



THE
NECKLACE

By Guy de Maupassant

Retold by Sara Simpson

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Matilde Loisel was one of those people born into the wrong family. She was a pretty girl who seemed like she should have been born into a rich family, but she wasn't. Her father was an office clerk. Her family had enough money to buy what they needed, but they weren't rich. When she was old enough to get married, she didn't have the money or connections to meet a rich man, so she married a clerk who worked in the Ministry of Public Instruction.

She wore plain clothes; she couldn't afford expensive ones. Even though she had never had an expensive dress, she was as sad as if she used to have beautiful clothing like a queen and had it taken away. Men are born with social standing because of their families; women aren't. A woman's beauty and personality are what give her power. Mathilde Loisel was as beautiful and charming as any rich woman; it wasn't fair she never got the chance to enjoy the finer things in life just because she was born poor.

She was unhappy with everything about her simple, middle-class life. Things that most people wouldn't even notice made her miserable. The chairs were worn. The curtains were ugly. The girl they hired to help cook and clean only did the basic chores. She spent all day dreaming about expensive furniture, fancy parties, and rich friends.

Each night, they ate the same boring dinner on the same simple dishes. Every night, her husband looked at the food and said "Beef stew! What a wonderful dinner!" before eating it happily. Mathilde Loisel wished that she was eating fine food on china plates and thought about how unlucky she was.

She didn't have any fancy dresses or jewelry, and these were the only things she cared about. She felt like she should have these things but would never get them. The thought made her miserable.

Madame Loisel had an old friend from school who was rich. She didn't like to visit her friend because it made her so jealous.

One night, her husband came home with a surprise for Madame Loisel.

"Look in the envelope!" he said.

She opened it. It was an invitation from her husband's boss. They were invited to go to a fancy ball.

Instead of being happy, Madame Loisel was upset. She threw the invitation on the table.

"What am I supposed to do with that?" she said.

Her husband was confused.

"I thought you would be happy," he said. "I know you wish we got to go to more fancy parties. It was very hard for me to get an invitation. Everyone at work wants to go, and hardly any clerks got an invitation. Lots of important people will be there."

"What am I supposed to wear?" Madame Loisel snapped.

Her husband hadn't thought about that.

"You should wear the dress you wear when we go to the theatre. It looks nice on you," he said.

Madame Loisel started to cry. Her husband was confused.

"What's wrong?" he asked.

"I don't have a nice enough dress to wear to a ball this fancy," she said. "You should give the invitation to someone else."

He didn't like seeing her so upset.

"Let's see if we can get you a nice enough dress. If you buy something very simple that you could wear again, I think we could afford it," he said.

"I think I can buy a decent dress for \$400," she said. It was a lot of money. She was nervous to see his reaction.

He went pale; \$400 was a lot of money. He had been saving up for months to buy a new hunting gun and go on a hunting trip with friends. He had almost \$400. He thought about saying "no" to his wife, but he really wanted her to be happy.

"Okay. I will give you \$400 to go shopping. Try to get a pretty dress."

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A few days before the ball, Madame Loisel was sad and anxious. Her dress was ready, but something was bothering her.

"What's wrong?" her husband asked. "You've been acting so upset."

"I don't have any jewelry to wear to the ball," she said. "I'll look like a poor person. It might be better if I didn't go," she said.

"You could wear flowers," her husband said. "You would look very pretty, and it would only cost \$10 to buy some very nice roses."

Madame Loisel didn't like this idea.

"There is nothing worse than looking poor in front of rich people," she said.

Her husband had an idea.

"I know! Go see your old friend from school, Madame Forestier. Ask her to lend you some jewelry. You were such good friends. I don't think she'd mind."

Madame Loisel looked happy for the first time in days. "That's a good idea!" she said

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The next day, Madame Loisel went to see her friend, Madame Forestier. She told her about the ball and wanting to borrow some jewelry. Madame Forestier brought out a big jewelry box.

"Choose anything you like, my dear," Madame Forestier said.

Madame Loisel had never seen such beautiful jewelry. She tried on many different pieces but couldn't make up her mind. They were all so pretty.

All of a sudden, Madame Loisel saw a black satin box. Inside, there was a diamond necklace. Her hands shook with excitement when she put it around her neck. She had never felt so beautiful. She was afraid to ask to borrow something so expensive.

"May I borrow this?" Madame Loisel asked.

"Of course," said her friend.

Madame Loisel hugged her friend, then ran home with her treasure.

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It was the night of the ball. Madame Loisel had a wonderful night. She was the prettiest woman there. She was **crazy with joy. All the men looked at her and asked her name.** They all wanted to dance with her. Even the Minister of Public Instruction, a very important man, noticed her.

She danced with passion. She forgot all of her unhappiness about her boring life. She finally felt like she was living the life she was supposed to live. She left the party at 4:00am. Her husband had been sleeping in a corner for hours by then along with the other husbands **whose wives were having a good time.**

Her husband put her old, simple coat over her shoulders. Other women wore expensive furs. Madame Loisel wanted to leave before anyone saw her wearing the coat.

"Wait here!" her husband said. "I'll get a cab. You wait here so you don't get cold."

Madame Loisel didn't listen. She ran down the stairs to the street. They couldn't get a cab, so they started walking towards the river in the cold. By the time they got a cab, Madame Loisel was shivering. They got home, and Madame Loisel sadly walked up the steps to

their apartment. Her perfect night was over, and her heart was breaking.

She took off her coat in front of the mirror. She wanted to look at herself in her beautiful dress and beautiful diamond necklace one more time. Suddenly, Madame Loisel shouted.

The necklace was missing.

Madame Loisel and her husband looked everywhere for the necklace, but they didn't find it.

"Are you sure you had it on when you left the ball?" her husband asked.

"Yes. I felt it right before we left," she said.

"It must be in the cab!" her husband said.

"Yes!" she said. "Do you know what the cab number was?"

"No," he said. "Do you?"

"No," she said.

Without the cab number, there was no way to find the cab they had taken. There were hundreds of cabs in Paris every night.

"I'll go back out. I'll retrace our footsteps," her husband said.

Madame Loisel sat down in a chair by the fireplace. She felt sick. She didn't even have the energy to change her clothes, so she just sat there in her ballgown.

At 7:00am, her husband came home. He hadn't found the necklace.

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They tried everything they could think of to get the necklace back. They went to the police to report it missing. They offered a reward. They put an ad in the newspaper. They went to every cab company in the city. They didn't find the necklace.

Madame Loisel felt more worried with each day that went by.

"Write your friend a letter," Madame Loisel's husband said. "Tell her you had to get the clasp fixed before you returned it. That will give us time to figure out what to do."

Madame Loisel sent the letter. Her husband looked five years older from the stress.

After a week, they knew the necklace was gone.

"We have to find a way to replace the necklace," her husband said.

They went to every jewelry store. Finally, they found one that was nearly identical. It cost \$40,000. They made a deal to buy it for \$36,000.

The Loisels had \$18,000 in savings. They would borrow the rest.

To get the money, they borrowed money from anywhere and everywhere. No bank would give them all of the money, so they went to many banks. When they ran out of banks to ask, they made deals with money lenders. The Loisels knew their lives were ruined.

When Madame Loisel finally took the necklace to Madame Forestier, she didn't even open the box.

"You should have brought it back sooner. I might have needed it," Madame Forestier said.

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Madame Loisel learned what it really meant to be poor. For the first time in her life, she stopped wishing for expensive things. There was a debt to pay, and she would pay it. The Loisels fired their maid and moved to a small apartment in a bad neighborhood.

She learned to do housework for herself. She washed the dishes; her soft, pink hands grew hard and brown. She scrubbed the laundry. She took out the waste every morning and brought up water in buckets; there was no indoor plumbing in their apartment. She shopped for groceries and argued with the sellers over every penny.

Every month, the Loisels sat down to pay their bills and felt afraid.

They lived this way for ten years. Finally, all their debts were paid.

Madame Loisel wasn't pretty any more. She looked old and tired. Her skin was rough. Her hands were red. Her clothing was worn and gray. She talked to herself while she scrubbed the floor.

Sometimes she thought about how her life would have been different if she hadn't lost the necklace. She was amazed by how such a small event could change an entire life.

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One Sunday, Madame Loisel went for a walk in the park to take a break from her housework. She saw a woman walking with a little child. It was Madame Forestier. She was still young and beautiful.

Madame Loisel wasn't sure if she should speak to her old friend. Should she tell her about the necklace? Now that it was paid for and over, she decided, why not? She went up to her friend.

"Good day, Jeanne," Madame Loisel said.

Madame Forestier didn't recognize her.

"It's me. Matilde Loisel," Madame Loisel said.

Madame Forestier cried out in surprise.

"Oh, Matilde!" she said. "What happened to you?"

"Life has been hard since the last time I saw you," Madame Loisel said. "And it's all because of you."

"Because of me? How?" Madame Forestier said.

"Do you remember that diamond necklace you loaned me to wear to a ball?" Madame Loisel asked.

"Yes. Why?" Madame Forestier said.

"I lost it," Madame Loisel said.

"You didn't lose it. You brought it back," Madame Forestier said.

"I brought back another one just like it. For the past ten years, we've been paying for it. It hasn't been easy for us, but it's over now. I'm glad," Madame Loisel said.

"You bought another diamond necklace to replace mine?" she said.

"Yes. I'm glad you never noticed. They were almost the same," Madame Loisel said, smiling proudly.

Madame Forestier stopped and looked hard at Madame Loisel.

Madame Forestier took Madame Loisel's hands in her own.

"My dear Matilde!" Madame Forestier said. "Why, my necklace was only paste! A fake! The diamonds were made of glass. It was worth, at most, \$500."

