

The Monkey's Paw

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SUMMARY/ PLOT OVERVIEW

This is a story about a mystical charm , a monkey's paw that is brought into the home of the White family by Sergeant Morris , who has served in India.

Play opens on a dark and stormy night as the three members of the White family relax inside their cozy house. Herbert White and his father are playing a game of chess while Mrs. White knits near the fire. After his son wins, Mr. White complains about the terrible weather and nearly deserted road they live near.

A family friend, Sergeant-Major Morris, arrives for a visit. Over whisky, he tells stories of his exploits abroad. Mr. White expresses interest in going to India, but the sergeant-major says he would be better off staying at home. At Mr. and Mrs. Whites' urging, Sergeant-Major Morris takes a small, mummified paw out of his pocket. He explains that a fakir (a mystic miracle worker) placed a spell on the paw to prove that people's lives are governed by fate and that it is dangerous to meddle with fate. According to the sergeant-major, three men can wish on the paw three times each. The sergeant-major himself has already had his three wishes, as has another man, who used his third wish to ask for death. The sergeant-major has considered selling the paw, but he doesn't want it to cause any more trouble than it already has. Moreover, no one will buy the paw without first seeing proof of its effect. The sergeant-major throws the paw into the fire, and Mr. White quickly rescues it. The sergeant-major warns him three times to leave the paw alone, but he eventually explains how to make a wish on the paw.

Mrs. White says the story reminds her of the Arabian Nights and jokingly suggests that her husband wish her a pair of extra hands to help her with all her work. The sergeant-major doesn't find this joke funny, however, and urges Mr. White to use common sense if he insists on wishing. After supper and more tales of India, the sergeant-major leaves. Herbert says he thinks the sergeant-major is full of nonsense and jokes that his father should make himself an emperor so that he doesn't have to listen to Mrs. White's nagging. In mock anger, Mrs. White playfully chases her son.

Mr. White says he has everything he wants and isn't sure what to wish for. Herbert says that two hundred pounds would enable them to pay off the money owed for the house. Mr. White wishes aloud for two hundred pounds as Herbert accompanies him with melodramatic chords played on the piano.

Mr. White suddenly cries out and says that the paw moved like a snake in his hand. After Mr. and Mrs. White go to bed, Herbert sits by the fire and sees a vividly realistic monkey face in the flames. He puts out the fire, takes the monkey's paw, and goes to bed.

The Whites' get the money from Herbert's factory after he is accidentally pulled into a machine and mangled to death. The 2nd wish is thought by Mrs White , to bring her son back from the grave. He has been dead for 10 days. The Whites' then begin to hear the sound of someone knocking at the door. Mrs White wants to rush to the door . Meanwhile Mr white makes his 3 rd wish to return whosoever is at the door. Mrs white finds nothing when she opens the door. Thus the play has elements of both horror as well as supernaturalism.