



Read Rhyme Repeat

The Necklace

Theater Adaptation
by Jill Craddock

The Necklace
Rhyming Reader's Theater Adaptation by Jill Craddock

Characters

M. LOISEL, husband

MME. LOISEL, wife

MME. FORESTIER, friend of wife/NARRATOR

M. LOISEL

My dear, you are a sight to behold. You don't belong here.
You belong under a crystal chandelier.
How did I ever get so lucky?

MME. LOISEL

My family had no money.
You were willing to have me without any dowry.

M. LOISEL

Still, my dear, I can't believe you ever married me.

MME. LOISEL

But now I smell ennui in the air.
Darling, take me to the chocolatier, just over there.

NARRATOR

If chocolate she wants, then chocolate it shall be.
Although a stretch for her husband's clerk salary.

MME. LOISEL

(Sighs)

Oh, my. A bit of chocolate shouldn't even be a treat.
Yet the smallest bite is a month's worth of luxury.

M. LOISEL

No matter what, you know I love you, and I do my best for you.
Try to remember that by some standards, we are well-to-do.
We have a home of our own and a girl to help with housework.
Viewed from her eyes, our lives have infinite perks.

MME. LOISEL

Infinite perks? Husband, I know you mean well.
"Infinite" to me is not chocolate: more like gowns by Chanel.

M. LOISEL

Yes, dear, I understand.

MME. LOISEL

And, darling, our space is so small. We must expand.
Our drapes are drab. The walls are thin.
The chairs are embarrassing to look at—even worse to sit in.

M. LOISEL

Those are goals to achieve at a certain pace.

MME. LOISEL

Never mind. There's no point. I'll never be proud of our place.
I know it hurts you, and it hurts me too,
But remember you chose me. I didn't choose you.

NARRATOR

She's beautiful, but mean.
Why does she need the life of a queen?

MME. LOISEL

I'm stuck eating stew on the same worn cloth for days.
My life is gray. It's a dull, dusty haze.

NARRATOR

What would do for you, just for argument's sake?

MME. LOISEL

Tea and chocolates at four every day.
Enough for a stomach ache.

M. LOISEL

Call over some friends then. Tea is cheap.

MME. LOISEL

I would if we had walls with proper tapestries.
If our home was scented with oils, and was not so dank, then I wouldn't be—

NARRATOR

Embarrassed by her husband's rank.

MME. LOISEL

Well, there's nothing to do.
It's not as though we can buy a curio or two.

M. LOISEL

What's a curio?

MME. LOISEL

You don't know. And that's the trouble with you.

M. LOISEL

I'll find out. I'll get it if you desire it.

MME. LOISEL

There's no point. We haven't room in this pigsty if we did acquire it.
Not even space for guests to admire the ornaments arrayed inside it.

(She sighs.)

Oh, husband. I'm actually listening to the words I speak.
What is it you like about me?

NARRATOR

She is so very pretty.

MME. LOISEL

I suppose that's something to make up for a ragged wardrobe.
Something to inspire a richer woman's envy.

M. LOISEL

Easily.
Speaking of rich ladies, what about Mme. Forestier?
How is she keeping these days?

MME. LOISEL

I haven't seen her of late.
She's redecorating her second estate.
She and I just don't relate.

M. LOISEL

What a shame.

MME. LOISEL

Indeed. I enjoyed having her for a friend.

M. LOISEL

Then why not go see her? She's your true supporter.

MME. LOISEL

Because I don't like to pretend.
Pretend I am happy for me and happy for her.
Looking at all her riches, which would fulfill my every wish,
Gives me only grief and a heart full of anguish.

M. LOISEL

Well, this will improve your mood.
This came today. It's very good news.
It's a very exclusive event hosted by my superiors.
I—we—have been honored with an invitation.

MME. LOISEL

Oh! If I have nothing to wear, there's hardly cause for celebration.

NARRATOR

They only select the top three employees from the entire Department of Education.
It's a great honor.

M. LOISEL

Wear your theater dress. It's not the Queen's coronation.

MME. LOISEL

A theater dress is fitting for someone of a lowly station.
They should give the honor to someone who can dress properly for the occasion.

M. LOISEL

You look lovely in your theater dress. What could be wrong with that?

MME. LOISEL

An affair of this stature requires an evening gown.
I can't wear my frumpy theater frock into town.

M. LOISEL

Well, how much does a... simple... evening gown cost?

MME. LOISEL

Four hundred would do.

M. LOISEL

I'll give it to you.

NARRATOR

And count his vacation time lost.

MME. LOISEL

Thank you husband! Now this inspires me.
I'll come back and show you what I find.

M. LOISEL

Very good, then, wife of mine.

(Mme. Loisel leaves.)

M. LOISEL

I've got a weakness for her face, her hair, her derrière.
But this invitation to the ball doesn't mean I'm well-to-do.
Better than that, it means I'm good at what I do.
For fifteen years, I've had the same job, day in and out.
She doesn't have any idea of my life when I leave the house.

NARRATOR

Every year, when the boss hosts this soiree, "Let me be picked," M. Loisel prays.
Finally, today is the day. But his beautiful wife acts as if it's all created for her display.
Colleagues will envy him such recognition as this. Which, for him, is perfect bliss.
Explaining that to his wife, of course, is useless.

M. LOISEL

I've kept her picture on my desk for passersby to fancy.
And they sometimes wonder aloud what she is doing with a schlub like me.
You know, I say, "I just got lucky."
And I work every day trying to make her happy.

MME. LOISEL

I'm back! Look at me. Look at me! Husband, what do you see?

M. LOISEL

You're breathtaking. Stunning. It's almost too much for me.

MME. LOISEL

It's a trick question. I'll ask you again. Look at me! Look at me!
What is it that you don't see?

M. LOISEL

I don't understand. Are you all right?

MME. LOISEL

No. I'm humiliated, and the party is tomorrow night.

M. LOISEL

What in the world could be the matter? Look at your exquisite new dress!

MME. LOISEL

Without ornament, it's nearly worthless.

M. LOISEL

Ornament?

MME. LOISEL

Some stones, a few jewels, a broach, a necklace.
Something to accentuate the elegance.

M. LOISEL

What about a flower to weave in your beautiful tresses?

MME. LOISEL

I'll look like a pitiful pauper with those other women in their jewelry and dresses.

M. LOISEL

Why don't you visit you Mme. Forestier?
She'd let you borrow a piece of jewelry, I daresay.

NARRATOR

Mademoiselle Forestier has quite the collection of gems.

M. LOISEL

She's your friend.
She wouldn't mind if you had a look at them.

MME. LOISEL

It makes me feel so shameful.
I just don't know. But I haven't a choice.
Very well. I'll go.

(She exits.)

M. LOISEL

If she found the Hope Diamond, she'd say it didn't fit.

(Mme. Loisel enters Mme. Forestier's sitting room.)

MME. FORESTIER

Mathilde, thank you for coming to see me.
I often reminisce about our schooling at that dreadful nunnery.
I just got this new brocade love seat.
Allow me to offer you something to eat.

MME. LOISEL

Oh, my stomach is in knots.
I don't think I could swallow a bite.
We are going to a grand ball tomorrow night,
But I'm in a sorry plight.

MME. FORESTIER

Whatever on earth are you trying to say?
With your beauty, I can't imagine you could feel that way.

MME. LOISEL

Well, I did just buy a gown, but it's so simple.
I'm embarrassed to wear it in town.
I need your... advice.

MME. FORESTIER

Embarrassed, my dear? Whatever for?
Just dress it with jewels and no one will guess that you're—

NARRATOR

Poor.

MME. FORESTIER

Oh! Of course.
Silly woman, look here.
Don't think twice. Borrow whatever you like.
I've one necklace in mind that will look sublime.

MME. LOISEL

You're so awfully kind.
You always could read my mind.

MME. FORESTIER

I had to. Those nuns never let us speak!
Just take the necklace and have fun.
You'll get it back to me by the end of the week.

MME. LOISEL

Thank you, my friend.

MME. FORESTIER

Have fun at your ball.
Please visit more often.
You need no reason to call.

(M. and Mme. Loisel enter the ballroom.)

M. LOISEL

I love your smile. You are the most gracious and beautiful prize.
My heart is filled with joy. Everyone is staring! Lower your eyes.

MME. LOISEL

I know. I know! It's all a dream come true.
Thank you for bringing me to the dance with you.

M. LOISEL

The president of the company asked if he could have you for a dance.
It's the first time he has spoken to me.
He never talks to me! I might have a chance.

MME. LOISEL

Chance at what, dear?

M. LOISEL

A promotion. A raise.
A chance to do something new with my days.
You go dance, keep it up, this is the life!
We can stay as long as you like, my trophy of a wife.

(Hours pass.)

MME. LOISEL

This is a dream, but we've been long enough.
I'm ready to go.

M. LOISEL

If you say so.
It's gotten quite cold.
Let me help you into your coat.

MME. LOISEL

That coat isn't mine!
It looks like it has fleas.
My coat must be missing.
Hail me a carriage or cab.

NARRATOR

The coat was hers, but she'd prefer to freeze than be seen looking so drab.

(The Loiseles enter their home.)

M. LOISEL

At work on Monday, I expect I will get a call.

MME. LOISEL

Darling, I'm just so pleased we went out at all. I can't remember feeling so— Oh!

M. LOISEL

What's wrong?

NARRATOR

The necklace was gone.

M. LOISEL

That can't be.

Did you have it on when you left the party?

MME. LOISEL

Yes, I touched it for luck, on my way out.

This can't be true. What in the world will we ever do?

M. LOISEL

You must have lost it in the cab—or since.

I'll retrace our steps from the front door.

MME. LOISEL

I haven't the strength to move off the floor.

Why did I think I belonged in that dress,

Much less in that elegant diamond necklace?

For one perfect night, my life was what I wanted it to be.

Now I have to pay the price for what was never meant for me.

M. LOISEL

(Reenters)

I had no luck.

You'll have to write a letter to your friend.

Tell her the clasp is out for a mend,

Because... the clasp is stuck.

It will buy us time to consider our amends.

MME. LOISEL

I can do that, but listen carefully.

I know this will cause you great anxiety.

I saw an identical piece.

But the cost is quite high, to say the least.

M. LOISEL

Just say it.

MME. LOISEL

Forty thousand. But we might get a good deal.

NARRATOR

There could be no good deal, unless they wanted to steal.

MME. LOISEL

Steal?

M. LOISEL

I won't, but the thought crossed my mind.
Forty thousand will be the life of me—of us—to find.

MME. LOISEL

How ever will we do it?

M. LOISEL

About half, I've inherited. The rest I will borrow from random—

NARRATOR

Associates.

MME. LOISEL

Associates? Such as whom?

NARRATOR

Usurers. Money-lenders. Loan sharks.

MME. LOISEL

I'm frightened.

NARRATOR

She should be. It will be a long way out.

M. LOISEL

Dismiss our maid and pack our things.
We'll have to move to someone's attic and live in the underwing.
This debt will never be paid by the paltry wages of a clerk.
My beautiful wife, get yourself ready to work.

MME. LOISEL

Whatever it takes to get through this, I'll do.
Housework and cooking, dishes and linens,
I personally will do for us, as penance.

M. LOISEL

"For us?" That's just a start.
You must work for others to do your part.

NARRATOR

Her pretty pink nails will be covered in grease.
Her smooth skin will soon begin to crease.

MME. LOISEL

I will work morning 'til night.

NARRATOR

I'm glad to see she is so very brave.

MME. LOISEL

It is my fault. I'll not give up the fight.

M. LOISEL

It was an accident.
As for me, I'll work two extra jobs to help us save.

MME. LOISEL

Thank you for not being angry with me.

M. LOISEL

Nothing can change what our lives are going to be.
You are my beautiful wife, and I will love you all of your life.

MME. LOISEL

I'll work as hard

NARRATOR

And long

MME. LOISEL

As I need to pay for this grief and strife.

NARRATOR

Their attic rooms are shabby, with furnishings much mended. But still...

MME. LOISEL

I'm home. Thank goodness this day has ended.

M. LOISEL

You are beautiful.

MME. LOISEL

My hair is untended.

M. LOISEL

I love you.

MME. LOISEL

My hands are like eggplants, and my skirts are askew.

M. LOISEL

None of that matters. I'm just happy to see you.

MME. LOISEL

And I, to see you.

M. LOISEL

Take a deep breath. Today is the day.
Nine years, nine months ... and
Our debt is out of the way.

MME. LOISEL

Today?

M. LOISEL

Today.

MME. LOISEL

It's been paid?

M. LOISEL

It's paid.

MME. LOISEL

I don't know what to say.

M. LOISEL

Go pick one of your jobs and walk away.

MME. LOISEL

I can quit?

M. LOISEL

Yes. Go.

MME. LOISEL

You're sure it's all right?

M. LOISEL

Go!

NARRATOR

She never felt so light!

MME. LOISEL

(On the street)

Mme. Forestier, I have thought about you so many times.
To see you on this day must surely be a sign.

MME. FORESTIER

I'm sorry, madame. You've made a mistake.
I don't know you. We've never met.

MME. LOISEL

Oh, yes, we have. It is our last meeting I hold in deep regret.
Yet, as of today, that story is something I may now forget.

MME. FORESTIER

I'm afraid I haven't a clue.
Please remind me, woman, who are you?

MME. LOISEL

I'm Mathilde Loisel.

MME. FORESTIER

Mathilde? My old friend? But you look so haggard; your face is so lined.
What has happened to you? Have you been the victim of a crime?

MME. LOISEL

I've had some misfortune, and my beauty has gone.
Believe it or not, it's all because I did you wrong.

MME. FORESTIER

That can't be true.
How can that be?

MME. LOISEL

Remember that exquisite diamond necklace you lent me?
Well, I lost it.
We've worked our fingers to the bone to replace it.

MME. FORESTIER

You lost it?
But you returned it.

MME. LOISEL

I returned a replacement.
I brought you another, just like the one you lent me.
It wasn't easy for us, with barely any money.

MME. FORESTIER

You bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?

MME. LOISEL

Ten years went by and you never noticed?
I knew I found the perfect matching design!

MME. FORESTIER

Oh, my poor friend. My heart just aches.
The necklace I lent you was nearly worthless.
All those "diamonds"? Every one was fake.