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Dramatic Publishing



A Christmas Play

The Nutcracker

by

JUNE WALKER ROGERS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE NUTCRACKER)

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for
Dulcy and Amanda Rogers

THE NUTCRACKER
A Play in One Act
For Ten Men, Twelve Women and Extras*

CHARACTERS

CLARA
FRANK (who also plays KRAKATUK)
AUNT HARRIET (who also plays the SNOW QUEEN)
MICKEY (who also plays the MOUSE KING)
FATHER
MOTHER (who also plays the SUGAR PLUM FAIRY)
GODFATHER DROSS
THE NUTCRACKER
FIRST MOUSE
SECOND MOUSE
THIRD MOUSE
FOURTH MOUSE
FIRST SNOWFLAKE
SECOND SNOWFLAKE
FIRST CANDY CANE (Irmagarde)
SECOND CANDY CANE (Hildegarde)
COFFEE
TEA
DAISY
ROSE
BONBON
PRINCE (who also plays NED)

*Toy Soldiers, Mice, Snowflakes and Flowers, all of whom may double as desired.

The Nutcracker

(This play may be presented exactly as written, with no music. However, it will be enhanced by the use of *The Nutcracker Suite* as background music. There are many fine recordings available. If your group includes dancers, the production may be further enhanced by adding portions of the *Nutcracker* ballet.)

(The lights in the theatre dim. If you are using music, a small part of *The Nutcracker Suite* may be played, to set the mood. When lights are fully down, music stops and a spotlight hits the curtain at C.)

(CLARA, an attractive young girl, pops her head through the center of the curtain as though looking through a window.)

CLARA. Look at that snow falling!

FRANK (voice only). Can you see him?

CLARA. Not yet.

(FRANK pops his head through the curtain above Clara's.)

FRANK. Are you sure?

CLARA. He'll be here, Frank. It's Christmas Eve and he's never missed a Christmas Eve yet. Not even a blizzard could stop him.

FRANK (trying to frighten her). Maybe he's frozen solid somewhere out in that storm . . . and not a Saint Bernard in sight to save him. (He peers out over the heads of the audience.)

CLARA. Oh, Frank, stop that! (Hearing something.) Someone's coming!

FRANK. Maybe it's Godfather Dross. (His head disappears.)

CLARA. Wait for me! (Her head disappears. There is the sound of a crash.) Who left that skate there! (Moaning.) Ohhh.

(AUNT HARRIET and her son, MICKEY, enter, preferably walking through the audience, otherwise from the side of the stage. They carry brightly wrapped presents and AUNT HARRIET bows, saying "Merry Christmas" to the audience as they pass.)

MICKEY (shivering). It's so cold tonight! Let's hurry inside, Momma.

AUNT HARRIET. Nonsense, Mickey, dear. This is what I call healthy weather. The cold keeps your blood warm. (Takes a deep breath.)

MICKEY (bobbing up and down). As long as you keep moving. Please, Momma.

(AUNT HARRIET and MICKEY face the curtain, C, which is now held back from both sides, forming an opening like a door. FRANK appears in opening.)

FRANK. I came as fast as I could, Godfath---- (Seeing MICKEY, disappointed.) Oh!

(AUNT HARRIET pushes MICKEY upstage, into the house. Curtain then opens to reveal the full

stage, which represents the living room of the Sutton home. The set can be a completely bare stage with a real Christmas tree that is being decorated by MOTHER and FATHER Sutton, or it can be three flats, the center one being a painted Christmas tree and the side ones a painted living room interior. There are presents under the tree including wooden soldiers, dolls, a toy bugle; also candy and nuts.)

AUNT HARRIET. How sweet of you, Franklin, to greet us at the door.

MICKEY (making a face at FRANK). Sweet!

AUNT HARRIET. Mickey, look at the tree. Isn't it glorious?

MICKEY. A tree is a tree. Where are the presents? (AUNT HARRIET pokes him to be quiet.)

FATHER (coming forward). Harriet! My favorite sister.

AUNT HARRIET. Your only sister!

FATHER. Maybe that's why you're my favorite. (He takes Harriet's and Mickey's coats and gives them to FRANK, who takes them offstage R.

MICKEY puts their packages under the tree.)

MOTHER (kissing AUNT HARRIET). Harriet, we're so glad you could come.

AUNT HARRIET (smug). Well, we always come by with our packages Christmas Eve.

(CLARA enters R.)

CLARA. Hello, Aunt Harriet. Well, everyone's here now but Godfather Dross.

AUNT HARRIET. Oh. No wonder the atmosphere is calmer than usual.

MOTHER. Oh, Harriet, the children adore their Godfather Dross.

AUNT HARRIET. Naturally. He acts as childish as they do. All those nonsensical presents he brings each year.

MICKEY. But nothing you can use . . . like a sword! (He pantomimes fencing.) Isn't that so, Momma?

AUNT HARRIET (trying to get him off the subject).
Go and play, Mickey.

MICKEY (persisting). But that's what you always say, Momma. Impractical. After every Christmas Eve. Isn't that so, Momma?

AUNT HARRIET (taking MICKEY aside). Mickey, darling . . . children must never repeat private conversations they have with their elders. Isn't that so, Mickey?

MICKEY. Except it's more fun if they do!

AUNT HARRIET (giving up, changing the subject).
Oh! It's so warm in here! Somebody should open a window and let in some fresh air.

FATHER. Harriet, we'll freeze to death if we open a window.

AUNT HARRIET. Then, never mind. If I collapse from heat prostration, just stick my head out of the door.

MICKEY (his hands behind his back, approaching FRANK and CLARA, who have been talking quietly). Clara . . . would you like to see what I have for you?

CLARA (wary). I'm not sure. . . .

MICKEY. But this is special.

FRANK. What could you have that's so special?

MICKEY (thrusting his hand out in front of CLARA).
Look, Clara! A mouse!

CLARA (screaming). A mouse! (Runs to MOTHER.)
Oh, Momma, save me! (Runs to AUNT HARRIET as MICKEY follows her.) Take it away! (Hides behind AUNT HARRIET, almost knocking her down.)

AUNT HARRIET (not having heard what happened).

What's the matter with you? (To MOTHER.)

I told you it was too hot in here!

CLARA (pointing at MICKEY). He's got a mouse!

AUNT HARRIET. He's got a . . . ? A mouse!

(Becomes frightened, lifts her skirt while scurrying around, with CLARA still hanging on to her skirt, scurrying behind.) Get it away! I hate mice. Where would you get a mouse? Drop it! No, don't! Oh! So unclean! They breed in the heat. Michael! Get rid of that mouse!

FATHER (taking Mickey's hand). Mickey! Playing tricks again. It's nothing but a sugar plum.

AUNT HARRIET. Michael, how could you? Now, apologize to Clara for frightening her.

(GODFATHER DROSS enters, through audience if possible; otherwise from stage R. He is an imposing figure, with white hair, a black patch over one eye and wearing a flowing black cape.)

GODFATHER DROSS. Have no fear . . . Dross is here. Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas, everyone!

FRANK and CLARA (running to him, embracing him).
Godfather Dross!

GODFATHER DROSS (laughing). The one and only!

MOTHER (kissing GODFATHER DROSS). Thank goodness! I don't think the world is ready for another like you.

CLARA (excited). We've been waiting and waiting.

GODFATHER DROSS (holding up his present, a wrapped box). I'm a little late because I had a few last-minute touches to put on my contribution to the festivities.

FRANK. What can it be?

CLARA. Momma, what do you think?

MICKEY (sneering). Last year it was a dancing shepherd doll.

AUNT HARRIET. Such a useful gift! You know how practical a dancing shepherd is.

CLARA (playfully grabbing for the box). Oh, please, let me see your surprise.

FRANK (also grabbing for it). I'm the older. I should open it.

AUNT HARRIET (to FRANK and CLARA). Wouldn't you rather open the nice scarves I brought you?

FATHER. Frank, I think it's Clara's turn this year.

CLARA (taking present, pulling ribbon off box). It feels heavy. . . . (She takes lid off box.) Why, it's . . . it's . . .

EVERYBODY. What? Well? What is it?

CLARA (taking it out, holding it up). It's . . . lovely! What is it?

GODFATHER DROSS. A magnificent nutcracker, my dear Clara.

FRANK (disappointed). A nutcracker! I don't even like nuts.

MOTHER. And I don't like your attitude, Franklin.

GODFATHER DROSS (looking at nutcracker, which is in the form of a toy soldier). I have to admit he's a funny-looking little wooden soldier . . . everything seems so out of proportion . . . but I just know this nutcracker is special.

CLARA (looking at it). Wherever did you find him?

GODFATHER DROSS. He seemed to find me. A beggar came to my house one day and, sticking out of his sack, was my little friend here. His paint was chipped and his uniform dirty, and he seemed to say with those gentle eyes, "Help me! Help me!"

CLARA (looking into nutcracker's eyes). And how could you refuse?

GODFATHER DROSS. I couldn't, so I bought him from the beggar, fixed him up, and now offer him to you.

CLARA (hugging the nutcracker). He's beautiful, Godfather. And I think he's very special, too.

GODFATHER DROSS. I'm glad you like him. I had a feeling you would.

MICKEY. If he's a real nutcracker, can we crack some nuts?

AUNT HARRIET. What a practical idea, Mickey.

CLARA (to GODFATHER DROSS). Is it all right?

GODFATHER DROSS. I think your little friend would like to be useful.

MOTHER (taking a nut from a bowl under the tree). Here's a walnut.

AUNT HARRIET. And a pecan. That's a tough nut to crack. (All except FRANK gather around the nutcracker, cracking the nuts. FRANK moves to one side and picks up a toy soldier. FATHER moves to him.)

FATHER. What's the matter, Frank?

FRANK. Aw . . . this Christmas . . . is . . . I don't know . . . dull.

FATHER. That's the wrong attitude, Frank. Maybe in the future we should just dispense with presents.

FRANK. Aw, Dad . . .

FATHER. I mean it, Frank. You seem to have forgotten the real meaning of Christmas. Maybe we should go back to the basics and just enjoy being together because we are together . . . with people we love.

FRANK. I love you. You know I love you. Look! Don't I look happy now! (He begins to run and jump.) I'm happy. Oh, boy, am I happy! Look, Clara . . . see how happy I am! (He jumps up and down in front of CLARA. Suddenly his

expression changes and we know he has done something terribly wrong. He stops jumping.)

Oh, oh . . .

CLARA. Frank! What have you done?

FRANK. It was an accident . . . I didn't know. . . .
(He stoops, picks up the nutcracker, which had been left on the floor.) I didn't know it was on the floor. I'm sorry, Clara.

CLARA (taking nutcracker from him). Oh . . . my poor nutcracker. Frank!

GODFATHER DROSS (taking it from CLARA). Here . . . let me see what happened.

CLARA. His jaw is broken.

FRANK. I'm sorry. Honest, Clara. . . .

CLARA. Being sorry won't mend my nutcracker.

Look, Godfather, his eyes suddenly look strange, as if he were about to cry.

GODFATHER DROSS. Well, wouldn't you cry if your jaw was broken?

CLARA. Oh, yes . . . yes. . . .

MOTHER (putting arm around CLARA). Dross, please don't cater to Clara's imagination. It sometimes runs away with her.

GODFATHER DROSS. Nothing wrong with having a good imagination. Has anyone a handkerchief?

CLARA (holding up a small crumpled one). Use mine. . . .

GODFATHER DROSS (pulling loud plaid handkerchief from his pocket). I think mine would be better. (He ties it around the jaw and over the head of the nutcracker.) He'll be as good as new in no time, Clara.

CLARA (clutching nutcracker to her). I hope so. I can't bear to see him looking so sad.

AUNT HARRIET. When things get broken, everybody's getting tired. Say good night, Mickey. A brisk walk home will do us a world of good. (FATHER

and MOTHER go to get Harriet's and Mickey's presents from under the tree.)

MICKEY. Aren't they even gonna give us something to eat? Some cheese? Something? (AUNT HARRIET pokes him to silence him. He speaks to the room in general.) Well, good night, everybody. Merry Christmas.

MOTHER (giving him present). Merry Christmas.
FATHER (giving AUNT HARRIET present). Thank you for coming. (FRANK, MOTHER and FATHER take AUNT HARRIET and MICKEY off R, MOTHER stopping to say to CLARA:)

MOTHER. And you can go upstairs to bed, too, Clara.

CLARA (to GODFATHER DROSS). I'm sorry we didn't take better care of your present.

GODFATHER DROSS. Now I told you he was special . . . magical . . . and in the morning, after he's had a good night's rest, he'll be better than ever, able to crack every tough nut that comes his way.

CLARA. I'll hide him behind the tree so nothing else can happen to him.

GODFATHER DROSS (kissing her). I'll come back tomorrow. Maybe he'll need a little touching up. That paint on his mouth looks a little chipped.

CLARA (dreamily). You make everything perfect, Godfather Dross. This is my favorite night of the year. I wonder if I'll always feel that way.

GODFATHER DROSS. Why not? I do. Good night, child, go to bed. (He exits R. We hear him saying good night to Mother and Father off.)

CLARA. Right away. I'll just put my nutcracker in a safe place.

(CLARA yawns, looks around, goes behind tree with

the nutcracker. MOTHER and FRANK enter.)

MOTHER. You see? Clara's gone to bed already.

(FATHER enters.)

FATHER. Go along, Frank.

FRANK. Yes, Dad. Good night. Good night,
Mother. (He exits R.)

FATHER. Each Christmas Eve, it always seems
like too much excitement for the children.

MOTHER. But they enjoy it.

FATHER. Of course. But Mickey always pulls
some prank and Frank winds up breaking
something.

MOTHER. How Clara survives all the teasing I'll
never know.

FATHER (putting an arm around MOTHER). She's
our little princess. . . . Merry Christmas,
dear.

MOTHER. And you, too. . . . (They exit.)

(The lights dim and suddenly a scratching sound is
heard, and then a few squeaks. An OWL
CLOCK, which has been standing at the side,
suddenly comes to life. [If it is painted on the
flat, cut out an opening for a face.])

OWL CLOCK.

To wit, to woo.
To wit, to woo.
It's twelve o'clock
Or quarter past
I feel excitement
Coming fast.
