

The story is set in a Paris atmosphere of social aspiration and discontent. The background is one of studied contrasts, contrasts between the stolid contentment of a husband and the would-be luxuriousness of a wife, between what Madame Loisel had and what she wanted, between what she was and what she thought she could be, between her brief moment of triumph and the long years of her undoing, between the trivialness of what she did and the heaviness of her punishment. These contrasts are developed not by reasoning but by each action plunging Madame Loisel deeper and deeper into misery. The author's attitude toward his work forms also a part of the real background. Maupassant shows neither sympathy nor indignation. He writes as if he were the stenographer of impersonal and pitiless fate.

Plot. Madame Loisel, a poor but beautiful and ambitious woman, borrows and loses a diamond necklace valued at \$7200. That, years, at least, is what Madame Loisel thought for ten terrible years and that is what the reader thinks till he comes to the last words of the story. The plot belongs, therefore, to that large group known as hoax plots. In most of these stories one person plays a joke on another. In this story a grim fate is made to play the joke. In fact, the current phrase, the irony of fate, "finds here perfect illustration. We use the expression not so much of a great misfortune as of a misfortune that seems brought about by a peculiarly malignant train of circumstances. The injury in this case not only was irremediable but turned

stories that he is interested not so much in the free play or the full reaction of personality as in the enslavement of personality through passion or chance. He saw life without order because without center, without reward because without desert; and his characters are made to see it through the same lens and to experience it on the same level. They either do not react or do not react nobly. Had Madame Loisel and her husband been shaped to fit into a less mechanical scheme of things, they would have recognized in their ten years' trial the call to something others . higher. They could have used their testing as a means of understanding with keener sympathy the lifelong testing of They could have attained a self ~ development that would have brought a happiness undreamed of before the fateful January 18. But this is Browning's way, not Maupassant's. The latter prefers to make Madame Loisel and her husband chiefly of putty so that they may illustrate the blind thrusts of accident rather than the power of personality to turn stumbling blocks into stepping-stones ! She was one of those

pretty and charming girls who, as if by a mistake of destiny, are born in a family of employees. She no expectations, no means of becoming known, had no dowry, understood, loved, wedded by any rich and distinguished man ; and so she let herself be married to a petty clerk in the Bureau of Public Instruction. She was Simple in her dress because she could not be elaborate, rank, but she was as unhappy as if she had fallen from a higher for with women there is no inherited distinction of higher and lower. Their beauty, their grace, and their natural charm fill the place of birth and family. Natural delicacy, instinctive elegance, a lively wit, are the ruling forces in the social realm, and these make the daughters of the common people the equals of the finest ladies

She suffered intensely, feeling herself born for all the refinements and luxuries of life. She suffered from the poverty of her home as she looked at the dirty walls, the worn-out chairs, the ugly curtains . All those things of which another woman of her station would have been quite unconscious tortured her and made her indignant . The sight of the country girl who was maid-of-all-work in her humble household filled her almost with She dreamed of echoing halls hung with Oriental draperies and lighted by tall bronze candelabra, while two tall footmen in knee-breeches drowsed in great armchairs by reason of the heating stove's oppressive warmth. She dreamed of splendid parlors furnished in rare old silks, of carved cabinets loaded with priceless bric-a-brac, and of entrancing little bou doirs just right for afternoon chats with bosom friends — men famous and sought after, the envy and the desire of all the other women. ure, When she sat down to dinner at a little table covered with a cloth three days old, and looked across at her husband as he uncovered the soup and exclaimed with an air of rapt Oh, the delicious stew ! I know nothing better than that, she dreamed of dainty dinners, of shining silverware, of tapestries which peopled the walls with antique figures and strange birds in fairy forests ; she dreamed of delicious viands served in wonderful dishes, of whispered gallantries heard with a Sphinx-like smile as you eat the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a quail . She had no dresses, no jewels, nothing ; and She loved nothing else . She felt made for that alone. She was filled with a desire to please, to be envied, to be bewitching and sought after. She had a rich friend, a former schoolmate at the convent, whom she no longer wished to

visit because she suffered so much when For whole days at a time she wept without she came home . ce asing in bitterness and hopeless misery

Now, one evening her husband came home with a triumphant air, holding in his hand a large envelope. " There, said he, there is something for you. She quickly tore open the paper and drew out a printed card, bearing these words The Minister of Public Instruction and Mme. Georges Rameau request the honor of M. and Mme. Loisel's company at the palace of the Ministry, Monday evening, January 18th. expected, Instead of being overcome with delight, as her husband she threw the invitation on the table with disdain, murmuring Why, my dear, What do you wish me to do with that ? I thought you would be pleased. You never go out, and this is such a fine opportunity ! I had awful trouble in getting it . Every one wants to go ; it is very select, and they are not giving many invitations to clerks . You will see all the official world. Why, She looked at him with irritation, and said, impatiently What do you expect me to put on my back if I go ? " He had not thought of that . He stammered the dress you go to the theatre in. It seems all right " to me . crying. He stopped, stupefied, distracted, on seeing that his wife was Two great tears descended slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth. He stuttered : What 's the matter ? What 's the matter calm voice, By a violent effort she subdued her feelings and replied in a as she wiped her wet cheeks : Nothing. Only I have no dress and consequently I cannot go to this ball . Give your invitation to some friend whose wife has better clothes than I . " He was in despair, but began again Let us see, Mathilde. How much would it cost, a suitable

But her husband cried How stupid you are ! Go and find your friend Madame Forestier and ask her to lend-you some jewels. You are intimate enough with her for that . " She uttered a cry of joy. Of course . I had not thought of that . The next day she went to her friend's house and told her distress . Madame Forestier went to her handsome wardrobe, took out a large casket, brought it back, opened it, and said to Madame Loisel : " Oh ! Choose, my dear . ass, hesitated, She saw first of all some bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then a Venetian cross of gold set with precious stones Of wonderful workmanship. She tried on the ornaments before she could not make up her mind to part with them, to give them back. She kept asking You have nothing else ? " Why, yes . But I do not know what will please you. At once she discovered, in a black satin box, a splendid diamond necklace, and

her heart began to beat with boundless desire. Her hands trembled as She took it . She fastened it around her throat, over her high-necked dress, and stood lost in ecstasy as she looked at herself . Then she asked, hesitating, full Of anxiety Would you lend me that, only that ?” certainly. Why, yes, She sprang upon the neck of her friend, e mbraced her rapturously, then fled with her treasure. The day of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a success . She was prettier than all the others, elegant, gracious, smiling, and crazy with joy. All the men stared at her, asked her name,