

Tracy Wells

Adapted from *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* by E.T.A. Hoffman, "The Nutcracker" story by Alexandre Dumas, and the Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky ballet *The Nutcracker*.
Illustration by Peter Carl Geissler

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The Tale of the Nutcracker
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For Connor and Natalie

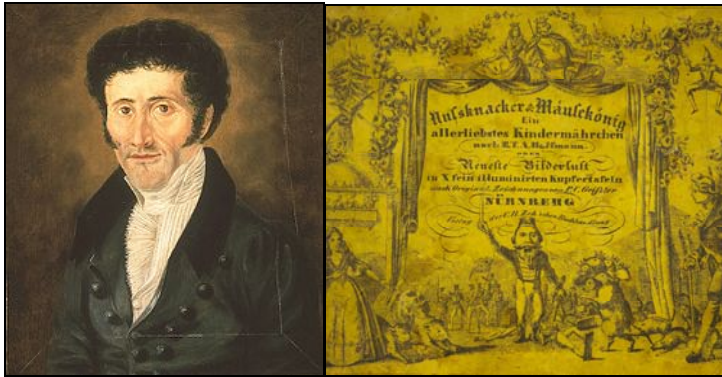
The Tale of the Nutcracker

HOLIDAY CLASSIC. Introduce your audiences to the original story of the Nutcracker with this adaptation, which is based on the novella by E.T.A. Hoffman, *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, and incorporates elements from the story by Alexandre Dumas and the ballet by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. It's Christmas Eve and Marie's godfather gives her a nutcracker for Christmas. Marie takes an immediate liking to the nutcracker and is dismayed when her brother Fritz breaks the nutcracker's jaw. Later that night when the rest of the family has gone to bed, Marie goes to check on the nutcracker and he magically comes to life along with the other dolls in the toy cabinet. Soon the Mouse Queen and her mouse army arrive to exact revenge on the Nutcracker. With the help of toy soldiers, the Nutcracker defeats the Mouse Queen and her army in battle and whisks Marie away to the magical Kingdom of the Dolls, which is guarded by fairies. There, the Nutcracker presents the Mouse Queen's crown to Princess Pirlipat, hoping to end the curse that has plagued them both. This imaginative, fantastical play is sure to delight audiences of all ages.

Performance Time: Approximately 90-120 minutes.

The Tale of the Nutcracker

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Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822). Cover of *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* illustrated by Peter Carl Geissler.

About the Story

Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann (1776-1822) was born in the kingdom of Prussia. Hoffmann was an author, composer, theatre manager, and music critic, but he is best known as the author of the 1816 novel *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*, which is the original source for Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's 1892 ballet. An author of fantasy and horror, Hoffmann's novel was intended for adults and is more violent and unsettling than Alexandre Dumas's version of the story or Tchaikovsky's ballet. Hoffmann is considered a pioneer in fantasy and horror fiction. He combined realism and fantasy with the macabre to create worlds in which inanimate things come to life. His works influenced writers including Edgar Allan Poe, Nikolai Gogol, Charles Dickens, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Franz Kafka, and Alfred Hitchcock. Hoffmann is also known for his short story, "The Sandman" and his novel *The Life and Opinions of Tomcat Murr*.

Characters

(9 M, 12 F, 10 flexible, opt. extras)
(With doubling: 8 M, 8 F, 8 flexible)

- MARIE SILBERHAUS:** Young teen girl who receives a nutcracker for Christmas from her godfather; wears a long nightgown and hair bow; female.
- FRITZ SILBERHAUS:** Marie's younger brother; wears a nightshirt and pants; male.
- JUDE SILBERHAUS:** Marie and Fritz's father, a judge; male
- MRS. SILBERHAUS:** Marie and Fritz's mother; female
- GODFATHER DROSSELMEIER:** Marie and Fritz's godfather, a talented toymaker; wears a brightly colored coat and an eye patch; male.
- MISS TRUDCHEN:** Stern governess; female.
- NUTCRACKER:** A prince who has had a curse placed upon him by Queen Mouserink; appears as a nutcracker; wears a mask and is dressed as a soldier in a red waistcoat and black pants; male.
- MISS CLAIRE:** New life-sized doll that Godfather Drosselmeyer gives to Marie for Christmas; wears a new fancy dress and bonnet and has a stylish hairdo; female.
- MISS ROSE:** Marie's life-sized doll who has been Marie's favorite doll since she was three years old; wears a worn dress, a tattered bonnet, and her hair is unkempt; female.
- CAPTAIN HUSSAR:** Leader of the toy soldiers who comes to life to help the Nutcracker defeat the mouse army; wears a military uniform and carries a sword; male.
- TOY SOLDIERS 1-4:** Toy soldiers that come to life; wear military uniforms and carry swords; flexible.
- QUEEN MOUSERINK:** Evil mouse queen from the Land of Sweets who wants to exact revenge on the Nutcracker; dressed as a mouse with ears, whiskers, and a tail, and wears royal attire and a crown; female.
- MOUSE KING:** Queen Mouserink's husband; male.

- MOUSE PRINCE:** Queen Mouserink's son; dressed as a mouse with ears, whiskers, and a tail, and wears royal attire with a medal; male.
- MOUSE SOLDIERS 1-4:** Soldiers in Queen Mouserink's army; dressed as mice with ears, whiskers, and tails; wear military uniforms and can wear grey clothing underneath their uniforms to suggest fur but this is optional; flexible.
- KING PRALINE:** King of the Kingdom of the Dolls; wears royal attire and a crown; male.
- QUEEN MARMALADE:** Queen of the Kingdom of the Dolls; wears royal attire and a crown; female.
- PRINCESS PIRLIPAT:** Haughty princess from the Kingdom of the Dolls; wears a gown with a crown and has a mask that is similar to the Nutcracker's face; female.
- ROYAL ASTROLOGER:** Advisor to the King and Queen; wears a robe; flexible.
- ROYAL MOUSE CATCHER:** Advisor to the King and Queen; wears a robe; flexible.
- CHRISTIAN ELIAS DROSSELMAYER:** Technician to King Praline; wears clothing similar to Godfather Drosselmeyer; male.
- PEPPERMINT FAIRY:** Fairy from the Kingdom of the Dolls; wears red and white clothing resembling a peppermint stick with fairy wings and carries a peppermint stick magic wand; female.
- LICORICE FAIRY:** Grumpy fairy from the Kingdom of the Dolls who dislikes sweetness; wears black with fairy wings and carries a black magic wand; female.
- LEMON DROP FAIRY:** Fairy from the Kingdom of the Dolls; wears yellow clothing, fairy wings, and carries a yellow magic wand; female.
- MARSHMALLOW FAIRY:** Fairy from the Kingdom of the Dolls; wears white with fairy wings and carries a white magic wand; female.
- EXTRAS (opt.):** As Toy Soldiers, Mouse Soldiers, Dolls, Fairies, and Residents of the Kingdom of the Dolls.

Costumes

All characters residing in the real world should be attired in clothing appropriate for the late 1800s and should be nicely dressed for Christmas. Characters residing in the Kingdom of the Dolls should wear fantastical costumes. If extras as residents of the Kingdom of the Dolls are used, they should be dressed in assorted candy colors or as pieces of candy.

Options for Doubling

ROYAL ASTROLOGER/TOY SOLDIER 1 (flexible)
MOUSE CATCHER/TOY SOLDIER 2 (flexible)
MISS CLAIRE/LEMON DROP FAIRY (female)
MISS ROSE/MARSHMALLOW FAIRY (female)
MISS TRUDCHEN/LICORICE FAIRY (female)
MRS. SILBERHAUS/PEPPERMINT FAIRY (female)
MOUSE KING/MOUSE SOLDIER 3 (male)

Setting

Late 1800s, Christmas Eve. The Silberhaus' parlor and the fantastical Kingdom of the Dolls.

Sets

Silberhaus Parlor. There is a large decorated lit Christmas tree with wrapped presents and unwrapped toys underneath CS. A fireplace with a clock on the mantle is SL. A sofa is DSR and two wing chairs with two accent tables and lamps are DSL. Two large parlor doors are in front of the scene with a spotlight on them. A large bookshelf filled with dolls and toy soldiers is SR. The bookshelf can be swung open or moved aside when it serves as the door to the Kingdom of the Dolls. There are two large parlor doors (opt.) for the start of Scene 1.

The Kingdom of the Dolls. There is a backdrop depicting a land of sweets along with stand-ups and other set pieces that look like sweets such as cookies, lollipops, candies, cupcakes, etc. There is a gumdrop garland and either a cupcake or muffin large enough to sit on.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Parlor in the Silberhaus home.

Scene 2: Parlor in the Silberhaus home.

Scene 3: Parlor in the Silberhaus home.

Scene 4: Parlor in the Silberhaus home.

Intermission

ACT II

Scene 1: The Kingdom of the Dolls.

Scene 2: The Kingdom of the Dolls.

Scene 3: The Kingdom of the Dolls.

Scene 4: Parlor in the Silberhaus home.

Props

Assorted wrapped Christmas gifts	Mask, for Nutcracker
Large wrapped box, for Claire (large enough to contain actor)	Plate of cookies
Large wrapped box, for Hussar (large enough to contain actor)	8 Swords, for Toy Soldiers and Mice Soldiers
Sword, for Hussar	Tattered bonnet, for Miss Rose
Nutcracker doll, dressed to match the actor playing the Nutcracker	Camera
Wrapped box for Nutcracker doll	Crown, for Queen Mouserink
Bowl of nuts	Gumdrop garland
Music box	Tray of sweet treats
Handkerchief, for Drosselmeyer	Banner that reads, "Welcome back, Nutcracker"
Dolls (displayed on bookshelf)	Silly hat, for Licorice Fairy
Toy soldiers (displayed on bookshelf)	Hand mirror
Blanket	Bouquet of flowers
Broom	Box of chocolates
Crib	Piece of paper with poem written on it
Baby doll	Hair bow, for Marie
Large pot and spoon	Medal, for Mouse Prince
Small bed on wheels	2 Large candy canes
Throne	Rope
Large nut	Candy throne
	3 Pairs of sunglasses, for Mouse Soldiers 1-3
	3 Canes, for Mouse Soldiers 1-3
	2 Candy canes

Sound Effect

Sound of wind

*"...she doesn't know the difference
between what is real
and what is her imagination."*

—Judge

ACT I

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Early 1900s. Silberhaus home, parlor, Christmas Eve. There is a large decorated lit Christmas tree with wrapped presents and unwrapped toys underneath CS. A fireplace with a clock on the mantle is SL. A large bookshelf filled with dolls and toy soldiers is SR. A sofa is DSR and two wing chairs with an accent table are DSL. There is a bowl of nuts and a lamp on the table. Two large parlor doors are in front of the scene with a spotlight on them. The rest of the scene is in darkness. Note: This can also be played in front of the curtain. Fritz tiptoes on SL, and Marie tiptoes on SR. They meet in front of the doors.)

FRITZ: I'm so excited, Marie! I just can't wait another minute!

MARIE: *(With a finger to her lips.)* Shhhh! Don't let them hear us, Fritz. We're not supposed to come down to the parlor just yet.

FRITZ: Why must they have a grownup party on Christmas Eve when they know we are anxious to open our presents?

MARIE: Father is an important judge and is expected to host gatherings for various holidays.

FRITZ: *(Crossing his arms, pouting.)* Then I wish Father wasn't a judge. I wish he were just a plain old man.

MARIE: *(Chuckles.)* Is that so? And what would you have Father do for work if he wasn't a judge?

FRITZ: I don't know. What job could he do where he would not have to host a party on Christmas Eve? *(Thinks.)* I know! A chimneysweep!

MARIE: *(With a knowing smile.)* Well, you know, Fritz, chimneysweeps work awfully hard and they don't bring home very much money. I think if Father was a chimneysweep instead of a judge then it would be unlikely that we would live in this grand house with our lovely things.

FRITZ: You don't know that.

MARIE: I do. And, furthermore, if Father were a chimneysweep instead of a judge, I'm quite certain we wouldn't have the Christmas tree with all the lights and trimmings.

FRITZ: No Christmas tree?! But I love our Christmas tree!

MARIE: And what's more, we wouldn't have any of our lovely presents to open on Christmas Eve.

FRITZ: (*Incredulously.*) No presents?! (*Sits.*) In that case, I suppose it's all right if Father is a judge. I'll just wait here quietly until the party is over. I'm sure it won't be that much longer.

MARIE: (*Chuckles.*) That's what I thought.

(*Miss Trudchen enters and sees Fritz and Marie.*)

MISS TRUDCHEN: (*Sternly.*) Marie! Fritz! There you are. You are supposed to be upstairs in your rooms.

MARIE/FRITZ: Sorry, Miss Trudchen.

MISS TRUDCHEN: What are you doing down here?

MARIE: We just came down to see if it was almost time to see the Christmas tree and open our presents.

FRITZ: (*Rolling on the floor, dramatically.*) We just couldn't wait anymore, Miss Trudchen. It was torture to make us wait upstairs for so long... simply torture!

MISS TRUDCHEN: (*Trying not to smile.*) Well, then, Fritz, you'll be pleased to know that your torture is over. That's why I was upstairs looking for you. The Christmas Eve party is over. It's time for you to go into the parlor.

(*Fritz jumps up.*)

FRITZ: Then what are we waiting for?!

(*Marie and Miss Trudchen laugh as the parlor doors open and lights come up on the scene. Judge and Mrs. Silberhaus are standing next to the tree.*)

MRS. SILBERHAUS: *(To Marie and Fritz.)* Merry Christmas, my darlings.

(Marie runs over and hugs Mrs. Silberhaus.)

MARIE: The tree is so beautiful, Mother.

FRITZ: And so bright! Where are the candles that we usually put on the tree? *(Rushes to the tree and touches the lights.)* And what are these?

JUDGE: Those are new electric lights, Fritz. Aren't they wonderful?

FRITZ: They are! But where did we get them?

(Drosselmeyer enters, carrying a box, which he sets downstage by the tree.)

DROSSELMEYER: I brought them, of course.

MARIE/FRITZ: Godfather Drosselmeyer!

(Marie and Fritz rush to embrace Drosselmeyer.)

DROSSELMEYER: *(Chuckles.)* Children! I must say, it is always a pleasure to see the two of you. You are always so appreciative of the little doo-dads and whatcha-ma-call-its that I bring to you.

MARIE: No one in the world brings us such exciting and unique gifts, Godfather.

MRS. SILBERHAUS: *(Annoyed.)* I happen to think we give you lovely gifts.

(Judge crosses to the tree and picks up a gift.)

JUDGE: *(To Marie.)* If you don't like the gifts we give you, then we can always find other homes for these... *(Indicating gifts.)*

(Fritz rushes over to the Judge and throws himself on his leg to stop him.)

FRITZ: No, Father! You mustn't! We love your gifts! We promise!

JUDGE: *(Chuckling.)* Very well.

(Judge returns to Mrs. Silberhaus, dragging Fritz on his leg.)

DROSSELMAYER: *(To Fritz and Marie.)* It just so happens that I've brought a couple of gifts for you today.

(Fritz jumps up and crosses to Drosselmeyer.)

FRITZ: *(Excitedly.)* What are they?! What are they?!

MARIE: *(To Drosselmeyer.)* Oh, I do hope it's a beautiful new doll!

FRITZ: *(To Drosselmeyer.)* And I'm hoping for a new gallant toy soldier!

DROSSELMAYER: Now would your Godfather Drosselmeyer bring you just any old doll or toy soldier? *(Crosses to SR and drags on a large box.)*

MARIE/FRITZ: No, Godfather Drosselmeyer.

DROSSELMAYER: I have always been interested in mechanical parts and the way things work. Toys are fun to spark your imagination, but there's nothing like seeing something really come to life. Wouldn't you agree, children? *(Crosses to SL and drags on a large box.)*

MARIE/FRITZ: Yes, Godfather Drosselmeyer.

DROSSELMAYER: Then let's see what you think of my gifts this year. Marie, why don't you open yours first.

(Marie crosses to the box SR and opens it. Miss Claire is inside, posed with her arms up.)

MARIE: It's a new doll! And she's as big as me!

DROSSELMEYER: That's not the only thing that makes her special.

(Drosselmeyer pulls the box away, crosses behind Claire, and "winds" her up. Claire begins to dance.)

MARIE: She really dances!

MRS. SILBERHAUS: That's wonderful, Drosselmeyer. What a spectacular gift!

JUDGE: *(To Drosselmeyer.)* You've really outdone yourself.

FRITZ: *(Excitedly jumping up and down in front of the box SL.)*
My turn! My turn!

DROSSELMEYER: Well, open it up, then.

(Fritz opens the box to reveal Captain Hussar.)

FRITZ: It's a toy soldier!

DROSSELMEYER: Not just any toy soldier.

(Drosselmeyer pulls the box away, crosses behind Hussar, and "winds" him up. Hussar marches around the stage and holds up his sword.)

FRITZ: Thank you, Godfather Drosselmeyer.

MARIE: Yes, thank you, Godfather Drosselmeyer. Your gifts are simply magical.

(Mrs. Silberhaus crosses to Claire.)

MRS. SILBERHAUS: That they are, but they are also very fragile and very likely to break. That's why we must keep them locked up in the cabinet.

(Miss Trudchen helps Mrs. Silberhaus "drag" Claire over to bookshelf.)

MARIE: But, Mother!

(Judge crosses to Hussar.)

JUDGE: Your mother is right. We are so grateful to Drosselmeyer for bestowing such wonders on our children. We have to make sure these treasures last them for many years.

(Judge "drags" Hussar over to the bookshelf.)

FRITZ: But, Father!

DROSSELMEYER: *(To Judge and Mrs. Silberhaus.)* You know that I make these gifts with the intention that the children will actually play with them.

MRS. SILBERHAUS: Of course, we do. We just make sure that they are supervised when they play with your toys.

MISS TRUDCHEN: Don't worry, Herr Drosselmeyer. I'll make sure the children don't have too much fun with the toys.

DROSSELMEYER: *(To Marie, aside.)* Actually, that is what I'm afraid of.

MRS. SILBERHAUS: It's getting late, children. You really should be getting up to bed.

DROSSELMEYER: If you don't mind, I have one more gift that I'd like to give the children. And this one should be all right for them to play with without breaking it. *(Crosses to the tree, pulls out gift, and brings it to Marie.)* Marie, you're the eldest. Why don't you open this one?

MARIE: All right. *(Slowly opens the gift and pulls out a nutcracker doll.)* Why, it's a...nutcracker.

FRITZ: Why would you bring us a nutcracker, Godfather Drosselmeyer? Look how ugly he is. *(Taps nutcracker's head roughly.)*

MARIE: *(Drawing the nutcracker closer.)* I don't think he's ugly. *(Looking at his face.)* I think he's quite handsome.

(Fritz pulls the nutcracker away from Marie.)

FRITZ: *(Looking nutcracker over.)* But what does he do?
Surely, he does something.

(Drosselmeyer takes the nutcracker from Fritz.)

DROSSELMEYER: Well, of course, he does something. He
cracks nuts. Like this... *(Takes a nut from the bowl on the table
and cracks it with the nutcracker.)*

JUDGE: How I love the sound of a hard shell being cracked!

FRITZ: *(To Drosselmeyer.)* But that can't be all he does. *(Grabs
nutcracker and looks him over.)*

DROSSELMEYER: I'm afraid it is, Fritz.

FRITZ: Then I don't want him. He's ugly and silly. And all
he can do is crack nuts.

*(Fritz puts a nut in the nutcracker's mouth, cracks it, and throws the
nutcracker down. Marie rushes over to nutcracker and picks him
up.)*

MARIE: Don't just throw him to the ground like that, Fritz.
(Looking nutcracker over, touching his mouth.) See, you've hurt
him! You've broken his jaw!

FRITZ: I couldn't have hurt him. He's only a nutcracker.

(Miss Trudchen crosses to Marie.)

MISS TRUDCHEN: She means that you've broken this nice
gift that your godfather has given you. *(Takes the nutcracker
from Marie.)* This is why I always supervise the children
when they play with the toys you've given them, Herr
Drosselmeyer.

MARIE: What are we going to do?

(Drosselmeyer crosses to Miss Trudchen and takes the nutcracker. He then crosses with Marie to the sofa and they sit. Drosselmeyer pulls out a handkerchief.)

DROSSELMAYER: I see what the problem is. His jaw has come loose. I will just tie it up with my handkerchief for now, and then I will come by again in a few days with my tools and fix it up good as new.

MARIE: *(Hugging Drosselmeyer.)* Oh, thank you, Godfather Drosselmeyer!

DROSSELMAYER: In the meantime, Marie, I am placing you in charge of caring for the nutcracker. You need to make sure that nothing else happens to him. Do you understand?

MARIE: I do, Godfather. And thank you.

(Marie takes the nutcracker from Drosselmeyer and hugs it.)

MRS. SILBERHAUS: Now, children, you really must be getting up to bed. Tomorrow is Christmas morning, after all.

FRITZ: *(Whining.)* But, Mother!

JUDGE: You heard your mother. Up to bed, on the double.

FRITZ: *(Saluting Judge.)* Yes, sir!

JUDGE: *(Pointing upstairs.)* Now, march!

(Fritz crosses to Hussar.)

FRITZ: Protect the presents under the Christmas tree, Captain Hussar. We will come for them in the morning.

JUDGE: Fritz!

FRITZ: *(Marching offstage like a soldier.)* One, two, three, four. One, two, three four... *(Continues as he exits.)*

MRS. SILBERHAUS: Herr Drosselmeyer, we will see you out.

DROSSELMAYER: *(To Marie, aside.)* Remember what I said, Marie, don't let anything happen to the nutcracker.

MARIE: I won't, Godfather Drosselmeyer. I promise.

(Drosselmeyer exits with the Judge and Mrs. Silberhaus.)

MISS TRUDCHEN: Come along, Marie. You heard your mother and father. It's time for bed.

MARIE: Can I just have one more minute, Miss Trudchen? I want to find the nutcracker a proper bed amongst the other dolls. He has some healing to do, you know.

MISS TRUDCHEN: Very well, Marie, but I expect you to head up to bed just as soon as you're done.

MARIE: Yes, Miss Trudchen. *(Miss Trudchen exits. Looks down at nutcracker. To nutcracker.)* Poor nutcracker. Please don't be angry with my brother, Fritz. He meant no harm. It's just that he's a little boy who loves to play with soldiers, so sometimes he can be a little rough. I'm convinced that when you get to know him, you'll forgive him. *(Crosses to bookshelf.)* To make amends for what my brother did, I promise to take good care of you. You'll be healthy in no time. In fact, I will give you the bed of my old doll, Miss Rose. *(Takes doll off of the shelf and puts the nutcracker in her place.)* You will sleep well tonight, nutcracker. *(Yawns and stretches her arms.)* I think I will, too. *(Looks back at the nutcracker.)* But a good nurse shouldn't leave her patient's side. I'll just lay down on the sofa for now.

(Marie crosses to the side table and turns down the lamp. As she does, the lights dim except for a spot on the sofa and the Christmas tree lights. Marie lays down on sofa and closes her eyes. Pause. Queen Mouserink enters and crosses to the sofa.)

QUEEN MOUSERINK: *(Looking over Marie.)* Well, well, well. Who do we have here? *(Looking into Marie's face.)* This is the girl that the Nutcracker has chosen to protect him. *(Cackles loudly.)* I should have no trouble at all defeating this little thing. Who does the Nutcracker think he is, hiding in the home of a little girl? *(Crosses to CS, lifts her arms, and looks*

around. Calls.) Come out, come out, wherever you are, Nutcracker! I know you're here!

(Lights up. Marie sits up, startled. Nutcracker is standing next to the bookshelf along with Hussar, Miss Claire, and Miss Rose.)

NUTCRACKER: Queen Mouserink, I should have known you would come for me!

MARIE: *(Shocked.)* Nutcracker, you're alive!

NUTCRACKER: *(Touching his face.)* I'd hardly call this living, with a face like this. But if you mean I can move and talk just like you, then, yes, I suppose I am alive.

MARIE: *(Pointing to Queen Mouserink.)* Who is that dreadful creature?

(Queen Mouserink crosses to Marie.)

QUEEN MOUSERINK: *(Threateningly.)* Just who are you calling dreadful?

NUTCRACKER: Leave her alone, Queen Mouserink! *(To Marie.)* That creature is Queen Mouserink, the evil queen of the mouse army from the Land of the Sweets. She has followed me here to exact revenge on me for killing her husband.

QUEEN MOUSERINK: That's right, Nutcracker. And I will have my revenge...I promise you that.

NUTCRACKER: You've tried for many years, and unsuccessfully at that. What makes you think things will be different now?

QUEEN MOUSERINK: *(Circling Marie.)* Look at who you've chosen as your protector...a little girl. *(Grabs Marie and pins her arms behind her.)* I should just take care of her right here and now. Then it will be just a matter of time before you are finished!

[END OF FREEVIEW]