

'The Awakening', Act I; Scene viii
The Cheniere Caminada

Robert sits, reading beneath the shade of an orange tree. The beach house is now a small cottage on the Cheniere. It is late in the day, nearing sunset. Edna emerges from the cottage and picks an orange from a cluster of branches. Robert is engrossed in his reading and does not notice her. She watches him for a few moments, smiles, and tosses the orange in his direction. An illumination breaks over his whole face when he sees her. She crosses to Robert as she speaks.

EDNA

How many years have I slept? The whole island seems changed. A new race of beings must have sprung up, leaving only you and me as past relics. How many ages ago did Madame Antoine and Tonie die? And when did our people from Grand Isle disappear from the earth?

ROBERT

(familiarily adjusting a ruffle upon her shoulder) You have slept precisely one hundred years. I was left here to guard your slumbers; and for one hundred years I have been out under the orange tree reading a book. The only evil I couldn't prevent was to keep a loaf of Madame Antoine's bread from hardening.

EDNA

If it has turned to stone, still will I eat it. But really, what has become of Monsieur Farival and the others?

ROBERT

Gone hours ago. When they found you were sleeping they thought it best not to wake you. They saw how exhausted you were at service.

EDNA

I couldn't possibly have stayed. I slept but a few hours last night, and the way the service was dragging on... I felt giddy and overcome.

ROBERT

They understood. You needed rest! It was folly to have thought of going in the first place, let alone staying. It was actually Farival who suggested we come here to rest.

EDNA

Leonce will be uneasy....

ROBERT

I don't believe he will; He knows you are with me.

EDNA

Where are Madame Antoine and her son?

ROBERT

Gone to Vespers, and to visit some friends, I believe. I am to take you back to Tonie's boat whenever you are ready to go.

EDNA

Shall we go right away?

ROBERT

The sun isn't as low as it will be in two hours.

EDNA

The sun will be gone in two hours.

ROBERT

Well, let it go; who cares!

"Edna and Robert both sat upon the ground-that is, he lay upon the ground beside her, occasionally picking at the hem of her muslin gown."

EDNA

It is such a warm evening, and the water looks so delicious. I wish I had thought to bring a bathing suit.

ROBERT

I have often noticed that you lack forethought.

EDNA

(laughs) Wasn't it enough to think of going to the Cheniere and waking you up? Do I have to think of everything?

ROBERT *(With a low voice, 'full of solicitude')*

Let us go to Grande Terre tomorrow.

EDNA

What shall we do there?

ROBERT

Climb up the hill to the old fort and watch the lizards sun themselves. And the next day or the next we can sail to the Bayou Brunalow.

EDNA

What shall we do there?

ROBERT

Anything—Cast bait for fish.

EDNA

No; we'll go back to Grande Terre. Let the fish alone.

ROBERT

We'll go wherever you like. I'll have Tonie come over and help me patch and trim my boat. Are you afraid of the pirogue?

EDNA

Oh, no.

ROBERT

Then I'll take you some night in the pirogue when the moon shines. Maybe your Gulf spirit will whisper to you in which of these islands the treasures are hidden—direct you to the very spot, perhaps.

EDNA

And in a day we should be rich! I'd give it all to you, the pirate gold and every bit of treasure we could dig up. I think that you would know how to spend it. Pirate gold isn't a thing to be hoarded or utilized. It is something to squander and throw to the four winds, for the fun of seeing the golden specks fly!

ROBERT(*pressing her hand, flushed*)

We'd share it, and scatter it together.

After several moments of silence, Robert begins to sing the refrain from 'Si Tu Savais' ('Couldst Thou But Know'), written by the Irish composer Michael William Balfe (1808-1870). "Robert's voice was not pretentious. It was musical and true."

EDNA

Do you know we've been together the whole livelong day, Robert—since early this morning?

ROBERT

All but the hundred years you slept...

EDNA

An eternity.

ROBERT

You must be famished!

EDNA

I am wasting away....

ROBERT

Well, there is some petrified bread inside.

EDNA

Sounds delicious.

Robert disappears into the cottage. Edna smiles and hums "Si Tu Savais"

Blackout; End of Scene