice girls; it’s time they were getting married. ‘Mrs. Belthrop.’ I tell you what it is, Edna; you can’t afford to snub Mrs. Belthrop. Why, Belthrop could buy and sell us ten times over. His business is worth a good, round sum to me. You’d better write her a note. ‘Mrs. James Highcamp.’ Hugh! the less you have to do with Mrs.</p>	<p>position to bully and intimidate both Edna and the cook.</p> <p>Nonverbal act of mockery and challenge</p> <p>Consternation = a sudden amazement or dread Cruet = a small bottle that contains liquid or oil</p> <p>Appease = to pacify = to calm</p> <p><i>Les convenances</i> = social conventions</p> <p>Mr. Pontellier becomes petty and aggressive when annoyed.</p> <p>Mr. Pontellier delegates business networking to his wife.</p>
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Highcamp, the better. 'Madame Laforce.' Came all the way from Carrolton, too, poor old soul. 'Miss Wiggs,' 'Mrs. Eleanor Boltons.'" He pushed the cards aside.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Edna, who had been fuming. "Why are you taking the thing so seriously and making such a fuss over it?"

"I'm not making any fuss over it. But it's just such seeming trifles that we've got to take seriously; such things count."

The fish was scorched. Mr. Pontellier would not touch it. Edna said she did not mind a little scorched taste. The roast was in some way not to his fancy, and he did not like the manner in which the vegetables were served.

"It seems to me," he said, "we spend money enough in this house to procure at least one meal a day which a man could eat and retain his self-respect."

"You used to think the cook was a treasure," returned Edna, indifferently.

"Perhaps she was when she first came; but cooks are only human. They need looking after, like any other class of persons that you employ. Suppose I didn't look after the clerks in my office, just let them run things their own way; they'd soon make a nice mess of me and my business."

"Where are you going?" asked Edna, seeing that her husband arose from table without having eaten a morsel except a taste of the highly-seasoned soup.

"I'm going to get my dinner at the club. Good night." He went into the hall, took his hat and stick from the stand, and left the house.

She was somewhat familiar with such scenes. They had often made her very unhappy. On a few previous occasions she had been completely deprived of any desire to finish her dinner. Sometimes she had gone into the kitchen to administer a tardy rebuke to the cook. Once she went to her room and studied the cookbook during an entire evening, finally writing out a menu for the week, which left her harassed with a feeling that, after all, she had accomplished no good that was worth the name.

But that evening Edna finished her dinner alone, with forced deliberation. Her face was flushed and her eyes flamed with some inward

Mr. Pontellier is particular and exacting.

Edna sees through Mr. Pontellier's manipulative, abusive tactics.

fire that lighted them. After finishing her dinner she went to her room, having instructed the boy to tell any other callers that she was indisposed.

It was a large, beautiful room, rich and picturesque in the soft, dim light which the maid had turned low. She went and stood at an open window and looked out upon the deep tangle of the garden below. All the mystery and witchery of the night seemed to have gathered there amid the perfumes and the dusky and tortuous outlines of flowers and foliage. She was seeking herself and finding herself in just such sweet, half-darkness which met her moods. But the voices were not soothing that came to her from the darkness and the sky above and the stars. They jeered and sounded mournful notes without promise, devoid even of hope. She turned back into the room and began to walk to and fro down its whole length, without stopping, without resting. She carried in her hands a thin handkerchief, which she tore into ribbons, rolled into a ball, and flung from her. Once she stopped, and taking off her wedding ring, flung it upon the carpet. When she saw it lying there, she stamped her heel upon it, striving to crush it. But her small boot heel did not make an indenture, not a mark upon the little glittering circlet.

In a sweeping passion she seized a glass vase from the table and flung it upon the tiles of the hearth. She wanted to destroy something. The crash and clatter were what she wanted to hear. A maid, alarmed at the din of breaking glass, entered the room to discover what was the matter.

“A vase fell upon the hearth,” said Edna. “Never mind; leave it till morning.”

“Oh! you might get some of the glass in your feet, ma’am,” insisted the young woman, picking up bits of the broken vase that were scattered upon the carpet.

“And here’s your ring, ma’am, under the chair.”

Edna held out her hand, and taking the ring, slipped it upon her finger.

If one has not given a full consent to the sanctity of marriage out of her own will, is the marriage bond still sacred?

Edna is impulsive and vigorous. As in the case of cytokine storm syndrome, a young, vigorous body will wage a full-front war against invading antigen and go into overdrive only to self-destroy herself.

Once woken up as an independent woman (from economic dependence, self-denial, and sexual double standards), Edna will crash against the repressive Victorian society until she is irreparably shattered.