

Characters

Mr White (M) A retired factory worker for Maw and Meggins

Mrs White (F) Mr White's wife

Herbert White (M/F) Their son and a factory worker for the firm

Sergeant-Major Morris (M) An ex-military man and former employee.

Mr Molyneux (F/M) A representative of Maw and Meggins.

(The parts of Sergeant-Major Morris and Mr Molyneux can be doubled if required.)

Scene 1 – Front Room. Evening.

(Tabs open. Lights rise. Mr White and his son are playing chess, and Mrs White is knitting beside the fire in chair.)

Mrs White: **(Teasingly to husband)** You'd think you hadn't got any other pieces except that King. Poor fellow's battling it out all on his own!

Mr White: Shush, let me concentrate. Just hark at that wind!

(SFX. Wind)

Herbert: I'm listening to it. Check.

Mr White: Look, it's blowing the curtain.

Herbert: Check.

Mr. White: I hardly think he'll come tonight. It's not fit for a dog.

(SFX. Wind)

Herbert: Checkmate.

Mr White: Hmmph. **(Crossly)** That's the worst of living so far out. Of all the beastly, slushy, out-of-the-way places to live in, this is the worst. Pathway's a bog, and the road's a torrent. I don't know what people are thinking about. I suppose because only two houses in the road are let, they think it doesn't matter.

Mrs White: Never mind, dear; perhaps you'll win the next game.

Mr White: Hmmph; I think you two are in league with each other.

(SFX. Loud banging of gate; knock at door)

Mr White: Speak of the devil; there he is. I should have known it takes more than weather to hold an old soldier back.

(Mr White exits. Murmuring voices. Mr White and Sergeant Major Morris offstage as if in hall.)

Mrs White: **(Calls)** Do bring your friend out of the hallway dear; there's quite a draught.

Mr White: Come along in.

(Mr White and S.M. Morris enter)

Mr White: Here he is, the man himself. Sergeant Major Morris. This is my wife.

S.M. Morris: Charmed ma'am

Mrs White: I've heard so much about you

S.M. Morris: All good I hope, all good!

Mr White: And my son Herbert. Herbert's following the family line working for Maw and Meggins. He services the machinery, and keeps it running tickety boo, don't you Herbert.

Herbert: How do'y do. Yes if it stops running I'm there in a flash. Sometimes a bit of the cloth will get jammed in the loom. Or if the machine operator is careless, happen a bit of their shawl catches – because they're mostly lasses and women. We've had some nasty accidents –

Mrs White: Oh Herbert, I'm sure the Sergeant Major doesn't want to hear about nasty accidents.

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S.M. Morris: I've seen my share of nasty accidents ma'am. And you can never be too careful with machinery lad; never too careful. Take a rifle for example. Simple piece of machinery, simple piece of ironwork; but if you're careless when you're carrying it; if you're careless when you're cleaning it, fate will intervene: fate will intervene. I've seen chaps blow their own heads off. Oh I could tell you a tale or two about nasty accidents.

Mr White: Twenty one years of it. Look at him! When he went away he was a slip of a youth in the warehouse. Now look at him, a fine figure of a man!

Mrs White: He doesn't look to have taken much harm. Why don't you offer your friend a drink dear, I'm sure he's ready.

Mr White: Of course he's ready; a drop of the grain?

Mrs White: Why don't you sit yourself by the fire, and get warmed up. Herbert, draw a chair up for the Sergeant Major.

Herbert: Will you tell us about your adventures? I'd love to have an adventure. Perhaps I should join the army?

Mrs White: Don't encourage him Mr Morris. He's got a good steady job at Maw and Meggins. He's not going to get his head blown off there. And if I'm not mistaken he's sweet on one of the lasses; unless it just happens that her machine keeps breaking!

Herbert: Mother!

Mr White: Tell us some of your tales Morris. I missed out on the war because I was tubercular.

Mr White: A drop of Mother's ruin for you Mother?

(SFX. Whistling of kettle)

Mrs White: No, a nice cup of tea will suit me. Will you have a cup Herbert?

Herbert: I'll try a whisky

Mrs White: Just a small one Father; he's not used to the hard stuff.

Mr White: Hmmph, I should have given him one before we started our game of chess.
(Mrs White exits)

Mr White: **(Pours three drinks of in tumblers. Hands one to S.M. Morris)** There you are Morris, something to warm the cockles.
(Mr White hands Herbert a tumbler.)

Herbert: Thank you.
(Mr White brings back his own tumbler. Mrs. White enters with cup and saucer.)

S.M. Morris: Here's to your very good health. Now then, let me see; which stories are suitable for parlour entertainment? **(Rhetorical)** Not the one about when we were pitched nearby a harem.

Mrs White: No thank you!

S.M. Morris: -- Well now, soldiers are a rough bunch; fight like a dog for their friends, family and country; and fight like a dog anyone who steals their girl. Happen there were these two young soldiers in my division, both in love with the same lass at home. Not engaged to either mind, but she was writing to both of 'em; couldn't make her mind up see. One used to tease the other something rotten when he got her letter, smile as he read it, sing a jaunty little song afterwards, really wind the other one up. It came to blows on more than one occasion. Well one day one of 'em caught by a bullet in no man's land, and he was lying there; moaning, bleeding. His pal had seen him go down; he'd found a bit of cover in a shell hole see, 'Hold on' he shouted. I'll come and stem the bleeding'. 'No' gasped his pal, 'advance, advance – you'll get hit here in fire alley'. 'A pal's a pal' said his friend. 'Can't leave you.' Well, do you know what the injured chap did to persuade him?

Herbert: Shot himself?

Mrs White: Oh dear.

S.M. Morris: No, he didn't do that. He reached in his pocket and got his letter out from the girl, rolled over, and smiled his best smile as he read it to himself

Mr White: Did his friend leave him there?

S.M. Morris: He did. But you know the funny thing?

Herbert: What?

S.M. Morris: Later, when they'd got his body back from no man's land, his friend looked at that letter, and the girl had written that she wasn't writing to him anymore;

hoped he'd get another girl, as she preferred his friend, that's the chap who wasn't shot!

Mrs White: So --- he'd pretended just to save his friend?

S.M. Morris: He had. Anyway the chap who wasn't shot, got shot himself the next week, so the girl got neither of 'em in the finish. That's the nature of the beast, war. Death; shows no fear or favour.

Mrs White: Oh dear.

Herbert: You can be lucky though can't you? You hear of chaps stopping a bullet with their cigarette case don't you?

S.M. Morris: **(Coughs)** I'm a little dry ---

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Mr White: Let me re-fill your tumbler. **(Takes tumbler, refills and hands to Morris.)**

S.M. Morris: Thank you, that will help wet my whistle. The whistle gets very dry this cold weather.

Mrs White: It's a foul night; Mr White thought you might not come.

S.M. Morris: Can't let a bit of weather stop your plans; if I say I'll be at a place, at such and such a time, if I'm not there, then I'm dead!

Mr White: Well I'm very pleased you're not dead!

S.M. Morris: **(Addressing Herbert)** Yes young Herbert, you *can* be lucky; although you can't plan to be lucky, because fate won't have that. So if you put a cigarette case in your pocket every time you went into battle, just as like you'd get shot in the neck, or something else would happen. Puts me in mind of this old snake charmer I knew. Had this snake for years, kept it in a basket, and when he took the lid off and played his pipe, the snake would rise up and sway to the music. It was a deadly poisonous snake and every morning he'd empty its glands of the venom in case it bit him. Well it never did bite him, and one day he didn't bother to empty its glands, because he knew it wouldn't bite him. But it did, and he died.

Mrs White: Oh dear.

Herbert: Why did it bite him that day?

S.M. Morris: It bit him that day, because it wasn't his snake. A new snake charmer had arrived in the town, and he was jealous, and took the old man's snake, and put another in its place.

Mrs White: How wicked!

Mr White: But if he'd got that snake and emptied its glands?

S.M. Morris: But he didn't, and that was fate, and he'd tempted it!

Mr White: I'd like to go to India myself. Just to look round a bit, you know.

S.M. Morris: Better where you are

Mr White: I should like to see those old temples and fakirs and jugglers. What was that you started telling me the other day about a monkey's paw, or something Morris?

S.M. Morris: Nothing. Leastways nothing worth hearing.

Mrs White: A monkey's paw?

S.M. Morris: Well, it's just a bit of what you might call magic perhaps: your young Herbert has finished his glass; what do you think of that nectar young sir?

Herbert: I like it; it does warm the cockles!

Mrs White: You'd better have no more you've got work in the morning. You need to be on your toes.

Herbert: A splash if the Sergeant Major is having some.

S.M. Morris: A man has to learn to hold his drink at sometime; learn his limits.

Mr White: Well, just a splash then Herbert. The Sergeant Major's had plenty of practice.

Mrs White: It's really not sensible.

(Mr. White collects tumblers and goes to refill.)

Herbert: How am I to get practice if my parents keep stopping me? I'm nearly a grown man!

Mrs White: It's best to practice when you're not at work next morning!

(Mr White hands Morris a tumbler.)

Morris: Thank you.

(Mr White handing Herbert a tumbler.)

Mr. White: A small one.

S.M. Morris: Um, well now, the paw: it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy.
(gets it from pocket.)

(SFX. A few bars of eerie Indian music)

Herbert: It really is a paw!

Mrs White: It's a horrid looking thing!

Mr White: And what is there special about it?

S.M. Morris: It had a spell put on it by an old fakir; a very holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who interfered with it did so to their sorrow. He put a spell on it so that three separate men could each have three wishes from it

Herbert: Have the three men had their wishes?

S.M. Morris: Two have.

Mrs White: What were they?

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

Mrs White: What a thing to thing to wish for – death!

Mr White: And – you've had your wishes?

S.M. Morris: To my sorrow. I wish I never had!

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Mr White: If you've had your three wishes, it's no good to you now then Morris. What do you keep it for?

S.M. Morris: Fancy, I suppose. I did have some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will. It's caused enough mischief already. Besides, people won't buy. They think it's a fairy tale, some of them; and those who do think anything of it want to try it first and pay me afterwards.

Herbert: If you could have your wishes again would you have them?

S.M. Morris: I don't know - **(suddenly throws paw into grate.)**
(SFX. Fierce crackle of flames.)

S.M. Morris: Let it burn it's done enough mischief!
(Mr. White hurries to retrieve it.)

Mrs White: **(Small shriek)** What are you doing father? Leave it be! You'll burn your hand!

Mr White: **(Retrieves paw)** If you don't want it Morris, I'll have it.

S.M. Morris: I threw it on the fire! If you keep it, don't blame me for what happens. Pitch it on the fire again like a sensible man!

Mr White: No; it's taken my fancy now. Let me keep it. How do you do it? How do you make a wish?

S.M. Morris: Hold it up in your right hand and wish aloud; but I warn you of the consequences.

Mrs White: It sounds like The Arabian Nights. Well I'd better get the supper finished. Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me?

Mr White: Shall I do that Herbert? Wish for four pair of hands for your mother?

Herbert: As long as she didn't get four mouths too, for then she would eat it all herself!

Mr. White: And I'd get four lots of agitation when I was in trouble!

S.M. Morris: Listen! If you must wish; then wish for something sensible!

Mrs White: I'll make sure he wishes for something sensible. Now you'd better all go and wash your hands after touching that object. Supper won't be long. **(All exit)**

(SFX. Wind blowing. Ticking of clock. Lights off. All Exit.)

Scene 2 – Front room. After Supper.

(Lights up. All enter as if from another room)

Mr White: Well goodnight. Don't leave it too long before you come and see us again.

S.M. Morris: Goodnight and thank you for the meal. Take my advice old friend, and burn that paw.

(S.M. Morris exits. Mr White exits to show S.M. Morris out. SFX. Door clicks shut. Footsteps retreating.)

Herbert: If the tale about the monkey's paw is not more truthful than those yarns he's been telling us, we shan't make much out of it!

(Mr White enters)

Mrs White: Did you give him anything for it, father?

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Mr White: A trifle. He didn't want it, but I made him take it. He's not a wealthy man. And he pressed me again to throw it away.

Herbert: Likely – why we're going to be rich, and famous, and happy. Wish to be an emperor father, to begin with; then you can't be henpecked! **(Hiccoughs)**

Mrs White: Come here you scallywag and I'll clip your ear. Just look at those cheeks father. A proper shade of pink and his eyes don't look right. That's the effect of whisky!

Mr White: Oh leave the boy be. He'll remember a thick head in the morning more than your carrying on. Anyway, what shall I wish for? I don't know and that's a fact. It seems to me I've got all I want.

Herbert: If you only cleared the money on the house, you'd be quite happy wouldn't you? Well, wish for two hundred pounds then; that'll just do it.

Mr White: Alright. I'll do it!

Mrs White: Shouldn't we chant or say some magic words?

Mr White: Don't make fun, or it won't come true. **(Holds up paw in right hand)** I wish for two hundred pounds.

(SFX. Dwindraught from chimney; roaring of fire.)

Mr White: Uuuuugggghhh – it moved. As I wished, it twisted in my hand like a snake!

Mrs White: I didn't see it move; it must have been your fancy, father. Just listen to that wind.

Herbert: Well I don't see the money, and I bet I never shall.

Mr White: Never mind though; there's no harm done, but it gave me a shock all the same. I'll finish my pipe by the fire before I come up to bed.

Herbert: I'll finish mine too. It gave me a queer feeling when you wished; like something was twisting me inside.

Mr White: Did it?

Herbert: No I'm having you on!

Mrs White: Oh Herbert; as if it's not wild and stormy enough outside.

Herbert: **(In melodramatic voice)** It was a dark and stormy night ---
(SFX. Door banging.)

Mrs White: What's that!

Mr White: It's just the door banging upstairs. Nothing to stop the wind; blows where it likes. Beastly slushy place!

Herbert: Darn, my pipe's gone out again. I'll give up on it. Goodnight; give us a shout if you want a hand to move it.

Mrs White: Move what!

Herbert: The cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed. You'll need a hand to move it!

Mrs White: **(Laughs)** We'll wake you up if we do!

Herbert: And something horrible squatting up on top of the wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten gains! **(Hiccoughs.)**
(Herbert exits)

Mrs White: I think I'll go up and get ready. You won't be long will you?

Mr White: No, I'll just damp the fire down a bit.
(Mrs White exits. SFX. Unearthly sounds start coming from fire, whispering, hissing noises, building up in volume.)

Mr White: **(To self)** What the devil's wrong with the fire It seems to be speaking --- and shapes, foul shapes leaping and falling, faces, horrid, horrid --- ugggghhhh --- a monkey's face --- it's mouth is open --- it's screaming -- it's screaming - ugggghhhh
(SFX. A foul inhuman scream as if from monkey.)

Mr White: **(To self)** Where's the water glass --- ugggghhh, what's this? The paw, the monkey's paw on the table; stiff, wizened, but fleshy; alive it feels alive,

egghh - I can't abide the feel of it! The water ---- throw it on the shapes in the fire.

(Mr White Mimes throwing water on the fire. SFX. A fierce sizzling, as water is thrown on fire.)

Mrs White: **(Calls from offstage as if from upstairs)** Are you alright father! What was that sound!

Mr White: **(To self, looking into grate)** The face, it's gone ---- thank the Lord --- it's gone – just black embers.

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Mr White: **(Calls to wife)** The fire, faces in the fire, but they've gone; I'm coming to bed now.

(Mr White exits, stumbling from room urgently, bumping into cupboard to escape visions in black embers.)

Mrs White: **(Calls, offstage)** Faces in the fire indeed! Too much cheese at supper I shouldn't wonder!

(SFX. Wind/ then ticking of clock. Lights fade. Lights slowly rise. Birdsong.)

Scene 3 – Front Room – next morning

(Mrs White and Mr White enter)

Mrs White: Well the wind's gone and it's a lovely morning. I think I'll get some washing done after I've cleared the dishes. And it's about time the windows were cleaned father; a good day for it.

(Mr White whistles or sings a verse or part of verse of 'When I'm Cleaning Windows' by George Formby)

Herbert: **(Enters holding head)** Oh hush Dad.

Mr White: What do you mean hush, I'm singing; it's a beautiful day!

Mrs White: I know what's wrong with you; you've got a hangover haven't you my lad! Well remember it next time you're drinking with old soldiers! You'd better have a glass of Epsom salts and clear your head before you go off to work.

(Mrs White goes to cupboard and mixes salts in water glass. Hands to Herbert.)

Herbert: **(Drinks)** Yuk!

Mrs White: The yarns these old soldiers spin! The idea of our listening to such nonsense, and even joining in! How could wishes be granted in these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you father?

Herbert: Might drop on his head from the sky. **(Holds head.)**

Mr White: Morris said the things happened so naturally, that you might if you so wished, attribute it to coincidence.

Herbert: Well, don't break into the money before I come back. I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, avaricious man, and we shall have to disown you.

Mrs White: I'll come and see you off; that sounds like the postman whistling.

(Herbert exits. Mrs White exits)

Mrs White: **(Offstage)** Bye love, see you tonight. I've got some nice liver and onions for tea.

Herbert: **(Offstage)** Eeegh!

Mrs White: **(Offstage)** You'll be feeling better by then.

(SFX: Eerie Indian music; just a few bars.)

Scene 4 – Front room, continuous.

(Mrs White enters with an envelope)

Mrs White: Look, the postman's brought us an envelope. Mr and Mrs White, it says in neat handwriting. A brown envelope, that means business. Who can be writing? Perhaps it's got the £200 inside **(laughs)**. Wouldn't that be funny?

Mr White: Perhaps someone's left us a bob or two in their will; £200

Mrs White: Who? No one's died that we know.

Mr White: It could be somebody we didn't know we had.

Mrs White: Shall I open it?

Mr White: Well it won't open itself, unless that's got magical properties too.

Mrs White: Wouldn't you have guessed it! It's the bill from the tailors for your Sunday suit! What a silly lot of nonsense your friend has got us believing. I expect Herbert will have more of his funny remarks for us when he comes home.

Mr White: I never believed in it, not really.

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Mrs White: You hoped; well I hoped as well. I mean £200 would shed some extra rays of sunshine into anyone's life wouldn't it? It's only human nature after all.

Mr White: Morris said that was what the thing preyed upon; human nature.

Mrs White: Perhaps we should have just wished for a new copper for the hot water; been a bit more specific. This one dribbles water everywhere. Well I'd better get on with it in the outhouse

(Mrs White exits)

Mr White: Aye, I'll get the leathers and bucket for the windows.

(Mr White exits. SFX. Clattering of bucket. SFX. Ticking of clock)

Scene 5 – Front room – after lunch

(Mr and Mrs White enter, as if from another room. Mrs White is wearing an apron.)

Mr White: That was nice.

Mrs White: You can't go far wrong with a chunk of bread and cheese with pickle on wash day.

Mr White: Washed down by a drop of stout.

Mrs White: Is that the gate? I thought I heard the latch?

Mrs White: **(Goes to looks out of window)** There's a man.

Mr White: Common enough, men.

Mrs White: He's a particular sort of man; he's very well dressed and he's got a silk hat. Oh no, he's made a mistake, he's gone again. No he's not, he's coming back; he's got his hand on the gate, and he's staring at the house. He looks like a solicitor or something. Eh, perhaps you were right and we've been left some money! Oh, he's opening the gate and coming down the path. I can't answer the door in my apron! What a mess I must look!

(SFX. Knock at door)

Mrs White: I'll stick my apron under the cushion. Tidy yourself up a bit father!

(Mrs White takes off her apron and hides it. Exits)

Mrs White: **(Offstage)** Do come in.

(Mrs White enters with Mr Molyneux)

Mrs White: Excuse the mess; it's wash day you see; all that wind last night, it's blown away all the clouds. And Mr White has been cleaning the windows. You won't normally find us like this.

(Mr Molyneux coughs nervously.)

Mrs White: Please sit down. Would you like a cup of tea? We were about to put the kettle on.

Mr Molyneux: No, no – please don't; though you may need –

Mr White: Have you come with a message for us? A surprise perhaps? Is that why we might need a cup of tea? We've got an inkling we might be in for a surprise.

Mrs White: Oh father! It's just a bit of nonsense!

Mr Molyneux: Are you expecting me? Have you heard?

Mrs White: Heard what? You don't make it sound as if it's a nice surprise? We were expecting a nice surprise.

Mr Molyneux: I'm sorry, it's not a nice surprise at all.

Mrs White: Oh.

Mr Molyneux: My name's Molyneux; Mr Molyneux. I was asked to call. I come from Maw and Meggins.

Mrs White: Our Herbert works there, there's nothing the matter is there? Nothing's happened to Herbert?

Mr White: There, there, mother. Don't jump to conclusions. **(To Mr Molyneux)** You've not brought bad news sir?

Mr Molyneux: I'm sorry, er –

Mrs White: Is he hurt? Is he hurt?

Mr Molyneux: Badly hurt, but he's not in any pain.

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Mrs White: Oh thank God! Thank God for that! Thank --- oh no, oh no!

Mr Molyneux: He was caught in the machinery.

Mr White: Caught in the machinery?

Mr Molyneux: He went to the help of a young lass; got her shawl jammed in the workings. She escaped by wriggling out of her shawl, but he - he should have stopped the machine, but -

Mr White: **(Repeats)** Caught in the machinery.

Mr Molyneux: Everyone says it was unlike him. They say he was usually careful. I'm very sorry to bring you such sad news.

Mr White: Sad news.

(Mrs White screams and sobs)

Mr White: **(To Mr Molyneux)** He was the only one left to us sir. It is hard.

Mr Molyneux: I beg that you will understand that I am only a servant of Maw and Meggins, and that the firm wishes me to convey their sincere sympathy with you in your great loss.

(Mrs White cries and sobs)

Mr White: Mother; mother. Sit down; sit down.

(Mr White helps Mrs White to sit in chair.)

Mr Molyneux: I am their servant and merely obeying orders.

Mr White: No-one is blaming you. It is hard sir, he was our only one.

Mr Molyneux: I was to say that Maw and Meggins disclaim all responsibility.

Mr White: Of course, if he was careless – oh **(sobs)**

Mr Molyneux: **(clears throat)** They admit no liability at all, but in consideration of your son's services, they wish to present you with a certain sum as compensation.

Mrs White: **(Cries out)** How much?

(SFX. Short piece of unworldly sounding Indian music)

Mr Molyneux: Two hundred pounds

Mr White: **(Anguished cry)** Agggggggghhhh!

(Mr Molyneux hands an envelope to Mr White and then exits. Mr and Mrs White exit clutching each other. SFX. Tolling of bell. Ticking of clock. Lights fade off, ticking continues and fades.)

Scene 6 – Front room – 1 week later, evening

(Lights rise slowly. Mrs White enters. Sits and knits silently. Mr White enters with a newspaper and pipe. He sits and turns pages of newspaper blindly.)

Mr White: You haven't spoken all day.

Mrs White: There's nothing to say.

Mr White: We could talk.

Mrs White: What about? He's gone; nothing matters.

Mr White: We matter. We have each other.

Mrs White: He was the sun and we travelled round him. There is no light or warmth left.

Mr White: It's only been a week. It will get easier --- **(voice cracks)**

Mrs White: No it won't. I don't want it to. I'm going to bed.

(Mrs White exits)

Mr White: I won't be long. I'll just finish my pipe, and damp the fire.

(Mr White puffs on pipe; rakes coals. Stands sorrowfully in front of grate. Exits. SFX. clock ticking. Lights fade off, clock continues to tick and fades.)

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Scene 7 – Front room, night.

(Lights rise slightly to simulate subdued light. Mrs White enters in dressing gown. Looking out of the window; weeping softly. Mr White enters yawning in dressing gown)

- Mr White:** Mother, come away from the window. Come back to bed, you'll get cold.
- Mrs White:** It's colder for my son.
- Mr White:** Shall I make you a cup of tea?
- Mrs White:** Go back to sleep. I only want my son. **(Then with a wild cry)** That's it! That's it!
- Mr White:** **(Alarmed)** What it is! What's wrong?
- Mrs White:** **(Wildly)** The paw! The monkey's paw!
- Mr White:** Good God – where? Where is it? What's the matter?
- Mrs White:** I want it! I want it! You've not destroyed it?
- Mr White:** It's on the cupboard where we left it. Why?
- Mrs White:** **(Hysterically)** I only just thought of it! Why didn't I think of it before? How stupid! How stupid! Why didn't you think of it before?
- Mr White:** What? Think of what?
- Mrs White:** The other two wishes. We've only had one!
- Mr White:** Was that not enough!
- Mrs White:** No! We'll have one more. Get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again.
- Mr White:** Good God! You are mad!
- Mrs White:** Get it! Get it and wish --- oh my boy, my boy!
- Mr White:** **(Shakily)** Get back upstairs to bed. You don't know what you are saying.
- Mrs White:** **(Feverishly)** We had the first wish granted; why not the second?
- Mr White:** It was a co-incidence. It had nothing to do with the paw or the wish; how could it?
- Mrs White:** Go and get it and wish!
- Mr White:** He's been dead ten days, and besides he – I wouldn't tell you else, but I was only able to recognize him by his clothing. If he was too terrible for you to see then, how now?
- Mrs White:** **(Shouts)** Do you think I fear the child I've nursed. Bring him back! Go and get it!

Mr White: I'm going to put the light on. The light might make you see some sense!
(Lights rise as Mr White flicks a switch)

Mrs White: **(Shouts)** Do it!

Mr White: **(Gets paw from table. To self)** uggggh – why does it feel so alive! **(To wife)**
This is madness!

Mrs White: **(In an unnatural voice)** Wish!

Mr White: It is foolish and wicked to wish a corpse alive! He is in his grave!

Mrs White: Then he can come out of it. **(Unnatural voice)** Wish!

Mr White: Very well, but don't blame me for the consequences. **(Holds paw aloft in right hand)** I wish my son alive again.

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(SFX. A few bars of eerie Indian music. Mrs White hurries to window and stands there looking out. SFX. Owl hooting)

Mrs White: **(After a few seconds of silence)** There is nothing; only darkness.

Mr White: Let me get you a blanket.

Mrs White: No. He won't come now. I'll come to bed.

(Mr and Mrs White exit after Mr White switches the lights off again. Lights dim to subdued light. SFX clock ticking, owl hooting, mouse squeaking)

Scene 9 – front room, later that night

(Mrs White enters followed by Mr White)

Mr White: It's no good, I can't sleep either. I'll put the kettle on.

(SFX. Soft eerie knock at door)

Mrs White: Was that a knock?

(Mr White has a sharp intake of breath. SFX. Knock is louder this time)

Mrs White: It is a knock! It's the door! **(Rushes to window.)**

Mr White: Come away. It's only the wind rattling the letter box.

(SFX. third knock, resounding through house)

Mrs White: It's Herbert! It's Herbert!

Mr White: You're not to go to the door! You don't know who it is in the middle of the night!

(Mr White attempts to restrain Mrs White)

Mrs White: It's my boy; it's Herbert! I forgot the cemetery is two miles away! What are you stopping me for? Let me go! I must open the door

(Mrs White struggles to get past Mr White.)

Mr White: Stop it! For God's sake don't let it in! It's an abomination.

(Mrs White moves deftly and unbalances Mr White who stumbles out of the way.)

Mrs White: I told you to let me go! How can you be afraid of your own son! I'm coming Herbert! I'm coming!

(Mrs White exits. SFX. knocking, knocking, knocking)

Mr White: **(Calls)** Mother --- don't --- don't open the door! Stop, you don't know what you're doing! **(Grabs poker from fire.)**

(SFX. offstage. Door curtain wrenched open; chain unlocked; one bolt drawn back; a jiggling of another bolt. Mrs White, offstage, gives a cry of exasperation.)

Mrs White: **(Calls, offstage)** The wretched top bolt won't undo. Help me for pity's sake!

(SFX. knocking, knocking, knocking)

Mrs White: **(Offstage. Shouts)** Herbert! Stay there! I'm going to get a chair.

(Mrs White enters. Picks up light stool.)

Mrs White: (Calls) Herbert I'm coming to unbolt the door, wait for me!
(Mrs White exits carrying stool.)

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Mr White: (To self, looking desperately around room) Where is it? Where did I put the damned thing! (To self after locating the paw) Here it is; here's the paw! (Holds the paw aloft) I wish – (he wishes silently.)
(SFX: Eerie Indian music. A howl of wind. Lights flicker on and off for a moment. SFX. bolt being drawn back; door opening.)

Mrs White: (Offstage, a howl of anguish) He's not here; he's gone; he's gone!
(Mrs White enters)

Mrs White: What are you doing with the paw! (Shouts) What did you wish? What did you wish?
(SFX. An infant crying offstage. Mrs White and Mr White stand frozen.)

Mrs White: (Looks offstage) There's a bundle on the doorstep!
(Mrs White exits. Mr White stands staring. Mrs White enters with bundle in arms)

Mrs White: It's a child; somebody's left a child on the doorstep! Tell me what you wished for?

Mr White: I didn't wish Herbert any harm. I just wished that things were back to how they used to be, before all this started. Before the monkey's paw.

Mrs White: (Laughs wildly) That's it! You've wished too far back! Herbert's gone right back to being a baby! (Gabbles) Oh the miraculous paw! I thought we'd lost him forever; we're not too old to raise him again!

Mr White: You can't keep it! Someone's abandoned it here. Look at the old coloured shawl it's wrapped up in. It's probably a gypsy's child. We don't wrap infants in these gaudy colours.

Mrs White: It's Herbert! I know; a mother knows! I'm going to unwrap him in front of the fire. (Croons) Welcome home my little one.

Mr White: (Incredulous) Can it really be Herbert? It was the third and last wish. Can it really be a miracle?
(SFX. infant type noise)

Mrs White: There, there, you'll be able to breathe easier once this cloth's away from your face – (stops still and looks at its face)

Mr White: Its face!

Mrs White: Its – it’s screwed up because it’s new born! Babies look like that when they’re new born, can’t you remember?

Mr White: Unwrap it. **(Takes a piece of shawl to unwrap bundle)**

Mrs White: Not so fast, not so fast; you don’t want it to get a shock. **(She gently exposes a bit more of bundle)** --- Oh look at its little hands. All pink and --- oh **(she stops.)**

Mr White: **(Stares)** Turn them over! Turn its hands over!

Mrs White: **(Stares)** Herbert had –

Mr White: No! No! Herbert did not have black hair all over his arms. This, this is not a child; these are not hands at all; **(weakly)** these are its paws; its two paws – it’s the monkey!

(Mr and Mrs White freeze in attitudes of horror. Lights off. Tabs closed. SFX. Eerie Indian music.)

THE END