

INT. DRAWING ROOM, Mlle. REISZ'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

It is a gray winter afternoon. Rain can be seen coming down outside Mlle. Reisz's window.

Still wet from her walk, Edna has just arrived and is hanging up her coat.

Mlle. REISZ

I was just thinking of you, my dear. But hardly expected to see you in such weather. Would you like some hot chocolate? The brandy you brought last time?

EDNA

Brandy, but please, let me get it myself. I have some news that will shock you.

Mlle. REISZ

News. (Smiling mysteriously) Yes, it is a day of news.

Edna is scarcely listening. She goes over to a cabinet where the brandy and glasses are stored, takes down a glass and pours herself a shot. She drinks it off quickly.

EDNA

I have decided to move out of the house on Esplanade Street.

Mlle. REISZ

Ah, yes. I think that will arouse surprise, even shock, in some quarters. Where does Madame intend to go?

EDNA

Not far. I shall rent a small house in the same neighborhood. I'm tired of looking after the house on Esplanade Street.

Mlle. REISZ

I don't understand. Your servants? They have all left you?

EDNA

I can't fool you, can I? The truth is that the house has never really seemed like mine. It is beautiful; it is fine. Many women would count themselves lucky to have such a house. But it is full of things that don't speak to me, that have no meaning for me.

MLLE. REISZ

But these things are your husband's, no? And what is his is yours.

EDNA

That's just the point. They are his, bought with his money, to his taste. They are not mine. And every one of them is like another knot that ties me to his, to that style of life. Do you understand? It's not the life I want. I have to be free.

MLLE. REISZ

You begin to swim far from shore, Madame.

EDNA

I have thought it all out. I have a little inheritance from my mother, and now some money of my own. My paintings are starting to sell with some regularity. Laidpore says I improve with every one. I won't need much, you see. There will just be old Celestine and me.

MLLE. REISZ

And your husband? What will he think? And what about your children?

EDNA

(Laughing nervously) Oh, yes. I can see his face now. Leonce will conclude that I've completely lost my mind. (Sadly) But the children. The children...

Edna has moved to the window and is looking out over the city. There are tears in her eyes.

EDNA

I don't know. Perhaps Leonce is right. Perhaps I'm dreaming. Perhaps what I want is impossible in this world.

MLLE. REISZ

I never thought I would pity the beautiful, the fascinating Mrs. Pontellier. But I pity you now.

EDNA

(Aroused) I don't want to be pitied. Besides, it is done. I have

already written to Leonce of my plans. I came to tell you. But before I leave the house on Esplanade Street, I intend to have a grand dinner, a great celebration. It will be very French! You will come won't you?

Mlle. Reisz nods.

EDNA

There will be pate and fruit and champagne and all the things you love. There will be music. We will sing and laugh and tell stories and be very, very happy.

In spite of the bravado, Edna looks scared and depressed. She sits down on the sofa.

EDNA

Now, play me something, anything. I'm cold and tired. It was a long wet walk.

MLLE. REISZ

I will play something. I will give you something too. You see you are not the only one with news.

EDNA

It can't be. Another letter? So soon?

As Edna moves quickly to the drawer of the end table, Mlle. Reisz goes over the piano and begins to play a joyful, spirited song. Edna quickly unfolds the letter and begins to read. Before she even finishes, she jumps up from the sofa, smiling.

EDNA

Why didn't you tell me? When does he arrive?