

THE  
NUTCRACKER

*The Nutcracker*

by D.L. Groover

Based on Stanton Welch's holiday ballet

The night outside the Stahlbaum house on a German Christmas Eve,  
Blows and blusters, and cracks its cheeks. Yet, inside, warm within her room,  
Sweet Clara glows with make-believe.

Feisty Fritz with doggy Heinz bounds in to misbehave,  
But is stopped mid-prank by stern Housemaid, who controls with haughty wave.

“Put away those toys, and wash your hands. Prepare for the party below.”  
Beloved toys are whisked away, ears all cleaned, all ready to go.

Oldest Louise, fresh as the spring, the fairest girl of all,  
Fusses and primps for she firmly intends to be the only belle of the ball.

Mother and father have gifts to bestow:  
For lovely Louise, a corsage for romance,  
Pointe shoes for Clara who loves to dance,  
Tin trumpet for Fritz, that will blurt, and screech, and blow.

What do you think then happens next, no sooner than family leaves?  
The toy chest bursts open all by itself, and out tumble toys like sheaves!

For it's Christmas tomorrow and toys must prepare  
For greedy small hands who don't want to share.  
The toys will be prodded and dragged on the floor,  
Squished in love and then squished even more.

Downstairs, the Stahlbaum party guests delight in punch and feast on ox,  
While Clara dances a solo dance within her Magic Theater Box.

The window blows open in icy gust, but when Clara rushes to close it,  
Who should appear in burst of snow whose frigid swirls expose it?

*Upon my snowflake, it's Drosselmeyer! Europe's mystery magic man,  
Here at the party to amaze and bewitch with his very own Magical Caravan.*

*His ghostly troupe relates the tale of Soldier Brave who loves Princess Fair.  
But mean old King, in love himself, turns Soldier to wood with oak-like hair.*

*But so in love, the princess grieves, whose tears enchantments wring.  
They fall upon the weaselly man and just like that – rat á la king.*

*But what's the ending, Clara cries, for the wizard will not say.  
Instead he gives the children gifts, meant for another day.  
To Louise, a crown; to Fritz, a sword;  
To Clara, a Nutcracker she adored.*

*The little toy is strong and brave, and Clara laughs with glee;  
But jealous Fritz is not amused and breaks it on his knee.*

*The conjurer knows just what to do and heals with surgical ease;  
He puts doll high, high on a shelf. Out of your reach, Fritz, if you please.*

*The party's over, a great success, but Clara sneaks down when all's asleep.  
What does she find at midnight's strike? A bunch of rats, who gnaw in a heap.*

*Her toys search high, her toys search low, but the Nutcracker is out of sight.  
Clara knows just where he is, but is stumped on her high-climb flight.*

*Out of the clock, magician appears and puts Soldier under the tree.  
With mighty flourish he casts his spell, and wonders of magic explode to see.*

*Wow-filled eyes have never seen such marvels befall such evergreen.  
The tree grew and grew, and grew with a roar, then burst through the roof and grew some more.*

*The house did shake, roof flew apart; but still tree grew, no end to its start.  
It pierced the clouds and grazed the moon. Slow down, old tree, are you a balloon?!*

*The magic was strong, the magic worked well; not only did tree and toys grow pell-mell.  
For the spell had wakened ratty hearts, whose needle-sharp teeth did sprout like darts.*

*The rats grew fat, they grew like a sneeze, they eyed the toys like the toys were cheese.  
The rats fought the toys, their numbers depleted; rag dolls unstuffed, hobby horses unseated.*

*Against the rodents the Nutcracker stood, brave Clara by his side,  
Then Rat King entered the fray at last, on little rat feet in little rat stride.*

*He stomped, he fumed, he threw a fit; an ill-mannered little boy.  
“How dare mere girl and toy of wood end my reign, squeaky realm destroy.”*

*He led from behind, so like a rat. Let others fight, all bullies do that.*

*But Clara would not stand for such tantrum on display.  
She snatched his crown, bopped him one, and sent him on his way.*

*Dispatched to his room without any dinner; minus his crown, no longer a winner.  
He fussed and whined, the short mousy bruiser, complained all the way, a very sore loser.*

*With Rat King defeated, eeww, what a smell; but strong little Clara had broken the spell.  
The wood of the doll changed into flesh, and there in all glory stood Brave Prince afresh.*

*The Prince was sad as he looked around for Princess Fair was not to be found.  
Let us find her, said Clara so bold. So off on their trek, so into the cold.*

*The wind did blow, the snow did blind, but they were determined, so never mind.  
Though toes were numb and fingers frozen, this was the path the trio had chosen.*

*But then to their rescue came a vision, a dazzle of white in icy precision.  
The Queen of Snow, in diamond-white glaze, snowflake-encrusted, icicles ablaze.*

*As Clara relates the battle's uprise, the Queen's heart melts at Rat King's demise.  
She shows the way, inside the tree, to the Land of the Sweets where Princess will be.*

*Sweet, indeed, was what they discovered: angels, and insects, and men, candy-covered.  
Sugar is sweet, but, my, what a sight...the Princess as Sugar Plum, what a delight!*

*United at last with his love once thought lost, Prince and Plum are sweetly embossed.  
But wait, what's that scratching, that gnawing where at? What is that smell? I smell a rat!*

*King Rat has returned, not defeated at all, still stinky and mean, and still three feet tall!  
He means to do menace, he means to do harm, but Clara forgives him, such is her charm.*

*In honor of kindness, the people rejoice, and celebrate loudly in sweet candy voice.*

*Ambassadors from far and wide, shower the three with gifts Yuletide.  
The Spanish click in and bring their own bull, with fiery flamenco in chocolate mouthful.  
Arabs with lion have coffee to serve, spicy and hot, an oasis hor d'oeuvre.  
With dragon and panda the Chinese parade, presenting their hosts with tea green as jade.*

*They may be big, and they may scare you, but Russians love sweets like teddy bears do.  
Their candy canes are sugar and lick-able, striped in red, their color political.  
Sleek as wolves, the Danes strut on. Their sweetmeats are almonds: Copenhagen chiffon.  
Sailors and bull dog from England appear, with sticky apples of toffee into mouths to smear.  
France leaps in on froggy strong tread, and Louie's sweet bon bons will assure him his head.*

*Ensnared on the throne, with scepter and crown, Clara is Queen in bright-candy gown.  
The Prince and his Princess are married at last. Clara waltzes with flowers, her troubles long past.*

*But something's not right, what's that in the air? The sweets fade away, but do not despair.  
For where does she wake, and what does she spy? Family faces around her, it's Christmas Day nigh.*

*Her Nutcracker doll held tight in her arms; Clara is fearless, no cause for alarm.  
She's home once again, her voyage complete, with a family who loves her –  
Her own Land of the Sweet.*