

A Nutcracker Story

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Excerpt

SCENE 12

(CLARA alone. DROSSELMEIER appears from the shadows.)

DROSSELMEIER. I never gave you your present.

CLARA. I don't care about presents now.

DROSSELMEIER. Oh, no? Pity. But I suppose you are far too *old* for such things.

CLARA. I suppose so.

DROSSELMEIER. Which is extraordinary, considering....

(CLARA turns to look at DROSSELMEIER.)

DROSSELMEIER. Considering that *I* am seventy-two and quite fond of presents.

CLARA. Nonsense.

DROSSELMEIER. Oh, but I *am* fond of presents.

CLARA. No, I meant you can hardly be seventy-two.

DROSSELMEIER. Quite right. I am a hundred.

CLARA. Oh, Godfather!

DROSSELMEIER. Too old? Twenty-seven, then.

CLARA. Godfather, you cannot be over—well.... How old *are* you?

DROSSELMEIER. Does it really matter?

CLARA. Sometimes. Tomorrow, I'm a lady. Although no one seems to remember it.

DROSSELMEIER. Tomorrow...! Well then, good gracious, yes yes, I quite see—oh, far too old, *far* too old. Quite a shame, though. I confess, it was a masterpiece. (*He sighs dramatically.*) But if you're really *far too old!* Well, I suppose you'll simply have to do without a present whatsoever.

(*He wipes a considerable tear, and turns away, throwing over his shoulder:*)

DROSSELMEIER. But if you cannot be swayed...!

CLARA. (*Relenting.*) Well...it's not *quite* my birthday.

DROSSELMEIER. Excellent! Then come, come! Sit here and close your eyes—no peeking! Put out your hands like so. And...dear me. I feel as though I ought to kneel.

(*For CLARA'S posture is like one about to be proposed to.*)

CLARA. (*Opening her eyes.*) Whatever do you mean? I don't understand you at all.

DROSSELMEIER. (*Turning her arms upward instead.*) No, you don't yet, do you? (*Aloud.*) Close your eyes. There we are. Aaaaaand—

(*He places the Nutcracker in her arms.*)

CLARA. (*Delighted without seeing.*) Oh!

DROSSELMEIER. Now!

(*CLARA opens her eyes. Her face falls.*)

CLARA. Oh.

DROSSELMEIER. It's a Nutcracker!!

CLARA. Yes.

DROSSELMEIER. A *cracker of nuts*!!

CLARA. Ye-es. (*Rallying.*) It's lovely. I'm sure I'll treasure it always. (*She kisses his cheek.*) Thank you, Godfather. And now I really must—

DROSSELMEIER. Must what?

CLARA. Go to my mother. Why, it's....

(*She looks at the clock; it stopped at 11:55.*)

DROSSELMEIER. Yes. Time has not passed.

(*CLARA sits in astonishment.*)

DROSSELMEIER. I don't believe I have told you the most interesting aspect of my gift.

CLARA. It's extraordinary face?

DROSSELMEIER. Oh, no—he's quite an ugly fellow, isn't he? No, no. His face isn't extraordinary at all. But *this* is.

(*He holds the Nutcracker up to CLARA'S ear.*)

CLARA. Why—he's breathing! But (*She puts her ear to the Nutcracker's chest.*) there's no beat.

DROSSELMEIER. True. He has no heart. I could not give him one. That will be up to you.

CLARA. Me? Oh, but I...(*Exasperated. Trying to exit.*) I don't have time for silly games. Fritz is gone and mother's distraught and—

DROSSELMEIER. This is not silly, Clara.

CLARA. But it's *not important!*

DROSSELMEIER. (*Suddenly fearsome.*) Not important? Not important! Do you suppose I stop time on a whim, child? Or that my gifts are given lightly? Do not mistake me for some conjurer—I, who have seen the stars at their nativity, and plumbed the ocean depths. Do you not see, child, whose life you hold within your hands?

CLARA. (*Furious.*) I see nothing but a doll. An ugly doll, fit for a child. Men are *dying*, Godfather—

DROSSELMEIER. (*Overlapping.*) *He* is dying, Clara. *You* are dying. There is more to life than breathing, Clara. There is beauty, there is joy, there is hope—and if you abandon those, then truly, you are dead. (*Kneeling before her.*) Clara, Clara, dear sweet child—will you be brave? There is a battle only you can fight, for it lies in here. (*He touches her heart.*) Will you fight it, Clara?

CLARA. I don't know how. There is no *time!*

DROSSELMEIER. (*Leaping to his feet.*) Courage, child! There is *always* time. Now!

(*The world explodes into a dream ballet, as the play continues...*)

End of Selection