

The Story of The NUTCRACKER

by Michele L. Vacca

*(Based on the Tales of Hoffman, a Dumas children's story,
and the Tchaikovsky ballet Scenario)*

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CHARACTERS

This play has eight major roles (names indicated in CAPITAL LETTERS), and can be performed by as few as eight actors. With a company of eight, the “doubles” (“doubling” in this case meaning one actor playing multiple roles) are distributed as listed below. If a larger cast is preferred, each one of the many “sub-roles” can easily be played by a single performer.

MARIE, a young girl

FRITZ, her brother

Mouse Warrior “Eeeky”

Snowflake I “Crystal White”

Butterscotch the Page

Optional: Clown acrobat and Chinese Dancer

MOTHER (Anna)

The Snow Queen

The Sugar Plum Fairy

FATHER (Carl)

Mouse Warrior “Squeaky”

The Snow King

Tutti-Frutti the Sugar Plum Fairy’s Prime Minister

DROSSELMEYER, a very spry “elderly” man, a toy maker/antique dealer

The Mouse King

The North Wind

Bittersweet the Sugar Plum Fairy’s Gatekeeper

Bonbon the Sugar Plum Fairy’s Prime Minister

NUTCRACKER, a toy

The Prince

Optional: Spanish Dancer, Cossack Dancer, and Cavalier

CLARA, a doll

Snowflake “Silver Frost” Dancer

Flute Solo Dancer

SOLDIER, a toy

Snowflake II “Shimmering Ice”

Taffy the Page

Optional: Clown acrobat and Chinese Dancer

Further enlarging the size of the cast: You are welcome to add still additional performers to the cast.. Adding extra dolls, toy soldiers, mouse warriors, snowflakes, and attendants for the Snow Queen and the Sugar Plum Fairy are all possible ways to increase the size of the company. If you want your additional characters to have “program” names, we’ll be happy to provide you with a list of possible choices.

THE STORY OF THE NUTCRACKER PRODUCTION NOTES:

THE CHARACTERS / THE CHARACTERS IN MARIE'S DREAM:

In the Second Act, Marie's elaborate dream puts the characters into a variety of roles. Therefore, even if doubling is being utilized, no particular attempt should be made to disguise the actors in their different parts. For example, all of the "Drosselmeyer" characters should wear a patch over one eye. The doubling should be apparent to the audience and fun for the actors at the same time – after all, Marie "remembers" everyone upon awakening!

Note: Brief descriptions can be found in the stage directions at the point where each new character makes his or her first entrance.

"THE" MUSIC:

Music from the Tchaikovsky ballet, "The Nutcracker," or Casse-Noisette, as it is sometimes called, is the obvious primary source for any desired effects, background music, and any movement/dance accompaniment for this play. The choice to use music from the ballet is an option for those who like to include music and movement in their productions. The director may opt to use a few pre-recorded background pieces from the famous ballet to introduce the acts, and then may opt to use minimal or no music at all beyond that, or opt to use music from other sources. The ballet itself is in the public domain and the music may be performed live or recorded, depending upon the individual theater. The play will function very well without a major amount of dance or music, although you will probably soon realize that your production may benefit from the inclusion of SOME of the music (even if only as occasional background for set changes) your audience will no doubt expect. In our own Classics On Stage! productions of this script we used an extensive amount of dance and a very large proportion of the ballet music. You can contact us for suggestions if you're producing this play.

DANCE/MOVEMENT STAGING:

Depending upon how much dance/movement you decide to add to your production, the services of a good choreographer can be extremely beneficial to the production of this play. He or she may wish to base the dance movements upon the original choreography used traditionally in the Nutcracker ballet, or may opt for more modern dance or free form interpretations. Even if you decide to use classical dancing (or any type of dancing) as part of your production, do keep in mind that acting abilities are of primary importance. Hopefully, performers with the combination of acting and movement talents you need will be available to be chosen. In the staging the dialogue portions of the play (especially Act II) do keep in

mind that the play is a comedy. The style that works best is closer to that of American musical comedy or British Gilbert and Sullivan operettas than it is to “serious” Shakespearean “drama.” Also – See page 24 in the script for a few helpful hints about staging the “battle” between the toys and the mice.

COSTUMES:

For the first act and the last scene of the play the costumes should be from the general 1840’s to 1890’s periods. This means longer suit coats for the men and a full, long dress for Mother. Marie and Fritz are dressed in the somewhat formal clothing of children of their class in that general period. Bright, warm colors are the most effective. The costumes for the characters in the “dream” portion of the play, as indicated in the script, do not have to conform to any particular historical period. A designer can use a very free hand here, although he or she must remember that most of the characters must be able to move/dance while wearing these costumes. A possible source of inspiration could be the costumes used in previous productions of the Nutcracker ballet. The Nutcracker Mask can be ordered though a costume shop or manufactured by using vinyl screen material or net over the face and an “elaborate” head dress above. The Mice can use simple commercial Halloween animal costumes heads – but of course the King must have a crown!

SETTINGS AND PROPS:

The sets and the changing of the sets are an important aspect of this play’s production, but they don’t have to be elaborate. The settings can be indicated by simple pieces to suggest areas, or they can be full settings in the backdrop proscenium style. Whatever style they ultimately are – the play should not simply stop to change the set – this is counter productive. Three “major” settings are needed – the living room/parlour of Marie’s family, the “generic” Land of Snow, and the “throne room” of The Land of Enchanted Dreams. The house setting should be somewhat realistic, i.e., minimal furnishings, possibly a fireplace, and the Christmas tree, etc. There should be a great contrast between the house setting and the other two major settings. For the other two, a designer can let the imagination go. Flats could be used or various free standing set pieces, or lighting and scrim effects, or any combination of these. Just remember, though, that the settings will have to be changed quickly and there has to be enough room left for the movement and whatever dancing you may want to incorporate. Drosselmeyer’s shop is the only other setting needed; it too can be simple or elaborate, depending upon your circumstances – an elaborate version of is described in the opening portion of the script. The (free standing) gate to the Land of Enchanted Dreams can be of almost any style and size, decorated by all sorts of candy and confections. Props needs are quite

minimal for this play – for example the Fairy should have a wand, other fantasy characters might carry staffs, the Gatekeeper could have a giant key, and so on. Ideally, Marie’s doll, Gertrude should be a “rag doll” type, which makes her “adventures” in Act I appear broadly comical and not at all realistic. The battle swords should NOT be heavy theatrical swords. The best “swords” for this scene are made of wooden dowels with a hilt added for gripping, and then painted silver. The swords but work best when they range from about 24 inches to about 30 inches in maximum length.

THE THREE DOLLS: – Commercial dolls of the largest possible size should be used for the three dolls; the Nutcracker, the Soldier, and Miss Clara. Their costumes and hair color should be modeled after those of the three actors. Removal of the dolls (within the scene in Act I) so that actors can take their places is the job of a “magical” fast-moving stage hand.

THE SCRIPT:

This play is based partially upon a story (THE NUTCRACKER AND THE MOUSE KING) by ETA Hoffmann, and upon the scenario of the famous Tchaikovsky ballet, and also upon a short story by Alexandre Dumas. The Hoffmann story dealt with mysterious Drosselmeyer giving the child Marie a magical Nutcracker toy that comes to life and does battle with the Mouse King. The Dumas material added the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Kingdom of Sweets to the plot. The ballet itself ultimately was a mixture of these two tales as well as the compilation of the vivid imaginations of the composer and the original choreographers/scenarists. If you’re interested in the history of the ballet you’ll discover among other things that Tchaikovsky was not at all confident that it would be successful, and some of the original ideas for the scenario – ideas that (fortunately) were ultimately scrapped – were surprisingly (and very amusingly!) bizarre!

HELPFUL HINTS: Advertising your production:

If you use this wording or a variation to publicize the production – then people who aren’t paying attention won’t mistakenly think you’re offering the entire ballet! THE STORY OF THE NUTCRACKER (the legal title of the play) “*Based on the Tales of Hoffman, an Alexandre Dumas children’s story, and the scenario of the famous Tchaikovsky ballet.*” If you’re using a lot of dance in the program then you can bill the play as: THE STORY OF THE NUTCRACKER – A Play with Dance.

INTERMISSION:

Depending upon set changes and actor breaks, there is no “script” artistic reason why this play needs an intermission. The choice is yours.

THE STORY OF THE NUTCRACKER

By Michele L. Vacca

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ACT I

(OVERTURE: ONE PORTION OF THE STAGE IS A PLEASANT PARLOUR FURNISHED WITH STYLES AND TASTES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. IT'S A PROSPEROUS AND COMFORTABLE LOOKING ROOM – WARM AND CHARMING. THIS PORTION OF THE SET IS VERY DIMLY LIGHTED, EXCEPT FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE, WHICH HAS A BRIGHT STAR ON ITS TIP. LIGHTS BRIEFLY ILLUMINATE THE TREE, MAKING THE ORNAMENTS SPARKLE, AND REVEALING STRINGS OF POPCORN, SUGAR PLUMS, LARGE SNOWFLAKES, AND OTHER BRIGHT DECORATIONS.

THE SECOND PORTION OF THE SET CONSISTS OF A SMALL SHOP. POSSIBLY THERE ARE SHELVES WITH TOYS, CLOCKS, AND BRIC-A-BRAC, ALL FOR SALE OR REPAIR. IN THE DIM LIGHT THE SHOP SEEMS QUITE MYSTERIOUS. THREE VERY LARGE DOLLS SIT ON ONE OF THE SHELVES: A TOY SOLDIER, A “BALLERINA” DOLL IN A PRETTY DRESS, AND A WOODEN NUTCRACKER DRESSED IN A SOLDIER UNIFORM. THE SIGN HANGING ON THE SHOP DOOR FRAME SAYS: “DROSSELMAYER’S: ANTIQUES AND TOYS.”

AS BACKGROUND MUSIC PLAYS, THE LIGHTS DIM ALMOST TO TOTAL DARKNESS, AND AS THEY COME BACK UP TO A “MOONLIGHT” LEVEL AND THE DOLLS BECOME VISIBLE AGAIN – IT CAN BE SEEN THAT THE INANIMATE DOLLS HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY THREE ACTORS DRESSED EXACTLY AS THE THREE DOLLS WERE DRESSED.

AS THE DOLLS ARE REVEALED, HERR DROSSELMEYER APPEARS. HE IS A MYSTERIOUS MAN, TALL AND THIN, AND HE WEARS A BLACK PATCH OVER ONE EYE. HE COULD BE ANY AGE FROM 60 TO 160. THERE'S A SPECIAL AURA SURROUNDING DROSSELMEYER, AN AURA OF DEEP AND SERENE MYSTERY. CHILDREN OFTEN SENSE THAT HE'S QUITE EXTRAORDINARY – HE SEEMS TO POSSESS A KIND OF UNIQUE “AUTHORITY,” AN ALMOST MAGICAL “POWER,” THAT'S NOT SINISTER IN ANY WAY.

DROSSELMEYER CROSSES TO THE SHELVES, ADJUSTS A FEW ITEMS, SMILES TO HIMSELF, RUBS HIS HANDS TOGETHER, AND LAUGHS SOFTLY. AS HE BEGINS TO SPEAK, HE SLIGHTLY ADJUSTS THE POSITIONS OF THE TOY SOLDIER, THE DOLL, AND THE NUTCRACKER.)

DROSSELMEYER: Ahh, my handsome soldier. So straight and tall. Very fine, indeed. (TO THE BALLERINA DOLL.) And my beautiful Clara. How pretty you look, my dear. Almost alive. How real. And you, my wonderful Nutcracker. What a magnificent piece of work you are. Truly, you are the best of all. (LAUGHS SOFTLY TO HIMSELF AND LOOKS OUT INTO THE NIGHT.) A wonderful Christmas Eve. The air is cold, but not freezing. The sky is clear; I can see the stars. (TO THE DOLLS.) Ahh, my children, what wonderful presents you will be. Tonight I feel that you possess strange powers. Tonight – (HE SLOWLY RAISES HIS ARMS, AND THE LIGHTS CHANGE COLORS.) – you are almost alive. Tonight you could go anywhere, and do anything. Anything that someone's imagination wished you to do. What a wonderful thought. Perhaps you will venture into a strange world that most people never see. A mysterious world with shimmering stars – (PERHAPS A SINGLE LIGHT ILLUMINATES THE STAR ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE.) – and silvery moonbeams – (MOONLIGHT FLOODS THE STAGE.) – and graceful sugar plums and dancing snowflakes. How I envy you, my children. The night is all yours!

(MUSIC PLAYS. THE THREE DOLLS SLOWLY COME TO LIFE, AND AS THEY MOVE / DANCE STIFFLY IN THE GLOWING MOONLIGHT. DROSSELMAYER GESTURES (VERY MUCH LIKE AN ORCHESTRA CONDUCTOR) – HAPPILY LOST IN A MAGICAL WORLD OF HIS OWN. AS THE THREE DOLLS DANCE PERHAPS THE OTHER TOYS ON THE SHELVES SWAY TO THE MUSIC. WHEN DROSSELMAYER GESTURES A FINAL TIME, THE THREE DOLLS DANCE OFFSTAGE. DROSSELMAYER EXITS LAST, AND WHEN HE MAKES A FINAL GESTURE ALL THE LIGHTS IN THE SHOP AREA DIM, FADING TO BLACK AS HE LEAVES. PERHAPS THE ONLY VISIBLE LIGHT IS THE STAR ON THE TOP OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

THEN CHEERFUL MUSIC PLAYS AS THE LIGHTS COME UP ON THE FAMILY PARLOUR AND THE ROOM IS FULLY REVEALED. THE ATMOSPHERE IS COZY, WARM AND PLEASANT, WITH NO SUGGESTION OF THE MYSTERY OF THE PREVIOUS SCENE.

AFTER A MOMENT MOTHER ENTERS. SHE CARRIES A FEW ATTRACTIVELY WRAPPED PRESENTS, WHICH SHE PUTS AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE. SHE SEEMS VERY HAPPY, AND SINGS TO HERSELF AS SHE ADMIRES THE TREE.)

MOTHER: What a lovely tree! I believe it's the finest one we've ever had. (AS SHE LOOKS AROUND THE ROOM.) Let's see now. I think everything is ready. (STRAIGHTENS A FEW SMALL THINGS.) There. I feel as though I've forgotten something. What could it be? Of course! The Christmas punch! (LAUGHS TO HERSELF.) How silly of me! (SHE GOES OUT TO GET THE PUNCH, HUMMING TO HERSELF AS SHE GOES.)

(AS SHE LEAVES HER YOUNG DAUGHTER, MARIE, WHO IS A VERY LIKEABLE AND CHARMING LITTLE GIRL, ENTERS. MARIE CARRIES ONE OF HER MANY DOLLS – THIS ONE IS "GERTRUDE." SHE HURRIES INTO THE ROOM,

LOOKING OVER HER SHOULDER WITH A SMILE,
AND THEN LAUGHS TO HERSELF.)

FRITZ: (HER BROTHER, WHO IS CALLING FROM
OFFSTAGE.) Marie! Marie! Where are you? Where are
you hiding? Marie?!

MARIE: (GIGGLES, THEN HIDES BEHIND A CHAIR.)

FRITZ: (ENTERS, OUT OF BREATH, LOOKING FOR HER.
HE IS A STURDY, HEALTHY BOY, FULL OF HIGH
SPIRITS, AND MORE THAN A LITTLE SPOILED.)
Marie! (STAMPS HIS FOOT IMPATIENTLY.) Now,
Marie, I know you're in here. Where are you?

MARIE: (TRIES TO SUPPRESS HER GIGGLES, BUT FAILS.)

FRITZ: I hear you! (LOOKS CAREFULLY AROUND THE
ROOM.) Come on, Marie, stop hiding.

MARIE: (DARTS BEHIND THE TREE TO HIDE, AND THEN
GIGGLES AGAIN.)

FRITZ: (STILL LOOKING.) Marie! Stop hiding, or I'll tell
Mama! (LIFTS UP A TABLECLOTH.)

MARIE: (GIGGLES.)

FRITZ: (POUTING.) All right, be that way. I don't want to play
anymore anyway. So there. (SITS IN A CHAIR.) Hmph!
Sisters!

MARIE: (FROM HER HIDING PLACE.) Do you give up, Fritz?

FRITZ: (STILL POUTING.) Hmph! Sisters!

MARIE: Well? Do you?

FRITZ: Oh, all right!

MARIE: (COMES OUT FROM HER HIDING PLACE, LAUGHS
AT HIM.) See? I told you. You couldn't find me, could
you? Could you?

FRITZ: (VERY SUPERIOR.) I could've if I'd wanted to.

MARIE: Uh-huh.

FRITZ: (SUDDENLY NOTICING THE PRESENTS MOTHER
PUT UNDER THE TREE.) Look! More presents!
(PICKS ONE UP.) Look at this big one! I hope it's for
me! (READS THE TAG.) It is! It is for me! I wonder
what it could be. (HE RATTLES AND POKES AT THE
PACKAGE.)

MARIE: Is it heavy?

FRITZ: (SHAKES IT.) Not very.

MARIE: What are you doing?

FRITZ: (WHO HAS ALREADY RIPPED OFF PART OF THE
PAPER.) I'm just going to take a peek. (HE RIPS OFF

THE REST OF THE PAPER.)

- MARIE: You'd better not. I'll tell Papa.
FRITZ: (WHO HAS NOW OPENED THE PACKAGE AND PULLED OUT THE PRESENT.) Ohhh. Ugh. (IT'S A VERY LONG, VERY UGLY, VERY BULKY HOMEMADE SCARF, AND HE IS VERY VERY DISAPPOINTED.)
- MARIE: What is it?
FRITZ: A scarf. A dumb scarf.
MARIE: (GIGGLES.) It's ugly.
FRITZ; (LOOKS AT THE CARD.) "From your Aunt Frieda."
MARIE: You'd better wrap it up again before Mama and Papa see that you opened it.
FRITZ: All right. (HE CLUMSILY BUNCHES THE PAPER OVER THE PACKAGE. IT QUITE OBVIOUSLY LOOKS AS THOUGH IT HAS BEEN OPENED.) There. As good as new.
MARIE: (GIGGLES.) Well, almost.
FRITZ: (GLOOMILY.) Well, I hope the other presents are better than that. After all, Christmas only comes once a year. And my birthday is ages away.
MARIE: Uncle Drosselmeyer always brings us good presents.
FRITZ: (BRIGHTENS.) That's true. He does. I hope he brings me another toy soldier. Maybe a Cossack! Or a samurai warrior! (WITH EACH IDEA HE DEMONSTRATES VARIOUS "BATTLE" TECHNIQUES.) Or maybe a Musketeer! (HE PERFORMS "MUSKETEER SWORDPLAY.") En garde! (NOW HAS ANOTHER IDEA.) Or a pirate! (PANTOMIMES "PIRATE BEHAVIOR.") Har, har, me hearty! (STILL AS "PIRATE" HE GRABS MARIE'S DOLL.) Aha! Come here, Gertrude! You're my prisoner!
MARIE: Fritz! Fritz! Give me back my doll! Fritz! Don't hurt Gertrude!
FRITZ: (STILL PLAYING "PIRATE," HE HOLDS GERTRUDE OUT OF MARIE'S REACH.) Aha! You can't save her now! She's my captive!
MARIE: Fritz!
FRITZ: Aha, Gertrude! I'll make you walk the plank!!
MARIE: Oh, no!
FRITZ: (HOLDING GERTRUDE HE MAKES HER "WALK THE PLANK." ACROSS THE BACK OF THE SOFA.) Walk, walk, walk, walk, and walk –

MARIE: No!!
FRITZ: (AS HE SWINGS THE DOLL IN A WIDE CIRCLE AROUND HIS HEAD.) And now into the ocean with you!
MARIE: Fritz! (IN TEARS.) Give me back my doll!
FRITZ: (SLOWLY STOPS SWINGING THE DOLL.) Oh, all right. Take your stupid doll. (HE TOSSES THE DOLL HIGH INTO THE AIR OVER HIS SHOULDER.) Uncle Drosselmeyer will probably bring you another one, anyway. He always does.
MARIE: (WHO HAS CAUGHT GERTRUDE AND NOW HOLDS HER PROTECTIVELY.) So what if he does!
FRITZ: He'll probably keep on giving you stupid dolls for Christmas until you're a hundred years old!
MARIE: My dolls are not stupid!
FRITZ: They are, too!
MARIE: They are not!
FRITZ: They are, too! Stupid dolls!
MARIE: Well, I think your toy soldiers are stupid!
FRITZ: They are not!
MARIE: Are, too!
FRITZ: Stupid dolls!
MARIE: Stupid soldiers!

(AS THE ARGUMENT CONTINUES THEIR VOICES HAVE GROWN LOUDER AND LOUDER. NOW MOTHER ENTERS WITH THE PUNCH BOWL. SHE PUTS IT DOWN.)

MOTHER: Children! Marie! Fritz! Please! (THEY ARE SILENT.) You must stop this arguing at once. You don't want to make your good Papa angry, do you?
MARIE: No, Mama.
FRITZ: No, I guess not, Mama.
MAMA: There. Now, that's better. We mustn't quarrel on Christmas Eve.
FRITZ: Yes, Mama.
MARIE: Yes, Mama. We're sorry.
MOTHER: That's all right. Now, I – oh! I think I hear Papa. Yes, there he is.
FRITZ: (RUSHES TO GREET HIS FATHER WHO HAS ENTERED FROM OUTSIDE.) Papa! Papa!
FATHER: (WITH A PLEASANT LAUGH. HE IS A

PROSPEROUS, AMIABLE AND DIGNIFIED
LOOKING GENTLEMAN – A MAN OF AFFAIRS IN
THE TOWN.) Well, well, Fritz, my boy. You seem to be
in excellent spirits.

FRITZ: Oh, yes, Papa!

MARIE: (GOES TO KISS HER FATHER.) We're glad you're
home, Papa.

FATHER: (AS HE HANGS UP HIS HAT AND COAT.) Well,
Marie, I'm glad to be home, too.

MOTHER: (REARRANGING HIS HAT AND COAT.) Did you have
a nice visit with the Libermanns, Carl?

FATHER: (WARMING HIS HANDS AT THE FIREPLACE.) Yes,
indeed, Anna. They asked why you didn't come though.

MOTHER: Oh, I had too many things I wanted to do to do here. After
all, Herr Drosselmeyer is coming to visit us tonight, and
you always want everything to be just right for him.

FATHER: That's true. I owe him such a debt of gratitude. A
pleasant Christmas Eve is the least we can do.

FRITZ: Papa, why do you owe Uncle Drosselmeyer gratitude?

FATHER: Well, Fritz, he helped me when I was young, and very
poor.

MARIE: What did he do?

FATHER: Well, he helped me with my studies mostly, so that I could
go to the University. If he hadn't helped me then, your
father would probably have been a chimney sweep, instead
of a judge.

MARIE: You mean we wouldn't have this house?

FATHER: That's right.

MARIE: Or the tree?

FATHER: No.

FRITZ: Or the presents?

FATHER: No.

MOTHER: So, you see, children, you have more reasons than you
thought to be fond of your Uncle Drosselmeyer.

FRITZ: Then he's not really our uncle?

FATHER: No, he's not. But to me, he was both a father and a
teacher. He always had some mysterious way of being
able to help people. Sometimes, when I was so tired and
discouraged that I felt I couldn't go through another day,
he would sit and talk to me . . .

MARIE: Talk about what?

FATHER: (WITH A LAUGH.) Believe it or not, he would talk to
me about his mechanical toys. He believed that they were

all alive – inside – and that they came from another land – far away – and he would tell me about that place – where dolls and toy soldiers and sugar plums could dance, until I would forget how tired I was, and I would go on with my work. (MUSING TO HIMSELF.) It was almost as though he put a spell on me . . .

MARIE: A spell?!

FRITZ: You mean – magic?!

MOTHER: (LAUGHS.) Oh, children.

FATHER: (LAUGHS.) No, no, not real magic. Just the magic of dreams, I suppose you could say.

FRITZ AND MARIE: Magic!

MOTHER: Oh, Carl, now you see what ideas you’ve put into their heads.

FATHER: (APPEARS TO BE NOT GREATLY CONCERNED.) Oh, they’ll forget quickly, Anna.

(“OUTSIDE” THE COMFORTABLE PARLOUR DROSSELMAYER IS SEEN APPROACHING THEIR HOUSE. HE CARRIES THE THREE LARGE BOXES, WHICH NOW CONTAIN THE LARGE DOLLS THAT WERE IN THE FIRST SCENE. THE SOUND OF A KNOCK IS HEARD. Note: Drosselmeyer may need assistance with the boxes.)

– INTERLUDE –

THE NEXT “FRENCH” SCENE IS WITH THE FAMILY, DROSSELMAYER, ETC., WHICH HAS BEEN EXCISED FROM THIS E-MAIL SEGMENT FOR BREVITY.

IN THE NEXT SEGMENT INCLUDED, WE CONTINUE WITH THE SEQUENCE BEFORE THE END OF THE FIRST ACT INCLUDING THE “GREAT” MOUSE KING ENTRANCE AND THE MOUSE “BATTLE.”

– INTERLUDE –

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYS AS MOTHER AND FATHER GO OUT THE SAME WAY THE CHILDREN DID. THE LIGHTS IN THE ROOM BECOME VERY DIM. A LIGHT SHINES ON THE NUTCRACKER IN HIS CHAIR. THE CHRISTMAS TREE GLOWS AND SHIMMERS. PERHAPS INDIVIDUAL LIGHTS ALSO ILLUMINATE CLARA, AND THEN THE TOY SOLDIER. AFTER A MOMENT MARIE ENTERS QUIETLY; SHE IS NOW DRESSED IN HER NIGHTGOWN. SHE PAUSES TO LISTEN . . . **NOTE:** All of the musical effects described below are part of the score of the Nutcracker ballet – Act I; Scene 7.)

MARIE: Everything’s quiet. (CROSSES TO NUTCRACKER, WHO IS SITTING IN HIS CHAIR.) Poor Nutcracker. Fritz didn’t mean to hurt you, I’m sure of that. He’s really not a bad boy. Besides, Uncle Drosselmeyer promised to take care of you in the morning. (AT THE MENTION OF DROSSELMAYER’S NAME – THE LIGHTS FLICKER, AND THE SPOTLIGHT/PIN SPOT ON THE NUTCRACKER GROWS MORE INTENSE.) Why, Nutcracker, what’s the matter? Your face looks so strange. (AS THE LIGHTS RETURN TO WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE . . .) Oh, now, it’s all right. (SHE TIES A HANDKERCHIEF AROUND THE NUTCRACKER’S HEAD. MYSTERIOUS MUSIC PLAYS.) There. Now you’ll feel better. (PICKS UP THE CLARA DOLL.) Now, Miss Clara, if you don’t mind, I want you to stay here tonight so you can watch over my Nutcracker. He’s very sick, you know. (SHE PUTS THE CLARA DOLL DOWN ON A CHAIR.) I’m – (STIFLING A YAWN, SHE SITS.) – very tired, Miss Clara, but I will stay with you a while – until the Nutcracker falls asleep. (YAWNS.) I’m so sleepy (SHE CLOSSES HER EYES A MOMENT. SUDDENLY THE MUSIC GROWS LOUDER, AND THE LIGHTS FLICKER AGAIN. A LOUD RUSTLING, WHISPERING NOISE IS HEARD. PERHAPS IT SOUNDS LIKE TINY FEET, RUNNING. MARIE SITS UP.) What’s that scratching noise? Oh, it must be the mice under the floor. (AS SHE

TIMIDLY PULLS HER FEET UP OFF THE FLOOR.)
Well, there's no need to be frightened, Miss Clara. They can't come in here. Besides, mice are little. There's really no need for us to be frightened at all. (SUDDENLY THE CLOCK BEGINS TO STRIKE LOUDLY, COUNTING UP TO TWELVE VERY SLOWLY – EACH STRIKE PROGRESSIVELY LOUDER AND MORE INTENSE.)
What's happening? Why is the clock so loud? (THE LIGHTS FLICKER AGAIN.) Is – is – is the Christmas tree growing? (THE TREE IS GROWING – OR SEEMS TO BE – OR PERHAPS IT IS SIMPLY GLOWING – WHICH IS IT?) Oh, Miss Clara, I'm frightened!

VOICE OF MISS CLARA: Don't be afraid. He will protect us.

MARIE: Who said that? Is someone here? Oh, no! (THE "MOUSE NOISES" GROW LOUDER AND LOUDER, AND MOST OF THE LIGHTS GO OUT – ALL THAT CAN BE SEEN ARE A FEW SMALL GLITTERING LIGHTS FROM THE TREE – THEY LOOK LIKE EYES, GLOWING IN THE DARK.) Help! What's happening? It's so dark! (THE TREE LIGHTS FLICKER AGAIN.)

VOICES OF THE MOUSE WARRIORS: (ACCOMPANIED BY SQUEAKING AND RUSTLING SOUNDS AND MUSIC THAT GROWS LOUDER EVERY SECOND.) Make way! Make way! His Majesty, the King of the Mice! Make way! Make way! (THE SQUEAKING AND RUSTLINGS GROW MORE INTENSE.)

MARIE: (WHO IS UNDERSTANDABLY FRIGHTENED.)
What's happening? Who's there? Go away and leave me alone!

(THE MUSIC AND THE MOUSE NOISES REACH A PEAK VOLUME AS THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE. THEN SUDDENLY THE MUSIC, THE NOISES AND THE RUSTLINGS CEASE. THE LIGHTS ALL GO OUT EXCEPT FOR THE STAR ON THE TOP OF THE TREE. WHILE IT IS DARK, THE THREE ACTORS TAKE THE PLACES OF THE THREE DOLLS. THEY ASSUME THE SAME POSITIONS AS THE DOLLS. WHILE THE LIGHTS ARE DARK, MARIE CONTINUES TO SPEAK THROUGHOUT.)

MARIE: The lights! What happened to the lights? Nutcracker,

where are you? I can't find you! Miss Clara! Where did you go? I don't understand what's going on. What happened to the lights? Please, turn on the lights. Please? Whoever you are. Nutcracker?

(WHEN THE ACTORS ARE IN PLACE, THE LIGHTS COME UP TO THEIR PREVIOUS LEVEL. THE THREE ACTORS SIT QUITE STILL, IN THE SAME POSITIONS AS THE THREE DOLLS. THE NUTCRACKER ACTOR EVEN HAS A BANDAGE WRAPPED AROUND HIS HEAD.)

MARIE: (AS THE ROOM GROWS LIGHTER.) The lights! I wonder what – (SHE SUDDENLY “SEES” THE THREE DOLLS.) Oh! Oh, my goodness! What happened? How did you –? Nutcracker, you're so big! Miss Clara! And the toy soldier! What –? (STOPS, LISTENS.) Why, it's so quiet. I don't even hear the clock ticking.

(SUDDENLY CHIMES RING OUT – LIKE THOSE OF A SMALL CLOCK. THE LIGHT ON THE NUTCRACKER GROWS BRIGHTER, AND HE BEGINS TO MOVE AND SPEAK.)

NUTCRACKER: (FROM HIS CHAIR – HIS VOICE GROWS STRONGER AS HE SPEAKS, AND THEN SLOWLY BEGINS TO RISE.)

“Come awake, and measures take;
With all our might, out to the fight;
Shield to the left, shield the right,
To arms and away
This is the night!”

MARIE: Nutcracker!

NUTCRACKER: (WHO IS NOW STANDING – DRAWS HIS WOODEN SWORD, ADDRESSES THE TOY SOLDIER, WHO ALSO NOW BEGINS TO COME TO LIFE.) You, my trusty vassal, brother, and friend, are you ready to stand by me in this great battle?

SOLDIER: (DRAWS HIS WOODEN SWORD, THEN SALUTES STIFFLY.) Yes, Your Highness. I will stand by you. I will follow you if need be to the death, or to the victory! (HE SALUTES.)

NUTCRACKER: Excellent!

(MOUSE NOISES HEARD AGAIN AS THE BATTLE MUSIC BEGINS.)

NUTCRACKER: Avaunt! To the fray!

SOLDIER: Lead on, sir!

CLARA: (WHO HAS ALSO SLOWLY COME TO LIFE, NOW RISES, GOES TO THE NUTCRACKER, AND CURTSEYS STIFFLY TO HIM.) Oh, Your Highness, I beg you. Do not go into this battle. You are sick and wounded. I beg you. Do not go.

NUTCRACKER: (RAISES HER FROM HER CURTSEY.) Nay, I must fight this battle. My duty calls. Your gentle concern touches me deeply, but I must go on.

CLARA: (CURTSEYS AGAIN.) You must do what you believe to be best.

(AS THE MOUSE NOISES AND THE MUSIC BEGIN TO GROW LOUDER)

NUTCRACKER: (CROSSES TO MARIE AND GIVES HER A DIGNIFIED AND COURTLY BOW.) Fair maid, if I do not survive this fearsome battle, I wish to express my gratitude for the care you have given me.

MARIE: (QUITE CONFUSED.) You're very welcome, of course.

SOLDIER: Sir! Take heed!

VOICES OF THE MOUSE WARRIORS: Make way! Make way! (THEY ENTER, TAKE THEIR POSITIONS, AND RAISE THEIR WOODEN SWORDS TO FORM AN ARCHWAY FOR THE KING TO PASS THROUGH.) Make way! Make way! The King approaches! His Majesty! The King of the Mice!

(WITH A FLOURISH, THE MOUSE KING APPEARS, ACKNOWLEDGING HIS "MOUSEY" WARRIORS. THE MOUSE KING WEARS A CROWN AND HAS A BLACK PATCH OVER ONE EYE. IN FACT, HE STRONGLY RESEMBLES HERR DROSSELMAYER – EVEN THOUGH HE WEARS A MOUSE HEAD AND CARRIES A GLITTERING WOODEN SWORD.)

MOUSE KING: (LETS FORTH A GREAT "MOUSEY" BATTLE CRY.) Ahhhggghhhh! (POINTS TO NUTCRACKER.) Attack! Destroy him!

MOUSE WARRIORS: (IMMEDIATELY GIVE THEIR ENTHUSIASTIC
“BATTLE CRY” IN VERY HIGH PITCHED VOICES.)

Squeak-Squeak!

MARIE: Oh, no!

NUTCRACKER: (TO MARIE AND CLARA.) Stand back! (TO THE
SOLDIER.) Attack!

SOLDIER: Yes, sir!

(A “BATTLE” FOLLOWS ACCOMPANIED BY
MUSIC. THE MUSIC FROM THE BALLET WORKS
VERY WELL, BUT ANY OTHER EXCITING
SLIGHTLY COMICAL MUSIC WILL WORK JUST
FINE. JUST REMEMBER THIS IS A “BATTLE”
BETWEEN WOODEN TOYS AND IMAGINARY AND
NOT VERY REALISTIC GIANT MICE – KEEP IT
FUN. WITH A LOT OF MOVEMENT THAT’S
CHOREOGRAPHED FOR SAFETY’S SAKE.
“SWORDPLAY” THAT’S AMUSING RATHER THAN
SKILLFUL DERRING-DO IS THE IDEA HERE.)

DURING THE BATTLE DIALOGUE BELOW
(ENHANCED BY AD-LIBS, OF COURSE) – THE
MOUSE WARRIORS AND THE SOLDIER BATTLE
BUSILY BACK AND FORTH, WHILE THE MOUSE
KING AND THE NUTCRACKER “DUEL” WITH
EACH OTHER. THE NUTCRACKER RESCUES THE
SOLDIER AT ONE POINT, AND THEN THE SOLDIER
SAVES THE NUTCRACKER FROM INJURY. MANY
BATTLE CRIES AND COMMANDS ARE HEARD,
ALTHOUGH NO ONE REALLY LISTENS. MARIE
AND CLARA ADD TO THE CONFUSION WITH
GROANS OF DISAPPOINTMENT, AND CHEERS OF
ENCOURAGEMENT.)

NUTCRACKER: Attack! We must win! To victory! Aha! Take that! En
garde!

SOLDIER: Yes, sir! Attack!

MOUSE KING: Attack! We must win! Vanquish the Nutcracker!

MOUSE WARRIORS: Yes, sir!

CLARA: Oh, Your Highness! Be careful! Oh! They’re winning!
Watch out!

MARIE: (TO CLARA.) Why are they fighting? (SEES THE
NUTCRACKER IN DANGER.) Oh! Be careful,

Nutcracker!

SOLDIER: (WHO IS SUDDENLY AND DRAMATICALLY
“WOUNDED.”) Agggghh! Alas, I am wounded!

CLARA: (ALSO VERY DRAMATICALLY.) Oh, woe is me! The
day is lost! (SHE’S ENJOYING THIS – SO SHE JUST
CONTINUES.) Oh, woe is me! The day is lost! Oh, woe
is me! The day is lost! Oh, woe is me! The day is lost!

(THE OTHERS STOP THE BATTLE TO LISTEN, BUT
THEN THEY TIRE OF THIS AFTER A WHILE, AND
SO THE MOUSE KING SAYS –

MOUSE KING: (TO CLARA.) Ahem!

CLARA: (STILL HOLDING HER “TRAGIC” POSE.) Yes?

MOUSE KING: Do you mind? We’re trying to have a battle here.

CLARA: Oh.

MOUSE WARRIORS: (TO CLARA.) Squeak-Squeak!

CLARA: (REACTS FEARFULLY) Eeek-eeek!

(CLARA RETREATS AND THE BATTLE RESUMES.)

MOUSE KING: Aha! We have won! Attack!

WARRIORS: Yes, sir! (THEY JOIN THE KING, ALL MOVING IN ON
THE NUTCRACKER, AND SURROUNDING HIM.)

MARIE: No!

CLARA: Alas!

SOLDIER: Our noble Prince!

NUTCRACKER: Do not despair! I have not yet lost!

MARIE: (AS THE MICE CLOSE IN ON THE NUTCRACKER.)
Oh, no! Leave the Nutcracker alone! (TO THE
SOLDIER.) Do something!

SOLDIER: (STILL RECOVERING FROM HIS “WOUND.”) Alas!
What can I do?

CLARA: (SOBBING.) Oh, woe is me! The day is lost! (ONCE
AGAIN SHE CONTINUES HER MELODRAMATIC
MOANS.) Oh, woe is me! The day is lost! Oh, woe is
me! The day is lost!

(AGAIN THE OTHERS STOP THE BATTLE TO
LISTEN, BUT MORE IMPATIENTLY THIS TIME.
THE MOUSE KING SAYS –

MOUSE KING: (TO THE OTHERS.) Not again!

OTHERS: (SIGH.)

MOUSE KING: (TO HIS WARRIORS.) Do something!

MOUSE WARRIORS: (TO CLARA.) Squeak-Squeak!

CLARA: (REACTS FEARFULLY) Eeek-eeek!

(CLARA RETREATS AND THE BATTLE RESUMES.)

MOUSE KING: (TO HIS WARRIORS.) Fall back and regroup!

MOUSE WARRIORS: Yes, Your Majesty! Squeak-Squeak!

(AS THE MOUSE KING AND HIS WARRIORS FALL BACK AND REGROUP – BY GOING THROUGH A SERIES OF “MOUSEY WARM-UPS,” THE NUTCRACKER TAKES THIS OPPORTUNITY TO STEP FORWARD AND DRAMATICALLY PROCLAIM TO THE AUDIENCE.)

NUTCRACKER: (TO THE AUDIENCE.) It was a noble fight! A horse!
A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

MOUSE KING: We have you now, Nutcracker!

(AS THE MICE DRAW CLOSER . . .)

MARIE: Oh, no! Poor Nutcracker!

CLARA: Oh, save him! (SHE FAINTS – DRAMATICALLY.)

MARIE: I'll try to save him. (AS SHE TAKES OFF ONE OF HER SLIPPERS – SHE CALLS OUT TO THE MOUSE KING.) You leave my Nutcracker alone! THROWS HER SLIPPER AT HIM, HITTING HIM IN THE BACK.)
There!

(AT THE MOMENT THE MOUSE KING IS STRUCK BY THE SLIPPER THE NUTCRACKER SEEMS TO VANISH FROM THE STAGE. **Note:** The actor only needs to walk quickly off the stage in order to achieve this effect since all of the focus is on the Mouse King.)

MOUSE KING: (AS THE SLIPPER STRIKES HIM.) Arrrggghhh!

MOUSE WARRIORS: Squeak? Squeak?

MOUSE KING: (CONTINUING TO MOAN, HE STAGGERS TO THE RIGHT, THEN HE STAGGERS TO THE LEFT, AND THEN HE STAGGERS TOWARD THE AUDIENCE – ON EACH CROSS THE MOUSE WARRIORS

FOLLOW HIM, READY TO CATCH HIM IF HE FALLS.) I am slain! (HE FALLS WITH A THUD, TWITCHES HIS LEGS, THEN HE IS STILL.)

MOUSE WARRIORS: (LOOK DOWN AT HIM, LOOK AT EACH OTHER, AND THEN LOOK OUT TO THE AUDIENCE. THEY BURST INTO LOUD “MOUSEY” TEARS.)

MOUSE KING: (THEIR LOUD CRYING AWAKENS HIM; HE MOANS, SITS UP, HOLDING HIS HEAD IN PAIN.) Agggghhh! What a racket!

MOUSE WARRIORS: (LOOK AT HIM DELIGHTEDLY, THEN FACE THE AUDIENCE AND SAY:) Squeak-Squeak! He lives!

MOUSE KING: (RISING WITH THEIR ASSISTANCE.) What a battle!

MOUSE WARRIORS: (AGREEING.) Squeak-Squeak!

MOUSE KING: Where’s my sword?

MOUSE WARRIORS: (GIVING HIM THE SWORD.) Squeak-Squeak!

MOUSE KING: Did we win?

MOUSE WARRIORS: (TRIUMPHANTLY.) Squeak-Squeak!

MOUSE KING: Let’s take a bow. (HE BOWS GRACIOUSLY TO THE AUDIENCE.)

MOUSE WARRIORS: (APPLAUDING HIM.) Squeak-Squeak!

MOUSE KING: (RAISING HIS SWORD.) On to Limburger!

MOUSE WARRIORS: Squeak-Squeak! Yes, Your Majesty!

(WITH A FLASH OF LIGHTS THE MOUSE KING AND HIS WARRIORS DISAPPEAR.)

(GRACIOUS AND PLEASANTLY TRIUMPHANT MUSIC BEGINS TO PLAY AND THE LIGHTS RETURN TO THE SAME LEVEL AS BEFORE THE BATTLE. **NOTE:** Music cited is from the end of Scene 7 in the ballet.)

MARIE: Nutcracker? Are you all right? I can’t see you. Where are you?

NUTCRACKER: (WHO APPEARS AS THE TRIUMPHANT MUSIC PLAYS.) Here I am. (THE LIGHTS SLOWLY COME UP MORE FULLY AS HE ENTERS. HE HAS REMOVED THE NUTCRACKER HEADPIECE, AND IT CAN NOW BE SEEN THAT HE IS A CHARMING PRINCE.)

MARIE: Why – why – you’re not my Nutcracker.

NUTCRACKER: Yes, I am.

MARIE: But you – you –

CLARA: (AWAKENS FROM HER FAINT; RECOVERED FROM HER ENCHANTMENT. SHE CURTSEYS TO THE NUTCRACKER PRINCE.) Your Highness.

SOLDIER: (NOW RECOVERED FROM HIS WOUNDS, BOWS AND SALUTES THE NUTCRACKER PRINCE.) Your Highness.

(THE NUTCRACKER, CLARA, AND THE SOLDIER HAVE NOW LOST ALL THE DOLL-LIKE MECHANICAL STIFFNESS THEY HAD EARLIER. NOW THAT THEY ARE RELEASED FROM THE ENCHANTMENT, THEY CAN MOVE AND SPEAK IN A MORE NORMAL WAY.)

MARIE: Your Highness? (TO NUTCRACKER.) Who are you? Where are you from? What has happened?

NUTCRACKER: (WITH A BOW.) Oh, Marie, you have released us from a terrible enchantment.

MARIE: I have?

NUTCRACKER: You have vanquished the King of the Mice. We shall be eternally grateful to you.

(ALL THREE OF THEM BOW TO HER.)

CLARA: Oh, yes! We're free! Free at last!

SOLDIER: We can go home!

MARIE: Where is your home?

NUTCRACKER: We shall show you.

CLARA: Yes, yes! We must!

NUTCRACKER: Come with us, Marie.

MARIE: Oh, I'd like to – but where are we going?

NUTCRACKER: You'll see.

CLARA: The most beautiful place in the whole world!

(“END OF ACT” MUSIC BEGINS TO PLAY, WHICH IS ACTUALLY JUST A CONTINUATION OF THE SAME MUSIC CITED ON PAGE 28.)

NUTCRACKER: Trust me, Marie. It is far, and yet not far. It is a beautiful place where time is not the same as your time. Life is pleasant in our Kingdom. Would you like to see for yourself?

MARIE: Yes, yes, I would.
NUTCRACKER: Come along, then!
CLARA: We're going home!
SOLDIER: Home at last!
NUTCRACKER: Follow us, Marie

(THE MUSIC GROWS LOUDER AND THE LIGHTS SHIMMER AND GLOW AS THEY FADE TO GRADUAL DARKNESS. AS THE VOICES FADE OFF INTO THE DISTANCE – AT LAST ONLY THE CHRISTMAS TREE IS LIGHTED. THE NUTCRACKER LEADS THEM OFF – PERHAPS THROUGH THE AUDIENCE –)

MARIE: Wait for me, Nutcracker!
NUTCRACKER: Follow me!
CLARA: Home at last!
NUTCRACKER: Follow me!
SOLDIER: We're going home!
NUTCRACKER: Follow me!

(THE MUSIC BUILDS AS THEY DISAPPEAR AND IT IS THE . . .

END OF ACT I)

– END OF E-MAIL SEGMENT – THERE ARE 54 PAGES IN THE COMPLETE PLAYSRIPT – (30 in the first act and 24 in the second.)