

# Character Analysis of ‘*Mathilde Loisel*’ in the Maupassant’s “*The Necklace*”

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**Abstract**— *The present paper mainly discusses the characterization of Mathilde Loisel in Albert Guy de Maupassant’s “the Necklace” or “The Diamond Necklace”, a short story originally published on February 17, 1884 with an original title: “La Parure”. Story takes place in France, during the 1800s, and focuses on the lives of the Loisel family. During that time period, life was hard for the majority of people, who lived primarily in working-class households. Madame Mathilde Loisel, is a round and dynamic character. As a young, married woman, Madame Loisel is pretty and charming, but her vanity makes her feel entitled to more than what she has. In fact, because of her looks, she believes Fate has made a mistake, that she was destined for more. But her dissatisfaction and vanity lead to her downfall, causing her to lose everything she has, including her youth, beauty, and modest way of life, but at the same time, causing her to grow, accept, and respect herself. Essentially by the end of the story, she came to understand her place in life as a very different person.*

**Keywords**— *Debt, Life, Mathilde, Maupassant, Necklace.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Henri Ren Albert Guy de Maupassant (Aug 5, 1850 - Jul 6, 1893) was a popular French, World famous, short story master, who wrote under the pen name, *Guy de Maupassant*. He is considered as one of the fathers of the modern short story writers as well as one of its finest practitioners. His prolific and deeply admired body of work influenced a great number of writers including William Somerset Maugham, O. Henry, Anton Chekhov, Kate Chopin and Henry James. Maupassant was a famous French critical realism writer in the 19th century, as well and his stories not only have clever layout, but his writings embrace ups and downs, the endings are unexpected, and have a profound social significance. His characters are vivid and vibrant, and dynamically depicted, and the inner world of the characters is profoundly revealed with concise brushwork.

*“The Necklace” or “The Diamond Necklace”* is an 1884 short story and is a representative of Maupassant’s short stories and the classic of the world literature gallery. For more than 100 years since its inception, people have not stopped researching and discussing about it. In particular, the character analysis of the story’s heroine Madame Mathilde Loisel is still a burning topic of evaluation and debate.

*“The Necklace,”* tells the story of Mathilde Loisel, wife of a low-paid clerk of the Ministry of Education, who borrowed a so called diamond necklace from her friend Madame Jeanne Forestier, to show off her charm to everyone in the ball party. Unexpectedly, the necklace was lost on her way home, she had to borrow money to buy a new diamond necklace and return it to her friend. In order to repay the debt, Mathilde worked hard for ten years, moved away from the original apartment, and became an ostentatious woman in the eyes of others. When she finally paid off an enormous debt of 36,000 francs and re-experienced the sunshine of her life, she learned that the necklace she borrowed was a fake necklace worth only five hundred francs. Unexpected and intriguing ending filled us with a strong interest in the inner world of the heroine, Mathilde. Following is the character sketch/analysis of Mathilde Loisel before and after, an event of, losing “The Necklace” happens.

## II. BEFORE THE NECKLACE

Mathilde reside in an era when the British bourgeois revolution in the seventeenth century set off a wave of revolutionary change in Europe. The French First Empire, founded by Napoleon, finally pushed the French bourgeoisie to the historical stage. In particular, the Franco-Prussian War that broke out in 1870 caused the French bourgeoisie to assume a dominant position, and France began the transition to a capitalist society from the primitive accumulation of imperialism. The process of urbanization not only brings advanced production methods and technologies, but also impact old systems and old ideas thus people's life concepts were changing. “Necklace” was created during this period.

At that time, the French government was corrupt, social morality was lost, the splendid life of the upper class and the moral concept of profit-seeking, influenced the various social classes, the vain and the pursuit of pleasure, became the prevailing social atmosphere at that time. People of different classes were trying to succumb to society, dreaming of living aristocratic life to change their status. The following quote--

*"She danced with intoxication, with passion, made drunk by pleasure, forgetting all, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness composed of all this homage, of all this admiration, of all these awakened desires, and of that sense of complete victory which is so sweet to woman's heart."* symbolizes the typical 19th century woman. Which is "Madame Mathilde Loisel herself". As a product of this era, Mathilde's vanity and decaying thoughts have penetrated deep into her heart.

In Mathilde's mind women, who do not have class, wealth, and power, are next to nothing. The beauty, charm, and temptation of women are the tricks that ring the doors of the upper class. She is undoubtedly beautiful and attractive. What she lacks is the opportunity to reach to the upper class. When real life's "housing of the house, the faintness of the walls, the dilapidation of furniture, the ruggedness of clothing" versus "elegant and luxurious life" of the dream, create a huge gap, Mathilde suffers and suffocate. From Mathilde's "dream", we can get a glimpse of it. She "dreams of those quiet halls, decorated with oriental curtains, high-brass bronze lamps, *"She thought of the silent antechambers hung with Oriental tapestry, lit by tall bronze candelabra, and of the two great footmen in knee breeches who sleep in the big armchairs, made drowsy by the heavy warmth of the hot-air stove."* she dreams Those spacious living rooms, where ancient drapes are hung, with delicate woodwork and rare antiques; she dreams of those gorgeous aromas, where she is closest to peoples who chats with the most admired men whom most women admire. She dreams of those beautiful dinners, masterpieces of silver crystals; those hanging on the walls, embroidered Characters in costumes, gardens of wonderland, strange birds; dreams of delicacies inexpensive dishes; dreams of eating pink carp or grouse wings while listening to guests with a charming smile. She is eager to be envied by women and pursued by men. So when her husband gave her an invitation to the ball of the Ministry of Education, she realizes that such an opportunity has come. She might have to turn her dream into reality and become a figure of attraction, whom men admire and woman's envy.

In her heart, Mathilde regarded the ball as the key to opening the door to the upper class, thus, she wanted to show

others, perfect and charming side of her. Now she not only has beautiful clothes, but also a necklace of identity and symbol, because Mathilde has borrowed a string of diamond necklaces from her rich friend, Madame Jeanne Forestier, and opened the door to fate. Mathilde danced to the ball and was enchanted by the praises of men and the envy of women. These are her longings and needs. She wants to be compare with others because she is a beautiful and arresting girl, but her status is not high. Born in an ordinary way, unable to get close to the upper class but this dance made her dull life shine, she succeeded, and her vanity is most satisfied. It is the temptation of Mathilde and the strong vanity of the luxurious life of the upper class that led to the inevitable occurrence of her life tragedy.

### III. AFTER THE NECKLACE-

Story tightly revolve around the necklace, and Mathilde's losing, of the necklace is the central event of the whole story, but also the turning point of her fate and soul. A symbol "fake necklace" is a strong symbol that represents Mathilde's desire to be something that she could not accomplish. The series of actions committed by Mathilde after the loss of the necklace allowed us to re-examine the French girl who loves vanity and advocates extravagant life. In the case of running around and inquiring about lost necklace with no result, Mathilde did not tell her friend that the necklace was lost, but chose to buy another identical diamond necklace to pay back to Madame Jeanne Forestier. Striving for a strong character and strong self-esteem made her rather burdened with huge debts and lost her dignity in front of wealthy classmates. Mathilde "showed heroism at once" and decided to "repay this terrible debt". She dismissed the maid, moved from the residence, rented a small attic to stay. She knew all the cumbersome things in the house and the nasty chores in the kitchen. She brushed the cups and saucers, and the greasy pots with her pink fingers. She washed the shirt with soap, washed the rag, and dried it on the rope. Every morning, she took the rubbish from the upper floor to the street and then the water from the downstairs to the floor. On the upper floor, she stood up and gasped. She wore like a poor woman, carrying a basket on her arm, going to the fruit shop, the grocery store, the meat shop, fighting for the price, over a copper piece, being mocked, tried to Save her hard money. After ten years passed, Mathilde repaid the debt, and she became a sole and hard-working woman of the poor family. Her hair was badly done, her skirts were awry, her hands were red. Speaking into the air and washing the floor with a large bucket of water.

If ten years ago, Mathilde had only knew that she will suffer like this in future, she would've lost the courage

to live, and even died. But ten years later, Mathilde bravely survived and shouldered the burden of life. She became a real hard-working woman. Once she was very beautiful, charming, and adoring. She once dreamed of powerful and luxurious life. Now she is fighting for bronze and copper and understanding the hardships and difficulties of life. After ten years of hard work, she learned to be diligent and thrifty, learned to work hard, become down-to-earth and has a calm mind. She no longer dreams, has no time and energy to grieve for the unfulfilled dreams and the unrealistic life. She became real and courageous, strong and resilient, and found the value and happiness of life in real and ordinary life. So when she met the still young and still beautiful Madame Jeanne Forestier in the park, she did not hesitate, did not leave though she became old and ugly, but greeted her friend happily and confidently. There is no such thing in her as self-sadness and self-deprecation, Madame Loisel was conscious of some emotion. "Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not? She then walked over." How handsome and calm, What a peace of mind. Thanks to the necklace, because this long decade of debt years, Mathilde gained peace of mind and peace, she became real and clear. The cute, courageous, strong and resilient Mathilde's image is now echoing.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The Necklace is an excellent masterpiece that represents a protagonist's materialistic approach towards life and her downfall and rise eventually. There are several symbols in the story as well, these symbols are "a diamond necklace", "a fake necklace", "Madame Mathilde Loisel herself" and "taxi". "taxi" also represents high social status, because in that time only people who had a high social status in society could use a taxi. "How strange life is, how fickle! How little is needed for one to be ruined or saved!" Maupassant wrote this at the end of the story. If there has been no incident of losing the necklace, Mathilde would've immersed in the pain and suffering due to the huge gap between her dreams and reality, for a lifetime; or perhaps became a close friend of a certain high-ranking social man, became a doll of others; or perhaps spent the rest of her life in the dissatisfaction with Mr. Loisel. Life is like a play, and drama is like life. Who can say that the loss of a necklace is a matter for Mathilde, it is not a loss of course, but a blessing in disguise. The hardships of life did not make Mathilde decadent. The material life and poverty made her spiritual world more fulfilling. She recovered the value and happiness of life which is more important than anything else, in this world. Ten years of hardship made Mathilde to ignore the forever lurking

hardships of life, she became confident, optimistic and strong. In fact, the last line "Oh, my poor Mathilde! Why, my necklace was paste. It was worth at most five hundred francs!" might hurt readers occasionally, but not to Mathilde for sure. This may be the tragedy and comedy of life.

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