

# Story of the Nutcracker and the Mouse King

*In Verse*

We'll tell you in music and verse, if we can,  
The tale of a good little Nutcracker-man;  
And how there was fought, in the dead of the night,  
'Twixt him and the mouse-king, a terrible fight.

Well, first you must know, that in ages long past,  
There reigned in a country far over the sea,  
A king who ate much and who ate very fast,  
For no one loved eatables better than he.

But the little mice also loved eatables good,  
And stole the king's tit-bits whenever they could;  
So he set a sly trap by the kitchener fire,  
And caught them, and killed them, with cheese on a wire.

Now the queen of the mice, by the murder made wild,  
She squeaked and she scratched in a terrible rage,  
And crept to the cradle where lay the king's child,  
A beautiful maiden of tenderest age.

She bit that poor princess who innocent lay,  
She bit that sweet maiden who woke in dismay!  
She went to bed pretty and woke up a sight,  
And day after day she grew more of a fright.

Scaring the women and scaring the men,  
Scaring all she came across;  
Efforts to cure her were all in vain,  
Nothing at all would mend the loss.

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Till in the end a wise man said,  
If you desire to save the maid,  
If you would bring her beauty back,  
Then you the "Crack-a-tooth nut" must crack.

When the nut was found in its fast-closed shell,  
Like a case of iron around it shut,  
The neighbors, so many that none could tell,  
They broke their teeth on the "Crack-a-tooth nut."

But the princess at last was made lovely once more,  
For a youth came who quickly with care cracked the shell,  
So the Mouse-queen sprang up from a hole in the floor  
To take vengeance on him who had broken the spell.

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His foot crushed the Mouse-queen as homeward she fled,  
"I shall yet have my vengeance!" she terribly cried,  
For the youth was soon furnished with Nutcracker's head,  
The last act of anger before the queen died.

A nutcracker toy did he grow, so they say,  
With tiny weak legs and an overgrown head;  
The Princess's beauty increased day by day,  
While he had her ugliest features instead.

A great jaw to crack nuts, and a white woolly beard,  
A poor wooden plaything was he to remain,  
Until a fair maid should love him, not afear'd,  
And the king of the mice should be routed and slain.

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For her sweet compassion would alter his fate,  
And he would grow handsome who long had been plain;  
His head be restored, and recovered his state,  
Being changed to a youthful and grand prince again.

It was Christmas eve, and the dim twilight  
Enhanced the hour of mystery,  
And up in the drawing-room cheerful and bright,  
Mary stood watching the Christmas-tree;

Under the branches outspread she soon spied  
The Nutcracker-prince in his sadness alone,  
A little old man with a mouth large and wide,  
And Mary caressed him with love as her own.

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Godfather Drosselmeyer came that night,  
And showed a thousand wonderful things,  
A castle all glowing with colors and light,  
With puppets that acted and danced upon springs.  
He wound up the works, and the dollies all moved  
To delicate music so tender and gay;  
But faithful and true to the Nutcracker proved  
Dear Mary, who stole with her loved one away.

Godfather Drosselmeyer, wonderful man,  
Constructed a clock that played out a sweet tune,  
Merrily, cheerily, rang the clear bells,  
Clearly, sweetly, at midnight and noon.  
One night little Mary lay weary and worn,  
Half-sleeping, half-walking in front of the fire;  
The chimes rang out midnight to herald the morn,  
While the last spark of light on the hearth did expire.

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Then by a strange gleam, as the carillon ceased,  
Slowly unfolded the clock-tower door;  
And the soldiers all armed, as for duty released,  
Marched out in good order and traversed the floor:  
The little tin drummer-boy beat the tattoo,  
And horse and foot tramped to the bugle's shrill call,  
Toy cannon, toy waggons, and gingerbread men,  
The Nutcracker-general leading them all.

Behind the wainscot soon was heard  
The call to arms to quell the foe:  
And mice in troops, to valor stirred,  
In martial order come and go!

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They very soon conquered the gingerbread men,  
But the valiant tin soldiers resisted their force,  
And charged at the mouse line again and again,  
As the toy cannon swept down the foot and the horse.

The Mouse-king now struggled with Nutcracker-prince,  
And Mary, who witnessed the scene as in fun,  
With a well-measured blow caused the Mouse-king to wince,  
And to stagger, and die – and the battle was won.

The Nutcracker-prince led the maid through a wood  
To a country abounding in pleasures and joys;  
Each mansion was made of plum-cake rich and good,  
And sugar the flesh of the maidens and boys,  
Who seemingly gambolled or danced where they stood,  
Surrounded by beauties in sweetmeats and toys

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And now on the lake, placid, gentle, and clear,  
Rides Mary along with the Nutcracker old,  
Who calmly, and stolidly careful did steer  
The pearly shell-boat drawn by dolphins of gold;  
The flood, which was essence of jasmine and rose,  
Meandered through banks of white sugar and cream,  
While around and above a sweet melody flows,  
A boat song re-echoed from valley and stream.

Fair Mary cried out, as the barcarolle ceased,  
"I love you, and gladly will share in your lot."  
The Nutcracker-prince from the spell was released,  
And back to his own form was changed on the spot.  
The toy people, yielding no more to despair,  
With ardor they greeted their lord and his bride.  
United, the wedding-march rang through the air:  
In the kingdom of Toy-land they reign side by side.

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