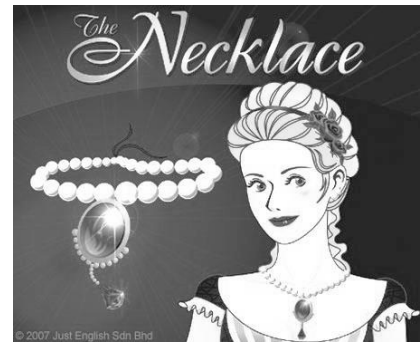


Name: _____

The Necklace

The Necklace by Guy de Maupassant

Mathilde Loisel was a pretty and charming girl. She had hoped to find a rich husband, but she had no dowry—no money from her family to take to her marriage—so she ended up marrying a young clerk in the Ministry of Education.



Although her husband loved her dearly and did all he could do to make her happy, this wasn't enough for Mathilde. She was dissatisfied with her simple middle-class life. Above all else, she wanted to be noticed and admired. She felt that she deserved to have fancy dresses and fine jewelry, and it made her unhappy that she couldn't afford them.

Mathilde couldn't understand why her husband always to be seemed so cheerful and content. It annoyed her when he'd say, "That supper sure was good. I can't imagine anything better!" How could he enjoy their meager little meals while she was dreaming of fancy dinner parties?

Then, one evening her husband handed her an invitation. Excited, she opened it and found an invitation to a grand party at the Ministerial Mansion.

Scornfully, she tossed it aside, saying, "What good is that to me?"

"Why, I thought you'd be thrilled since you never get to go out. I had an awful time getting invited. Everybody wants to go, but few clerks can. The most important people in Paris will be there."

She gave him a bitter look and replied, "How can I go? What do you think I would wear?"

"Why, the dress you wear when we go to the theater. That looks quite nice."

He was confused when she started crying and said softly, "Whatever's the matter?"

"You don't understand. I don't have an evening gown. Without a gown to wear I can't go to that party, however much I might want to."

He thought for a moment. Finally, he said, "How much would the right outfit cost? Something simple?"

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She considered for a while before answering, wondering exactly how much her husband might be willing to give her.

Finally, she replied, "I'm not really sure. Maybe I could manage with four hundred francs."

He turned pale because four hundred francs was much more than he wanted to spend. However, he said, "All right. I'll give you four hundred francs."

As the party neared, Mme. Loisel seemed sad. She was moody and upset although she had spent all four hundred francs on a beautiful dress.

One evening her husband asked, "What's the matter?"

"I'm embarrassed not to have any jewelry."

"Borrow some from your friend Mme. Forestier. Aren't you good enough friends?"

"Of course. Why didn't I think of her!"

The next day Mathilde went to her friend, who offered her a large jewelry box. "Pick out something, my dear."

Mathilde found the perfect diamond necklace. Her heart beat faster, and her hands shook when she picked it up. "Could I possibly borrow this one?" she asked.

"Why, of course."

She hugged her friend, kissed her warmly, and fled with her prize.

Mme. Loisel was a hit at the party. The prettiest one there, she was stylish, warm, smiling, and wildly happy. All the men turned to look at her. They asked who she was and begged to meet her. The Cabinet members waltzed with her, and the minister noticed her.

She danced madly, wildly, dizzy with joy. Around four o'clock the Loisels finally left the party and took a shabby cab home.

Before undressing, Mathilde had to admire herself one last time. But when she looked in the mirror, the necklace was gone! Upset, she cried out for her husband.

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“What’s wrong?”

“I . . . I . . . I don’t have my friend’s necklace.”

“That’s impossible.”

They hunted everywhere in the apartment but found nothing. He retraced their steps, searching for hours while she slumped in a chair in the cold room.

Her husband came in around seven o’clock. He’d had no luck finding the necklace.

By the end of the week, they had given up all hope. Loisel looked five years older. “We must somehow replace the necklace,” he said sadly.

They searched the city and finally found a necklace exactly like the first. It cost forty thousand francs, but they could get it for thirty-six.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs he had inherited from his father. He borrowed the rest. He got a thousand francs from one friend, four hundred from another—a hundred here, sixty there. He signed notes, made deals with loan sharks, borrowed from moneylenders.

When Mme. Loisel returned the necklace, her friend said coldly, “You should have returned it sooner, Mathilde. I might have needed it.”

Mme. Forestier didn’t open the case.

Mme. Loisel bravely faced being poor. That debt had to be paid, and she would pay it. She and her husband moved to a cheap attic apartment.

She took whatever work she could get. She did housework and scrubbed laundry. She dressed like a peasant and watched every coin she spent. She bargained for food with the fruit dealer, the grocer, and the butcher. They looked down on her for her pettiness, and she felt humiliated.

Her husband took on two extra jobs. He worked evenings as a bookkeeper, and at night he copied documents for five sous a page.

This lasted for ten years.

Finally, all the debts and interest were paid.

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Mme. Loisel looked like an old worn-out woman now. Sometimes she'd remember the party where she'd been so beautiful and admired. What if she hadn't lost the necklace? Who knows? How little stands between joy and misery!

Then one Sunday, while she was walking, she saw a woman strolling with a child. It was Mme. Forestier; she still looked young and beautiful.

Mme. Loisel went toward her friend saying, "Hello, Jeanne."

The other was surprised to be spoken to so familiarly. "But...madame...I don't recognize ...You must have mistaken me for someone else."

"No, I'm Mathilde Loisel."

Her friend cried out, "Oh, my poor Mathilde! How you've changed!"

"Yes, I've had a hard time. And plenty of problems—and all because of you!"

"Of me . . . what do you mean?" Mme. Forestier asked.

"Do you remember the diamond necklace I borrowed?"

"Yes, I think so. Why, what about it?"

"I lost it," Mathilde said.

"Lost it? But you returned it."

"I bought another just like it, and we have been paying for it for ten years. Well, it's over now, and I am glad."

Mme. Forestier was surprised. "You bought a diamond necklace to replace mine!"

"Yes. You never noticed, then? They were quite alike." Mathilde smiled with pride and simple joy.

Mme. Forestier, quite overcome, clasped her friend by the hands.

"Oh, my poor Mathilde. Mine was fake. Why, at most it was worth only a few hundred francs!"

THE END