

THE MONKEY'S PAW

written by

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based on the short story by W.W. Jacobs

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OVER BLACK:

HENRY (V.O.)
What the hell is that?

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A small, but inviting space. The blinds are closed. The overhead light casts a warm glow on -

KATHERINE and HENRY (both 50s) sitting at the table with SERGEANT MORRIS (also 50s).

Their son, MIKE (mid-20s), lies on the couch in the neighboring living room, watching TV.

On the table between the three -

A SMALL MONKEY'S PAW. Flesh rotted and mummified. One toe missing.

Sergeant Morris looks down at the paw, a look of revulsion on his face.

SERGEANT MORRIS
Something I picked up in
Afghanistan. Supposedly, it had a
spell put on it by an old Muslim
holy man. He wanted to show that
fate ruled people's lives, and
that those who interfered with it
did so at their own risk.

Henry and Katherine eye him - he can't possibly be serious.

SERGEANT MORRIS
It will give you three wishes.

KATHERINE
You've got to be kidding me.

Mike leans up to look at them, laughing.

MIKE
Take it, Dad. Make us rich.

SERGEANT MORRIS
Laugh if you want, but I'm telling
you it's true. I swear.

HENRY
Then why do you want to get rid of
it?

SERGEANT MORRIS
I've had my wishes.

Sergeant Morris brings his cup to his mouth and drains the contents slowly. Eyes never moving from the paw.

SERGEANT MORRIS
Now it can be someone else's problem.

HENRY
So naturally you thought of me?

SERGEANT MORRIS
Of course.

HENRY
Twenty years of serving together,
and this is what it's worth?

Henry picks up the paw, turning it over in his hand. Taking in every angle.

HENRY
How stupid do you think I am?

Sergeant Morris reaches for it -

SERGEANT MORRIS
If you don't want it, I'll find
someone else.

Henry pulls it away, clutching the paw tightly to his chest. Like a child having to give up a toy.

HENRY
If you don't want it, then I guess
I'll take it.

Mike chuckles from the living room.

Katherine looks at her husband. She puts her hand on his, pleading with her eyes.

KATHERINE
Is this a joke? Are you trying to
get back at me for something? Do
you really believe in this crap?

HENRY
What could it hurt?

Sergeant Morris tips his glass at Henry, then quickly finishes it off. He sits the glass down gently on the table. Looks up at Henry -

SERGEANT MORRIS
Why don't you make your first wish?

HENRY
Right now?

SERGEANT MORRIS
No harm, right? I mean, you don't believe it works, right?

Henry looks down at the paw in his hand.

SERGEANT MORRIS
Just hold it tightly, say your wish out loud, and you're all set.

Katherine hangs her head. Gets up from the table.

KATHERINE
I'm going to go find something better to. Which shouldn't be hard.

She leaves.

Henry closes his eyes, clutches the paw firmly.

HENRY
I wish I had 30,000 dollars.

SERGEANT MORRIS
Why 30,000?

HENRY
That's what's left on the mortgage.

SERGEANT MORRIS
Hey, whatever makes you happy.

HENRY
How long's it usually take?

SERGEANT MORRIS
It varies. Could be hours, could be days.

Sergeant Morris checks his watch. He stands, grabbing his coat from the back of his chair.

SERGEANT MORRIS
I think I've caused enough damage for one day. I'll see you around.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Henry holds the door open for Sergeant Morris, nodding a goodbye.

HENRY
Good seeing you again.

SERGEANT MORRIS
It was nice playing catchup. Good luck.

He walks away toward his car.

Henry shuts the door. Turns, heads to the couch. He plops down beside his son.

Mike turns off the TV. He looks at his father, shaking his head.

MIKE
Funny, Dad, I never knew you were so gullible.

HENRY
It's all in good fun.

MIKE
Whatever you have to tell yourself. They say when you get old, the mind's the first thing to go.

HENRY
Don't you have work tomorrow?

MIKE
Yeah, so?

HENRY
Shouldn't you get some sleep. You don't want to be unless. Don't know how they'd tell a difference, though.

MIKE
Ha ha ha. You're hilarious. I'm going.

Mike stands up and heads for the stairs.

MIKE
Check your pillow tonight.
(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)
Maybe the tooth fairy will leave
you 30,000 dollars.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry lies in bed, reading.

Katherine sits at the vanity, getting ready to turn in for the night. She glares at Henry's reflection in the mirror.

KATHERINE
You don't think that stupid things
going to work, do you?

Henry rolls his eyes.

We get the sense this isn't the first time they've had this conversation.

HENRY
Of course not.

KATHERINE
Then why did you take it? It's
disgusting.

HENRY
I thought it'd be funny.

KATHERINE
Well it wasn't. You threw it away
like I asked, right?

HENRY
Yes, sweetheart. It's in the
trashcan out back.

KATHERINE
Thank you.

Katherine climbs into bed. Turns off her lamp.

KATHERINE
Goodnight.

HENRY
'Night.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Henry watches the news, nursing a beer.

Katherine stands by the window, peering through the curtains.

HENRY
What are you doing?

KATHERINE
Mike's late.

HENRY
So?

KATHERINE
So?! What if something's wrong?

HENRY
He's a grown man, he can take care
of himself.

KATHERINE
What if something happened. I have
a bad feeling.

HENRY
You always have a bad feeling.

KATHERINE
Not like this. Something's wrong.
He would call if he was going to
be late.

HENRY
I'm sure he's fine.

THE PHONE RINGS.

Katherine hurries and picks it up.

KATHERINE
Hello?
(beat)
Yes. I'm his mother...

Henry watches curiously as the color drains from Katherine's face. Tears stream down her cheeks.

She collapses to the floor.

Henry scrambles out of his chair. Rushes over to his wife.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Henry and Katherine stand with a group of MOURNERS as they watch Mike's casket being lowered into his grave.

Katherine is barely able to stand, sobbing uncontrollably. Nearly hyperventilating.

Henry does his best to steady her. His face ashen with grief.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

All the lights are off. Everything seems oddly cold and isolated.

On the table -

A LETTER from Mike's employer. An amount for a SETTLEMENT at the bottom: \$30,000.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's late. Pitch black. Silent.

Henry wakes. Rolls over, extending his arm -

Katherine is gone.

Henry sits up, trying to take in the room. He sees Katherine sitting by the window.

HENRY

Honey, come back to bed. You need sleep.

KATHERINE

I can't sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I see Mike's face.

Henry gets out of bed. Turns on the lamp.

As his eyes adjust to the light, he notices that Katherine is wearing shoes that are CAKED IN MUD. She's still wearing her jacket, soaked with rain.

Her hands are clasped together and resting gently on her lap.

Henry walks closer...

HENRY

Honey, what did you - ?

KATHERINE

I had to try bringing him back.
(voice cracking)
I had to try...

HENRY
What did you do?

Katherine OPENS HER HANDS -

REVEAL:

THE MONKEY'S PAW.

Henry stares at her. Flooded with emotion. His mind racing in a million places.

HENRY
You didn't?

KATHERINE
It worked for the money! I know
it's stupid, but it does work.

HENRY
Maybe it was just a coincidence?
What happened to Mike was an
accident. I miss him too -

KATHERINE
Then why don't you want him back?

HENRY
I do. But we don't know what will
come back. It could be our son, it
could be something else. Something
worse.

KATHERINE
I'll take that risk. I'll do
anything to have my son back!

HENRY
Katherine! How could -

A LOUD THUD FROM DOWNSTAIRS.

Katherine's eyes go wide. She drops the monkey's paw on the floor. SPRINTS from the room.

Henry hurries after her.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Katherine hurries down the steps, rushing for the front door.

Henry stops near the top of the landing.

ANOTHER KNOCK on the front door. This one louder, more forceful.

KATHERINE
I'm coming, sweetheart. Mommy's coming.

HENRY
Katherine, please don't do this. Whatever's out there isn't our son.

KATHERINE
Shut up!

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine fidgets with the chain on the door, her hands barely able to work in her frantic state.

Henry turns and runs for the bedroom.

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Henry throws himself onto the floor, grabbing the paw.

He clutches it tightly, muttering the final wish...

INT. FLANAGAN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Katherine finally WRENCHES THE DOOR OPEN -

The smile and hopefulness drains from her face as she drops to the floor, SCREAMING IN SORROW.

Henry inches up behind his wife. He looks down at her, his face etched with remorse.

He looks outside -

THERE ISN'T A SOUL IN SIGHT.

As Katherine's shrieks fill the quiet night air, Henry continues to stare into the darkness, never knowing if he made the right choice -

SMASH TO BLACK.