

CLASSIC
a story with
timeless appeal

Drama

The Monkey's Paw

You have three wishes.

What could possibly go wrong?

Based on the classic story by W.W. Jacobs
Adaptation by Jennifer Dignan
Illustrations by Gary Hanna

Characters

Circle the character you will play.
*Starred characters are major roles.

Scene Setter, reads the scene number and description

***Stage Directors 1, 2, 3, and 4** (SD1, SD2, SD3, SD4), describe the lighting, sets, and sound effects as well as characters' actions

***Mr. White**

Sergeant Major Morris, an old friend of Mr. White

***Mrs. White**

Herbert, the Whites' son

Messengers 1 and 2

Turn the page to read this creepy tale.



Scene 1

An October evening, 1901—a stone cottage
in the English countryside

SD1: The sounds of howling wind and pelting rain rise from the darkness, punctuated by claps of thunder.

SD2: After a minute, the sounds of the storm fade.

SD3: The stage lights come up to reveal a cozy living room where Mr. and Mrs. White, their son, Herbert, and Sergeant Major Morris are gathered before a crackling fire.

Mr. White: Twenty-one years it's been since you left, Morris! You were a young man then.

Morris: Indeed—just about Herbert's age, I suppose.

Mrs. White: I couldn't bear the thought of Herbert packing off to distant lands.

Morris: How have you been keeping busy, Herbert?

Herbert: I've got a job at Maw and Meggins. It's a bit tedious working the machinery, but my boss has been hinting that I'll soon be promoted.

SD4: Mrs. White places a hand on her son's knee.

Mrs. White: We're very proud of our boy.

Herbert: Father says you've been in India, Sergeant Major.

Morris (vaguely): Hmmmm.

Mr. White: I'd rather like to visit India myself.

Morris: Trust me, you would not. Nothing but war and plagues there.

Mr. White: But what about the lively markets and enchanting old temples?

Morris: Nevertheless . . .

Mr. White: What was it you started telling me the other day, Morris? Something about a monkey's paw?

Morris (quickly): Nothing. At least, nothing worth hearing.

Mrs. White: What's all this? A monkey's paw?

SD1: Morris stares into the fire for a long moment.

Morris: No . . . no, it's best we leave that alone.

Herbert: But now we're intrigued, Sergeant Major.

Mrs. White: Do tell!

SD2: Morris looks at the Whites' curious faces. A muscle in his jaw twitches.

Morris: Well, all right. It's just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps.

SD3: Morris fumbles in his pocket and pulls out a shriveled monkey's paw.

Mrs. White (recoiling): Oof!

Morris: To look at it, it's just an ordinary little paw.

Mr. White: What's special about it?

Morris: A holy man put a spell on it.

SD4: Morris leans forward as if to confess a secret.

Morris: He wanted to show that fate rules our lives, and that those who interfere with fate do so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three men could each be granted three wishes.

Herbert: Well then, why don't you have three wishes, sir?

SD1: Morris slowly sets the paw on the small table before him.

Morris (gravely): I have.

Mrs. White: And were they granted?

Morris: They were.

Mr. White: Has anyone else wished?

Morris: The first man made his three wishes. I don't know what the first two were, but the third wish was for death. That's how I got the paw.

SD2: The room falls silent. All eyes rest on the monkey's paw.

Mrs. White: How awful—to wish for death.

Mr. White: If you've already had your three wishes, Morris, why do you keep the monkey's paw?

Morris: To be honest, I'm not sure. I had some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will.

SD3: Morris picks up the paw and studies it.

Morris: It has caused enough mischief already.

SD4: Suddenly, Morris tosses the paw into the fire.

Morris: Better to let it burn.

SD1: Mr. White lunges forward and snatches the paw from the flames.

Mr. White: If you don't want it, Morris, give it to me!

Morris: No, sir, I won't! I wash my hands of it.

SD2: But Mr. White is already examining his new possession.

Morris: If you keep it, don't blame me for what happens.

Mr. White: How do you make a wish?

Morris: Hold it up in your right hand and state your wish out loud. But I caution you: It's a curse, not a blessing.

SD3: Mrs. White moves toward the kitchen.

Mrs. White: How about wishing me four pairs of hands with which to serve dinner?

SD4: The Whites burst into laughter, but Morris grabs Mr. White by the arm.

Morris: If you must make a wish, at least wish for something sensible.

Mr. White: Very well. You've convinced me. Now let's eat before the food gets cold.

SD1: The lights fade as the group makes its way to the dinner table.

Scene 2

Later that night

SD2: Morris is leaving the Whites' house.

Morris: Wonderful to meet you, Mrs. White. Best of luck, Herbert. White, old man, pleasure to see you again. But now I must be going or I'll miss my train.

SD3: Morris leaves. Herbert closes the door and turns to his parents.

Herbert: Father, your friend is quite the storyteller. If his story about the monkey's paw is not more truthful than the rest of what he's told us tonight, I'm afraid the paw will be of little use.

Mr. White: That may be. Though before he left, he pressed me again to throw the thing away.

Mrs. White: Such nonsense!

Mr. White: I'm sure you are right—but I might as well make a wish, don't you think? Although I don't know what to wish for. I've got everything I want.

Herbert: Ah, but you would be happier if the house were paid for, wouldn't you, Father? Go ahead, wish for 200 pounds and see what comes of it.

SD4: Herbert catches his mother's eye and winks. Mrs. White rolls her eyes, shaking her head.

SD1: With his right hand, Mr. White holds the monkey's paw high.

Mr. White: I wish for 200 pounds!

THE GENRE

This play is adapted from a short story by W.W. Jacobs that was first published in England in 1902 and is still widely read today. It includes many classic elements of the horror genre that create suspense—startling noises, a storm, and supernatural events. *What else makes this story suspenseful?*

In the U.S., money is in dollars. In England, money is in pounds.

SD2: He cries out, dropping the paw.

Mr. White: Aah! It moved! As I made my wish, it twisted in my hand like a snake!

Mrs. White: You must have imagined it, dear.

Herbert: I don't see any money.

Mr. White: Nevermind, then. There's no harm done. But it gave me quite a shock.

SD3: Herbert picks up the paw and examines it. Then he shrugs and places it on the mantel.

Herbert: Well, goodnight. I expect you'll wake to find a big bag of cash in the middle of your bed—and some horrible monkey ghost watching you pocket your **ill-gotten gains**. Ha!



THE TIME PERIOD
When this story was published, India was under the rule of England. To people in England, India was a fascinating, far-away land. Travelers like Morris came home telling wild, fanciful stories of what they'd seen. These stories were often more entertaining than accurate.

Scene 3

The next evening

SD4: Mr. and Mrs. White are having dinner.

Mr. White (smiling): I expect Herbert will tease his foolish father some more about the monkey's paw when he gets home from work.

Mrs. White: You must admit he has the right.

SD1: She glances at the grandfather clock in the corner.

Mrs. White: I wonder what's keeping him.

SD2: There is a knock at the door.

SD3: Mrs. White answers it. She shows two messengers into the room. They seem uncomfortable, shifting from side to side and fidgeting.

Messenger 1: We were sent by Maw and Meggins.

Mrs. White: Has something happened?

Mr. White: There, there, now. Don't jump to conclusions.

Messenger 2: We are very sorry . . .

Mrs. White: Is Herbert hurt? Is my boy hurt?

Messenger 1: Badly hurt.

Messenger 2: But he is not in pain anymore.

Mrs. White: Well, thank goodness for that!

SD4: The messenger pauses, allowing his meaning to sink in. A horrified look crosses Mrs. White's face.

Mrs. White: NO!

Messenger 1: I am afraid your son was caught in the machinery.

SD1: Mr. White stares blankly. Mrs. White begins to whimper.

Messenger 2: The firm wishes to **convey** its sympathy. Maw and Meggins admits no **liability**, but in consideration of your loss, they wish to present you with compensation.

SD2: Mr. White gasps.

Mr. White: How much?

Messenger 1: Two hundred pounds.

Scene 4

A week later in the middle of the night

SD3: In a small downstage area off to the side is Mr. and Mrs. White's tidy bedroom. Moonlight streams in through a window.

SD4: Mr. White is asleep in bed. Mrs. White sits in a chair by the window, staring out at the night.

SD1: A clock ticks on the dresser.

SD2: Suddenly, Mrs. White turns to her sleeping husband.

Mrs. White (crying out): THE PAW! THE PAW! THE MONKEY'S PAW!

SD3: Mr. White bolts up in bed. His eyes dart wildly around the room.

Mr. White: What? Where? What's wrong?

Mrs. White: The monkey's paw! Do you still have it?

Mr. White: It's on the mantel. Why?

SD4: Mrs. White clasps her hands to her heart.

Mrs. White: I've just realized: We've only had one wish.

Quick! Go get the monkey's paw and wish our boy alive again.

Mr. White (horrified): You do not know what you are saying.

Mrs. White: We had the first wish granted. Why not the second?

Mr. White: That was . . . a coincidence.

Mrs. White: Go get it!

Mr. White: He has been dead seven days.

Mrs. White: I don't care!

Mr. White: How will he appear now?

SD1: Mrs. White growls at him through gritted teeth.

Mrs. White: Bring . . . him . . . back!

SD2: With a pained expression, Mr. White leaves the room. Mrs. White paces anxiously.

SD3: A few moments later, Mr. White returns, holding the paw.

Mrs. White: What are you waiting for?

Mr. White: It is foolish and wicked.

Mrs. White: Wish!

Mr. White: What if he does come back but he still looks . . . dead?

Mrs. White: WISH!

SD4: Mr. White's hand shakes as he slowly raises the paw.

Mr. White (quietly): I wish my son alive.

SD1: He cringes and flings the paw to the floor.

SD2: Mrs. White rushes to the window and stares out.

SD3: Minutes pass. Nothing happens. Mr. White sighs with relief.

Mr. White: I am going back to bed.

SD4: Mrs. White looks out the window for a moment longer and then, without a word, goes to bed too.

SD1: The clock continues to tick.

Then there is a quiet knock from offstage.

Mrs. White: What was that?

Mr. White: It was—a rat. I saw one earlier. In the hallway.



THE THEME

The theme "be careful what you wish for" is a popular one in literature. Characters learn the hard way that having a wish come true is not a blessing but a curse—and that it's better to be content with what you already have. *How is the monkey's paw a curse?*

SD2: There is another knock, louder this time. Mrs. White sits up.

Mrs. White: Herbert!

SD3: Mrs. White moves toward the bedroom door. Mr. White catches her arm.

Mrs. White: Let go! It's my boy!

Mr. White: For goodness sake, don't let it in!

Mrs. White: Are you really afraid of your own son? Let me go!

SD4: There is another knock, even louder.

SD1: Then another, louder still.

SD2: Mrs. White runs out the bedroom door.

Mrs. White: I'm coming, Herbert! I'm coming!

SD3: The lights come up on the opposite side of the stage—to show the Whites' living room—as Mrs. White rushes to the front door.

SD4: The loud, insistent knocking continues as Mrs. White tries to open the lock.

SD1: She calls over her shoulder.

Mrs. White: The bolt is stuck! I can't open the door!

SD2: As Mrs. White wrestles with the bolt, Mr. White, in the bedroom, crawls on his hands and knees, groping for the monkey's paw.

Mrs. White: Hold on, Herbert. Hold on!

SD3: The knocking has grown to a violent pounding.

SD4: Mr. White seizes the paw and thrusts his arm into the air.

Mr. White: I wish it would GO AWAY!

SD1: The knocking stops abruptly.

SD2: Just then, Mrs. White manages to slide the bolt.

SD3: She flings open the door.

SD4: But . . .

SD1: No one is there.

Mrs. White: No! No! No!

SD2: Mr. White rushes to her side and stands at the open door.

SD3: Together, they look out at the empty street. ●



What Do You Wish For?

Here's how to get it. (Don't worry. No monkey's paw required.)

By Kristin Lewis and Adele Braun



In the play you just read, the ability to get anything you wish for turns out to be a terrible curse. This got us thinking. Is there really something wrong with making a wish—and having that wish come true?

We all have things we wish for. Maybe you wish you could sing like Zendaya or have thousands of Instagram followers. There is nothing **inherently** bad about such wishes—and there is nothing wrong with turning those wishes into goals that you **strive** to achieve. As *The Monkey's Paw* suggests, the trouble starts when we take shortcuts to get what we want.

So how *should* we go about fulfilling our wishes? We asked the experts. Here is what we found out.

1 Figure out what you really want.

Before you go after what you want, make sure you really want it. Achieving a goal takes a lot of time and energy, so focus on something that you care about deeply—whether that is helping animals in shelters find new homes or starting your own babysitting service. Begin with the things in your life that bring you joy and excitement.

2 Find your strengths.

Explore your interests and discover your strengths. If you think you might want to be a professional musician someday, sign up for orchestra and see how it goes.



3 Start small.

A big goal—whether it's to play for the NFL or to be valedictorian—can be overwhelming. Break your goal into small steps. If your goal is to swim at the Olympics, your first step may be to shave a few seconds off your backstroke time.

4 Set a time frame.

Set a realistic time frame for achieving your goal, advises psychologist Marcus Crede, a professor at Iowa State University. Rather than saying you will accomplish your goal *someday*, pick a specific day or month.



5 Know yourself.

Be clear on what you need in order to be at your best as well as what gets in your way. If you get distracted by Instagram, turn off your phone. If you need eight hours of sleep to be in top form, be strict with yourself about going to bed on time.

6 Ask for advice.

Find a few people—teachers, coaches, family members, friends—with **expertise** who can help you achieve your goal. Ask them to share their knowledge with you, help you when you get stuck, answer your questions, and keep you motivated.



7 Stay calm.

Some studies show that a little stress can be a powerful motivator. But too much stress can stop you from being **productive**. To relieve your stress, take walks, listen to music, breathe deeply, or talk to someone about your worries.



8 Visualize yourself.

Spend two minutes a day imagining yourself working toward your goal. Include lots of details to make your vision as realistic as possible. Picture your environment and imagine how you will feel.

9 Track your progress.

Measure your progress by keeping a diary. Professor Lori Desautels of Butler University says that “focusing on the process, not the end goal” is important when you're working to achieve something over a long period of time. Look back at your diary to remind yourself how far you've come—especially when you're overwhelmed or frustrated.



10 Don't be afraid to fail.

If you don't reach your goal, don't sweat it. “It's not a matter of succeeding or failing,” Desautels says. Remember, if you fail today, you can always try again tomorrow. In the words of Thomas Edison, who invented the incandescent lightbulb after many years of trying and failing: “Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Writing Contest

Imagine that a friend has just found the monkey's paw and is seeking your advice about whether to use it. What would you say? Is there a better way for your friend to achieve his or her goals? Answer both questions in the form of a letter, play scene, or 1- to 2-minute video. Send it to **Wishes Contest**. Five winners will each get *The Night Gardener* by Jonathan Auxier.



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