

The jewelry essay

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Guy De Maupassant's "The Jewelry" tells the story of midlevel chief clerk M. Lantin and the pleasant life he shared with a young woman described as, "the very ideal of that pure good woman to whom every young man dreams of entrusting his future." (pg. 58) Throughout the story M. Lantin seems to have it all: a decent job that provides him with enough money for a good home and a loving wife with only two flaws: her love for the theater and fake jewelry.

But not everything is at seems; is there more to this "perfect" marriage than it leads on? Is there perhaps, a secret? Never judge a marriage by kind words and thoughtful actions, for looks can be deceiving. As a chief clerk of the Minister of Interior, M. Lantin fell in love with the daughter of a country tutor, and demanded for her hand in marriage. Her beauty, described as, "a charm of angelic shyness; and the slight smile that always dwelt about her lips seemed a reflection of her heart," (pg. 58) and was such that people surrounded her with praises, considering the man to marry her rather lucky.

And indeed, he was. She made him utterly happy with her tender actions, her enthusiastic attention, playful caresses, and the upright home she provided him with. Despite making only 3, 500 francs a year, she "ruled his home with an economy so adroit that they really seemed to live in luxury" (pg. 58) and she was able to "furnish him with excellent wines and with delicate eating." (pg. 60) She provided him with so much happiness, that he chose to overlook her love for the theater and fake jewelry, claiming she had the tastes of a regular gypsy.

Her love for the theater was such that it soon became her downfall. One night after the theater she came home chilled and trembling, followed by a bad cough the next day, and eight days later she died of pneumonia. M. Lantin loved his wife so much that it seemed that he was following her right into her tomb. Despite the passage of time he grieved for her death day and night, “haunted by the memory of her, by the smile, by the voice, by all the charm of a dead woman.

” (pg. 59) The sadness of her death troubled him so much that in one single month his hair turned white, and every night he would lock himself in her room, exactly as she had left it. But along with sadness, her death also brought him troubles. Life became rough for him; he found himself in debt and had scarcely enough money to furnish his own needs, let alone wants. His salary was simply not enough anymore. Now this is the part that intrigued me; how was the wife able to maintain a household and provide him with fine dining and delicate eating when he now found himself without a cent in his pocket? What did she do so differently than what he is doing now? And why was M. Lantin so blind to this? Did he not notice the difference between his life before and after he married her? Having found himself in such hard times, M. Lantin considered selling the thing he hated most – “the stock” his wife admired with passionate delight as if it were real jewelry.

From the beginning this had been a whim of hers that he secretly despised, claiming that “when one has not the means to afford real jewelry, one should appear adorned with one’s natural beauty and grace only.” (pg. 59)

Finally tired of the flash jewelry that kept ruining the lovely memory of his adoring wife, and anxious for money, M. Lantin went through the bundle of

trinkets that she kept in her morocco box, and decided on her big pearl necklace, determining that this would be worth the most. Despite feeling embarrassed for exposing his misfortune, he walked into a jewelry store and asked for the necklace to be examined, hoping to receive at least eight francs. The jeweler, after examining the pearl necklace and talking to the store's clerk, stated that the value of the pearls was between 12, 000 and 15, 000 francs. Thinking the clerk might have been mistaken, M.

Lantin left the store with astonishment so profound, he called the man a fool. Moving on to the next jewelry store, Mr. Lantin was proved wrong and told that the pearls were indeed genuine and worth 18, 000 francs. Now this is the part that got me thinking, two jewelers certainly couldn't have made the same mistake. There was no fault in the pearl necklace. Dumbfounded by this revelation, M. Lantin left the pearl necklace with the store's clerk, and went his own way. Knowing that with his measly salary, his wife wouldn't have been able to afford such valuable jewelry, suspicion swept over him and soon he found that " the ground was heaving under his feet; that a tree, right in front of him, was falling toward him," (pg.

1) because of the overwhelming assumption. Like M. Lantin, because of the lack of textual evidence, the reader can only assume the same thing. Was his wife indeed having an affair, or based on the amount of her entire jewelry, was she having so much more than that? Based on whispers and giggles from the clerks, I think that this is a safe speculation.

But whether she used all of her savings or stepped outside her marriage, we will never really know. Regardless of the actions that Madame Lantin could

have committed, the monetary value of her entire jewelry collection was so shocking, that M. Lantin did not seem to care anymore. Exaggerating the amount he received, he quit his job, went out to dinner, and for the first time went to the theater without feeling bored. Six months after her death, he remarried a faithful woman with a terrible who made his life wretched. I think that the moral of this story is like the old saying goes, “ never judge a book by its cover, for you can never tell by just outward appearances.

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