

The Nutcracker

Synopsis

ACT I

Scene 1: Christmas Eve in the Barn

It is Christmas Eve in Imperial Russia. Young Misha and his sister Marie are preparing for a grand party at their family's country estate. They join their friend, Peter the stable boy, who is sweeping out the barn in anticipation of guests. The company arrives and the party and dancing begin. The children's Uncle Nikolai arrives with gifts and entertains everyone with extraordinary magic tricks. As a present, he gives Marie a Nutcracker in the shape of a gallant soldier. Marie and Misha fight over the soldier until their father takes it away.

Scene 2: The Battle with the Tsar of the Mice

The excited children are put to bed. As they fall asleep, they enter an enchanted dream world. The Christmas tree in their room grows to a towering height and the Nutcracker comes to life along with all the other Christmas toys. A battle breaks out between the dogs and cats. The cats are victorious, but in turn are defeated by an army of mice. When the Tsar of the Mice challenges the Nutcracker to combat, Misha and Marie come to his aid. After helping to defeat the Tsar with their feather pillows, Misha, Marie discover that the Nutcracker is their friend, Peter, and the three travel to the land of snow.

Scene 2: The Land of Snow

Exhausted, the children fall back on their beds, only to be carried off on a new dream journey, this one to the icy, crystalline realm of the Snow Queen. There, along with the Nutcracker, Misha and Marie dance with the Snow Maidens. Afterwards, the Snow Queen presents them with a glorious ice-boat, attended by unicorns, which takes them off to the land of the Sugar Plum Fairy.

ACT II

Scene 1: The Palace of the Sugar Plum Fairy

Misha, Marie and the Nutcracker arrive in the land of the Sugar Plum Fairy, who lives in a majestic and ornate Fabergé egg in a golden palace. They are greeted by their Uncle Nikolai and nanny Baba, in the guises of the Grand Duke and Empress Dowager. A splendid feast is ordered for the newcomers who, while it is being prepared, are treated to a series of wondrous spectacles culminating with Baba as a shepherdess with a flock of lambs and a sheep pursued by a fox.

Scene 2: The Feast

Finally the chefs and waiters arrive with the promised banquet. Misha and Marie, as special guests, are given seats of honour at the table, whereupon – children being children – they begin a food fight. In the midst of the chaos, the final traces of winter gradually disappear. The gates of the palace swing open and two harbingers of spring, a bee and a host of flowers, dance merrily in the warm, gentle breezes.

Scene 3: A Magical Farewell

Through all of this fantastical confusion, the Nutcracker and the Sugar Plum Fairy have fallen in love. As the world of the Sugar Plum Fairy begins to fade, the tired children find themselves back in their room, being tucked in by Baba. As they drift off to sleep once more, the Nutcracker and the Sugar Plum Fairy appear to them to say goodbye. Their adventures have transformed Misha and Marie and with the aid of their dreams they have moved from childhood to adolescence, an important step on their life journeys.