

0. Christmas Eve - Story Preface

1. Christmas Eve

2. The Presents

3. Marie's Pet

4. Wonderful Events

5. The Battle

6. The Invalid

7. The Story of Pirlipat

8. Drosselmeier Continues

9. Crackatook

10. Uncle and Nephew

11. Victory

12. Land of Sweets

13. The Metropolis

14. Conclusion



Gennady Spirin—a Russian-American known for his wonderful art and illustrations for children's books—created this watercolor, circa 1996. It appears in a [hardcover version of *The Nutcracker*](#), translated by Aliana Broodman and illustrated by Spirin. Copyright, Gennady Spirin, all rights reserved. Provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new viewers with [Spirin's work](#).

E.T.A (Ernst Theodor Amadeus) Hoffmann sets his *Nutcracker* story at Christmastime. In this 19th-century tale, people still use real candles to light their holiday trees.

On Christmas Eve, a German family gathers for fun and surprises. Mysterious events happen throughout this Hoffmann tale, beginning with one of the biggest questions of Christmas-Eve night: What has Godpapa Drosselmeier made for the children this year?

*It was Christmas Eve and Fritz and Marie Stahlbaum [known, in modern versions of *The Nutcracker*, as Fritz and Clara Silberhaus ("Silver House") instead of Fritz and Marie Stahlbaum "Steel Tree"] had been banned from the drawing room all day. The children [including their sister Louise] sat waiting in the parlor, very excited and trying to be patient.*

As the evening shadows eerily deepened around them, Fritz told Marie—who was just seven years old—a secret. Since early that morning, he'd heard very strange noises coming from behind those closed doors. He'd also heard hammerings, tinkerings, rustlings and rattlings.

"What's more," whispered Fritz rather mysteriously, "I've seen a strange little man in black creeping around the house, carrying a big box."

"Godpapa!" gasped Marie. "I wonder what he's brought us?"

Godpapa Drosselmeier always gave them the cleverest, prettiest toys. He wasn't pretty himself, though. He was small and wiry and wrinkled, and he had a black patch over his right eye. He was bald, too, but people didn't know that because he wore a fine wig on top of his head.

He was also very clever. He was so, SO clever that he knew anything and everything about clocks and watches.

Whenever one of Dr. Stahlbaum's clocks stopped, Drosselmeier came to the rescue. He would take off his wig and yellow jacket, then put on his apron and start working with his sharp-but-little instruments. Before anyone knew it, the clock would be happily whirring again.

The best of all times was Christmas, when Drosselmeier made wonderfully ingenious things for the Stahlbaum family. This year, Marie was thinking it might be the magical lake her godfather had once told her about—a lake where a little girl fed shortbread to graceful and beautiful swans.

Fritz, however, was equally sure that the gift would be a huge fortress full of fighting soldiers.

The children talked in their hushed voices about their soon-to-be-seen presents. Fritz wanted a fox for his ark and some hussars for his toy army. Marie hoped for a lovely new doll.

Suddenly they heard a Ting-a-ling-a-ling. Mama was ringing a little silver bell. The drawing-room doors flew open and a brilliant light came flooding out.

Imagine the magical sight that met the children's eyes! There stood the Christmas tree, hung with gold and silver apples and sugar plums, and glittering with little candles.

The entire room sparkled!

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Christmas-Eve>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Christmas-Eve>