**The Rocking-Horse Winner**

**D.H. Lawrence**

There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet

she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had

bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not

love them. They looked at her coldly, as if they were finding fault with her. And

hurriedly she felt she must cover up some fault in herself. Yet what it

was that she must cover up she never knew. Nevertheless, when her children

were present, she always felt the centre of her heart go hard. This troubled her,

and in her manner she was all the more gentle and anxious for her children, as if

she loved them very much. Only she herself knew that at the centre of her heart

was a hard little place that could not feel love, no, not for anybody. Everybody

else said of her: "She is such a good mother. She adores her children." Only she

herself, and her children themselves, knew it was not so. They read it in each

other's eyes.

There were a boy and two little girls. They lived in a pleasant house, with

a garden, and they had discreet servants, and felt themselves superior to anyone

in the neighbourhood.

Although they lived in style, they felt always an anxiety in the house.

There was never enough money. The mother had a small income, and the father

had a small income, but not nearly enough for the social position which they had

to keep up. The father went into town to some office. But though he had good

prospects, these prospects never materialised. There was always the grinding

sense of the shortage of money, though the style was always kept up.

At last the mother said: "I will see if I can't make something." But she did

not know where to begin. She racked her brains, and tried this thing and the

other, but could not find anything successful. The failure made deep lines come

into her face. Her children were growing up, they would have to go to school.

There must be more money, there must be more money. The father, who was

always very handsome and expensive in his tastes, seemed as if he never would

be able to do anything worth doing. And the mother, who had a great belief in

herself, did not succeed any better, and her tastes were just as expensive.

And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: There must

be more money! There must be more money! The children could hear it all the

time though nobody said it aloud. They heard it at Christmas, when the

expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining modern

rocking-horse, behind the smart doll's house, a voice would start whispering:

"There must be more money! There must be more money!" And the children

would stop playing, to listen for a moment. They would look into each other's

eyes, to see if they had all heard. And each one saw in the eyes of the other two

that they too had heard. "There must be more money! There must be more

money!"

It came whispering from the springs of the still-swaying rocking-horse,

and even the horse, bending his wooden, champing head, heard it. The big doll,

sitting so pink and smirking in her new pram, could hear it quite plainly, and

seemed to be smirking all the more self-consciously because of it. The foolish

puppy, too, that took the place of the teddy-bear, he was looking so

extraordinarily foolish for no other reason but that he heard the secret whisper all

over the house: "There must be more money!"

Yet nobody ever said it aloud. The whisper was everywhere, and therefore

no one spoke it. Just as no one ever says: "We are breathing!" in spite of the fact

that breath is coming and going all the time.

"Mother," said the boy Paul one day, "why don't we keep a car of our own?

Why do we always use uncle's, or else a taxi?"

"Because we're the poor members of the family," said the mother.

"But why are we, mother?"

"Well - I suppose," she said slowly and bitterly, "it's because your father

has no luck."

The boy was silent for some time.

"Is luck money, mother?" he asked, rather timidly.

"No, Paul. Not quite. It's what causes you to have money."

"Oh!" said Paul vaguely. "I thought when Uncle Oscar said filthy lucker,

it meant money."

"Filthy lucre does mean money," said the mother. "But it's lucre, not

luck."

"Oh!" said the boy. "Then what is luck, mother?"

"It's what causes you to have money. If you're lucky you have money.

That's why it's better to be born lucky than rich. If you're rich, you may lose

your money. But if you're lucky, you will always get more money."

"Oh! Will you? And is father not lucky?"

"Very unlucky, I should say," she said bitterly.

The boy watched her with unsure eyes.

"Why?" he asked.

"I don't know. Nobody ever knows why one person is lucky and another

unlucky."

"Don't they? Nobody at all? Does nobody know?"

"Perhaps God. But He never tells."

"He ought to, then. And aren't you lucky either, mother?"

"I can't be, it I married an unlucky husband."

"But by yourself, aren't you?"

"I used to think I was, before I married. Now I think I am very unlucky

indeed."

"Why?"

"Well - never mind! Perhaps I'm not really," she said.

The child looked at her to see if she meant it. But he saw, by the lines of

her mouth, that she was only trying to hide something from him.

"Well, anyhow," he said stoutly, "I'm a lucky person."

"Why?" said his mother, with a sudden laugh.

He stared at her. He didn't even know why he had said it.

"God told me," he asserted, brazening it out.

"I hope He did, dear!", she said, again with a laugh, but rather bitter.

"He did, mother!"

"Excellent!" said the mother, using one of her husband's exclamations.

The boy saw she did not believe him; or rather, that she paid no attention

to his assertion. This angered him somewhere, and made him want to compel

her attention.

He went off by himself, vaguely, in a childish way, seeking for the clue to

'luck'. Absorbed, taking no heed of other people, he went about with a sort of

stealth, seeking inwardly for luck. He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it.

When the two girls were playing dolls in the nursery, he would sit on his big

rocking-horse, charging madly into space, with a frenzy that made the little girls

peer at him uneasily. Wildly the horse careered, the waving dark hair of the boy

tossed, his eyes had a strange glare in them. The little girls dared not speak to

him.

When he had ridden to the end of his mad little journey, he climbed down

and stood in front of his rocking-horse, staring fixedly into its lowered face. Its

red mouth was slightly open, its big eye was wide and glassy-bright.

"Now!" he would silently command the snorting steed. "Now take me to

where there is luck! Now take me!"

And he would slash the horse on the neck with the little whip he had asked

Uncle Oscar for. He knew the horse could take him to where there was luck, if

only he forced it. So he would mount again and start on his furious ride, hoping

at last to get there.

"You'll break your horse, Paul!" said the nurse.

"He's always riding like that! I wish he'd leave off!" said his elder sister

Joan.

But he only glared down on them in silence. Nurse gave him up. She

could make nothing of him. Anyhow, he was growing beyond her.

One day his mother and his Uncle Oscar came in when he was on one of

his furious rides. He did not speak to them.

"Hallo, you young jockey! Riding a winner?" said his uncle.

"Aren't you growing too big for a rocking-horse? You're not a very little

boy any longer, you know," said his mother.

But Paul only gave a blue glare from his big, rather close-set eyes. He

would speak to nobody when he was in full tilt. His mother watched him with an

anxious expression on her face.

At last he suddenly stopped forcing his horse into the mechanical gallop

and slid down.

"Well, I got there!" he announced fiercely, his blue eyes still flaring, and

his sturdy long legs straddling apart.

"Where did you get to?" asked his mother.

"Where I wanted to go," he flared back at her.

"That's right, son!" said Uncle Oscar. "Don't you stop till you get there.

What's the horse's name?"

"He doesn't have a name," said the boy.

"Gets on without all right?" asked the uncle.

"Well, he has different names. He was called Sansovino last week."

"Sansovino, eh? Won the Ascot. How did you know this name?"

"He always talks about horse-races with Bassett," said Joan.

The uncle was delighted to find that his small nephew was posted with all

the racing news. Bassett, the young gardener, who had been wounded in the left

foot in the war and had got his present job through Oscar Cresswell, whose

batman he had been, was a perfect blade of the 'turf'. He lived in the racing

events, and the small boy lived with him.

Oscar Cresswell got it all from Bassett.

"Master Paul comes and asks me, so I can't do more than tell him, sir,"

said Bassett, his face terribly serious, as if he were speaking of religious matters.

"And does he ever put anything on a horse he fancies?"

"Well - I don't want to give him away - he's a young sport, a fine sport, sir.

Would you mind asking him himself? He sort of takes a pleasure in it, and

perhaps he'd feel I was giving him away, sir, if you don't mind.

Bassett was serious as a church.

The uncle went back to his nephew and took him off for a ride in the car.

"Say, Paul, old man, do you ever put anything on a horse?" the uncle

asked.

The boy watched the handsome man closely.

"Why, do you think I oughtn't to?" he parried.

"Not a bit of it! I thought perhaps you might give me a tip for the

Lincoln."

The car sped on into the country, going down to Uncle Oscar's place in

Hampshire.

"Honour bright?" said the nephew.

"Honour bright, son!" said the uncle.

"Well, then, Daffodil."

"Daffodil! I doubt it, sonny. What about Mirza?"

"I only know the winner," said the boy. "That's Daffodil."

"Daffodil, eh?"

There was a pause. Daffodil was an obscure horse comparatively.

"Uncle!"

"Yes, son?"

"You won't let it go any further, will you? I promised Bassett."

"Bassett be damned, old man! What's he got to do with it?"

"We're partners. We've been partners from the first. Uncle, he lent me my

first five shillings, which I lost. I promised him, honour bright, it was only

between me and him; only you gave me that ten-shilling note I started winning

with, so I thought you were lucky. You won't let it go any further, will you?"

The boy gazed at his uncle from those big, hot, blue eyes, set rather close

together. The uncle stirred and laughed uneasily.

"Right you are, son! I'll keep your tip private. How much are you putting

on him?"

"All except twenty pounds," said the boy. "I keep that in reserve."

The uncle thought it a good joke.

"You keep twenty pounds in reserve, do you, you young romancer? What

are you betting, then?"

"I'm betting three hundred," said the boy gravely. "But it's between you

and me, Uncle Oscar! Honour bright?"

"It's between you and me all right, you young Nat Gould," he said,

laughing. "But where's your three hundred?"

"Bassett keeps it for me. We're partners."

"You are, are you! And what is Bassett putting on Daffodil?"

"He won't go quite as high as I do, I expect. Perhaps he'll go a hundred

and fifty."

"What, pennies?" laughed the uncle.

"Pounds," said the child, with a surprised look at his uncle. "Bassett keeps

a bigger reserve than I do."

Between wonder and amusement Uncle Oscar was silent. He pursued the

matter no further, but he determined to take his nephew with him to the Lincoln

races.

"Now, son," he said, "I'm putting twenty on Mirza, and I'll put five on for

you on any horse you fancy. What's your pick?"

"Daffodil, uncle."

"No, not the fiver on Daffodil!"

"I should if it was my own fiver," said the child.

"Good! Good! Right you are! A fiver for me and a fiver for you on

Daffodil."

The child had never been to a race-meeting before, and his eyes were

blue fire. He pursed his mouth tight and watched. A Frenchman just in front had

put his money on Lancelot. Wild with excitement, he flayed his arms up and

down, yelling "Lancelot!, Lancelot!" in his French accent.

Daffodil came in first, Lancelot second, Mirza third. The child, flushed

and with eyes blazing, was curiously serene. His uncle brought him four

fivepound notes, four to one.

"What am I to do with these?" he cried, waving them before the boys eyes.

"I suppose we'll talk to Bassett," said the boy. "I expect I have fifteen

hundred now; and twenty in reserve; and this twenty."

His uncle studied him for some moments.

"Look here, son!" he said. "You're not serious about Bassett and that

fifteen hundred, are you?"

"Yes, I am. But it's between you and me, uncle. Honour bright?"

"Honour bright all right, son! But I must talk to Bassett."

"If you'd like to be a partner, uncle, with Bassett and me, we could all be

partners. Only, you'd have to promise, honour bright, uncle, not to let it go

beyond us three. Bassett and I are lucky, and you must be lucky, because it was

your ten shillings I started winning with ..."

Uncle Oscar took both Bassett and Paul into Richmond Park for an

afternoon, and there they talked.

"It's like this, you see, sir," Bassett said. "Master Paul would get me

talking about racing events, spinning yarns, you know, sir. And he was always

keen on knowing if I'd made or if I'd lost. It's about a year since, now, that I put

five shillings on Blush of Dawn for him: and we lost. Then the luck turned, with

that ten shillings he had from you: that we put on Singhalese. And since that

time, it's been pretty steady, all things considering. What do you say, Master

Paul?"

"We're all right when we're sure," said Paul. "It's when we're not quite

sure that we go down."

"Oh, but we're careful then," said Bassett.

"But when are you sure?" smiled Uncle Oscar.

"It's Master Paul, sir," said Bassett in a secret, religious voice. "It's as if he

had it from heaven. Like Daffodil, now, for the Lincoln. That was as sure as

eggs."

"Did you put anything on Daffodil?" asked Oscar Cresswell.

"Yes, sir, I made my bit."

"And my nephew?"

Bassett was obstinately silent, looking at Paul.

"I made twelve hundred, didn't I, Bassett? I told uncle I was putting three

hundred on Daffodil."

"That's right," said Bassett, nodding.

"But where's the money?" asked the uncle.

"I keep it safe locked up, sir. Master Paul he can have it any minute he

likes to ask for it."

"What, fifteen hundred pounds?"

"And twenty! And forty, that is, with the twenty he made on the course."

"It's amazing!" said the uncle.

"If Master Paul offers you to be partners, sir, I would, if I were you: if

you'll excuse me," said Bassett.

Oscar Cresswell thought about it.

"I'll see the money," he said.

They drove home again, and, sure enough, Bassett came round to the

garden-house with fifteen hundred pounds in notes. The twenty pounds reserve

was left with Joe Glee, in the Turf Commission deposit.

"You see, it's all right, uncle, when I'm sure! Then we go strong, for all

we're worth, don't we, Bassett?"

"We do that, Master Paul."

"And when are you sure?" said the uncle, laughing.

"Oh, well, sometimes I'm absolutely sure, like about Daffodil," said the

boy; "and sometimes I have an idea; and sometimes I haven't even an idea, have

I, Bassett? Then we're careful, because we mostly go down."

"You do, do you! And when you're sure, like about Daffodil, what makes

you sure, sonny?"

"Oh, well, I don't know," said the boy uneasily. "I'm sure, you know,

uncle; that's all."

"It's as if he had it from heaven, sir," Bassett reiterated.

"I should say so!" said the uncle.

But he became a partner. And when the Leger was coming on Paul was

'sure' about Lively Spark, which was a quite inconsiderable horse. The boy

insisted on putting a thousand on the horse, Bassett went for five hundred, and

Oscar Cresswell two hundred. Lively Spark came in first, and the betting had

been ten to one against him. Paul had made ten thousand.

"You see," he said. "I was absolutely sure of him."

Even Oscar Cresswell had cleared two thousand.

"Look here, son," he said, "this sort of thing makes me nervous."

"It needn't, uncle! Perhaps I shan't be sure again for a long time."

"But what are you going to do with your money?" asked the uncle.

"Of course," said the boy, "I started it for mother. She said she had no luck,

because father is unlucky, so I thought if I was lucky, it might stop whispering."

"What might stop whispering?"

"Our house. I hate our house for whispering."

"What does it whisper?"

"Why - why" - the boy fidgeted - "why, I don't know. But it's always short

of money, you know, uncle."

"I know it, son, I know it."

"You know people send mother writs, don't you, uncle?"

"I'm afraid I do," said the uncle.

"And then the house whispers, like people laughing at you behind your

back. It's awful, that is! I thought if I was lucky -"

"You might stop it," added the uncle.

The boy watched him with big blue eyes, that had an uncanny cold fire in

them, and he said never a word.

"Well, then!" said the uncle. "What are we doing?"

"I shouldn't like mother to know I was lucky," said the boy.

"Why not, son?"

"She'd stop me."

"I don't think she would."

"Oh!" - and the boy writhed in an odd way - "I don't want her to know,

uncle."

"All right, son! We'll manage it without her knowing."

They managed it very easily. Paul, at the other's suggestion, handed over

five thousand pounds to his uncle, who deposited it with the family lawyer, who

was then to inform Paul's mother that a relative had put five thousand pounds

into his hands, which sum was to be paid out a thousand pounds at a time, on

the mother's birthday, for the next five years.

"So she'll have a birthday present of a thousand pounds for five successive

years," said Uncle Oscar. "I hope it won't make it all the harder for her later."

Paul's mother had her birthday in November. The house had been

'whispering' worse than ever lately, and, even in spite of his luck, Paul could not

bear up against it. He was very anxious to see the effect of the birthday letter,

telling his mother about the thousand pounds.

When there were no visitors, Paul now took his meals with his parents, as

he was beyond the nursery control. His mother went into town nearly every day.

She had discovered that she had an odd knack of sketching furs and dress

materials, so she worked secretly in the studio of a friend who was the chief

'artist' for the leading drapers. She drew the figures of ladies in furs and ladies in

silk and sequins for the newspaper advertisements. This young woman artist

earned several thousand pounds a year, but Paul's mother only made several

hundreds, and she was again dissatisfied. She so wanted to be first in

something, and she did not succeed, even in making sketches for drapery

advertisements.

She was down to breakfast on the morning of her birthday. Paul watched

her face as she read her letters. He knew the lawyer's letter. As his mother read

it, her face hardened and became more expressionless. Then a cold, determined

look came on her mouth. She hid the letter under the pile of others, and said not

a word about it.

"Didn't you have anything nice in the post for your birthday, mother?"

said Paul.

"Quite moderately nice," she said, her voice cold and hard and absent.

She went away to town without saying more.

But in the afternoon Uncle Oscar appeared. He said Paul's mother had had

a long interview with the lawyer, asking if the whole five thousand could not be

advanced at once, as she was in debt.

"What do you think, uncle?" said the boy.

"I leave it to you, son."

"Oh, let her have it, then! We can get some more with the other," said the

boy.

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, laddie!" said Uncle Oscar.

"But I'm sure to know for the Grand National; or the Lincolnshire; or else

the Derby. I'm sure to know for one of them," said Paul.

So Uncle Oscar signed the agreement, and Paul's mother touched the

whole five thousand. Then something very curious happened. The voices in the

house suddenly went mad, like a chorus of frogs on a spring evening. There

were certain new furnishings, and Paul had a tutor. He was really going to Eton,

his father's school, in the following autumn. There were flowers in the winter, and

a blossoming of the luxury Paul's mother had been used to. And yet the voices in

the house, behind the sprays of mimosa and almond-blossom, and from under

the piles of iridescent cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy:

"There must be more money! Oh-h-h; there must be more money. Oh,

now, now-w! Now-w-w - there must be more money! - more than ever! More

than ever!"

It frightened Paul terribly. He studied away at his Latin and Greek with

his tutor. But his intense hours were spent with Bassett. The Grand National had

gone by: he had not 'known', and had lost a hundred pounds. Summer was at

hand. He was in agony for the Lincoln. But even for the Lincoln he didn't 'know',

and he lost fifty pounds. He became wild-eyed and strange, as if something were

going to explode in him.

"Let it alone, son! Don't you bother about it!" urged Uncle Oscar. But it

was as if the boy couldn't really hear what his uncle was saying.

"I've got to know for the Derby! I've got to know for the Derby!" the child

reiterated, his big blue eyes blazing with a sort of madness.

His mother noticed how overwrought he was.

"You'd better go to the seaside. Wouldn't you like to go now to the seaside,

instead of waiting? I think you'd better," she said, looking down at him anxiously,

her heart curiously heavy because of him.

But the child lifted his uncanny blue eyes.

"I couldn't possibly go before the Derby, mother!" he said. "I couldn't

possibly!"

"Why not?" she said, her voice becoming heavy when she was opposed.

"Why not? You can still go from the seaside to see the Derby with your

Uncle Oscar, if that that's what you wish. No need for you to wait here. Besides, I

think you care too much about these races. It's a bad sign. My family has been a

gambling family, and you won't know till you grow up how much damage it has

done. But it has done damage. I shall have to send Bassett away, and ask Uncle

Oscar not to talk racing to you, unless you promise to be reasonable about it: go

away to the seaside and forget it. You're all nerves!"

"I'll do what you like, mother, so long as you don't send me away till after

the Derby," the boy said.

"Send you away from where? Just from this house?"

"Yes," he said, gazing at her.

"Why, you curious child, what makes you care about this house so much,

suddenly? I never knew you loved it."

He gazed at her without speaking. He had a secret within a secret,

something he had not divulged, even to Bassett or to his Uncle Oscar.

But his mother, after standing undecided and a little bit sullen for some

moments, said: "Very well, then! Don't go to the seaside till after the Derby, if

you don't wish it. But promise me you won't think so much about horse-racing

and events as you call them!"

"Oh no," said the boy casually. "I won't think much about them, mother.

You needn't worry. I wouldn't worry, mother, if I were you."

"If you were me and I were you," said his mother, "I wonder what we

should do!"

"But you know you needn't worry, mother, don't you?" the boy repeated.

"I should be awfully glad to know it," she said wearily.

"Oh, well, you can, you know. I mean, you ought to know you needn't

worry," he insisted.

"Ought I? Then I'll see about it," she said.

Paul's secret of secrets was his wooden horse, that which had no name.

Since he was emancipated from a nurse and a nursery-governess, he had

had his rocking-horse removed to his own bedroom at the top of the house.

"Surely you're too big for a rocking-horse!" his mother had remonstrated.

"Well, you see, mother, till I can have a real horse, I like to have some sort

of animal about," had been his quaint answer.

"Do you feel he keeps you company?" she laughed.

"Oh yes! He's very good, he always keeps me company, when I'm there,"

said Paul.

So the horse, rather shabby, stood in an arrested prance in the boy's

bedroom.

The Derby was drawing near, and the boy grew more and more tense. He

hardly heard what was spoken to him, he was very frail, and his eyes were really

uncanny. His mother had sudden strange seizures of uneasiness about him.

Sometimes, for half an hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was

almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe.

Two nights before the Derby, she was at a big party in town, when one of

her rushes of anxiety about her boy, her first-born, gripped her heart till she

could hardly speak. She fought with the feeling, might and main, for she

believed in common sense. But it was too strong. She had to leave the dance

and go downstairs to telephone to the country. The children's nursery-governess

was terribly surprised and startled at being rung up in the night.

"Are the children all right, Miss Wilmot?"

"Oh yes, they are quite all right."

"Master Paul? Is he all right?"

"He went to bed as right as a trivet. Shall I run up and look at him?"

"No," said Paul's mother reluctantly. "No! Don't trouble. It's all right.

Don't sit up. We shall be home fairly soon." She did not want her son's

privacy intruded upon.

"Very good," said the governess.

It was about one o'clock when Paul's mother and father drove up to their

house. All was still. Paul's mother went to her room and slipped off her white fur

cloak. She had told her maid not to wait up for her. She heard her husband

downstairs, mixing a whisky and soda.

And then, because of the strange anxiety at her heart, she stole upstairs to

her son's room. Noiselessly she went along the upper corridor. Was there a faint

noise? What was it?

She stood, with arrested muscles, outside his door, listening. There was a

strange, heavy, and yet not loud noise. Her heart stood still. It was a soundless

noise, yet rushing and powerful. Something huge, in violent, hushed motion.

What was it? What in God's name was it? She ought to know. She felt that she

knew the noise. She knew what it was.

Yet she could not place it. She couldn't say what it was. And on and on it

went, like a madness.

Softly, frozen with anxiety and fear, she turned the door-handle.

The room was dark. Yet in the space near the window, she heard and saw

something plunging to and fro. She gazed in fear and amazement.

Then suddenly she switched on the light, and saw her son, in his green

pyjamas, madly surging on the rocking-horse. The blaze of light suddenly lit him

up, as he urged the wooden horse, and lit her up, as she stood, blonde, in her

dress of pale green and crystal, in the doorway.

"Paul!" she cried. "Whatever are you doing?"

"It's Malabar!" he screamed in a powerful, strange voice. "It's Malabar!"

His eyes blazed at her for one strange and senseless second, as he ceased

urging his wooden horse. Then he fell with a crash to the ground, and she, all her

tormented motherhood flooding upon her, rushed to gather him up.

But he was unconscious, and unconscious he remained, with some

brainf ever. He talked and tossed, and his mother sat stonily by his side.

"Malabar! It's Malabar! Bassett, Bassett, I know! It's Malabar!"

So the child cried, trying to get up and urge the rocking-horse that gave

him his inspiration.

"What does he mean by Malabar?" asked the heart-frozen mother.

"I don't know," said the father stonily.

"What does he mean by Malabar?" she asked her brother Oscar.

"It's one of the horses running for the Derby," was the answer.

And, in spite of himself, Oscar Cresswell spoke to Bassett, and himself

put a thousand on Malabar: at fourteen to one.

The third day of the illness was critical: they were waiting for a change.

The boy, with his rather long, curly hair, was tossing ceaselessly on the pillow.

He neither slept nor regained consciousness, and his eyes were like blue

stones.

His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into a stone.

In the evening Oscar Cresswell did not come, but Bassett sent a message,

saying could he come up for one moment, just one moment? Paul's mother was

very angry at the intrusion, but on second thoughts she agreed. The boy was the

same. Perhaps Bassett might bring him to consciousness.

The gardener, a shortish fellow with a little brown moustache and sharp

little brown eyes, tiptoed into the room, touched his imaginary cap to Paul's

mother, and stole to the bedside, staring with glittering, smallish eyes at the

tossing, dying child.

"Master Paul!" he whispered. "Master Paul! Malabar came in first all right,

a clean win. I did as you told me. You've made over seventy thousand pounds,

you have; you've got over eighty thousand. Malabar came in all right, Master

Paul."

"Malabar! Malabar! Did I say Malabar, mother? Did I say Malabar? Do

you think I'm lucky, mother? I knew Malabar, didn't I? Over eighty thousand

pounds! I call that lucky, don't you, mother? Over eighty thousand pounds! I

knew, didn't I know I knew? Malabar came in all right. If I ride my horse till I'm

sure, then I tell you, Bassett, you can go as high as you like. Did you go for all

you were worth, Bassett?"

"I went a thousand on it, Master Paul."

"I never told you, mother, that if I can ride my horse, and get there, then

I'm absolutely sure - oh, absolutely! Mother, did I ever tell you? I am lucky!"

"No, you never did," said his mother.

But the boy died in the night.

And even as he lay dead, his mother heard her brother's voice saying to

her, "My God, Hester, you're eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil

of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where

he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner."

**The Rocking-Horse Winner**

**Questions**

1. The second sentence of the story says Paul's mother "married for love." Do you believe she was truly in love or merely infatuated?

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Is Bassett genuinely concerned about Paul's welfare, or does he simply regard Paul as a "money machine?"

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. When Paul's mother calls home from the party to ask Miss Wilmot whether Paul is all right, is she motivated by guilty conscience and perhaps fear of being viewed as a bad mother for leaving him at home? Or is she genuinely concerned about his welfare?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Are the house voices real? Or does Paul hear them because he is mentally disturbed?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Well-to-do English parents in Lawrence's day frequently turned the care of children over to nursemaids and others on the household servant staff. Do you think Lawrence wrote "The Rocking-Horse Winner" partly to chastise parents for this practice?

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_