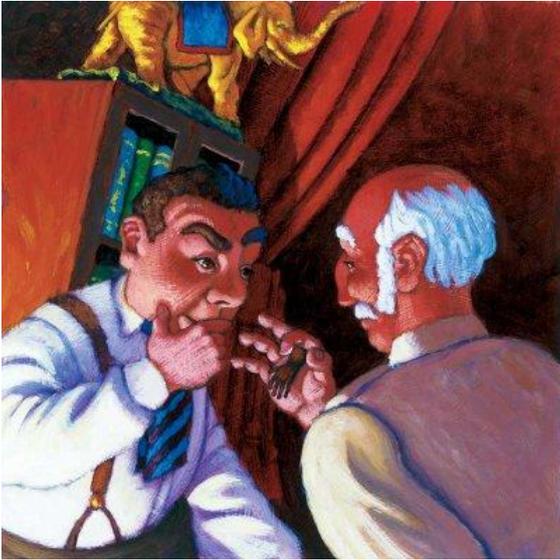


# The Monkey's Paw

Mr. White held his front door open. "Morris! Come in, come in." Mr. White's old friend, Sergeant Major Morris, stepped inside. Mr. White led him into the parlor. Mrs. White and their grown son, Herbert, sat before a crackling fire. Morris settled into a chair. Mrs. White poured tea.

"So good of you to come," said Mrs. White.

"Thank you for inviting me." Morris looked around the parlor. "It's so warm here. So safe. I can almost forget that the mysterious jungles of India lurk right outside this house. I can almost believe life has returned to normal."



"Normal?" Mr. White studied his old friend's face. He looked worried. Or did he look scared?

"Has something happened to you, Morris?" asked Mr. White. Morris rubbed his hand across his chin. "My life has nearly been destroyed by a monkey's paw."

"A monkey's paw?" Mr. White frowned. "I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean."

Morris reached into his pocket and pulled out a dark object. It was a tiny, shriveled hand, covered in fur.

Mr. White peered down at the tiny hand. "Morris, this is the cause of all your troubles? The withered paw of one small monkey?"

"It's small and withered, yes," said Morris. "But it's powerful. It has a spell on it. This paw grants three wishes to anyone who owns it."

"Three wishes!" Mrs. White looked at the paw. "It's magic

then."

"You may call it magic," Morris said. "I call it cursed."

"Cursed?" said Mrs. White. "But that's silly. How can a wish be cursed?"

"Very easily," said Morris, shaking his head. "Whenever we make a wish, greed clouds our judgment."

"I wouldn't let greed cloud my judgment," said Herbert. "I would think the whole thing through. I would know exactly what I was wishing for."

"I thought I was smarter than the monkey's paw and its magic," Morris said. "I was wrong."

"Then you've made your three wishes?" asked Mr. White.

"I have," said Morris. "And if I had a fourth wish, I'd use it now. I'd wish with all my heart I'd never seen this paw. It's terrible, I tell you."

Morris flung the monkey's paw into the fireplace.

"No!" Herbert said. He grabbed a fire iron. Then he fished the monkey's paw from the flames and flipped it onto the parlor floor.

"I can't watch you ruin your happy home." Morris rose to his feet. "You have a fine family and a good life," he told Mr. White. "If you want to keep them safe, you'll toss that cursed paw back into the flames."

Mr. White walked Morris to the door.

When Mr. White returned, Herbert said, "What should we wish for first?"

"Nothing," said his father. "Morris was right. I live in a fine house with a family I love. I have nothing to wish for."

"But this fine house isn't completely ours," said Mrs. White. "We still owe two hundred dollars to the bank. Wouldn't our good life and fine family be that much better without debt hanging over our heads?"

"Think how happy you'd be to hand two hundred dollars to the banker, Papa," said Herbert.

"I don't know," Mr. White said. "It would be nice to own this house." Mr. White stared at the monkey's paw. Then he took a deep breath. "I wish for two hundred dollars."

"Oh!" said Mrs. White. "I saw it move. The monkey's paw moved!"

"It heard your wish, Papa," said Herbert. "Now the wish will come true."

"Nonsense," said his father. "The wind moved it. This monkey's paw is no more magic than I am." He scooped up the paw. Then he put it into his desk drawer. "Let's forget about this withered paw and go to bed."

The next morning, though, Herbert had not forgotten.



"The two hundred dollars may come today while I'm at work," he said, as he left for his job at the factory. "Don't spend it all before I get back."

That evening, Herbert did not come home from work. Mrs. White was very worried. Then a knock sounded at the door. Mrs. White opened the door. A man from Herbert's factory stepped into the hall. "There's been an accident," the man told Mr. and Mrs. White. "Herbert was caught in the machinery at the factory. We couldn't save him."

Mr. White stared at the man. "Herbert is...dead?"

The man nodded. "We hope this will help ease your suffering a bit." He handed Mrs. White an envelope. Mrs. White's hand trembled as she opened it. "Oh! Oh, no!" She flung the envelope to the floor. The packet from Herbert's factory contained two hundred dollars.

"Where is the paw?" Mrs. White ran into the parlor.

"I've put it away," Mr. White said, "where it can do no more harm."

"But we have two more wishes," said Mrs. White. "We can wish him back. We can have our sweet Herbert back."

"Do you really think that's wise?" said Mr. White. "After what just happened? Do you believe anything good can come from our wishes?"

"Don't you want your son back?" asked Mrs. White.

"Of course I do," said Mr. White. He unlocked his desk drawer and pulled out the monkey's paw. He closed his eyes. "I wish for my son," he said. "I wish my son Herbert would come back."

Thunder cracked outside the window.

"It heard you," whispered Mrs. White. "Our Herbert will come home."

Mr. and Mrs. White heard footsteps outside.

"Herbert," said Mrs. White. "I'd know the sound of his walk anywhere."

She raced through the hall and flung open the front door. A tall figure stumbled towards her down the road.

"Herbert!" she said.

Lightning flashed. Mrs. White saw her son clearly.

"No!" Mrs. White screamed. "Oh, no! It can't be." She stared at the figure in the road. It was Herbert, but not Herbert as he had been that morning.

Mrs. White slammed the door.

Mr. and Mrs. White heard Herbert's uneven steps.

They heard his knocks on the door.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

"What have we done?" Mrs. White slumped to the floor.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

"We have one wish left," said Mr. White. "I wish..."

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

"I wish my son was dead," said Mr. White.

The banging stopped. Mrs. White crept to the window and looked out.

"He's gone," she whispered. "Our son is gone."

"And so are our wishes." Mr. White stared at the shriveled paw in his hands. "Along with our happy life."

He staggered into the parlor and threw the monkey's paw into the fire. And this time Herbert was not there to pull it out.

