

## **THE NECKLACE** from the story by Guy de Maupassant

A woman is invited to a very special kind of party. She wants to look her best, and so she borrows a necklace from a good friend. She is the prettiest woman at the party, and she has the best time of her life. But she will have to pay for that necklace, and she does. What kind of necklace was it? Why did she have to pay for it? How did she pay for it? Guy de Maupassant liked to give a special twist to the endings of his stories. What will it be this time?

### THE CAST

Announcer Monsieur Loisel Madame Mathilde Loisel (His wife) Madame Jeanne Forestier

### THE SETS

The Loisel living room The house of Madame Forestier A boulevard in Paris

**Announcer** We are in the living room of Monsieur Loisel and his wife, Mathilde. It is the simple living room of a man who works hard and just manages to get along. He works as a clerk in the Ministry of Education, in Paris, France. Generally, he comes home tired, and he and his wife sit down to a simple supper. However, tonight is no ordinary night for Monsieur Loisel. He is obviously excited about something.

**Loisel** (Entering and shouting) Mathilde! Mathilde!

**Mathilde** Here I am. Why are you shouting?

**Loisel** Ah, Mathilde! My good wife!

**Mathilde** You have been drinking, my good husband!

**Loisel** Ah, no! Mathilde, let me tell you slowly.

**Mathilde** (Beginning to set the dinner table) Very well. Tell me while we're having our supper. You got a raise?

**Loisel** Ah! You are joking.

**Mathilde** We need a new sofa, some curtains. It isn't a raise?

**Loisel** No. Nothing so ordinary.

**Mathilde** Then what?

**Loisel** (Pulling an envelope from his pocket) For you!

**Mathilde** An inheritance. My rich aunt has died and left me some money.

**Loisel** No! No! Open the envelope! What a surprise!

**Mathilde** (Opening the letter) You won some money in a lottery. (She pulls an invitation card out of the envelope and looks at her husband, blankly.) This is your surprise?

**Loisel** Read it!

**Mathilde** (Reading) The Minister of Education and Madame Ramponneau request the pleasure of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel at the Ministry on the evening of Monday, January 18th.

**Loisel** We've been invited by the Minister of Education! What an honor, Mathilde! (Mathilde Putting the invitation down and returning to the dinner table) (Sourly) A great honor. Sit down and eat.

**Loisel** But Mathilde! We have never been invited before. I thought... At least, I thought you'd be pleased.

**Mathilde** Your soup is getting cold.

**Loisel** Only a few clerks were invited. It took so much effort to get this invitation, Mathilde. Only the very best people will be there.

**Mathilde** And what am I going to wear at such an important affair?

**Loisel** (For a moment he is stumped.) The dress you wear when you go to the theater. Your theater dress. It's very pretty. (Mathilde begins to cry.) It's a beautiful dress, Mathilde.

**Mathilde** A rag. A wretched dress. Like everything else in this house. This wretched table. These wretched chairs. The silver. This food. Is this the way to live?

**Loisel** I do the best I can.

**Mathilde** I know you do the best you can. It's not good enough. I was born to fine things, elegant furniture, thick rugs, shining silver. I have nothing. I am not going to your party!

**Loisel** But Mathilde!

**Mathilde** I'm not going. Give your invitation to one of your friends. Give it to someone whose wife has a decent dress to wear.

**Loisel** (Quietly) How much would it cost to get a new dress? Something you can wear to the theatre. Or to an affair, when we are invited. How much would such a dress cost?

**Mathilde** (Thinks for a moment.) I don't know exactly.

**Loisel** About how much? I have some money saved. I had been thinking of buying a hunting gun for my vacation next summer. About how much, Mathilde?

**Mathilde** (After a pause) I could buy a simple dress for four hundred francs.

**Loisel** That's exactly how much I have saved. Four hundred francs.

**Mathilde** Buy your gun, then. We don't need to go to the party.

**Loisel** No. You buy a dress with it. Four hundred francs! You should be able to get a very nice dress for four hundred francs.

**Announcer:** Ah, Madame Mathilde Loisel was a happy woman! For once in her life she was able to go out and buy a beautiful dress in which to attend an elegant affair. There would be music, dancing, handsome young men, and an elegant table of elegant food, all beautifully served. Then, just a few days before the day of the party, Mathilde began to grow sad again. Monsieur Loisel was quick to notice.

**Loisel** What's the matter with you? Don't you feel well?

**Mathilde** I'm not sick, if that's what you mean.

**Loisel** You should be laughing and singing! You're going to the most elegant affair in Paris. You've bought yourself a beautiful dress. Instead, you act as if you are the most unhappy woman in the world. I am.

**Mathilde** I'm miserable. I'm absolutely miserable.

**Loisel** Why?

**Mathilde** You are absolutely blind. You can't see anything.

**Loisel** I can't see what?

**Mathilde** I haven't a jewel to wear. A necklace. A bracelet. A single stone. I'll look like no one at the party. Who'll notice me? Who'll look at me? Not a single jewel! (And she begins to cry again.)

**Loisel** I'll buy you some flowers.

**Mathilde** Flowers?

**Loisel** For a few francs i can buy you some beautiful roses.

**Mathilde** Flowers! Roses! Are we going to some picnic? You don't understand at all. You'll never understand.

**Loisel** I try, Mathilde. I try to understand.

**Mathilde** All the women there will be wearing diamonds. Diamonds! And I'll be wearing flowers!

**Loisel** And what can I do about it?

**Mathilde** Nothing! But I'm not going to the party. I'm not going to let myself look foolish, with all those rich women and their diamonds!

**Loisel** Then we won't go to the party!

**Mathilde** I should have known that from the very beginning. You bring me an invitation. You might as well have lost it. This is no kind of party for people as poor as we are.

**Loisel** (With a sudden bright idea) How about Madame Forestier? She is a good friend of yours. She's rich. She has more diamonds than she can wear. She'll lend you a bracelet, a necklace, something, for one evening

**Mathilde** (Suddenly quite happy) Of course! Why didn't I think of it? Of course she'll lend me a bracelet, a necklace...

**Announcer** Very early the next morning, Madame Loisel called on her friend Madame Forestier, and Madame Forestier was most generous.

**Madame Forestier** Of course, my dear. I'll be happy to let you have anything you'd like. (Producing a box of jewels Here. Choose what you like.

**Mathilde** Oh! How beautiful! You are so kind. (She looks at the jewels.) Mathilde Is there anything else you have?

**Madame Forestier** (Producing another box) Perhaps there is something here you fancy.

**Mathilde** Beautiful! Beautiful! Have you anything else, Madame Forestier? If it isn't too much trouble...

**Madame Forestier** No trouble at all. (She produces several boxes.)

**Mathilde** Ah! (She looks at everything. Finally, she picks up a beautiful diamond necklace.) This! (Putting the necklace around her throat) May I borrow this beautiful necklace?

**Madame Forestier** It's lovely on you. You may borrow anything you like.

**Mathilde** Oh, thank you! Thank you! I'll return it in the morning!

**Announcer** Madame Loisel was the happiest woman in Paris. And at the elegant party, she was gayer and happier than she had ever been before, in all her life. All the handsome young men had their eyes on her, and they all danced with her. But parties must end, and early the next morning, Monsieur and Madame Loisel arrived at home weary, but quite happy.

**Mathilde** What a glorious evening.

**Loisel** I'm glad you enjoyed it. (Moving to help Mathilde take off her cloak) Let me help you.

**Mathilde** No. Let me remember for a little while.

**Loisel** It's late, Mathilde. I have to get up early. I work tomorrow.

**Mathilde** (Allowing Loisel to help her with her cloak) Of course. Of course. But it was a beautiful evening! (She reaches towards her throat for the necklace.) It isn't there! (Her mood changes quickly.)

**Loisel** What is it, Mathilde?

**Mathilde** The necklace! It's gone!

**Loisel** It can't be. Look in your dress! In your bag!

**Mathilde** (As they both search frantically) It's not here! I've lost it!

**Loisel** At the party?

**Mathilde** No. I remember touching it, as we left. Did you take the number of our taxi?

**Loisel** No. Did you?

**Mathilde** No. What shall we do? A diamond necklace. It must be worth millions! I'll go back. I'll go over every inch of the way home. I'll find it. I must!

**Announcer** But Loisel did not find it. The police couldn't find it. They advertised in the papers, offered a reward. The diamond necklace was not returned and they had to replace it. They found one like it for thirty-six thousand francs.

**Mathilde** Even this may not be good enough. Even if we buy it, I hope Madame Forestier doesn't open the box it comes in.

**Loisel** But where are we going to get thirty-six thousand francs? I couldn't save that much money in ten years.

**Mathilde** Borrow it. I'll help pay it back.

**Loisel** How? With what?

**Mathilde** I'll work. I must return that necklace.

**Loisel** But what kind of work can you do?

**Mathilde** I can sew. I can help in someone's kitchen. I can clean.

**Announcer** And that is exactly what Madame Loisel did, for ten years. They moved from their neat and comfortable house to a one-room apartment under a roof. There was no more theatre, and never a party. Mathilde scrubbed and scrubbed ... If it wasn't dirty dishes it was clothes. Both Loisel and his wife aged terribly in those years. They had borrowed money from everyone to buy that necklace for Madame Forestier. Ten years after she had borrowed the necklace Mathilde happened to meet Madame Forestier, whom she had not seen in all those years. The meeting took place on a great boulevard of Paris. Madame Forestier was ten years older but still elegant, still beautiful. Mathilde had become old and very plain.

**Mathilde** Good morning, Jeanne.

**Madame Forestier** (Looks at her. Obviously, she does not remember, or recognize, Mathilde.) I don't know you, Madame.

**Mathilde** I am Mathilde. Mathilde Loisel.

**Madame Forestier** Oh! Mathilde! How you have changed!

**Mathilde** I've had some hard times. And you, Jeanne, were the cause of my hardship.

**Madame Forestier** I the cause? How is that?

**Mathilde** Do you remember the diamond necklace you lent me?

**Madame Forestier** (Trying to remember) The diamond necklace?

**Mathilde** It was for the affair at the Ministry. Ten years ago.

**Madame Forestier** Ah, yes. I remember. Well, it is a rather pretty necklace.

**Mathilde** Beautiful! And I lost it.

**Madame Forestier** Lost it? But you returned it to me.

**Mathilde** No. I lost it. I bought another that looked like it. That's the one I returned. And we've been paying for it for ten years. It wasn't easy. You understand that. We are poor. But the debt is paid off now, and I'm glad.

**Madame Forestier** (Puzzled) You bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?

**Mathilde** You didn't notice the difference? I'm glad for that, too.

**Madame Forestier** But, my poor Mathilde!

**Mathilde** It's all over now. Thirty-six thousand francs, and we paid it all.

**Madame Forestier** But, Mathilde! The necklace I lent you was not a diamond necklace. The stones were imitation diamonds. Surely, the whole necklace wasn't worth more than a few hundred francs!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did M. Loisel expect his wife to be pleased to receive the invitation from the Minister of Education?

2. Describe Mme Loisel's reaction on reading the invitation.
3. Why had M. Loisel been saving 400 Francs?
4. Compare and contrast the life of Mme Loisel before and after the disappearance of the necklace.
5. What efforts were made to find Mme Forestier's necklace?
6. Describe in your own words how the Loisels' life changed after they had paid for the new necklace.
7. Why do you think Mme Loisel did not recognize the difference between good quality jewellery and fake jewelry?
8. Why was Mathilde unhappy with her life at the opening of the story?
9. Do you think M. Loisel enjoyed the ball?
10. How did M. Loisel contribute to the cost of the new necklace?
11. What is the moral to this story? Is Mathilde better off or worse at the end? What is the reason for this change?