

What Is It About. . .?

Samuel was a self-made man. After high school, during a recession, he found work as a garbage man. Far from being self-conscious about his honest work, he enjoyed it. He never ceased being surprised at what some people threw away. A few years went by, the recession lifted, banks wanted to lend, and Samuel was in business for himself. After a few more years Samuel had hundreds of employees and a fleet of big trucks. Another few years and he sold out to a big firm listed on the Big Board. He was spending the rest of his life investing, in order to make more money.

What is it about money that makes men want more and more of it?

Mabel was also from a humble background. She met Samuel while he was still dumping garbage cans into the truck himself. In those days a girl usually got pregnant after marriage, so they married. The delay was inconsequential, as they produced baby girls right away, and almost annually.

While family and income grew, Mabel visualized two ambitions: One, the daughters must have an education, emphasizing moral values. Two, they must all move up to a social level commensurate with Samuel's ever growing income.

The first goal was easy: Catholic all-girl elementary and secondary schools, followed by an all female college. Years later Mabel would ask herself:

What is it about all-female schools that makes girls so crazy for men?

Mabel discovered a way to elevate the family socially while under the dryer at the beauty salon. Perusing an article in Town and Country, she discovered a whole world of beautiful people, mounted on magnificent horses jumping over fences in horse shows. Then came photos of ultra-fashionable parties where everyone was expensively dressed in designer originals. Except the riders from the horse show. They came in their riding attire.

Surely they had not taken the time to undress, bathe, and put their riding clothes back on before coming to the party. Missing this detail, Mabel did not wonder what they smelled like nor did she know that the group shown was called the Mink and Manure Set.

Apparently one could enter this circle of glamorous people merely by purchasing a horse that would jump over a fence, and then managing to sit on him while he did so.

Not that Mabel planned to do it herself; instead she foresaw riding lessons during the coming summer for her oldest daughter, Mary Ellen, a 20-year old sophomore at an unknown college for women somewhere in the wilderness.

Mary Ellen should have been at a Big-Ten university where she would have been homecoming queen. Wavy chestnut hair, luscious lips, big brown eyes that always seemed to be asking questions - all this atop a glorious figure, featuring a most ample poitrine, which was entirely self-sufficient; that is to say a bra would be superfluous if not disparaging.

Compliant by nature, Mary Ellen progressed quickly under the tutelage of Miz Clarinda Klutterbutt, the hefty owner and CEO of a nearby stable for hunters and jumpers. Mary Ellen liked animals, and she enjoyed the feeling of domination when guiding a horse toward a fence, then after a squeeze of her knees, soaring up and over. Landing on the other side gave her a different feeling:

What is it about jumping that compels me to wear my bra?

By mid-summer she was winning ribbons in moderately important shows, especially when the judge was a male. These were even before her gelding named Ooh-la-la arrived from France.

Miz Klutterbutt had been commissioned to look for a horse on which Mary Ellen could win big. For \$917,000 plus air transportation Miz Klutterbutt found an adequate mount at an haras of international renown in Normandie. Meanwhile Mary Ellen had been fitted with riding clothes from Nardi in New York and boots from Peale in London. Mabel went to every horse show and party afterward. She was in the set.

Successful showing required some training at the Klutterbutt stables between events, but Mary Ellen was enjoying herself. Very early on she could not help but notice the young man who saddled the horses and seemed to do most of the cleaning around the stables. Miz

Klutterbutt's stable, incidentally, was well-known for its cleanliness. The stalls were so clean that visitors often wondered:

What is it about the Klutterbutt stables that makes the horses so constipated?

The young man who times his duties so he could watch Mary Ellen practice was a Country boy named Rockledge. Everyone called him Little Rock to differentiate from his father whom they called Big Rock. But Little Rock was much bigger than Big Rock, who was little. In fact Little Rock was described by female admirers as a "real hunk." Captain of the football team, he had left high school before graduation to help put food on the table at home. Big Rock, a blacksmith, was succumbing to his preference for Jack Daniels over shoeing horses. Mrs. Rock asked over and over:

What is it about horses that makes men want to drink so much?

Little Rock, who liked horses, landed a job at the Klutterbutt stables. He decided to abstain from drinking, but he was not abstemious otherwise. As a youngster, he had noted that the female sex in general was fond of him. As he grew bigger, his muscles filled out, but his big blue eyes lent an air of innocence to an otherwise virile demeanor. A number of females tested him out; they agreed everything was in good working order. During the tests Little Rock felt only transitory affection, nothing serious.

Until he saw Mary Ellen arrive at the stables, that is. As if dazzled by a flash of lightning, Little Rock realized all at once that she was the only one for him. He was entranced by her grace, her gentle smile, her musical "Hi there, Little Rock," and of course the delicious shape of her poitrine. He waited for the opportunity to make a move.

The opportunity arose on a Thursday in September. Mary Ellen's parents had flown east to a boarding school with the youngest daughter. The other daughters were already away at their schools. Mary Ellen, lonely, had driven over to the stables to practice for her final show.

Little Rock stationed himself near the last fence, after which he would help Mary Ellen dismount and enjoy the feel of her hand on his arm.

As Ooh-la-la centered up to the last fence, a little garter snake slithered out from underneath the wing. All pink and white and wriggly, it was really an adorable little creature. But Ooh-la-la thought otherwise. Instead of jumping, he shied suddenly, and Mary Ellen was separated from him in mid-air, as it were. She would have fallen gracefully, but, alas, her foot got caught in the stirrup. Realizing her predicament, she could not suppress a discreet little scream.

Ooh-la-la stood still for a moment, trembling. His eyes widened and he snorted. Probably he couldn't decide which way to bolt, a horse's brain being no bigger than a walnut.

Little Rock knew what to do. In a gentle but firm voice he repeated:

"Whoa, boy, whoa La-la, easy, steady, boy. . ." as he moved toward the horse very slowly, arm outstretched as if offering a handful of oats.

Taking hold of the reins, he quickly disengaged Mary Ellen's foot from the stirrup. He knelt down, and face close to hers asked if she was alright.

"Just my foot. I think my ankle's twisted."

He kissed her lightly on the forehead.

"Oh, Mary Ellen, I'm sorry. Now I'll probably get fired - for harassment or something. But I love you so much, I can't stand to see you hurt."

Mary Ellen, very serious, looked into the big blue eyes. Then, with both hands she pulled him down by the ears (they stuck out a little) and kissed him firmly on the mouth.

Little Rock gathered her up in his arms and carried her into the stables. Ooh-la-la followed, fortunately not getting tangled up in the dragging reins. After a little ice on the ankle, Mary Ellen said she would like to go home and soak in the whirlpool bath in her father's bathroom. Little Rock, at the wheel of his purple pick-up, put his arm around Mary Ellen, who snuggled up close. She was mesmerized by the good luck gizmo that dangled on a chain from the rear view mirror.

After he had carried her upstairs, she asked him to wait in the bedroom in case she had trouble with the faucets.

A few minutes passed and Mary Ellen called out that she was having trouble with the faucets.

"Why are you walking in backwards?" asked Mary Ellen, as Little Rock entered the bathroom, rear end first.

While waiting, hearing the splashing, Little Rock had been thinking about what was in the tub besides water. Consequently, a frontage view of this young man at that moment would verify that Viagra was definitely contra-indicated.

"I didn't want you to be embarrassed," said Little Rock.

A few days later Mother and Daughter were having a little talk.

"But Mother, I'm going to marry him," said Mary Ellen. She was not insensitive to middle class morality.

"I don't care, Mary Ellen. I mean, I do care. He's ~~nothing~~ more than a country hick, and he smells!

"Mother, I like the way he smells. I like the smell of liniment and horse manure."

Her father was in shock.

"Mary Ellen, he looks and smells like he hates to take a bath."

Mary Ellen managed to restrain herself from telling Papa how much Little Rock had enjoyed their bath together in Papa's bathroom.

Little Rock was having a problem too.

"Daddy, I'm going to marry her because she's cool, and because I want to always take care of her." At this point neither Little Rock nor Big Rock gave a damn about split infinitives. Big Rock's reply was rhetorical:

"Son, what is it about your physical make-up that placed your brain in the head of your ding-dong?"

At this ambiguous juncture we terminate the paper, because the denouement could only be too commonplace.

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Now what is it about endings like this that makes
you people want to strangle the author?

Louis M. Prince
