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Real Jewelers Fake Love

Death, deceit, and unhappiness are three things that would not typically be associated with precious gems. Society uses diamonds to express love and devotion. Emeralds also represent successful love. Pearls are known for their calming effects, and they also symbolize purity, generosity, integrity, and loyalty to its wearer. "The Jewelry" by Guy De Maupassant represents death, deceit, and unhappiness not the characteristics of society gems. According to author Lezaed, "Maupassant was more famous for his stories than his novels, but he could pace a narrative of either length superbly, and if this at times feels more like a long-drawn-out story than a novel, that is because of its limited cast of characters" (Lezaed). The author of "The Jewelry" uses symbolism to show betrayal, irony to show to how the unknown sometimes reveals happiness, and the theme is that things do not always appear as they seem or looks can be deceiving.

A person, place, thing or event that figuratively represents or stands for something else is a symbol. Often the thing or idea represented is more abstract and general, and the symbol is more concrete and particular. In the story, "The Jewelry", the title is also a symbol. Jewelry represents betrayal. Madame Lantin owned an abundance of jewelry which included: the big pearl necklaces, big diamond earrings, bracelets, brooches, rings, medallions, a set of emeralds, sapphires, and a solitaire that is suspended to a gold neck chain. Jewelry was one of the faults Monsieur Lantin found within his wife. Jewelry was her passion, along with the theater. Monsieur Lantin assumed that Madame Lantin's jewelry was fake. He could not imagine that she

would have enough money to purchase pearls, diamonds, emeralds, or gold. According to narrator he trusted her, “She ruled his home with an economy so adroit that they really seemed to live in luxury” (Maupassant 67). Madame Lantin loved the theater. She often visited at the theater with a lady friend and her husband. However, Monsieur Latin was not fond of the theater. He trusted her to be accompanied with a lady acquaintance. The narrator says, “So at last he begged her to go to the theater with some lady acquaintances who would consent to see her home afterward” (Maupassant 67). Madame Lantin rejected this at first, but she eventually consented, “Finally she yielded, just to please him; he felt infinitely grateful to her therefore” (Maupassant 67). Madame Lantin took advantage of the trust of her husband. He knew that she loved two things the most: costume jewelry and the theater. Monsieur Lantin could possibly be blinded with the things that he found fault with her. He states, “There were only two points upon which he ever found fault with her- her Love of the theater and her passion for false jewelry” (Maupassant 67). Knowing that Monsieur Lantin trusted her to attend to the theater with a lady acquaintance gave her many opportunities to seduce and flirt with wealthy men, specifically men who could afford expensive real jewelry. Also, Madame Lantin did not have a profession; she stayed home and received jewelry that was delivered to her in his absence. It’s easy to see the jewels in the story as symbolic of a betrayal of trust. The wife, who had been the concubine of a wealthy man or men for some time, clearly had been too subtle for her husband; her “fake” jewels, which he only realizes after her death are worth thousands. The jewels are evidence of both her duplicity and his gullibility. No wonder it is such a shock for him!

Irony is a situation or statement characterized by a significant difference between what is expected or understood and what actually happens or is meant. Irony is woven throughout the story, such as when the narrator discovers that the jewels are not fake at all. Evidence in the story

shows that his wife was unhappy with her husband. Madame Lantin might have felt neglected due to her husband's insistence that she attend the theater with lady acquaintance and not considering her preference which was his company. This negligence might have attributed to her seeking male company elsewhere. With irony meaning the opposite of what is expected, we could have expected Monsieur Lantin would have been happier with his second wife. The narrator describes Lantin's second wife as, "The most upright of spouses...but had a terrible temper." (Maupassant 73). He could give her anything she wanted because he was rich. However, he was despondent because "She made his life very miserable" (Maupassant 73). Monsieur Lantin was happier when he was ignorant of his wife's affair or affairs. He was happy and in love with her and beyond her death. His need for money to survive led him to the truth. The truth being that her costume jewelry was real and worth thousands of dollars. The ultimate irony of "The Jewelry" is that the "fake" jewels- jewels that pretended to be real- are in fact real jewels pretending to be fakes. He would have been better off not knowing the truth of the jewels or of his wife. Monsieur Lantin was shocked when the Jeweler said, "Sir, I sold it for twenty-five thousand francs..." (Maupassant 70). This is the moment he realized that his whole life was fake with his first wife.

We are sometimes blinded or sometimes choose not to see the reality simply to make life easier on ourselves. Madame Lantin appeared to be pure and good: she was the perfect wife for a young man seeking someone to trust. The author says, "The young girl seemed to be the very ideal of that pure good woman to whom every young man dreams of entrusting his future" (Maupassant 67). Madame Lantin led a double life. In her life with her husband she was in charge of their home and she used frugal methods in a way that made it seem that they were wealthy. According to the text, "She ruled his home with an economy so adroit that they really

seemed to live in luxury” (Maupassant 67). Although he believed that the theater was her weakness, he allowed her to become a theater-goer. Madame Lantin took advantage of the fact that Monsieur Lantin did not find joy in the theater. He allowed his wife to be accompanied by lady acquaintances. This is probably the time when Madame Lantin changed to a woman of the streets. Being a woman of the streets she most likely associated with very wealthy men. Her second fault according to Monsieur Lantin was satisfied by the association. Maupassant states in the text, “There were only two points upon which he ever found fault with her- her love of the theater, and her passion for false jewelry” (Maupassant 67). The reader would assume that the jewelry was earned by being a mistress for wealthy men. In order to take the jewelry home, Madame Lantin had to pretend that the jewelry was fake. Monsieur Lantin had no idea that the jewelry was worth thousands of dollars. Looks can be deceiving. The author says, “His wife could never have bought so valuable an object as that...But then, it must have been a present!...A present from whom? What for? (Maupassant 70). Monsieur Lantin finally has to face reality that his wife has been living a double life. He has to face the fact that maybe her love for him was also fake. His recognition of a wife who is actually a fake has thrown him off guard. For example, in the text it states, “he thrust out his arms instinctively, and fell senseless” (Maupassant 70). Monsieur Lantin was worn out with grief and fatigue due to facing the reality of his life. Things do not always appear as they seem.

In the Irish Times it states that, “Maupassant’s only weakness is his popularity- his huge sales made critics suspicious and reluctant to acknowledge his art. The first of Maupassant’s novels, *Un Vie* appeared in 1883, it was followed within two years by *Bel Ami*. It made him rich and famous, but he was never happy” similar to Monsieur Lantin (Maupassant’s Literary Legacy). Jewelry was the symbol in the story that represented betrayal. The jewelry which turns

out to the genuine; whereas, makes the reader think that the marriage was not genuine because the jewelry was always thought to be fake. Monsieur Lantin is happier when he thought the jewelry were fake and his wife was true. Although when he finds out the truth he remarries someone who is virtuous and becomes very unhappy. You never really know everything about a person. We should never assume, but always ask questions because looks are deceiving and things do not always appear as they seem.

Works Cited

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