

Listen Close, Listen Well

Source Material

(Footsteps on a wooden stage in an empty theater. The sound of a spotlight turning on.)

NARRATOR

Ah! Look! You're finally here. Of course you were expected. This evening I'll be taking you through some of my favorite stories. So sit back, relax. *(really close to the mic)* I said, sit back. Relax. *(normal)* Make sure you listen close and listen well.

We begin by traveling to imperialist Britain in 1902; a short story by WW Jacobs adapted for your ears tonight. Are you ready to make your wish? You are. Behold, *The Monkey's Paw*.

The Monkey's Paw

Written by W.W. Jacobs (1902) Adapted by Steven Gross (2021)

"Be careful what you wish for, you may receive it." – Anonymous

NARRATOR

Outside, the night was cold and wet, but in the small living room the curtains were closed and the fire burned brightly. The White family sat comfortably as the father and son played chess and the mother knit, examining their game.

Father and Son play chess

Father plays a questionable move with the king.

MOTHER

Hah!

Father grumbles and gasps seeing the mistake.

FATHER

Mmmm... listen to the wind, son!

SON

...I'm listening...

Son makes a move.

SON

Check.

Father takes a sharp inhale and makes a move.

FATHER

Well. I should hardly think that he'll come tonight.

Son makes a move.

SON

Mate.

FATHER

Gah! Hmph... He should've been here ten minutes ago, shouldn't he have? The worst of living this far out...

Father continues to grumble.

MOTHER

Never mind, dear, perhaps you'll win the next one.

Father starts to speak and seeing a knowing look between mother and son, stops and smiles

The gate bangs shut and heavy footsteps come toward the door

FATHER

There he is.

Father rises quickly and opens the door

FATHER

Ah! Good evening. Oh I did hear, Morris, and my deepest condolences for your loss.

SERGEANT

Oh thank you. I have indeed seen brighter days.

MOTHER

Tut, tut!

Mother coughs gently and Sergeant fully enters and Father shuts the door

FATHER

Sergeant-Major Morris, my wife, and my son Herbert.

SERGEANT

Ah, Mrs. White, how lovely a home you have prepared. And Herbert, Jr.! You are, my boy, as your father described.

Sergeant shakes hands

MOTHER

Please sit.

Sergeant sits and Father gets whiskey and glasses

NARRATOR

After the third glass of whiskey, the Sergeant's eyes got brighter and he began to talk. The little family listened to the soldier's stories of numerous adventures to the most exotic and distant parts.

SERGEANT

—and the bluest waters that one ever could see. That Indian Ocean! Nothing like the channel that we call our own.

FATHER

Twenty-one years of it. When he went away he was a thin young man. Now look at him.

MOTHER

He doesn't look to have taken much harm.

FATHER

I'd like to go to India myself. Just to look around a bit, you know.

SERGEANT

Better where you are.

Sergeant puts down his empty glass and sighs softly

FATHER

I should like to see those old mystical temples and the street entertainers. What was that that you started telling me the other day about a monkey's paw or something, Morris?

SERGEANT

Nothing. At least, nothing worth hearing.

MOTHER

Monkey's paw?

SERGEANT

Well, it's just a bit of what you might call magic, perhaps.

Father, Mother, and Son lean forward excitedly.

Sergeant raises glass to lips, puts it down, Father fills it.

Sergeant searches in his pocket

SERGEANT

To look at it, it's just an ordinary little paw, dried to a mummy.

Sergeant draws the paw out of his pocket.

MOTHER

Ugh!

SON

Hmm.

Son takes the paw and examines it.

Father takes it and examines

FATHER

And what is there special about it?

Father places it on the table

SERGEANT

It had a spell put on it by an old magical holy man. He wanted to show that fate ruled people's lives, and that those who tried to change it would be sorry. He put a spell on it so that three different men could each have three wishes from it.

Father, Mother, and Son laugh lightly and then regret it.

SON

Well, have you made all three, sir?

SERGEANT

I have.

MOTHER

And did you really have the three wishes granted?

SERGEANT

I did.

Sergeant drinks and his glass taps against his teeth

MOTHER

And has anybody else wished?

SERGEANT

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

Silence.

FATHER

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

Sergeant shakes his head

SERGEANT

Fancy I suppose. I did have some idea of selling it, but I don't think I will. It has caused me enough trouble already.

FATHER

If you could have another three wishes, would you have them?

SERGEANT

I don't know. I don't know.

Sergeant takes the paw and throws it onto the fire.

Father cries out and takes it out.

SERGEANT

Better let it burn.

FATHER

If you don't want it Morris, give it to me.

SERGEANT

I won't. I threw it on the fire. If you keep it, don't hold me responsible for what happens. Throw it on the fire like a sensible man.

Father shakes his head and examines the paw

FATHER

How do you do it?

SERGEANT

Hold it up in your right hand, and state your wish out loud so that you can be heard. But I warn you of what might happen.

Mother stands and begins to set for dinner

MOTHER

Sounds like the 'Arabian Nights'. Don't you think you might wish for four pairs of hands for me.

Mother, Father, and Son laugh

Sergeant grabs Father's arm

SERGEANT

If you must wish. Wish for something sensible.

Father puts the paw in his pocket. Stands.

FATHER

Oh of course, sensible. I do wonder—

NARRATOR

The family and their guest moved to the table and over the course of dinner the talisman was partially forgotten. At the end of the meal, the night closing in, the Sergeant bid them farewell to catch the last train of the night.

FATHER

Goodnight then old friend. Safe journey.

Father walks Sergeant to the door, opens it, Sergeant leaves.

Father closes the door.

SON

If the tale about the monkey's paw is just as true as his other stories, there's no reason to take much stake in it.

MOTHER

Did you give anything for it, dear?

FATHER

A little. He didn't want it, but I made him take it. And he pressed me again to throw it away.

SON

Not likely! Why, we're going to be rich, and famous, and happy. Wish to be a king, father, to begin with; then mother can't complain all the time.

Mother squeals and laughing, chases Son around the table with a cloth.

Father takes the paw from his pocket.

FATHER

I don't know what to wish for, and that's a fact. It seems to me I've got all I want.

Son puts his hand on Father's shoulder

SON

If you only paid off the house, you'd be quite happy, wouldn't you! Well, wish for two hundred pounds, then; that'll just do it.

FATHER

Hm! Gah!

Son sits at the piano and plays a few grand chords

FATHER

I wish for two hundred pounds.

Son plays a grand final chord.

Father screams, drops the paw, and Son and Mother run to him

FATHER

It moved! As I wished, it twisted in my hand like a snake.

Son picks up the paw and puts it on the table

SON

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

MOTHER

It must have been your imagination, dear.

Father shakes his head

FATHER

Never mind, though; there's no harm done, but it gave me a shock all the same.

They all sit, Son and Father smoke.

The wind blows higher than ever. A door bangs upstairs and Father jumps at it.

Silence.

MOTHER

We best be getting to bed now.

SON

I expect you'll find the cash tied up in a big bag in the middle of your bed and something horrible sitting on top of your wardrobe watching you as you pocket your ill-gotten money.

FATHER

Goodnight.

Father and Mother exit to their bedroom

NARRATOR

Herbert, sitting alone in the darkness, stared into the dying fire and in it began to see animalistic and horrific faces. The eyes stared back at him fiercely until—

Son shudders, blows out the candle.

NARRATOR

The next morning at the breakfast table, the family laughed at their fears and dispelled belief in the paw that sat, tossed on the cabinet.

MOTHER

I suppose all old soldiers are the same. The idea of our listening to such nonsense! How could wishes be granted these days? And if they could, how could two hundred pounds hurt you, darling?

SON

Might drop on his head from the sky.

FATHER

Morris said the things happened so naturally that you could miss the connection altogether.

Son stands and prepares to go to work

SON

Well don't break into the money before I come back. I'm afraid it'll turn you into a mean, greedy old man, and we shall have to tell everyone that we don't know you.

Mother laughs, follows Son to the door, opens it, and watches Son walk away before closing the door and returning to the table

FATHER

The thing moved in my hand; that I'll swear to.

MOTHER

(calmly) You thought it did.

FATHER

I say it did. There was no thought about it; I had just—

NARRATOR

The rest of the couple's day proceeded as one could expect. By evening, they were sitting comfortably again by the fire when Mrs. White noticed a man pacing outside their gate.

Mother gasps looking out the window watching a man pacing outside

FATHER

What's the matter?

MOTHER

There's a man in a very fine suit pacing outside our door. What is the matter indeed?

Mother takes off her apron, places it under the cushion on her chair.

She walks to the door, opens it.

MOTHER

Good evening sir. Won't you come in?

Lawyer enters and Mother shuts the door.

LAWYER

Mmm.

MOTHER

I do dearly apologize for the appearance of the room at this moment and that of my husband.

Silence.

LAWYER

I—was asked to call. *(cleaning something from his pants)* I come from Maw and Meggins.

Mother jumps up.

MOTHER

(breathlessly) Is anything the matter? Has anything happened to Herbert? What is it? What is it?

FATHER

(hurriedly) There, there darling. Sit down, and don't jump to a conclusion. You've not brought bad news, I'm sure sir.

LAWYER

I'm sorry—

MOTHER

(wildly) Is he hurt?

Lawyer nods.

LAWYER

(quietly) Badly hurt, but he is not in any pain.

MOTHER

Oh thank God! Thank God for that! Thank...

Silence.

LAWYER

He was caught in the machinery.

FATHER

Caught in the machinery, yes.

Father sits staring out the window and holds Mother's hand

FATHER

He was the only one left to us. It is hard.

Lawyer coughs and walks to the window

LAWYER

The firm wishes me to pass on their great sadness about your loss. I ask that you please understand that I am only their servant and simply doing what they told me to do.

Silence.

LAWYER

I was to say that Maw and Meggins accept no responsibility. But, although they don't believe that they have a legal requirement to make a payment to you for your loss, in view of your son's services they wish to present you with a certain sum.

Father drops Mother's hand and stands.

FATHER

How much?

LAWYER

Two hundred pounds.

Mother screams. Father smiles weakly and then faints.

NARRATOR

The days passed, a funeral was held, and they realized that they had no choice but to accept the situation. It was about a week after that when Mr. White woke up in the night and found himself alone in his bed.

Mother cries quietly at the window. Father sits up in bed.

FATHER

Come back. You will be cold.

MOTHER

It is colder for my son.

Mother cries. Father slowly falls back asleep.

Mother screams and Father shoots awake.

MOTHER

THE PAW! THE MONKEY'S PAW!

FATHER

Where? Where is it? What's the matter?

Mother runs and nearly trips to Father

MOTHER

(quietly) I want it. You've not destroyed it?

FATHER

It's in the living room, on the shelf above the fireplace. Why?

Mother cries and laughs and kisses Father's cheek.

MOTHER

I only just thought of it. Why didn't I think of it before? Why didn't you think of it?

FATHER

Think of what?

MOTHER

The other two wishes. We've only had one.

FATHER

(angrily) Was not that enough?

MOTHER

No! We'll have one more. Go down and get it quickly, and wish our boy alive again.

Father fully sits up and throws off the blankets.

FATHER

Good God, you are mad!

MOTHER

(breathing quickly) Get it. get it quickly, and wish—Oh my boy, my boy!

Father strikes a match and lights a candle.

FATHER

Get back to bed. You don't know what you are saying.

MOTHER

We had the first wish granted, why not the second?

FATHER

A c-c-coincidence.

MOTHER

(shaking with excitement) Go get it and wish.

FATHER

(voice shaking) He has been dead ten days, and besides he—I would—I could only recognize him by his clothing. His face was—far too terrible—I would not wish that upon you.

Mother pulls Father to the door.

MOTHER

Bring him back. Do you think I fear the child I have nursed?

Father goes down the steps to the living room, feeling his way to the fireplace

He gets the paw, gropes around, finding his way to the stairway.

Father climbs the stairs and enters the bedroom.

MOTHER

WISH!

FATHER

(weakly) It is foolish and wicked.

MOTHER

WISH!

Father raises his hand with the paw in it

FATHER

I wish my son alive again.

The paw falls to the floor. Father sinks into a chair.

Mother walks to the window and opens the curtains.

NARRATOR

She stood at the window waiting and watching. And when the candle finally went out without a resurrected son nearby, the old man went back to bed, and a minute afterward the old woman silently laid down beside him.

Silence. The clock ticks. Night sounds.

After some time, Father takes the matches, lights one, goes downstairs.

The flame goes out at the base of the stairs, Father starts to light another and there's a soft knock at the door.

The matches fall to the floor. Father holds his breath.

Another knock. Father runs back up the stairs to the bedroom and closes the door.

Another knock heard throughout the house.

MOTHER

(sitting up quickly) WHAT'S THAT?

FATHER

(shakily) A rat, a rat. It passed me on the stairs.

A loud knock echoes through the house.

MOTHER

It's Herbert! It's Herbert!

Mother runs to the bedroom door and Father catches her by the arm before she can open it. Mother struggles against his grip.

FATHER

(low and scared) What are you going to do?

MOTHER

It's my boy; it's Herbert! I forgot it was two miles away. What are you holding me for? Let go. I must open the door.

FATHER

(shaking) For God's sake don't let it in.

MOTHER

You're afraid of your own son. Let me go. I'm coming, Herbert; I'm coming.

Another knock. Then another. Mother breaks free, opens the door, and runs down the stairs. Father follows her to the top of the stairs.

Mother pulls the chain back on the front door and opens the bottom lock.

MOTHER

(breathing heavily) The top lock. Come down. I can't reach it.

Father searches in the bedroom on hands and knees for the paw.

A series of quick loud knocks.

*Mother moves a chair and puts it against the door. She stands on it and begins to open
the top lock.*

At the same time, Father finds the paw. He whispers a wish that we can't hear.

The knocking stops but the echoes reverberate.

Mother pulls the chair back and opens the door.

A cold wind blows up the staircase.

Mother cries out and Father runs to her.

Father runs out the door to the gate.

NARRATOR

But the streetlight opposite shone on a quiet and deserted road.

NARRATOR

(still in Trans-Atlantic accent) Mmmm. Beautiful story, isn't it? There is something so.... *(no accent)* succulent...to that tempting magic. Would you wish to wipe away your gravest errors?

Our night in the dark continues with a story to bring us a bit closer. Wouldn't you want to be closer? Think of me in your dreams? I bring to you, Ian Farrell's *Seities*.

SEITIES

by Ian Farrell

CHARACTERS

TRUTH: 20, any gender, could be anybody.

MIMIC: Looks, sounds, is identical to Truth.

NOTES

Truth and Mimic should be played by the same actor.

This piece was written to be an auditory experience.

“ ... ” denotes a pause in speech.

Human noises and repeating of certain words are suggestions, actors should take liberties with these lines.

(We're deep underground. It's dark, cold. The room is small, and the sound reverberates. It's difficult to breathe. There's a constant smack of dripping blood falling on concrete like the ticking of a clock. This will never stop. Under a single light source, TRUTH is passed out on the ground. In the dark, there's someone else in the room. Familiar screaming pierces through from several floors above. TRUTH is jolted awake.)

TRUTH:

Hello? Where, where am I?

(TRUTH struggles to their feet. They're weak.)

TRUTH:

How did I get here..? I was, I was in my apartment... Is there anybody there? Gray, please help me...

(TRUTH moves to the nearest wall. Their footsteps push aside trash; wrappers, empty glass bottles, scrap metal, etc. They strike the wall. This shakes the entire room for a beat. The vibrations ripple through the floors above and below, shaking the entire structure. These vibrations move farther and farther away.)

TRUTH:

There's only a little light... If anyone can hear me, my name is Truth, I don't know where I am... it's hard to breathe.

(TRUTH waits for a beat, trying to control their breath. No one is coming. They walk along the walls of the room, searching for an exit. They're hit by the falling blood from the ceiling. TRUTH jolts back.)

TRUTH:

The ceiling... it's leaking blood..

(TRUTH turns, and they realize the other figure in the room. Beat. TRUTH's breathing panics.)

TRUTH:

Is someone there? Show yourself.

(A beat of silence, until the pair speaks. MIMIC's voice is identical to TRUTH's. They both speak at the same time)

TRUTH:

Who are you?

MIMIC:

Who are you?

(Beat.)

TRUTH:

You have my... How..?

I just want help, please.

Stop! Why won't you help me?

MIMIC:

You have my... How..?

I just want help, please.

Stop! Why won't you help me?

(Physical struggle can be heard on the floor above. Following it, a door is slammed shut. There's an indiscernible shouting from floors below.)

TRUTH:

Are you mocking me?

How do you sound like that...

You can't just be an echo. I can see your shadow. You must have answers?

Just, fucking stop, please.

This room, there's no windows or light or anything...

Are we underground? Do you know?

...

You are mocking me.

I bet you locked me in here.

You creep in the dark...

MIMIC:

Are you mocking me?

How do you sound like that...

You can't just be an echo. I can see your shadow. You must have answers?

Just, fucking stop, please.

This room, there's no windows or light or anything...

Are we underground? Do you know?

...

You are mocking me.

I bet you locked me in here.

You creep in the dark...

I will not respect a thief.
Are you the one who threw me in this
disgusting bunker?!
Fucking answer me!

I will not respect a thief.
Are you the one who threw me in this
disgusting bunker?!
Fucking answer me!

*(Exhausted breaths in unison for a long beat. TRUTH slowly staggers into the darkness.
Their footsteps are slow, and heavy. Full of hesitation.)*

TRUTH:
Please, come into the light. I need to
know who you are.

MIMIC:
Please, come into the light. I need to
know who you are.

*(TRUTH gets far enough into the darkness to peer on MIMIC. Twin screams erupt. TRUTH
staggers backwards.)*

TRUTH:
This, this is a trick! You're a trick.
You can't... You can't steal my face too.
Please, just let me leave.
I saw a door behind you...

MIMIC:
This, this is a trick! You're a trick.
You can't... You can't steal my face too.
Please, just let me leave.
I saw a door behind you...

(The MIMIC's breathing stops.)

TRUTH:
Is that the way out? I'm sorry, I don't want this to be difficult. I have to get back. Please,
let me get to the door. Let me go back to my life.

*(Their breathing has lost synchronization. The MIMIC speaks at the same time that
TRUTH says the corresponding word.)*

TRUTH:

Where did you come from? You, you must have come from somewhere.

Am I right?

Maybe someone left you here too?

Maybe we're both victims?

I can hear the people above and below us.

Do you know who they are?

...

I can see their blood... soaking through the ceiling... pooling on the floor...

I can feel it on my skin. It's still warm...

Someone's dying above...

What if we're next? We could escape together?

What if...

...

What if I'm next?

...

Of course you won't help me. *Whoever* you are.

Are you trying to say something?

I don't understand... I don't know what you want.

Why won't you just speak to me...

...

Who could do this...

I'm, I'm all alone again...

Am I...

MIMIC:

Where.

Am I?

I can hear?

I can see?

I can feel?

Who.

Are you?

Who.

Am I?

I can't,
I can't be dead.
I'd never get to see Gray again...
I'd never get to see anyone.

I want to- no.

I want to.

I have to *live*.

Live.

This can't be real.

You can't be real.

...

Can you just tell me who the fuck you are?!

(MIMIC gasps violently. Aggressively they take as much air as they can, as quickly as they can. The panic persists until their breathing suddenly drops into a slow wheeze. The smacking of the falling blood turns slowly from the constant rhythm of seconds to a more sporadic, uneven cadence. Time stops as heavy breathing, people stomping above, and liquid falling on cement control a beat. Suddenly the wheeze stops, and time starts.

MIMIC speaks.)

MIMIC:

I don't know... who I am...

(MIMIC picks a piece of glass up off the concrete floor.)

MIMIC:

I have a... reflection? Of course.

(The glass falls to the floor. The blood drips. Beat.)

MIMIC:

I am Truth.

TRUTH:

What? You, you can't-

MIMIC:

My name is Truth.

TRUTH:

No. You can't take that too.

MIMIC:

Please.. Help me.

TRUTH:

Stop it.

MIMIC:

I don't... I don't know where I am. Please...

TRUTH:

This is a trick.

MIMIC:

Why won't you help me? I have to get back, please.

TRUTH:

Get back where?

MIMIC:

My partner... Please his name is Gray, I can't, I have to get back to them. Please help me...

TRUTH:

DO NOT say that name. Do not try and take him as well. He's too important.

MIMIC:

I'm not... I'm not trying to take anything. I don't even know how I got here, I just want to go home. He has to be waiting for me, you must understand-

TRUTH:

This has gone far enough. Gray isn't, he isn't yours. You can't just take as you please. You're not me! You're not even real.

MIMIC:

I am! I, I'm Truth! Who else would I be?! Please, you're scaring me...

(TRUTH is pushing themselves back, and throwing whatever they can find on the floor (rocks, trash, glass, etc) at MIMIC hysterically.)

TRUTH:

Get the fuck away from me!

MIMIC:

I don't understand, why do you hate me?

(TRUTH has pushed themselves as far as they can. They bang on the wall like a scared animal attempting to escape. When they do, the entire basement shakes. Each strike on the wall pulsates to the floors above and below.)

TRUTH:

You're a freak! You, you're a monster. I have to get the fuck out.

MIMIC:

But... we're exactly the same.

(TRUTH gives up, and so does the shaking. Someone is smashing glass several floors below. Beat.)

MIMIC:

You... you did this, didn't you? You're the one who left me here?

TRUTH:

No. Stop it.

MIMIC:

That's why you wanna get rid of me! Where are we? Tell me where we are?! I know you fucking know!

TRUTH:

Stop! I don't, I don't know!

MIMIC:

I can hear other people around us, did they help you trap me here?

TRUTH:

This isn't, this can't be real. You are not real.

MIMIC:

You steal my face, and, and then you say I'm not real? I will not respect a thief.

TRUTH:

This is all bullshit! You're the one taking everything!

MIMIC:

No more deception. I need to get out of here. Either move, or... Or I'll force my way through.

TRUTH:

Why?

MIMIC:

Why? Please. Enough with the games. Just move so I can leave.

TRUTH:

But the door is behind you... wait, where'd the, where'd the door go?

MIMIC:

You're the one blocking it.

TRUTH:

When did it get behind me... You were keeping me here! You were blocking the door!

MIMIC:

You know that's not true. I won't fall for this trick.

TRUTH:

How did it move... This can't, none of this...

MIMIC:

Please. Move.

TRUTH:

This isn't real.

(MIMIC picks a discarded glass bottle off of the ground. They smash the end of it with malice.)

MIMIC:

I am real, you are not.

TRUTH:

I'm, I'm real! I have a whole life of memories?!

MIMIC:

Memories you stole from me.

TRUTH:

I lived them! I'm 20 years old, I go to school and, I have a partner and a family and-

MIMIC:

You're a thief!

TRUTH:

I'm from outside Philly, my mother's name is Carla and, and my father's name is Darrel and, and...

MIMIC:

These are basic, easily found facts.

TRUTH:

I've got a home, and, and someone waiting for me in it. And no one can take it away from me and-

MIMIC:

It was never your home.

(TRUTH picks up a bottle from next to them, and smashes the end of it, similar to MIMIC.)

TRUTH:

And I'm fucking real!

(The pair shrieks. They advance towards each other with vindictive footsteps. However, before they connect the attack is interrupted by an identical scream as the start of the play. TRUTH's scream erupts from multiple floors, above and below them. They both stop dead in their tracks. The scream rings in their ears. Beat.)

TRUTH:

Was that my voice?

MIMIC:

Was that my voice?

(A beat of exponential panicked breathing.)

TRUTH:

My voice... what is my voice...

The other people here... are they... me?

MIMIC:

My voice... what is my voice...

The other people here... are they... me?

(Their panic multiplies. Their breaths speed exponentially. All in unison.)

TRUTH:

(Quietly) Do they all look like me?

Who else stole my voice?

How are they me...?

...

...

Am I real?

MIMIC:

(Quietly) Do they all look like me?

Who else stole my voice?

How are they me...?

...

...

Am I real?

(Two thuds. Bodies landing on the floor. Their breathing is broken. A long beat. MIMIC drags themselves towards TRUTH.)

TRUTH:

What, what're you doing?

MIMIC:

What, what're you doing?

(A body drags across the room slowly and dreadfully. The sound of broken glass sliding on the floor.)

TRUTH:

There can only be one of us.

No please, don't!

MIMIC:

There can only be one of us.

No please, don't!

(MIMIC pounces on TRUTH. TRUTH releases the same scream heard twice prior. There's a struggle for control. The broken bottles swing. They're stabbing each other. Mutilating their imposter. Fighting for their life. Their identities melt together into a bloody rage.)

(Eventually, one voice stops.)

(Footsteps to the door. It swings open, and slams shut. On a distant floor above, TRUTH's voice can be heard faintly, saying "Hello? Where, where am I?".)

END PLAY

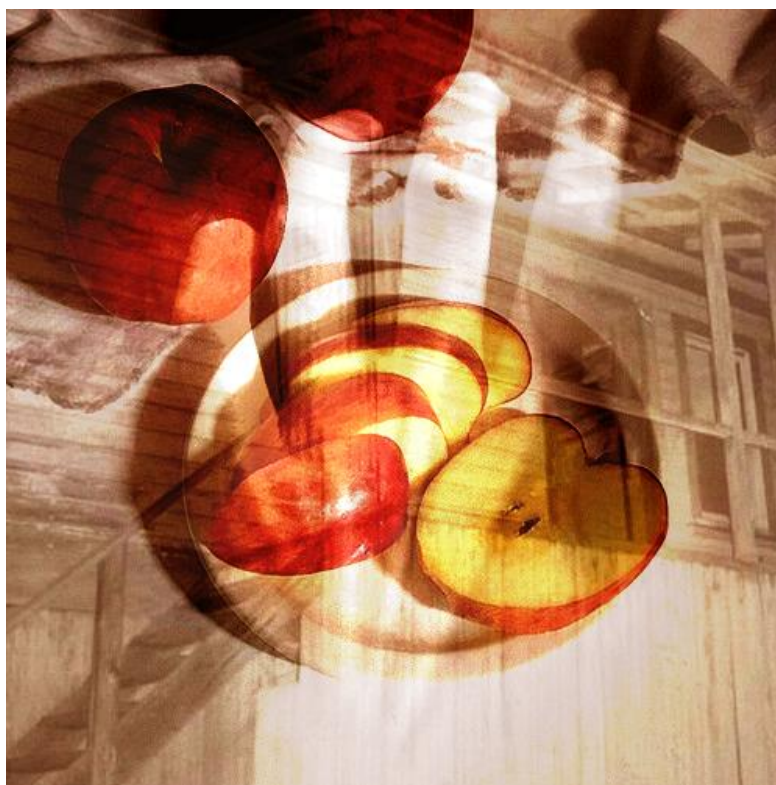
NARRATOR

(mocking Truth) Hello? Where, where am I? *(normal)* Where are we indeed? Are you still there?

Boo! I love haunted houses. Scaring people...to death... Come with me into the chaos of *funhouse* by Amir Gad.

FUNHOUSE

g.g.



version #3

figures:

JULES - recovering buzzkill, college student

GERRY - optimistic punk, college student

EMCEE - excellent host, funhouse builder

when:

the present

symbol key:

// is for crisscrossing.

-- is for interruption.

Words written like *this* denote some type of shift in tone.

some notes:

Feel free to use noises/sound/music not written in the script. I'd suggest looking into 70's horror.

Everyone is written/referred to with they/them pronouns. Edit/keep these to the performers own!

This is not for three white people.

Be weird, be fun!

(Hollow sound.)

JULES

If there was one sentence... one collection of words to sum up the night...

GERRY

This...

(The duo drive down deserted streets. Creep, covered by Mxmtoon, is on the stereo.)

GERRY

This is going to be so fun!

JULES

I'm sure it is. I've never been to one before.

GERRY

Seriously? You've **never** gone to a haunted house? They're super common in my hometown. First time I've gone to one in quite some time.

JULES

You've never gone to this one before?

GERRY

Nope! It's not this DIY often. You know the old cider house down on... is it Montresor Street?

JULES

I do, thing's been there since... too long. Why didn't the town publicize it though, it sounds cool.

GERRY

Well, they didn't. It's this one person-- They do this thing where they convert old buildings into one night only horror fun houses.

JULES

Put your belt on.

GERRY

Belts, shmelts, you're the one driving.

JULES

So the mysterious funhouse in the old cider house *isn't* creepy.

GERRY

Oh no, completely un-creepy.

JULES

Which is why // you didn't--

GERRY

// Precisely *why* I didn't--

GERRY
You first.

JULES
You go.

(Moment. Then:)

JULES
..tell me.

GERRY
...tell you.

(GERRY chuckles.)

GERRY

It's going to be fun. I promise. We're here!

(The truck slows. The duo get out, shutting the door. The sound of crickets. The sounds of the endless night. Footsteps on cold dirt.)

JULES

I thought you told me this--

GERRY

It'll look better on the inside, I'm sure.

JULES

This thing is creepy.

GERRY

Thom Yorke creepy.

JULES

Do you smell it? Smells like cider still. Cider mixed with rot. It's got memory, history.

(Screech owl whinnying.)

GERRY

Who--

JULES

Screech owls. They sound pretty sometimes.

(Owl screeching.)

GERRY

Fuck!

JULES *giggling*

It's ok! Just owls.

(JULES sighs.)

GERRY

You ok?

JULES

Does something feel... off?

(GERRY thinks. Lots of humming.)

GERRY

No!

JULES

It just feels *weird* here.

GERRY

Oh.

(Moment, then:)

GERRY
We don't need to be here long.

JULES
Nevermind, it's fine! I'm fine.

GERRY
You sure Jules?

JULES
I'm fine. I'm good.

(JULES blows kisses to GERRY.)

GERRY
Gross! No kisses.

JULES
Fine, fine. Let's go in.

(GERRY pushes the old door open. The sound of wood scuffing the floor.)

GERRY
This door isn't up to code.

JULES
This is so weird.

(EMCEE comes up to them.)

EMCEE
Boo!

GERRY *surprised*
Woh!

EMCEE
Hello hello! Welcome to the Pop-Up Horror House, currently in the Montresor Cider House! So good to see you, you got here just in time.

GERRY
Oh whew!

JULES

Just in time?

EMCEE

There's *pretty* strict rules on the number of people per go through. It's best experienced by oneself or in duos like you. Plus, for code purposes-- this building is old! Like, *hellishly* old.

GERRY

So you're the guy who does this! *Love* your work, so cool we could be here. This stuff is to die for.

EMCEE

You're too kind!

GERRY

So how do we do the do!

JULES

I've never been out to something like this.

EMCEE

No one's been! Every funhouse is uniquely designed. You come in, get frightened, you go. New rooms every time I set up. You're going to go up those steps to the first room.

GERRY

Eeeeeeee!!! So excited

EMCEE

Remember! It's not the being together. It's the becoming something else together. Up you go! Enjoy.

(Footsteps going up.)

GERRY

Did you see the cider press? It's tinier than I thought it would be.

JULES

No, I didn't notice it.

GERRY

I'm delighted you decided to come.

JULES

Delighted?

GERRY

Mhm! Delighted. I like this type of stuff. The weird, the indie, the mysterious. Growing up north, this stuff is common. So I think I tried to find hints of it here. Which is pretty *uncommon*. You didn't do much our first semester, even if I tried to get you to come out. Not like there's much to do out here, university is kind of out in the boonies my mom tells me. My point is... it's nice to be here with *you*.

JULES

Gerry...

(GERRY opens the door to the next room. Nursery-rhyme esque "creepy" music. Squishy footsteps. The door locks behind them, but they don't notice.)

JULES

Oh lovely, creepy music. Is this stuff...

(Squishy step.)

GERRY

Mock-up blood or gore. Some mud. My shoes suffer for the pursuit of fun.

JULES

Grotty.

GERRY

Cool.

(The music stops.)

JULES

Uh...

GERRY

It's the set-up for the story, *every* horror thing like this has a story. Like, we're cops going into the murderer's house or killer clowns from high school, so on so forth.

JULES

Right.

(The EMCEE's voice crinkles to life over the sound system.)

EMCEE

Well, well, well. You two must think you're so cool. You must be pretentious, or hopelessly stupid, or the both of them combined! First big night of your life, first precipice to new you. You chose this old dump on your own, so unlucky you. Or lucky you. I'm hoping you're enjoying this little shindig. I'll let you in on my little secret. I'm going to hunt you down. Join my collection. Let's see you get moving.

(Moment.)

GERRY

See, it's fun!

JULES

I... don't see how.

GERRY

Onto the next.

(Footsteps through squish. GERRY opens the door. Scuffing footsteps of shoes, to get rid of grossness. The door closes.)

JULES

Gerry, going to be honest, I *despise* this.

GERRY

It's just the first room! We don't know 'bout this one.

JULES

First room, creepy music, creepy monologue, gross footsteps. This room...

GERRY

Bloody footprints going into one of the two doors. Choices, choices.

JULES
Well?

GERRY
You pick.

JULES
Why?

GERRY
Your next step! The new you! I'm being extreme, obviously but, choose our door! Choose where we go from here.

(Moment. Footsteps. Door opens slowly.)

JULES
Well I feel like I've been tricked. We're supposed to go in the direction of the blood. This one's just some old closet... hold on, is there no...

(Rustling footsteps. JULES shuts the door. It hits something.)

EMCEE *muffled*
Motherfucker, my nose!

JULES
Nope! Nope! Nope!

GERRY
Ooo... immersive! They were just trying to jump you. You good in there? Sorry bout it...

EMCEE *muffled*
I'm fine...

JULES
Let's just go.

(Door opens. Footsteps. The next room.)

GERRY
You're not enjoying yourself.

JULES

I'm trying to. I don't... I shouldn't ruin this. I'm ruining this.

GERRY

You're not. I promise, ok?

JULES

Ok. I just feel... nevermind.

GERRY

Tell me.

JULES

I'm enjoying our time together. Not so much the context, but...

GERRY

Next time, you pick something.

JULES

The next door?

GERRY

Not entirely. Next time we go out.

JULES

I--

GERRY

Ooo look! One of those... touch? Feel things? You know, like you put rubber gloves filled with flour to be *corpses* or something.

JULES

Didn't your mother tell you not to put your digits in weird things?

GERRY

Nope! She *supported* it.

(GERRY feels in the box. Disgusting sounds. Squishy.)

GERRY

It's like...pudding mixed with jelly? Ewww there's some plums in here too I think, for eyes. Flour filled gloves, told you so. How deep is this-- OUCH.

JULES

You ok? Lemme see? Jesus fuck your bleeding!

GERRY

No it's not mine--fuck! Why is there so much! I think it's... is this someone's piercing? I--

JULES

Move over.

(JULES knocks the box over. The semi-pulverized bits of bodies pour onto the floor.)

JULES

OH MY FUCKING GOD.

GERRY

IT'S BLOOD. OH MY GOD IT'S BLOOD. YOU KNOW THE SMELL OH MY GOD I--

JULES

Gerry, Gerry chill, we just need to get out of here, we just need to go--

GERRY

OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD, OH MY GOD.

JULES

COME ON!

(Running, Opening doors, running down. Trying to pull open the door.)

JULES

They locked the door!

EMCEE

Hey there, kiddos. Enjoying yourselves?

GERRY

FUCK YOU! WHY DID YOU-- HOW DID YOU!

JULES

Gerry, get behind me.

GERRY

Jules--

JULES

GET BEHIND ME, GERRY.

EMCEE

Did you like my set-up? Best I've done yet. First time I've let myself use the other bodies, thought it would up the terror. Just feels wrong lugging them in the truck between pop-ups. I've got quite the collection. Mush 'em up, turn them into their own creepy thing.

JULES

You fucking psycho.

EMCEE

Wrong. I'm just quite the excellent host. The two of you... you've got something nice. I enjoyed seeing it. You'll be fine specimens of my collection.

(The EMCEE slips their knife from their pocket. It rushes JULES. Fighting. GERRY trying to bust down the door.)

GERRY

STOP IT! STOP!

(More fighting. JULES might be losing.)

JULES, THE CIDER PRESS!

(JULES shoves the emcee into the cider press.)

EMCEE

No, no, no, hold on this isn't--

JULES

God, I hope this works. I'm sorry.

(JULES begins to turn the lever. The sound of the press, closing. The lever stops.)

JULES

It's stuck! Gerry, help!

EMCEE

Hold on! Listen to me! Listen to me!

JULES

Gerry!

(GERRY grips the lever.)

GERRY

We're done listening to you. I'm so sorry, but this is on you.

(They turn the lever together. The sound of the EMCEE's skull splintering. Silence.)

GERRY

We killed someone.

JULES

We killed something... in self defense.

GERRY *the most serious they've been*

You chose.

JULES *kind of out of it*

How?

GERRY

You chose me, you put yourself in front. You... protected me.

JULES

You protected me in the end there. We're both protecting us.

GERRY

There's... something I need to tell you-- to tell us.

JULES

... Me too.

END

Silence. Narrator laughs.