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‘What is that tune?’ said Karl. ‘Why does he stop for that?’

‘It’s a little tune called “The Flowers of Lapland”,’ said Dr Kalmenius. ‘He likes that, bless him. He stands still to listen to it, and that tips his balance wheel the other way, and then he stops. What a marvel! What a piece of work!’

‘I’m afraid of him.’

‘Oh, come, come! Afraid of a little tin man who likes a pretty tune?’

‘It’s uncanny. It’s not like a machine at all. I don’t like it.’

‘Well, that’s a great shame. What will you do without him tomorrow? I shall be watching with great interest.’

‘No, no!’ said Karl, in anguish. ‘I didn’t mean ... Oh, I don’t know what I mean!’

‘Do you want him?’

‘Yes. No!’ cried Karl, beating his fists together. ‘I don’t know. Yes!’

‘Then he is yours,’ said Dr Kalmenius. ‘You have wound up the future, my boy! It has already begun to tick!’

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And before Karl could change his mind, the clockwork-maker gathered his long cloak around him, swept the hood up over his head, and vanished out of the door with his sledge.

Karl ran to the door after him, but the snow was so thick that he could see nothing. Dr Kalmenius had vanished.

Karl turned back into the parlour and sat down weakly. The little figure stood perfectly still, with its sword upraised, and its blank metal face gazing at the young apprentice.

‘He wasn’t a man,’ Karl muttered. ‘No man could make this. He was an evil spirit! He was the dev—’

He clapped his hands over his mouth and looked in terror at Sir Ironsoul, who stood motionless.

‘I nearly said it!’ Karl whispered to himself. ‘I mustn’t ever forget – and the tune! How does it go? If I can remember that, I’ll be safe ...’

He tried to whistle it, but his mouth was too dry; he tried to hum it, but his voice was shaking. He held out his hands and looked at them. They were trembling like dry leaves.

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‘Perhaps if I have another drink ...’ he said.

He poured some more brandy, splashing most of it on the counter before he got some in the glass. He swallowed it quickly.

‘That’s better ... Well, after all, I *could* put him in the clock. And if I bolted him to the frame, he’d be safe enough. He wouldn’t be able to get out of that, no matter what words anyone said ...’

He looked around him fearfully. The parlour was as silent as the grave. Then he lifted the curtain and peered through the window, but there was not a single light in the town square. Everyone in the world seemed to have gone to bed, and the only beings awake were the clock-maker’s apprentice and the little silvery figure with the sword.

‘Yes, I’ll do it!’ he said.

So he threw the canvas over Sir Ironsoul, hastily pulled on his coat and hat, and hurried out to unlock the tower and prepare the clock.

Now, as it happened, there was one other person awake, and that was Gretl, the landlord’s little daughter. She couldn’t sleep at all, and the



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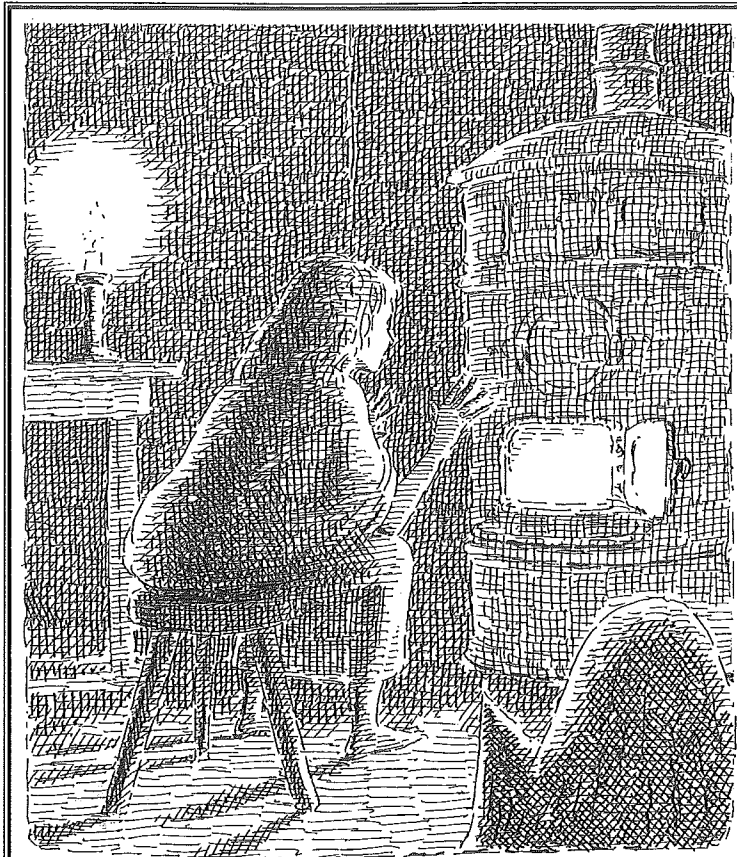
reason for that was Fritz’s story. There was one thing she couldn’t get out of her mind. It wasn’t the clockwork in the dead prince’s breast; it wasn’t the horses foaming with terror or the dead driver behind them; it was the young Prince Florian.

She thought: poor little boy, to travel home in that frightful way! She tried to imagine what terrors he must have faced, alone in the sledge with his dead father, and she shivered under her blankets, and wished that she could comfort him.

And because she couldn’t sleep, she thought she’d go down and sit by the stove in the parlour for a while, because her bed was cold. So she wrapped a blanket around her shoulders and tiptoed down the stairs just as the great clock in the tower was chiming midnight. There was no-one in the parlour, of course, and the lamp was burning low, so she didn’t notice the little canvas-covered figure in the corner, and sat down to warm her hands at the stove.

‘What a strange story that was going to be!’ she said to herself. ‘I’m not sure that people





GRETL WAS KIND-HEARTED, YOU SEE. HER HEART WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE. HER HEART WAS WARM, HER HEART WAS TENDER, SHE HAD A HEART OF GOLD. YOU KNOW THOSE EXPRESSIONS? THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE, LIKE GRETL, WHO CAN'T HEAR OF ANYONE ELSE'S PROBLEMS WITHOUT SUFFERING ALMOST AS MUCH AS THEY DO. THE WORLD IS A CRUEL PLACE SOMETIMES, AND WARM-HEARTED PEOPLE DO MOST OF THE GOOD IN IT. AND MUCH OF THE TIME, THEY'RE MOCKED AND SCORNED FOR THEIR PAINS.



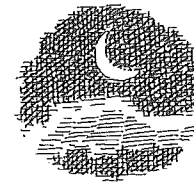
ought to tell stories like that. I don't mind ghosts and skeletons, but I think Fritz went too far that time. And didn't everyone jump when the old man came in! It was as if Fritz conjured him up out of nothing. Like Dr Faust, conjuring up the devil ...'

And the sheet of canvas fell softly to the floor, and the little metal figure turned his head, and raised his sword, and began to move towards her.

OH, NO! GRETL, BE CAREFUL! STOP! DON'T SAY IT! ... AH! TOO LATE ...



PART TWO



When Prince Otto married his Princess Mariposa, the whole city rejoiced: fireworks were lit in the public gardens, bands played all night in the ballrooms, and flags and banners waved from every rooftop.

‘At last we’ll have an heir!’ the people said, for they had been afraid that the dynasty would come to an end.

But time went by, and more time, and no child came to Prince Otto and Princess Mariposa. They sought the opinions of the finest doctors, but still no child came. They made a pilgrimage to Rome to seek the blessing of the Holy Father, but still no child came. Finally, as





THE PRINCESS WAS CALLED MARIPOSA. SHE WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL, BUT WHAT PRINCESS ISN'T? BEING BEAUTIFUL IS THEIR PROFESSION. PRINCESS MARIPOSA SPENT MOST OF HER TIME SHOPPING. THE DRESS DESIGNERS LET HER BUY DRESSES AT HALF-PRICE, BECAUSE SHE WORE THEM AT FASHIONABLE PARTIES AND MADE THE DESIGNERS FAMOUS. IF YOU WANT TO BUY THINGS CHEAP, IT HELPS TO BE RICH, STRANGE AS IT SEEMS. POOR PEOPLE ALWAYS HAVE TO PAY THE FULL PRICE.



Princess Mariposa stood at the palace window, she heard the chiming of the cathedral clock, and said, 'I wish I had a child as sound as a bell and as true as a clock'; and when she had said those words, she felt her heart lift.

And before the year was out, she did have a child. But alas for her and for everyone, her labour was hard and painful, and when the baby had taken one breath in this world, he could take no more, and he died in the arms of the nurse. Princess Mariposa knew nothing of that, for she was in a dreadful swoon, and no one could say whether she would live or die. As for Prince Otto, he was nearly out of his mind with fury. He snatched the dead child from the nurse's arms and said, 'I will have an heir, come what may!'

He ran down to the stables and ordered the grooms to saddle his fastest horse, and with the dead child clasped to his breast he galloped away.

Where was he going? North, and further north, until he came to the workshop of Dr Kalmenius, near the silver mines of Schatzberg.



There it was that the great clockwork-maker created his wonders, from the celestial clock that told the position of every planet for the next twenty-five thousand years to the little figures that danced, and rode miniature ponies and shot tiny arrows, and played the harpsichord.

‘Well?’ said Dr Kalmenius.

Prince Otto stood in his riding-cloak with the snow still white on his shoulders, and held out the body of his child.

‘Make me another child!’ he said. ‘My son is dead, and his mother lies between life and death! Dr Kalmenius, I command you to make me a child of clockwork who will not die!’

Even Prince Otto, in his madness, didn’t believe that a clockwork toy could resemble a living child; but the silver they mined in Schatzberg was not the same as other metals. It was malleable and soft and lustrous, with a bloom on it like that on a butterfly’s wing. And as for the great clockwork-maker, the task was a challenge to his artistry that he couldn’t resist, and so, while Prince Otto buried the dead child,



Dr Kalmenius set to work to make the new one. He smelted the ore and refined the silver, and beat it into a subtle thinness; he spun gold into filaments finer than spiders’ silk, and attached each one separately to the little head; he cast and filed and tempered, he soldered and riveted and bolted, he timed and adjusted and regulated, until the little mainspring was tight, and the little escapement on its jewelled bearings was ticking back and forth with perfect accuracy.

When the clockwork child was ready, Dr Kalmenius gave him to Prince Otto, who scrutinized him carefully. The baby was breathing and moving and smiling and even, by some secret art, warm. In every way he looked exactly like the child who had died. Prince Otto wrapped his cloak around the baby, and rode back to the palace, where he laid the child in the arms of Princess Mariposa; and the princess opened her eyes, and the joy of seeing her own child, as she thought, alive and well, brought her back from the brink of the grave. And besides, she looked so pretty with a child in her arms; she had always known she would.



They named him Florian. A year went by, two years, three, and the little boy grew up beloved by everyone, happy and sturdy and clever. Prince Otto took him riding on a little pony, taught him to shoot a bow and arrow; he danced, he picked out tunes on the harpsichord; he grew stronger and bigger, more merry and lively all the time.

But in the fifth year of his life, the little prince began to show signs of a disturbing illness. There was a painful stiffness in his joints; he had a constant feeling of chill, and his face, which was normally so lively and expressive, was becoming mask-like and rigid. Princess Mariposa was worried to distraction, for he no longer looked nearly so handsome next to her.

'Can't you do something to cure him?' she demanded of the Royal Physician.

The physician tapped the boy's chest, and looked at his tongue, and felt his pulse. It was like no disease he had ever seen. If he hadn't known the prince was a little boy, he'd have said he was seizing up like a rusty clock, but he could hardly say that to Princess Mariposa.



'Nothing to worry about,' he said. 'It's a condition known as inflammatory oxidosis. Give him two spoonfuls of cod-liver oil three times a day, and rub his chest with oil of lavender.'

The only one to suspect the truth was his father, and so Prince Otto set off once again for the mines of Schatzberg, and knocked at the door of Dr Kalmenius's workshop.

'Well?' said the clockwork-maker.

'Prince Florian is ill,' said Prince Otto. 'What can we do?'

He described the symptoms, and Dr Kalmenius shrugged his shoulders.

'It's in the nature of clockwork to run down,' was the answer. 'His mainspring was bound to weaken, his escapement to become clogged with dust. I can tell you what will happen next: his



THAT'S A TYPICAL DOCTOR'S ANSWER. HE MAKES UP A MEDICAL-SOUNDING NAME (ALL OXIDOSIS MEANS IS RUSTY DISEASE) AND PRESCRIBES SOME MEDICINE THAT AT LEAST WON'T DO ANY HARM. THAT'S ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS THEY TEACH THEM IN MEDICAL SCHOOL — OR IT USED TO BE. BUT THE ROYAL PHYSICIAN HAD A VERY GOOD BEDSIDE MANNER, AND EVEN IF HE DIDN'T ALWAYS KNOW HOW TO CURE HIS PATIENTS, HE SOOTHED AND FLATTERED THEM BEAUTIFULLY.



skin will stiffen and crack, and split from top to bottom to reveal nothing but dead, seized-up metal inside him. He will never work again.

'But why didn't you tell me this would happen?'

'You were in such a hurry that you didn't ask.'

'Can't you just wind him up?'

'Impossible.'

'But what can we do?' said Prince Otto in his rage and despair. 'Is there nothing that can save his life? I must have an heir! The survival of the Royal Family depends on it!'

'There is one thing,' said Dr Kalmenius. 'He is failing because he has no heart. Find him a heart, and he will live. But I don't know where you'll find a heart in good condition that its owner is willing to part with. Besides—'

But Prince Otto had left already. He didn't stop to hear the rest of what Dr Kalmenius was going to say. That's often the way with princes; they want instant solutions, not difficult ones that take time and care to bring about. What the great clockwork-maker had been going to



say was this: 'The heart that is given must also be kept.' But quite possibly Prince Otto wouldn't have understood anyway.

He rode back to the palace, turning the problem over in his mind. And what a dilemma! To save his son, he had to sacrifice another human being! What could he do? And whom could he ask to make such a great sacrifice?

And then he thought of the Baron Stelgratz.

Of course! There was no-one better. Baron Stelgratz was an old, trusted adviser, a staunch friend, faithful, brave, and true. The little prince loved him, and he and the baron used to play for hours at mock-battles with Prince Florian's toy soldiers, and the good old nobleman would teach him how to handle a sword or fire a pistol, and tell him all about the animals of the forest.

The more Prince Otto thought about it, the better a choice it seemed. Baron Stelgratz would leap at the chance to give his heart for the family. Better not tell him yet, though; better wait till they were at Dr Kalmenius's workshop; then he would see the necessity quite clearly.

