

# The Necklace

A TWISTED TALE OF GREED, GLAMOUR, AND TRAGEDY

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT; ADAPTED FOR SCOPE BY MACK LEWIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVE CLEGG

MASTERPIECE  
a great work of  
literature

## CHARACTERS

**\*MAUPASSANT** [maw-pah-SAWN]: the narrator  
**\*MADAME MATILDA LOISEL** [lwa-ZEL]: a young woman  
**MAID MARIE-CLAIRE**

**\*MONSIEUR LOISEL:** Matilda's husband  
**\*MARCEL:** the chimney sweep who helps with the narration  
**MADAME FORESTIER**

**MADAME AMBASSADOR**  
**AMBASSADOR**  
**GENTLEMAN**  
**JEWELER**  
*\*Large speaking role*

## CHECK IT OUT AS YOU READ, LOOK FOR:

**The Moral of the Story**  
The lesson to be learned from a story or an experience is called a moral. What is the moral of *The Necklace*?

## SCENE 1

**MAUPASSANT:** Oh, hello there. Or should I say, *bonjour* [bohn-ZHOOR]. After all, we are in Paris. The year is 1875. And this is the home of Madame Matilda Loisel, a young lady as charming as she is discontent. Here she comes now.  
**MATILDA** (*distressed*): Marie-Claire?

Marie-Claire?!

**MAID:** *Oui* [hwee], Madame?

**MATILDA:** Marie-Claire, do try to straighten up before the master gets home. Everything looks so shabby!

**MAID:** But, Madame, you have such a beautiful home.

**MATILDA:** Nothing but faded wallpaper and dilapidated furniture. How it tortures me to live here!

**MAUPASSANT:** As I was saying, Madame is charming. She also has rich tastes.

**MATILDA:** Make it better, Marie-Claire!

**MAID:** Madame?

**MATILDA:** Dust, Marie-Claire! Straighten! Fluff!

**MAID:** Yes, Madame. Right away.

**MAUPASSANT:** Ah, here comes Monsieur Loisel. Madame wishes he were royalty or a wealthy man. He is neither, but tonight, he does have a gift.

**LOISEL:** Dear Matilda, have I got a surprise for you!

**MATILDA:** What's this?

**LOISEL:** An invitation to the Ambassador's Ball. I went to a great deal of trouble to get it.

**MATILDA** (*angry*): What would I want with this?

**LOISEL:** But this is such a big event!

**MATILDA:** What do you think I own that I can wear to such a fancy affair?

**LOISEL:** Why, how about that dress you wear to the theater? It's pretty enough!



TIME LIFE PICTURES/MANSELL/TIME LIFE PICTURES/GETTY IMAGES



Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) is the author of this famous story. His full name is "Henri Renè Albert Guy de Maupassant." Try saying that five times fast!

**MATILDA:** The dress I wear to the theater?! Are you mad?

**LOISEL:** Please don't cry, Matilda. What's wrong?

**MATILDA:** Nothing. Only I can't go. Give the invitation to someone whose wife is better dressed than I.

**LOISEL:** Don't be sad. How much would a new gown cost?

**MATILDA:** Well, I don't know exactly. I should think 400 *francs* [frahns] ought to do it.

**LOISEL:** Very well. I will give you 400 francs. Do try to get a dress you'll be happy with.

**MAUPASSANT:** Poor Loisel. He looks a little pale.

## SCENE 2

**MARCEL:** Wait a minute!

**MAUPASSANT:** This is Marcel, the chimney sweep. Marcel, if Marie-Claire knew you were traipsing around the house covered in soot, she'd wallop you with her dust mop.

**MARCEL:** Dust mop, shmust mop. Now listen, you mean to tell me that Monsieur Loisel is going to empty his savings account and work overtime just so Matilda can buy a new dress?

**MAUPASSANT:** We're already in Scene 2, Marcel, so I suspect he already has.

**MARCEL:** Does he honestly think a new dress will make her happy?

**MAUPASSANT:** Why wouldn't it?

**MARCEL:** Because she—

**MAUPASSANT:** Shhh. *Tais-toi* [tay-twah], Marcel. They're coming.

**MAID:** Oh my, Madame, you look simply beautiful.

**LOISEL:** Stunning, my dear.

Like Matilda, Maupassant was a social climber. His success as a writer propelled him into Paris's high society—where he got ideas for many of his stories, including this one!

Ravishing!

**MATILDA:** Something's not right.

**MAID:** Madame?

**LOISEL:** Not right? What could be wrong?

**MATILDA (crying):** Oh, no. Oh, no! What am I to do?

**LOISEL:** What is it, Matilda?

**MATILDA:** I haven't any jewelry. I shall look so poor!

**LOISEL:** You can wear some flowers!

**MATILDA:** How embarrassing it would be to appear so shabby amidst such opulent women. No, I can't go.

**LOISEL:** Call on your friend, Madame Forestier! She will certainly lend you some jewels.

**MATILDA:** *C'est vrai* [seh vray]! I hadn't thought of that. We must go at once!

## SCENE 3

**MATILDA (to herself):** I do hope Madame Forestier takes pity on me.

**FORESTIER:** Matilda, how nice to see you! What brings you?

**MATILDA:** It seems I've been invited to the Ambassador's Ball. Loisel has gone out of his way to get me an

invitation and buy me a dress.

**FORESTIER:** The Ambassador's Ball! You must be thrilled.

**MATILDA:** Yes . . . and no. I'm ashamed to say I haven't any jewelry. My husband means well, but after all, he's merely a clerk. May I borrow some from you?

**FORESTIER:** Why, of course! Here's my case.

**MATILDA:** *Oh là là* [oo law law]! However will I choose? There are so many wonderful pieces!

**FORESTIER:** Just trinkets, my dear. Choose whatever you wish.

**MAUPASSANT:** Matilda and a case full of jewels? This could take a while, so allow me to advance the story. It seems nothing in the case will satisfy Matilda's tastes—until she discovers the necklace. Her heart skips a beat. Her hands tremble.

**MATILDA:** Would you lend me this diamond necklace? Only this?

**FORESTIER:** Certainly! Now go enjoy the ball.

## SCENE 4

**MARCEL:** So she's going to the ball?

**MAUPASSANT:** She's already there.

**MARCEL:** Wow, look at that! Wealth, power, beauty—it's all here, isn't it? But how did *I* get here?

**MAUPASSANT:** You're not here. You're merely telling the story.

**MARCEL:** I am? Really? Well, then, so Matilda arrives at the ball.

**MADAME AMBASSADOR:** And who is this elegant young lady?

**LOISEL:** Ambassador, Madame Ambassador, I'd like you to meet my wife.

**MADAME AMBASSADOR:** What a radiant smile you have! Come, darling, let me show you around.

**AMBASSADOR:** That's a lovely

lady you have there, young man.

**MARCEL:** So she's a hit!

**MAUPASSANT:** See for yourself.

**GENTLEMAN:** Excuse me. May I have this dance?

**MATILDA:** Certainly!

**GENTLEMAN:** You're the prettiest thing here.

**MATILDA:** You undoubtedly say that to all the women.

**GENTLEMAN:** Only when they are as lovely as you!

**MAUPASSANT:** Matilda spends the evening in a cloud of happiness. It is four in the morning before Loisel can convince her to leave.

**MATILDA:** We must hurry out before someone sees my coat.

**LOISEL:** No one will notice your coat, Matilda.



The *Necklace* was first published in a French newspaper in 1884. It was a hit! Maupassant gained instant fame.



**MATILDA:** It's old and unfashionable. Please, let's hurry.

**LOISEL:** At least let me call a cab. It's chilly out.

**MATILDA:** But we'll be noticed. We can walk down the street. A cab will happen by sooner or later.

**LOISEL:** Very well, if only to keep up appearances.

### SCENE 5

**MARCEL:** I don't see what the big deal is. She goes to the ball. She has a great time. End of story.

**MAUPASSANT:** Not quite, Marcel. There's still a lesson to be learned.

**LOISEL (at home):** I thought we'd never find a cab. I'm still shivering.

**MATILDA:** Oh, but it was worth it. Do you know I waltzed with the Ambassador?

**LOISEL:** I'm glad you enjoyed yourself, but I still have to report to work this morning.

**MATILDA:** Just one more look.

**MAUPASSANT:** That's when Matilda looks into the mirror.

**MATILDA:** The necklace . . . it's gone!

**LOISEL:** What? Did you have it when we left the ball?

**MATILDA:** Yes, I felt it around my neck as we came out.

**LOISEL:** Perhaps it's in the cab.

**MAUPASSANT:** Loisel searches the streets. He goes to the police and to the cab offices.

**MARCEL:** Does he find it?

**MATILDA:** Darling, I'm so glad you're home! Tell me you found it!

**LOISEL (sadly):** Tell your friend you are having the clasp repaired. That will give us time to find a replacement.

### SCENE 6

**MARCEL:** A replacement? They can't afford a replacement. A diamond necklace like that?

**MAUPASSANT:** After a great deal of searching, they finally find a necklace just like it.

**LOISEL:** Excuse me, sir. May we have a look at that diamond necklace?

**JEWELER:** Very well, but if you must know, it is exceptionally expensive.

I cater to a very exclusive clientele.

**MATILDA:** It's nearly identical.

We must have it!

**MAUPASSANT:** Loisel swallows hard and braves the question.

**LOISEL:** How much is it?

**JEWELER:** Forty-thousand francs.

**LOISEL:** Would you consider thirty thousand?

**JEWELER:** As I said, we serve a select clientele.

Today, Maupassant is best known for his dazzling short stories (he penned more than 300!), which often explore human weaknesses. What "weaknesses" does he explore in *The Necklace*?

**MATILDA:** Surely you can see we're desperate.

**JEWELER:** Very well. I will accept thirty-six thousand.

**MAUPASSANT:** They can't begin to afford thirty-six thousand francs. So they borrow the money and then spend 10 years paying it back. They have to fire the maid.

**MARCEL:** Not Marie-Claire! Oh, how I love that old woman!

**MAUPASSANT:** They move to a truly shabby one-room apartment. Loisel gets a second job at night. Matilda takes in work as a washerwoman.

**MARCEL:** They go on like that for 10 years?

**MAUPASSANT:** What else can they do? Not long after making the final payment on their debt, Matilda bumps into Madame Forestier on the street.

**MATILDA:** Madame Forestier, good morning.

**FORESTIER:** Do I know you?

**MATILDA:** It's me, Matilda Loisel.

**FORESTIER:** My poor Matilda! How you've changed.

**MAUPASSANT:** It is true. Ten years of hardship and exhausting work has made Matilda haggard.

**MATILDA:** I've had some toilsome times, and all because of you.

**FORESTIER:** Because of me? Whatever do you mean?

**MATILDA:** Do you recall the diamond necklace you lent me? Well, I lost it.

**FORESTIER:** But you returned it to me.

**MATILDA:** I returned another exactly like it. It has taken us 10 years to pay for it. You can understand how hard



it's been for us to live in poverty for so long, but it is finally finished and I am decently content.

**FORESTIER:** You bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?

**MATILDA:** Yes. They were exactly alike.

**FORESTIER:** Oh, my poor Matilda.

Had you only come to me and told me the truth! My diamonds were fake. They weren't worth but 500 francs!

**MARCEL (after a pause):** Boy, that is a hard lesson.

**MAUPASSANT:** Indeed, Marcel. A lesson for us all. ●

### WRITING PROMPT

#### A Lesson for Us All

At the end of the play, Marcel and Maupassant agree that Matilda learned a hard lesson—and that it is a lesson for everyone. This lesson is the moral of the story. Write a paragraph explaining what the moral of the story is and how it applies to Matilda.