



**LITERARY  
SHORTS  
ANTHOLOGY**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Literary Shorts*, an anthology of short stories to challenge, entertain and inspire.

The stories have been carefully selected to offer you a wide range of rich reading experiences. With texts from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, by authors from all six continents, you're sure to find plenty to enjoy.

The selection is designed to offer you multiple opportunities to develop your critical, creative and comparative skills. Hence the title of the anthology's accompanying resource pack – *Literary Shorts: Critical, Creative and Comparative Approaches for KS3*. Not only does this contain material to go with each story, but it also offers exciting ways to explore key features of literary texts, such as setting, structure and character. These can be adapted to go with the stories you most want to read and are a fantastic way to develop the analytical skills so crucial to English study as you grow older.

You'll love the stories in this anthology and you'll love what the accompanying resources allow you to do with them.

# THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

## GUY DE MAUPASSANT



**Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893)** was an influential French writer, considered to be one of the godfathers of the modern short story. His work belongs to the 'realist' school of literature, which attempts to show the details of everyday life as closely as possible in writing.

'The Diamond Necklace', first published in 1884, is one of his most liked short stories and is well known for its ending.

She was one of those pretty, charming girls who are sometimes born, as if by an accident of fate, into a family of ordinary workers. She had no dowry, no aspirations, no way of becoming well-known, or understood, or loved, or married to a rich and distinguished man, and so she allowed herself to be married off to a lowly pen pusher from the Ministry of Education.

She had simple tastes, since she couldn't afford any better, and yet she was as miserable as if she had once been a member of the upper classes. For women can get past caste or class, using beauty, grace and charm to get on instead of high birth and a good family. The only way to rank women is by their natural refinement, their instinct for elegance, their quick thinking, and these qualities can make an ordinary woman the equal of the finest lady.

She suffered endlessly, feeling herself to have been born for a life of delicacy and luxury. She hated the poverty of her lodgings, the bare walls,

the worn chairs, the ugly curtains. All these things, which another woman of her class would not even notice, tormented her and made her resentful. The sight of the little Breton girl who did their modest housework brought on bitter disappointment and hopeless dreams. She imagined silent antechambers, lined with Oriental tapestries, lit by bronze candelabras, with two imposing footmen in knee breeches dozing in huge armchairs, overcome by the heavy warmth of the stove. She imagined vast reception rooms hung with antique silks, fine pieces of furniture laden with priceless ornaments, and intimate, perfumed reception rooms made for late afternoon conversations with the closest of friends – famous, sought after men, the ones all women desire and crave the attentions of. ||

When she sat down to dinner opposite her husband, at a round table covered with the same tablecloth they had used for three days in a row, and he lifted the lid from the pot exclaiming delightedly: ‘Stew! Nothing could be better than that!’ she imagined fine meals, gleaming silver cutlery, tapestries on the walls depicting people from times past and strange birds flying in a magical forest. She imagined exquisite dishes, served on beautiful china. She imagined herself receiving whispered gallantries with a sphinx-like smile, while eating the pink flesh of a trout or the wing of a grouse.

She had no fine clothes, no jewels, nothing like that. And yet these were the only things she loved; she was made for them, she felt. She so longed to please, to be envied, to be desired and sought after.

She had a rich friend, an old schoolmate from the convent, whom she no longer wanted to visit because it made her so sad when she returned home. She would cry for whole days with heartache and regret, in despair and misery.

\*\*\*

Then, one evening, her husband came back from work looking pleased with himself and holding a large envelope in his hand. ‘Here you are,’ he said. ‘Something for you.’

She quickly tore into the paper and pulled out a card, which bore these words:

*The Minister of Education and Madame Georges Ramponneau  
request the honour of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel  
at the Ministry on the evening of Monday 18th January.*

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation onto the table resentfully, muttering:

‘What do you want me to do with that?’ **||**

‘But sweetheart, I thought you’d be pleased. You never go out, and this is a wonderful opportunity. I went to a lot of trouble to get this invitation. Everyone wants one; it’s a very select gathering and they aren’t giving out many invitations to ordinary clerks like me. You’ll get to see all the most important people.’

Giving him an angry look, she exclaimed impatiently:

‘And what do you think I could possibly wear to this event?’

He had not thought of that. He stammered:

‘Well, the gown you wear to the theatre. That seems very nice, to me...’

He stopped, confused and at a loss, noticing that his wife was crying. Two huge tears rolled slowly from the corners of her eyes towards the corners of her mouth. He asked:

‘What’s the matter? What’s the matter?’

With a tremendous effort, she got her emotions under control and, wiping away her tears, answered him in a calm voice:

‘Nothing. It’s just that I don’t have anything to wear and so I can’t go to the party. Give the invitation to a colleague whose wife can be better dressed than me.’

He was in despair. He tried again:

‘Let’s see, Mathilde. What would it cost? A decent dress, one you could use for other things afterwards. Something very simple.’

She thought for several seconds, working out how much she would need, but also calculating how much she could ask for without getting an immediate refusal and an exclamation of horror from the clerk, who was careful with his money.

Eventually she replied, hesitantly:

‘I’m not sure exactly, but I think I could manage to find something for four hundred francs.’

His face grew a little pale because that was exactly the amount he was setting aside to treat himself to a gun so that he could join a shooting party next summer on the Nanterre plain, with a group of friends who went there on Sundays to shoot larks.

‘Very well,’ he said. ‘Four hundred francs it is. Just try to get a really beautiful dress.’ 

\*\*\*

The day of the ball drew near and Madame Loisel seemed sad, uneasy, anxious, even though her dress was ready. One evening, her husband said to her:

‘What’s the matter with you? You haven’t been yourself for the last three days.’

And she replied:

‘What’s bothering me is that I don’t have any jewellery to wear, not a single stone. I’ll look as poor as I always do. I’d almost rather not go to the party at all.’

‘You could wear fresh flowers,’ said her husband. ‘They’re very stylish at this time of year. You can get two or three beautiful roses for ten francs.’

She was not at all convinced.

‘No...There’s nothing more humiliating than looking poor when you’re surrounded by rich women.’

But her husband cried:

‘You silly thing! Go and see your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you some jewels. You’re close enough to her to do that.’

She uttered a cry of joy:

‘That’s true! I never thought of that!’

The next day, she went to see her friend and explained the problem. Mme Forestier went to her mirrored wardrobe, took out a large jewellery box, brought it to Mme Loisel, opened it and said:

‘Choose something, dear.’



First she saw bracelets, then a pearl necklace, then an exquisitely made gold Venetian cross studded with gems. She tried on each piece in the mirror, hesitating, not wanting to part with any of them, to give them back. She kept asking:

‘Do you have anything else?’

‘Of course. Have a look. I don’t know what kind of thing you like.’

Suddenly she discovered, in a black satin box, a beautiful string of diamonds; her heart began to beat with an uncontrollable desire. Her hands trembled as she picked it up. She put it on, over her high-necked dress, and was lost in ecstasy at her own reflection.

Then she asked hesitantly, anxiously:

‘Would you lend me this? Just this?’

‘Of course. Definitely.’

She threw her arms around her friend’s neck, gave her a big kiss, and fled with her treasure.

The day of the party arrived. Mme Loisel was a success. She was the prettiest of them all, elegant, gracious, smiling and wildly happy. All the men looked at her, asked her name, wanted to be introduced to her. All the secretaries of state wanted to waltz with her. The Minister noticed her.

She danced as if intoxicated, wildly, drunk with pleasure, forgetting everything except the triumph of her beauty, the glory of her success, in a sort of cloud of happiness created by all the tributes paid to her, all the admiration, by the desire she had aroused, by the complete victory which was so sweet to her woman’s heart.

She left at about four o’ clock in the morning. Her husband had been asleep since midnight in a deserted little room with three other men whose wives were really enjoying themselves.

Over her shoulders he threw the coat he had brought for her to go home in, the modest clothing of her normal life, and the poverty of it contrasted with the elegance of the ball gown. She felt the contrast and wanted to get away, before it could be noticed by the other women, who were wrapping themselves in costly furs.

Loisel held her back:

‘Wait a bit. You’ll catch cold out there. I’ll go and call a cab.’

But she didn’t listen to him and rushed down the stairs. When they reached the street, they couldn’t find a cab; they began searching for one, shouting after drivers they saw going past in the distance.

They went down towards the Seine, desperate and shivering. At last, on the dock, they found one of those ancient, nightprowling cabs that you only see in Paris after dark, as if they were ashamed to show their shabbiness during the day.

It took them to their door on Rue des Martyrs and they walked sadly up to their flat. It was all over for her. And he, meanwhile, was thinking about the fact that he had to be at the office by ten.

She took off the old coat that covered her shoulders in front of the mirror, so as to see herself one more time in her full glory. But she let out a sudden cry. The necklace was no longer around her neck!

Her husband, who was already half undressed, asked:

‘What’s the matter with you?’

She turned towards him in a panic:

‘I... I... I don’t have Mme Forestier’s necklace anymore.’

He stood up, bewildered:

‘What? How? That’s not possible!’

And they searched in the folds of her dress, in the folds of her coat, in the pockets, everywhere. It was not to be found.

He asked:

‘Are you sure you still had it when we left the ball?’

‘Yes, I touched it in the hall at the Ministry.’

‘But if you’d lost it in the street, we would have heard it fall. It must be in the cab.’

‘Yes, that seems likely. Did you take the cab’s number?’

‘No. How about you? Did you notice it?’

‘No.’

They looked at each other, horrified. Eventually, Loisel got dressed again.

‘I’ll go,’ he said. ‘I’ll retrace our steps and see if I can find it.’

And he went out. She stayed in her evening gown, without the strength to take herself to bed, collapsed on a chair, no fire, unable to think.

Her husband came back seven hours later. He had found nothing.

He went to the police station, to the newspapers to offer a reward, to the cab companies, in fact anywhere that seemed to him to offer the tiniest ray of hope.

She waited all day, in the same state of bewilderment at this terrible disaster.

Loisel, his face hollow and pale, returned that evening having found nothing.

‘You must,’ he said, ‘write to your friend and say that you’ve broken the clasp and we’re getting it repaired. That will buy us some time.’

She wrote what he dictated.

\*\*\*

By the end of the week, they had completely lost hope.

And Loisel, who had aged five years, declared:

‘We must find a way to replace the necklace.’

The next day, they took the box that had held the necklace, and went to the jeweller’s whose name was inside. He looked in his books:

‘It wasn’t me who sold this necklace madame, I only supplied the clasp.’

So they went from jeweller to jeweller, searching for an identical necklace, trying to remember it accurately, both of them sick with worry and grief.

They found a diamond necklace which seemed to them to be exactly the same as the one they had lost in a shop at Palais Royal. It was priced at forty thousand francs. They could have it for thirty-six thousand.

They begged the jeweller not to sell it to anyone for three days. And they made a deal with him that he would buy this one back from them for thirty-four thousand, if they found the one they had lost before the end of February.

Loisel had eighteen thousand francs left to him by his father. He would have to borrow the rest.

So he borrowed, asking for a thousand francs from one person, five hundred from another, five Louis here, three Louis there. He signed promissory notes, entered into ruinous agreements, did business with usurers and every kind of lender. He mortgaged the rest of his life, risked his signature without any idea whether he would be able to repay, and, afraid of the trouble that lay ahead, of the black misery he was bringing down upon himself, of the prospect of physical deprivation and moral torment, he went to get the new string of diamonds, and to place thirty-six thousand francs on the jeweller's counter. ||

When Mme Loisel returned the necklace, Mme Forestier said, in a rather resentful way:

‘You really should’ve given it back to me sooner. I might have needed it.’

She didn’t open the box, something her friend had worried about. If she’d noticed that it was a replacement, what would she have thought? What would she have said? Would she have taken her for a thief?

\*\*\*

Madame Loisel came to know the hard life of the needy. Unexpectedly, however, she made up her mind to play her part heroically. The terrible debt had to be paid. And pay it she would. They dismissed the maid, changed lodgings, rented an attic room.

She came to know what it meant to do heavy housework and hateful kitchen jobs. She washed up, wearing out her pink nails scrubbing the greasy crockery and the bottoms of pans. She did the dirty laundry, the shirts and the dishcloths and dried them on the line; she took the rubbish down to the street every morning and brought up the water, stopping on each landing to catch her breath. And, dressed as the poor woman she now was, she went to the fruit shop, the butcher, the grocer, a basket on her arm, haggling, insulted, hanging onto every wretched penny.

Each month they paid off some debts and renewed others to give them more time.

The husband worked in the evenings, keeping the accounts for a shopkeeper and often, at night, he did copy work for five pennies a page.

And this life lasted for ten years.

At the end of ten years, everything was paid off, everything, including the usurer's charges and the accumulated interest.

Mme Loisel seemed to have aged, now. She had become one of those tough and hard and coarse women who come from a poor household. Her hair was badly styled, her skirts awry, her hands reddened, she talked loudly, sloshing the water over the floorboards as she washed them. But every now and then, when her husband was at the office, she sat by the window and she day-dreamed about that evening long ago, and the ball where she had been so beautiful and so much admired.

What might have happened if she had never lost the necklace? Who knows? Who knows? How strange life is, how unpredictable! How little it takes to ruin you, or to save you!

\*\*\*

Then one Sunday she was taking a walk along the Champs-Elysee to relax after a week of hard work, when she suddenly caught sight of a woman who was walking with a child. It was Mme Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still attractive.

Mme Loisel felt emotional. Should she speak to her? Yes, of course she should. And now that everything was paid off, she could tell her all about it. Why not?

She went nearer.

'Hello, Jeanne.'

Her friend did not recognise her and was surprised at being spoken to in such a familiar way by this lower class woman. She stammered:

'But... madame! I don't know... you must be mistaken.'

'No. I'm Mathilde Loisel.'

Her friend gave a cry.

‘Oh!... Poor Mathilde, you’ve changed so much!’

‘Yes, I’ve had some hard times since I last saw you; and more than my share of trouble... and all because of you!’

‘Because of me... How come?’

‘You remember that beautiful string of diamonds you lent me for the Ministry ball?’

‘Yes. And?’

‘And, I lost it.’

‘What! But you gave it back to me.’

‘I gave you another one exactly like it. And we’ve been paying for it for the last ten years. You have to understand that it hasn’t been easy, we had nothing you know... But it’s finally over, I’m very glad to say.’

Mme Forestier had stopped.

‘You’re saying that you bought a string of diamonds to replace mine?’

‘Yes. You’ve never noticed? They were very similar.’

And she smiled with a happiness that was proud and innocent.

Mme Forestier, deeply moved, took her by both hands.

‘Oh! My poor Mathilde! Mine was fake. It was worth five hundred francs at the most!...’