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Illustration, of "The Nutcracker," by Maxim Mitrofanov, a prolific Russian artist who illustrates children's books (among other things). Copyright, Maxim Mitrofanov, all rights reserved. Image of The Nutcracker—who is really Drosselmeier's nephew— proposing to Marie, provided here as fair use for educational purposes. Mitrofanov's illustrations appear in a version of Hoffman's tale—"The Nutcracker and the Mouse King"—translated into Russian by I. Tatarinov and published by Rosmen-Press in 2011.

With her father's threat before her—that he would destroy all her toys and the Christmas Nutcracker—what should Marie do?

If she's just dreaming, why would she risk such a loss? If she's not dreaming, how could such an "other world" really exist?

Let's see how Hoffman ends his story. Be prepared for the unexpected!

Marie didn't dare to say another word. Fritz made a face at her. Then he gave his hussars back their plumes and let them sound the march again.

The memories of her adventures haunted Marie for months and months. Instead of playing as she used to, she would sit quietly and think wistfully to herself. Everyone started to call her "Marie, the Dreamer."

But one day, Godpapa Drosselmeier was fixing one of the clocks in the house and Marie was gazing at Nutcracker. "Dear Nutcracker," she said suddenly. "If you really were alive, I wouldn't hate you like Pirlipat does. You had to sacrifice your fine looks, and I truly love and respect you."

"Stuff and nonsense!" muttered Drosselmeier.

All of a sudden ... there was a tremendous flash, followed by a loud bang. Marie tumbled off her chair.

She came to and saw her mother fussing around her.

"Marie, you're too big to be falling off your chair," she scolded.

"Now, darling, look who's here. Godpapa Drosselmeier's nephew, from Nuremberg."

Marie looked up and saw her godfather holding a very small but handsome gentleman by the hand. He was wearing a fine red coat, white stockings and a powdered wig with a pigtail. There was a jeweled sword at his side.

He delighted Marie by giving her a box of dainty sugar toys, just like those the Mouse King had eaten. And he gave Fritz a beautiful sabre. At supper, he even cracked the hardest nuts for the children by putting them in his mouth and tugging his pigtail.

Marie blushed whenever she looked at the elegant young man.

"Now children, play nicely together," said Godpapa with a smile.

But as soon as they were alone, the young man fell on one knee.

"Loyal and lovely Marie!" he cried. I am young Drosselmeier, whose life you saved. I thank you with all my heart for loving me despite my ugliness, for now the evil spell is broken - I am no longer a nutcracker! Marie, will you marry me and be Queen of the Sweetmeat Kingdom?"

"Dear Mr. Drosselmeier," Marie replied. "You are so good and kind, and you rule a delightful people. Yes ... I accept your hand."

So they were engaged and, after a year and a day (or thereabouts), the young king arrived at her house one morning in a golden coach drawn by silver horses. The royal bride and groom galloped away in bright sunshine.

A thousand dolls danced at their wedding, and Marie is still queen of a glittering kingdom of Christmas Woods and Marzipan Castles; a kingdom where you can see all kinds of wonderful things - if you look with the right eyes!

Happy Holidays! We hope you've enjoyed our abridged version of Hoffman's tale.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Conclusion)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Conclusion>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Conclusion)

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