

## The Rocking Horse

This is the story of a very special rocking horse who was very old indeed. He once belonged to a boy called Robbie, but Robbie had grown up to be a strong man with a big beard, and so had given his favourite old toy to his nieces and nephews.

Soon the time came when the children became older, and no longer played with toys, and so the old horse, along with all the other toys, was left behind in the big nursery at the top of the house. As time went on, spiders spun great webs over the windows and a thick layer of dust covered everything in the room.

When little Basil found his way into the old nursery, he thought it was a wonderful, magical place full of adventure, and decided to explore. He sat himself down on an old stuffed chair and thought about where he might begin. He looked around the large, dusty nursery, and at once the rocking horse met his gaze. He looked at it for so long that his eyes blinked.

Now, an older person might say that just then, the rocking horse creaked as old things have a way of doing, but Basil knew very well that the rocking horse had sighed, and he asked him what was the matter.





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"I was just wishing that someone might come along and smarten me up a bit, said the horse. My left eye is in that box over there with all the tin soldiers, and my tail is tied to a stick in that cupboard. I suppose a little bit of glue would stick both back in place." He told Basil. "And one of my stirrups has been nailed to the table drawer for a handle, I think it would come off if pulled hard enough, then it could be tied back on to my saddle-strap with a bit of string. My mane is gone forever, it wore away over time, but I think I could be smartened up, with a little help?" He asked hopefully.

"I can help you!" Said Basil, jumping up and running to the tool cupboard and opening it with a loud CREAK .

"I've found your tail! Oh, and here is a bottle of glue! Now, I shall look for your eye." With that, Basil began lifting paper and dusty toys out of the way in search of the tin with the toy soldiers.

"You know", went on the old horse, "I heard the Mother saying the other day that she would send me back to my old home if I were not so shabby." Basil, who had found the missing eye, was now fixing it in its place with plenty of glue, which ran down and dropped off the horse's nose. "Does it hurt?" he asked sympathetically. "Oh, I don't mind that," said the horse. "It feels like old times having another little boy around.





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"I used to belong to Robbie, before he gave me to the children here, but they weren't very kind to me." The horse shook his head sadly.

"Be careful!" said Basil, "The glue isn't dry yet and your eye will drop off again if you shake your head like that. Tell me more about Robbie, he sounds like he was lots of fun."



"We were best friends", went on the horse. "He told me all about his troubles and showed me all the new things he had learned. Sometimes, if he had a bit of cake, he would put it in the hole in my neck, and rock me to make it drop into my stomach."

While he had been talking, the horse hadn't even noticed that Basil had fixed his tail back on. Basil was grateful, because it meant it hadn't hurt. "There! Your tail's in now," said Basil. "I will see if I can get the stirrup off the drawer; then I'll sponge you clean."

"If you could only make me look nice they would send me back for Robbie's son, and I could see Robbie again. You are such a kind little boy, Robbie will love you." "You look lots better already", said Basil, tugging away at the stirrup. "When you get back to Robbie, I'm sure he will have you painted up and you will feel like new."

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With that the stirrup came off the drawer suddenly, and Basil had to be careful not to fall over backwards. He remembered there had been a piece of string next to the glue in the cupboard, and so he went and got it, and tied the stirrup back onto the horse's saddle-strap. Just then, Basil's mother called up the stairs to tell him that lunch was ready. "I must go now," said Basil, "but I will come up again and finish you."

"Auntie," Basil began, when he was seated at the table, "I have been mending up the old rocking horse; won't you send it to Uncle Robbie's son?"

"Yes, I think I will," Auntie replied. Just then, a little boy of about 4 or 5 came bounding down the hall, followed by a tall, strong man with a big beard. "Oh, Robbie!" said Basil's Auntie, "You're just in time, Basil here has been fixing your old rocking horse. Why don't you take Simon up to see him?"

Robbie took his young son and sat him on his shoulders, before climbing up the stairs to the nursery.





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When he opened the door, the old rocking horse was waiting, giddy with excitement and joy. Robbie placed Simon on the floor, took his hand and took him over to meet his old friend. "Well, what have we here!" he exclaimed, laughing. "It is certainly good to see you old friend, how about we take you home and get you fixed up properly?" Simons eye were wide with wonder, it was clear that he was going to love the rocking horse very much.

As Robbie carried the rocking horse out to the car, the old toy smiled gratefully at Basil as he waved them goodbye, and Basil knew that the rocking horse was going to be very well loved and looked after from now on.

