



## The Rocking-Horse Winner

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Paul, the protagonist of this haunting story, is a sensitive boy who would do anything to gain and keep his mother's love. Though she is beautiful, talented, well-bred, and blessed with three lovely children, she is preoccupied by her lack of luck. Luck, to the mother, is what brings you money. Father is not lucky, for the family does not have the means to live in style. The anxious children, especially the morbidly perceptive Paul, hear their house whisper, "There must be more money."

Paul longs to silence the house and his mother's creditors. After discussing racetrack lore with the family gardener, Paul furiously rides his rocking-horse. During the wild, rhythmic plunging, the nearly hypnotized Paul "knows" the name of the horse that will win big at the next race. With the trustworthy gardener to place his bets, Paul rapidly accumulates a heady sum.

With his uncle's help, Paul arranges a birthday surprise for his mother--one thousand pounds annually for the next five years. He eagerly watches his mother open her mail only to find that she wants, and gains, all five thousand pounds at once. The voices of the house go mad as the mother redecorates, fills the rooms with flowers and the nursery with new toys. "There must be more money" becomes a scream, not a whisper.

Paul returns to his frantic late-night rides. He feels that he must "know" for the Derby because his mother, still cool, remote, and dissatisfied, longs to live in greater style. Even she realizes that something is wrong with Paul, who has grown overwrought and feverish. Entering his room late at night, she hears the rhythmic plunge of the rocking-horse. Paul collapses in a brain fever as he mutters over and over "Malabar," the name of the horse to win the Derby. The gardener bets Paul's money as planned; his mother is 80,000 pounds to the good. "I am lucky," are Paul's dying words.

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