

EXT. OUTSIDE THE COMMON HALL - NIGHT

Later that evening, the crowd from within has made its way outside to enjoy the fresh air and further conversation.

VICTOR

Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. A beautiful night like this--and one deucedly warm I must say--should be finished off with something cool and refreshing. No, mother, I do not mean to tap the family stores.

There is general laughter.

VICTOR

No, I propose something even better, or at least as good. What say you all to a moonlight swim?

There is a murmur from the crowd.

VICTOR

Robert, I'm sure, will join me. And what about Mrs. Pontellier?

ROBERT

(To Edna) What do you think?

Edna looks at Leonce.

LEONCE

Why not? It's very hot and I should like to see Edna's progress.

ROBERT

(Shouting out to Victor.) The Pontelliers and I will join you.

There is a further murmur and then more calls of "we will join you" as people begin to move to the beach.

EXT. THE BEACH. - NIGHT

The nearly full moon is shining brightly on the water; the waves shimmer in the light. It's a gorgeous night for a swim.

Edna and Leonce are wading in.

LEONCE

Well now, Edna. Let's see what you've learned. Shall I be disappointed?

Edna is taken slightly aback, but seems to rise now to the challenge of her husband's words.

EDNA

I will see that you're not.

She swims off, stroking at first diffidently, and then with great concentration and determination.

Leonce watches her as she sets off.

LEONCE

What do you think, Lebrun?

M. FARIVAL

Look at Mrs. Pontellier!

There is a general exclamation and applause as Edna swims past many of the younger bathers.

Buoyed by the reaction of the others, Edna gains confidence and ease with each stroke.

LEONCE

I should congratulate you, for I suspect this is your doing, Lebrun.

ROBERT

I wish I thought so. But, really, I'm as surprised as you are.

Leonce and Robert watch as Edna swims back up to them. She is excited, exuberant.

EDNA

There, you see! I did it!

LEONCE

Yes. I saw, Edna, and I admit I am surprised.

ROBERT

Bravo!

EDNA

I love it! And it's so easy! I only wonder why I found it so difficult before! Look, I'll go even further this time.

ROBERT

Wait.

But Edna has already plunged back in and begun swimming steadily away from shore.

LEONCE

Let her go.

Edna swims past the younger boys and girls, intoxicated with her own power, looking only ahead until she realizes that the sounds of splashing and laughter behind her are getting dimmer and dimmer.

Slowing down and treading water, she looks back to the shore. She is out over her head, and has drifted away from the other bathers seemingly unnoticed.

A cry of fear escapes her. She begins desperately swimming back towards the shore. Stroke by stroke, she makes her way to the nearest part of the shore. As she regains the beach, panting hard, she throws herself on the sand, lying back, and closing her eyes. Then, as her fear subsides and her breathing becomes more regular, she opens her eyes and looks up at the sky.

The moon is clearly visible with stars all around it.

There is a subtle smile on her face.

EXT. THE PATH BACK TO THE LEBRUN COTTAGES - NIGHT

Edna has changed back into her dress and is walking along the path to the cottages. She is soon joined by Robert.

EDNA

Did you think I was afraid to walk home alone?

ROBERT

No, I knew you were not afraid. Not after swimming out so far. I was watching you.

EDNA

Then why did you come? Why didn't you stay with the others?

ROBERT

I never thought of it.

EDNA

I don't think I've ever been so excited and exhausted all at the same time. I feel like I've been to a place where I have never been before, and I have felt things that I have never felt before. I don't think I've ever been more alive, and yet everything around me seems somehow disembodied, floating, like spirits in a dream.

ROBERT

Then you've been visited by the Gulf Spirit.

EDNA

The Gulf Spirit? What's that?

ROBERT

It's an old Indian legend. It tells of a spirit--I can't remember his name--who comes down to earth on moonlit summer nights and takes a mortal maid with him to banquet with the gods.

EDNA

What happens to her?

ROBERT

I can't remember. It's all nonsense anyway.

EDNA

Tell me.

ROBERT

According to the legend, they feast together in the clouds and then she falls asleep in his arms. She is awakened the next morning by the roar of the surf on the shore.

EDNA

And her Indian god?

ROBERT

Disappeared. But now the young maid can no longer be satisfied with the companionship of her own kind. She goes on seeking him, searching beyond the horizon until she wastes away into a spirit herself.

Edna continues to walk on pensively.

ROBERT

Come, you're exhausted, you said so yourself. Let me take your arm.