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The Monkey's Foot

Mr. and Mrs. White lived in a small house. Their son Hebert lived with them. Herbert worked in a factory. He worked at a big machine. Mr. White worked in an office. Mrs. White was a housewife.

There were not many houses near them. 'I want a house near the town,' said Mr. White. 'But its 400 pounds for a house near the town, and we're not rich.' 'No,' said Mrs. White, 'but we're happy here, aren't we, Herbert?' 'Yes, but Dad's right,' said Herbert. 'We're a long way from the shops and the train and the bus.'

One evening, an old friend came to dinner. His name was Mr. Morris. The Whites liked to hear his stories. He talked about many countries. When Mr. Morris knocked at the door, Mr. White opened it.

'Come in, come in,' he said. 'Good to see you. How are you? Come and sit by the fire. Whisky?'

'Thank you,' said Mr. Morris. 'How are you, Mrs. White, Herbert?'

'Very well, thank you,' they said.

'Dinner isn't ready,' said Mrs. White. 'Tell us a story, Mr. Morris.' 'A story about India,' said Herbert. 'I'm going to India, some day.'

Mr. Morris said nothing. He had something in his hand.

'What's that, Mr. Morris?' said Mrs. White.

'This?' said Mr. Morris. 'It's a monkey's foot.'

'A monkey's foot?' said the Whites.

'Yes. Don't touch it.'

'Why not?' said Herbert.

Mr. Morris looked at the fire.

'Mr. Morris, aren't you well?' asked Mrs. White.

'Oh yes, thank you,' said Mr. Morris. 'I'm not ill.'

'Tell us about the monkey's foot,' said Herbert.

'Yes,' said Mr. Morris. "I got this foot from a man in India. He said..."

'Yes?' said the Whites.

'With this foot you can ask for three things. You can have three wishes.'

'How?' said Herbert.

'Take the foot in your hand and say, "I wish for..."

Then say what you want.'

'And you asked for three things?' said Mrs. White.

'No.' Mr. Morris looked at the fire again.

'I only asked for one thing,' he said. 'I have one wish. I got it'

'A good thing?' asked Herbert.

'No, it was not,' said Mr. Morris. 'No more questions, please. You always have a good big fire here. I'm going to put the monkey's foot on your fire.'

'Don't,' said Herbert. 'Give it to us.'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'Because you are my friends.'

'Dinner's ready,' said Mrs. White.

Mr. Morris put the foot on the fire he went to the table with Mr. White. Herbert jumped up and got the foot from the fire. He put it on a little table. Mr. Morris did not see it.

After dinner Mr. Morris went home. 'Here's the foot,' said Herbert. 'I'm going to ask for something.'

'Don't, Herbert,' said Mrs. White.

Herbert did not listen to her. 'Dad,' he said, 'You want 400 pounds. Wish for 400 pounds. Here's the foot.'

'I want 400 pounds,' said Mr. White.

Then he said, 'The foot jumped in my hand!'

'Where's the money?' said Herbert. 'There's no money here. I'm going to bed.'

'Put that thing on the fire,' said Mrs. White. 'I don't like it.'

But Mr. White put the foot on the table.

In the morning, at breakfast, Herbert said, 'No letters today. No 400 pounds for you, Dad.'

'I'm happy here without the money,' said Mrs. White.

Herbert went to his factory. 'Back to my machine,' he said. Mr. White went to his office. Mrs. White worked in the house.

When Mr. White came home in the evening, he said, 'Any money?'

'No,' said Mrs. White.

'Where's Herbert?' said Mr. White.

'He isn't back from the factory,' said Mrs. White.

Seven o'clock came. Eight o'clock. Herbert wasn't back. 'Where is he?' said Mrs. White.

Then there was a knock at the door.

'Open it,' said Mrs. White.

Mr. White opened the door. A man was there. He said, 'Mr. White? The father of Herbert White?'

'Yes.'

'I'm from the factory,' said the man.

'Come in.'

'Thank you,' said the man. He had something in his hand. 'This is a letter,' he said. 'A letter from the factory.'

'Where's Herbert?' said Mrs. White. 'Where's my boy?'

The man said nothing.

'Is Herbert ill?' said Mr. White.

'No,' said the man. 'Not ill.'

'Is he...?'

'He is dead,' said the man. 'Your son is dead.'

'Dead?'

'The machine,' said the man. 'The big machine...'

'I want to see my son,' said Mrs. White.

'No,' said the man again. 'The machine...'

Mrs. White said nothing.

'This letter,' said the man. 'It's from the factory. We want to give you some money.'

'Money?'

'400 pounds,' said the man.

Mr. and Mrs. White were in bed. They were not asleep.

'Are you cold, my love?' said Mr. White.

'No,' she said. 'But my boy Herbert is cold tonight.'

Then she said, 'Where is it?'

'What?'

'The foot. The monkey's foot. We have two wishes. I'm going to get the foot.'

'No, no, my love.'

But she went to the sitting room.

'Here it is,' she said. 'On the little table.'

'Please, please, my love, don't,' said Mr. White.

She said nothing. The monkey's foot was in her hand.

'I want my son alive again,' she said.

The foot jumped in her hand.

'Come back to bed, my love. You're ill,' said Mr. White.

But she listened. Something walked up the road to the house.

Something knocked at the door. Again and again, something knocked at the door.

'Open the door!' she said.

'No,' said Mr. White

'I'm going to open it,' she said. 'I'm coming my boy, I'm coming!'

Mr. White looked for the monkey's foot.

'Here it is,' he said. 'I wish my son dead again!'

The foot jumped in his hand.

Mrs. White opened the door.

There was nothing there.