

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE ACT I, SCENE I

It's Christmastime in early nineteenth century Germany as Herr Drosselmeyer, an eccentric toymaker and inventor, reveals a magical gift box with the assistance of his nephew and his baby hawk protégées. The nephew and these helpers, who he is carefully schooling in all things mechanical and magical, deliver a small brass metal sled with a large magical key hand tooled by Herr Drosselmeyer himself. He places the key into the lock, and it starts to turn as our story unfolds....

SCENE II

STREET OUTSIDE THE STAHLBAUM HOUSE

Marie Stahlbaum, Drosselmeyer's goddaughter, is sitting at the window ledge at her family home passing the time before the big Christmas party. From below her window, and unaware of her presence, the nephew passes by on his way to lend a hand to his Uncle Drosselmeyer in his workshop of mechanical clocks and toys. The streets are bustling with patronage. People are shopping and pulling their sleds full of gifts through the street.

SCENE III

DROSSELMAYER'S TOYSHOP

Drosselmeyer is putting the finishing touches on special toys that he has lovingly made for his godchildren, Marie and Fritz Stahlbaum. He plans to give these toys to Marie and Fritz this evening at the annual party held at the home of the Stahlbaum family. As he prepares to close his store, Marie and her mother, Frau Stahlbaum, make a surprise visit to do some last-minute shopping. Marie immediately becomes infatuated with a specific toy, the Nutcracker, which is not quite finished. Herr Drosselmeyer tries in vain to distract Marie from this special toy by presenting her with another gift. Marie can't stop thinking of this Nutcracker as she has become quite smitten with it...

SCENE IV

CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Stahlbaum home is festive and alive with dancing and holiday celebrations. There is a beautiful brass mechanical clock on the mantelpiece gifted to the family many years ago by Drosselmeyer. A magnificent Christmas tree adorns the parlor with a beautiful ornamental palace atop the highest branch.

Suddenly, Herr Drosselmeyer and the nephew burst into the room bearing gifts. Fritz is presented with the Mouse King toy, which is later locked inside a cabinet because Fritz behaves so mischievously with it. Drosselmeyer then captures everyone's attention as he presents two wonderful doll house cabinets from which two mechanical life-size dolls emerge to delight the guests. The festivities continue with a special show presented by Drosselmeyer with the assistance of Marie and the Nephew.

Saving the best for last, Drosselmeyer presents Marie with the special Nutcracker that she so admired in his workshop earlier that evening. It seems that the Nutcracker was meant to be Marie's all along, and she begins to dance with this wonderful gift. Fritz is jealous and rudely snatches the wooden figure from Marie. After a great chase, the Nutcracker

is broken; Marie is devastated, and Fritz is sent to bed in disgrace. Drosselmeyer recovers the broken pieces and magically repairs the Nutcracker, and the Nephew reunites Marie with her wooden friend.

As the evening draws to a close, the last dance of the evening is finished, and the guests depart. The Nutcracker is placed safely under the tree as the family retires for the evening.

SCENE V

THE BATTLE

While everyone is asleep, Marie is worried about her beloved Nutcracker and slips back downstairs into the darkened parlor to find him safely under the tree. As the clock strikes midnight, feeling tired, Marie falls asleep next to her new Nutcracker. Marie is startled by mice that steal her Nutcracker. The room then appears to transform itself and the Christmas tree seems to grow and grow before her very eyes.

A fierce battle ensues between the giant mice and toy soldiers who have miraculously come to life and the Nutcracker escapes the clutches of the mice and challenges the Mouse King to a duel. With Marie's help, the Nutcracker fatally wounds the Mouse King and magically the Nutcracker is then transformed into a handsome prince that Marie recognizes as the Nephew. This handsome prince then invites Marie to join him on an enchanted journey.

SCENE VI

JOURNEY THROUGH THE LAND OF SNOW

Marie and her Nutcracker Prince begin their journey together as the Hawk Angels follow Drosselmeyer's enchanted sled through the magical Land of Snow where they meet the Snow Queen and watch the Snowflakes and their Cavaliers dance.



ACT II, SCENE I

KINGDOM OF SWEETS

Drosselmeyer guides Marie and Nutcracker Prince through the snowy night. As the first light breaks, a beautiful ornamental palace begins to appear. Marie's excitement grows as the lights to guide them become increasingly strong and slowly the palace below starts to rotate as if it is an illuminated jewelry box.

There, Marie is surprised and elated by a peculiar similarity to her family and the Stahlbaum guests and family from the night before. Marie's mother has become Sugar Plum Fairy, her father has become the Cavalier, the flower girl is now Holly Berry, the housekeeper becomes Mrs. Ginger Rodgers, and the butler is now Mirliton.

After Marie and Nutcracker Prince are invited to join in a warm and welcoming display of dance from characters represented from over the world, Drosselmeyer begins a marvelous presentation of magic, transforming the world around him as Marie and Nutcracker Prince begin their journey back home.

SCENE II

ARRIVING HOME

Marie awakens inside her home and frantically searches for her Nutcracker. Realizing he is safely next to her, she wonders if this fantasy of her Nutcracker Prince was all a dream. Drosselmeyer's creation was truly the best Christmas gift of all.

