

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Guy de Maupassant's

The Necklace

adapted by

JAY REID GOULD

from the short story



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

**"Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois"**

**© MCMLXIX by
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**

**Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(THE NECKLACE)**

ISBN 0-87129-853-8

THE NECKLACE
A Play in One Act
For One Man and Three Women

CHARACTERS

MATHILDE LOISEL *a young woman*
EMILIE *her maid*
HENRI LOISEL *Mathilde's husband*
JEANNE FORESTIER *a friend of Mathilde*

PLACE: *The apartment of Mathilde and Henri
Loisel in Paris.*

TIME: *Around 1890.*

SCENE I: the Loisel apartment, late afternoon.

SCENE II: the apartment, several days later,
late at night.

SCENE III: the apartment, ten years later.

The furniture and properties should be simple and should be used throughout with a few changes of accessories.

Costumes should give the impression of the times without being absolutely accurate. Long skirts and large hats should be worn by the women.

Scene 1

SCENE: The apartment of Mathilde and Henri Loisel in a middle-class section of Paris. The time is around 1890, in the late afternoon. The apartment is furnished simply. At LC is a square table on which is a bell. Against the wall, L, is a serving table or buffet, and just above that, a door going into the kitchen. Three straight chairs line the rear wall L. In the rear wall also, near R, is a door going into the hall. At RC is an easy chair, with a small table beside it. Part of the wall should have some decorative fabric on it, and there should be a few pictures with ornate frames.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: MATHILDE LOISEL is on stage. Mathilde is in her twenties. She is dressed in a simple, long period dress in some light shade. She is fussing around the chair with a feather duster in her hand.)

MATHILDE (calling out). Emilie!

(From stage L enters EMILIE, a young servant girl. She is healthy-looking and is wearing a dark working dress with a white apron.)

EMILIE. Madame?

MATHILDE. Take this, please. Empty it. (She hands an ash tray to EMILIE.) I cleaned it this

morning, but M'sieu has used it since. It's really too bad. I told him Mme. Forestier would be here this afternoon.

EMILIE. Yes, Madame. (She turns to leave.)

MATHILDE. Oh, Emilie. (EMILIE turns back.)
See if you can find the long tablecloth.

EMILIE. The brocaded one, Madame?

MATHILDE. It's the only one we have. Hurry, please. I don't know why we are so far behind.

EMILIE. We don't entertain often, Madame.

MATHILDE. I would entertain every day--if we had the means. (She sighs.) Hurry.

(EMILIE goes off L. MATHILDE goes to the serving table and fusses among the dishes assembled there.)

(EMILIE returns almost immediately and takes the emptied ash tray R, then puts the cloth on the table. It should reach almost to the floor.)

MATHILDE. Now put two chairs at the table. I shall sit here--(Indicating left of the table.)-- Mme. Forestier shall sit behind the table. Or should it be the other way?

EMILIE. It seems right, Madame.

MATHILDE. I'm afraid, my dear Emilie, you don't have much feeling for what is appropriate.

EMILIE. No, Madame.

(MATHILDE crosses to the chair R and sits.)

MATHILDE. Now, please set the table. I wish I had the correct wine service.

EMILIE (carrying dishes to the square table). This set is very pretty. You haven't used them much since you married.

MATHILDE. Most inappropriate. It should be crystal. Mme. Forestier uses nothing but crystal and silver.

EMILIE. Mme. Forestier won't care. She's an old friend of yours.

MATHILDE. Mme. Forestier hasn't seen me since M'sieu Henri and I were married.

EMILIE (busily setting the table). Mme. Forestier didn't know where you lived.

MATHILDE (rising). I would not tell her.

EMILIE. Are you ashamed, Madame?

MATHILDE. I'm ashamed of the way I live. We should be in better surroundings. Nothing is new. Old draperies, old pictures, old furniture. Everything is old. Our four-poster bed creaks like an old ship.

EMILIE. I like old things, Madame.

MATHILDE. So would I, if they were old enough. (Looking at the table.) No, I don't like that. Put the wine glasses over there. Mme. Forestier will sit opposite M'sieu--if he should arrive in time. (Impatiently.) Here I am trying to have things nice--and I don't know if my own husband will be here.

EMILIE (at the table). M'sieu Henri will be here, Madame. He is always punctual.

MATHILDE. Perhaps it would be better if he weren't. So gauche, so awkward . . .

EMILIE. Mme. Forestier, she must be remarkable.

MATHILDE. Remarkably rich. . . . Perhaps you wonder how I should know her. Convent school, Emilie, is a great leveler. All classes of people are sent to convent school. To improve themselves--to acquire the graces for a successful life. Perhaps even you went.

EMILIE. Oh, no, Madame. I went to school in my village of Clermont. My parents couldn't afford convent school. They wouldn't have thought it right.

MATHILDE (looking sharply at EMILIE to see if she is being impertinent). My parents couldn't afford to send me--but they did. There I met Jeanne Simone, the prettiest girl in class--the best dressed. Her life was surrounded by luxuries. Perhaps that's why she fancied me--another luxury.

EMILIE. Oh, Madame! You have a happy life.

MATHILDE. I suppose. (She lifts her arms wide.) Don't you yearn for the better things of life, Emilie?

EMILIE. I yearn for what I can get. Madame.

MATHILDE. You must have come to Paris to better yourself.

EMILIE. I came to Paris to earn money--I'll go back to Clermont with a dowry.

MATHILDE. And marry some awkward young man.

EMILIE. Oh, I have him picked out, Madame. He is awkward, but the best cowherd in the countryside. My dowry will help to build us a small cottage on my father's farm.

MATHILDE (rather sarcastically). And you shall live happily ever after.

EMILIE. Sometimes happy, sometimes not. But we will live as we were intended to live. Whatever it is, it will be God's will.

MATHILDE. Oh, Emilie, I wish I had your nature. Then I would think this a palace. (She looks around with an expression of disgust.) But it's not . . . Mme. Forestier will be here any moment. Is everything ready?

EMILIE. Yes, Madame. (She listens.) I believe that M'sieu Henri has arrived.

(In comes HENRI LOISEL through the rear doorway. He is a young civil servant in his thirties, dressed in somber dark clothes. He stands in the doorway. He carries a folded newspaper.)

HENRI. Oh, my dear. How nice everything looks. (He attempts to kiss MATHILDE, who presents only her cheek to him.)

MATHILDE. Emilie, you may leave. Answer the door when Mme. Forestier arrives. (EMILIE goes out L. HENRI starts to unfold his paper.) Henri, please. Don't start reading now.

Jeanne will be here any moment. Wait until Jeanne gets here before you smoke. And please don't soil the ashtray. We've just cleaned.

HENRI. What a fuss you're making.

MATHILDE. I can't seem to explain it. Jeanne is used to only the best.

HENRI. This looks good to me. See how we are going up in the world. We even have a maid.

MATHILDE. If that is what you would call her.

HENRI. You're not satisfied?

MATHILDE. Oh, I suppose. Anyone can see she's right off the farm.

HENRI. I'm sorry that she doesn't please you. I told you an apprentice maid was all we could afford.

MATHILDE. Well, I wish she didn't have to learn at our expense.

HENRI (at the table; lifting the cover of a dish).
What have we here? Rhum baba. How lovely. It's one of my favorite dishes. Did you make it?

MATHILDE. How ridiculous! You know I can't make anything complicated.

HENRI. Are we to thank Emilie for this?

MATHILDE. I doubt that rhum baba is a favorite dish where Emilie comes from. No, I bought it at the pâtisserie on Rue St. Celeste.

HENRI. Ah, expensive.

MATHILDE. Must we always think of expense, Henri?

HENRI. Not you, my dear, but it's something I must think of constantly. (He sits in chair R and starts to glance at his paper.)

MATHILDE. Henri, please.

HENRI. Sorry, dear. But a man expects some comfort when he comes home.

MATHILDE. A man should earn such comforts.

HENRI. I feel it distresses you I'm only a clerk in the Ministry of Information.

MATHILDE. Doesn't it distress you?

HENRI. Some day I shall be a supervisor.

MATHILDE. Some day! Some day! In five years you'll be earning a few more hundred francs a year. We might even have a week's vacation at some cheap resort in Brittany.

HENRI. That would content me.

MATHILDE (vehemently). Content you! Henri, don't you have any ambition? To be anyone in Paris, you must rise above the crowd. But you! . . . Content to stay as you are. A clerk in a second-rate government office. (She turns away.)

HENRI (hurt to the quick). I was good enough for you when we married.

MATHILDE. Good enough for my father! I was just out of convent school with dreams----

HENRI (breaking in). Dreams! Dreams of what?

MATHILDE. A better life. I was brought up in an apartment just like this. You've seen it enough times. An old, musty apartment--the same furnishings, same pictures--the same kind of street. Somewhere there must be something better!

HENRI. You found something better in convent school?

MATHILDE. Convent school was dull, dismal, far removed from the world. I found nothing.

HENRI. You found Jeanne Forestier. She turned your head with her money and gave you ideas far above your station in life. Jeanne Forestier spoiled you.

MATHILDE. Jeanne Forestier gave me dreams. . . dreams of fine houses, carriages, grand parties---

HENRI. You'd have been better off if you'd never known Jeanne Forestier.

MATHILDE. How can you say that! The only things I have ever seen have been through Jeanne's eyes. She would go home for several days and then come back and describe everything. Drawing rooms filled with romantic, intelligent men and women. Authors, actresses, statesmen. Handsome men, beautiful women. Clothes--furs, exquisite gowns, jewelry. How I love jewelry. Now--this dingy apartment. Sitting here all day----

HENRI. You sit here all day eaten with envy. You should be thankful. You even have a maid.

MATHILDE. A maid whose life ambition is to earn a dowry.

HENRI. Don't scoff at a dowry! What did you bring me? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! You should be thankful you found a clerk who would marry you for yourself. . . . I did love you, Mathilde, I still do. (Then he grows angry again.) But I'm tired of your pretensions!

MATHILDE (breaking into tears). I'm tired of my frustrations. (She sits in a chair and weeps. HENRI looks at her, then approaches her.)

HENRI. I'm a bully and a monster! This was to be a happy day for you and I've spoiled it. Forgive me, Mathilde. Forgive me.

MATHILDE. Forgive me a little, Henri. I know you do your best. . . . Oh, it is so late. Please, please change your coat and see if Emilie has the wine ready. (HENRI leans down, wipes her eyes with his handkerchief which he gives her, and then kisses her. He goes off L.)

(MATHILDE rings the bell. In comes EMILIE.)

MATHILDE. M'sieu will help you with the wine. Be sure it's the proper temperature.

(At that moment the outside bell rings. MATHILDE and EMILIE exchange looks. MATHILDE pats her hair into shape and wipes her eyes, then nods to EMILIE. EMILIE goes out R. In a moment JEANNE FORESTIER enters. She is the same age as Mathilde. She is dressed in

quiet elegance and has the composure of one accustomed to wealth. During the scene, JEANNE is slightly amused by her friend's presumptions, while MATHILDE shows her uneasiness by trying too hard. EMILIE ushers JEANNE in and stands in the background, fascinated by her.)

JEANNE. Oh, my dear, dear Mathilde!

MATHILDE. Darling Jeanne. How I've missed you! (They embrace in stage C. MATHILDE turns to EMILIE.) Take Madame Forestier's things. (EMILIE comes out of her trance-like state and attempts to remove Jeanne's handbag.)

JEANNE. (to MATHILDE).

Darling, if you don't mind, I'll keep it with me. (MATHILDE motions to EMILIE, who goes off stage R.) Oh, it's so good to see you. And, please, I do hope you haven't made any special preparations.

MATHILDE. After all the years we've known each other, of course not. Jeanne, dear, do please sit over here. (She motions to dining chair at left. JEANNE sits in it.)

JEANNE. How lucky I found you again. We've been apart far too long.

MATHILDE. Your way of life must be quite different from mine.

JEANNE. Not really. We're both wives with houses to care for.

MATHILDE. Mine can scarcely be dignified by the

name of house.

JEANNE. But so intimate--so cozy. Any children yet, dear Mathilde?

MATHILDE. I can't bear to think about it. Henri would love to have a boy--or a girl--it makes little difference to him. . . . But how can one be active, going to parties and musicals when one has children?

JEANNE. I manage somehow, dear Mathilde.

MATHILDE. With a governess, no doubt.

JEANNE (changing the subject). But it's been so long since we met. When I found that I was to be in the neighborhood, I told Philippe I must see you.

MATHILDE. But how did you find us? We haven't been at all social since our wedding.

JEANNE. I remembered your husband was in the civil service. Philippe knows everyone. He found out easily enough.

(HENRI comes in from R. He is wearing another coat. He stands a bit awkwardly and coughs delicately.)

MATHILDE. Jeanne, dear, may I present my husband Henri?

JEANNE. I am enchanted. Henri. (To MATHILDE.) I really must have your husband meet Philippe.

MATHILDE. Henri, will you see what is happening to Emilie? (HENRI makes a bow to