

tains, well wrapped up against the cold, and they weren't expected back for a week or so.

'Well, what should happen but that only two nights later, the sentry on duty at the palace gate saw a commotion down the road, and heard the whinnying of horses - whinnying in panic - making a terrible racket; and it looked, though he couldn't be sure, as if a sledge was being driven towards the palace by a madman.

'The sentry raised the alarm, and called for lights, and when the sledge got close enough, they could see that it was the royal sledge, the very one the prince had set off in only two nights before. It was hurtling up the road behind those terrified horses, and it wasn't going to stop; and the sergeant of the guard gave orders to drag the palace gates open quickly before it crashed.

'They got them open just in time. The sledge rushed through, and then drove round and round the courtyard, for the horses were mad with fear and couldn't stop. The poor beasts were covered with foam and their eyes were rolling, and the sledge would be going round

that courtyard still if one of the runners hadn't caught on a mounting block and turned the whole thing over.

'Out fell the driver, and out fell a bundle from the back of the sledge. A servant hastened to pick it up, and found little Prince Florian wrapped in a fur rug, safe and warm and half asleep.

'But as for the driver ...

'Well, as soon as the sentries came close, they saw who it was. It was none other than Prince Otto himself, stark dead, as cold as ice, with his eyes wide and staring ahead of him, his left hand gripping the reins so tight they had to be cut loose, and (this was the strangest part) his right hand still moving, lashing the whip up and down, up and down, up and down.

'They covered him up so the princess wouldn't see him, and took little Prince Florian to her to prove he was alive and well, because he was their only child.

'But what was to be done with Prince Otto? They took his body into the palace and sent for the Royal Physician, a worthy old man who'd

studied in Heidelberg and Paris and Bologna, and who'd published a treatise on the location of the soul; he'd studied geology, and hydrology, and physiology, but he'd never seen anything like this before. A dead body that wouldn't keep still! Imagine that! Stretched out icy-cold on a marble slab, with its right arm lashing and lashing and lashing with no sign that it was ever going to stop.

'The physician locked the door to keep the servants out, and brought the lamp closer, and bent low to look, and then his eye was caught by something in the clumsy arrangement of the clothes. So, avoiding that lashing right arm, he carefully unfastened the cloak and the fur coat and the under-jacket and the shirt, and laid the prince's chest bare.

'And there it was: a gash across his breast just

THERE WAS A LOT OF ARGUMENT ABOUT THE LOCATION OF THE SOUL IN THOSE DAYS. SOME PHILOSOPHERS THOUGHT IT WAS LOCATED IN THE BRAIN, SOME IN THE HEART, SOME IN THE PINEAL GLAND, WHATEVER THAT IS. THEY EVEN USED TO WEIGH PEOPLE BEFORE AND AFTER THEY DIED, TO SEE WHETHER THEY WEIGHED LESS WHEN THE SOUL HAD LEFT THEM. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER THEY DID OR NOT.



over the heart, crudely sewn up with a dozen stitches. The physician got his scissors and snipped them away, and then he nearly fainted with surprise, because when he opened the wound, there was no heart there. Instead, there was a little piece of clockwork: just a few cogs and springs and a balance wheel, attached in subtle ways to the prince's veins and tick-tick-ticking away merrily, in perfect time with the lashing of his arm.

'Well, you can imagine how the physician crossed himself and took a sip of brandy to calm his nerves. Who wouldn't? Then he carefully cut the attachments and lifted out the clockwork, and as he did so, the arm fell still, just like that.'

As he got to that point in his story, Fritz paused for a sip of beer, and to see how his audience was taking it. The silence in the inn was profound. Every single customer was sitting so still they might have been dead themselves, except for their wide eyes and expressions of tense excitement. He had never had such a success!

He turned the page and read on:

FRITZ'S STORY (CONTINUED)

'Well, the physician sewed up Prince Otto's wound, and let it be known that the prince had died of apoplexy. The servants who'd carried the body in thought differently; they knew a dead man when they saw one, even if his arm was moving; at any rate, the official version was that Prince Otto had suffered a contusion of the brain, and that his love for his son had kept him alive just long enough to drive him safely home. He was buried with a good deal of ceremony, and everyone was in mourning for six months.

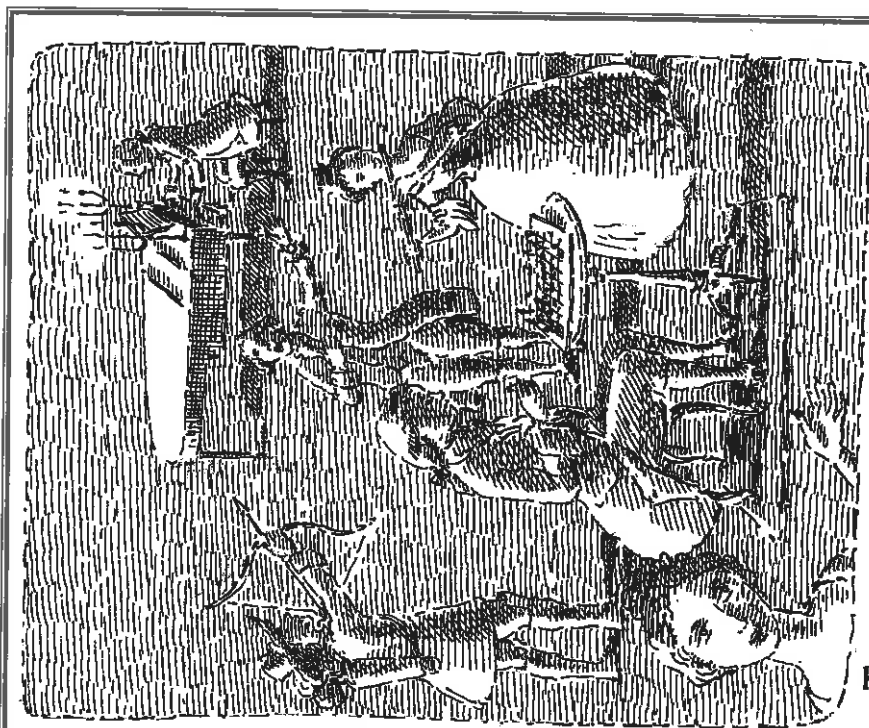
'As for what had happened to Baron Stelgratz, the other member of the hunting party, no-one could guess. The whole affair was shrouded in mystery.

'But the Royal Physician had an idea. There was one man who might be able to explain what had happened, and that was the great Dr Kalmenius of Schatzberg, of whom very few people had heard; but those who did know of him said he was the cleverest man in Europe. For making clockwork, he had no equal, not

even our good Herr Ringelmann. He could make intricate pieces of calculating apparatus that worked out the positions of all the stars and the planets, and answer any mathematical question.

'Dr Kalmenius could have made his fortune if he'd wanted to, but he wasn't interested in fortune or in fame. He was interested in something far deeper than that. He would spend hours sitting in graveyards, contemplating the mysteries of life and death. Some said he experimented on dead bodies. Others said he was in league with the powers of darkness. No-one knew for certain. But one thing they did know was that he used to walk about at night, pulling behind him a little sledge containing whatever secret matter he was working on at the time.

'What did he look like, this philosopher of the night? He was very tall and thin, with a prominent nose and jaw. His eyes blazed like coals in caverns of darkness. His hair was long and grey, and he wore a black cloak with a loose hood like that of a monk; he had a harsh grating voice, and his expression was full of savage curiosity.



THERE WAS SOMETHING UNCANNY ABOUT DR KALMENIUS'S CLOCKWORK. HE MADE LITTLE FIGURES THAT SANG AND SPOKE AND PLAYED CHESS, AND SHOT TINY ARROWS FROM TINY BOWS, AND PLAYED THE HARPSICHOORD AS WELL AS MOZART. YOU CAN SEE SOME OF HIS CLOCKWORK FIGURES TODAY IN THE MUSEUM AT SCHATZBERG, BUT THEY DON'T WORK ANY MORE. IT'S ODD, BECAUSE ALL THE PARTS ARE IN PLACE, AND IN PERFECT ORDER, AND THEY SHOULD WORK; BUT THEY DON'T. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THEY HAD ... DIED.

'And that was the man who —
Fritz stopped.

He swallowed, and his eyes moved to the door. Everyone followed his gaze. The parlour had never been so still. No-one moved, no-one dared to breathe, for the latch was lifting.

The door slowly opened.

On the threshold stood a man in a long black cloak with a loose hood like a monk's. His grey hair hung down on either side of his face: a long, narrow face with a prominent nose and jaw, and eyes that looked like burning coals in caverns of darkness.

Oh, the silence as he stepped inside! Every single person in the parlour was gaping, mouth open, eyes wide; and when they saw what the stranger was pulling behind him — a little sledge with something wrapped in canvas — more than one crossed themselves and stood up in fear.

The stranger bowed.

'Dr Kalmenius of Schatzberg, at your service,' he said, in a harsh, grating voice. 'I have come a long way tonight, and I am cold. A glass of brandy!'

The landlord poured it hastily. The stranger drained it at once and held out the glass for more. Still nobody moved.

'So silent?' said Dr Kalmenius, looking around mockingly. 'One might think one had arrived among the dead!'

The Burgomaster swallowed hard and got to his feet.

'I beg your pardon, Dr -- er -- Kalmenius, but the fact is that--'

And he looked at Fritz, who was staring at Dr Kalmenius with horror. The young man was as pale as the paper in his hand. His eyes were nearly starting from his head, his hair was standing on end, and a ghastly sweat had broken out on his forehead.

'Yes, my good sir?' said Dr Kalmenius.

'I -- I --' said Fritz, and swallowed convulsively.

The Burgomaster intervened: 'The fact is that our young friend is a writer of stories, Doctor, and he was reading us one of his tales when you arrived.'

'Ah! How delightful!' said Dr Kalmenius. 'I should greatly enjoy hearing the rest of your

story, young sir. Please don't feel inhibited by my presence -- carry on as if I weren't here at all.'

A little cry broke from Fritz's throat. With a sudden movement he crumpled all his sheets of paper together and thrust them into the stove, where they blazed up high.

'I beg you,' he cried, 'have nothing to do with this man!'

And like someone who has seen the Devil, he ran out of the inn as fast as he could.

Dr Kalmenius broke into a wild and mocking laugh, and at that, several other good citizens followed Fritz's example, and left their pipes and their mugs of beer, grabbed their coats and hats, and were off, not even daring to look the stranger in the eye.

Herr Ringelmann and the Burgomaster were almost the last to leave. The old clockmaker thought he should say something to a fellow craftsman, but his tongue was mute, and the Burgomaster thought he should either welcome the eminent Dr Kalmenius or send him on his way, but his nerve failed; and the two old men took their sticks and hurried away as

fast as they could.

Little Gretl was clinging to her father the landlord, watching it all with wide eyes.

'Well!' said Dr Kalmenius. 'You keep early hours in this town. I will take another glass of brandy.'

The landlord poured with a shaking hand, and ushered Gretl out, for this was no company for a child.

Dr Kalmenius drained the brandy at once, and called for yet another.

'And perhaps this gentleman will join me,' he said, turning to the corner of the bar.

For there sat Karl still. In the rush of all the other customers to leave, he had not moved. He turned his glowering face, now flushed with drink and sullen with self-hatred, to glare at the stranger, but he could not meet those mocking eyes, and he dropped his gaze to the floor.

'Bring a glass for my companion,' said Dr Kalmenius to the landlord, 'and then you may leave us.'

The landlord put the bottle and another glass on the bar, and fled. Only five minutes before,

the parlour had been full to bursting; but now Dr Kalmenius and Karl were alone, and the inn was so quiet that Karl could hear the whisper of flames in the stove, and the ticking of the old clock in the corner, even over the beating of his own heart.

Dr Kalmenius poured some brandy, and pushed the glass along the bar. Karl said nothing. He bore the stranger's stare for nearly a minute, and then he banged his fist on the counter and cried:

'God damn you, what do you want?'

'Of you, sir? I want nothing from you.'

'You came here on purpose to jeer at me!'

'To jeer at you? Come, come, we have better clowns than you in Schatzberg. Should I come all this way to laugh at a young man whose face shows nothing but unhappiness? Come, drink up! Look cheerful! It is your morning of triumph tomorrow!'

Karl groaned and turned away, but Dr Kalmenius's mocking voice continued:

'Yes, the unveiling of a new figure for the famous clock of Glockenheim is an important

occasion. Do you know, I tried to find a bed in five different inns before I came here, and they were all full up. Visitors from all over Germany – gentlemen and ladies – craftsmen, clock-makers, experts in all kinds of machinery – all come to see your new figure, your masterpiece! Isn't that something to be joyful about? Drink, my friend, drink!

Karl snatched the glass and swallowed the fiery liquor.

'There won't be a new figure,' he muttered.

'What's this?'

'I said there won't be a new figure. I haven't made one. I couldn't. I wasted all my time, and when it was too late I found I couldn't do it. There you are. Now you can laugh at me. Go on.'

'Oh, dear, dear,' said Dr Kalmenius solemnly. 'Laugh? I wouldn't dream of it. I've come here to help you.'

'What? You? How?'

Dr Kalmenius smiled. It was like a flame suddenly breaking out of an ash-covered log, and Karl recoiled. The old man came closer.

'You see,' he said, 'I think you may have overlooked the philosophical implications of our craft. You know how to regulate a watch and repair a church clock, but had you ever considered that our lives are clockwork, too?'

'I don't understand,' said Karl.

'We can control the future, my boy, just as we wind up the mechanism in a clock. Say to yourself: I *will* win that race – I *will* come first – and you wind up the future like clockwork. The world has no choice but to obey! Can the hands of that old clock in the corner decide to stop? Can the spring in

your watch decide to wind itself up and run backwards? No! They have no choice. And nor has the future, once you have wound it up.'

'Impossible,' said Karl, who was feeling more and more light-headed.

NOW WE'RE GETTING TO THE HEART OF IT. THIS IS DR KALMENIUS'S PHILOSOPHY. THIS IS WHAT HE WANTS KARL TO BELIEVE. WELL, THERE MAY BE SOMETHING IN IT. THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO THINK THEY ONLY HAVE TO WISH FOR SOMETHING, AND IT'LL COME TRUE. DOESN'T EVERYONE THINK LIKE THAT WHEN THEY BUY A LOTTERY TICKET? AND THERE'S NO DOUBT, IT'S A PLEASANT THING TO IMAGINE. BUT THERE'S A FLAW IN IT ...



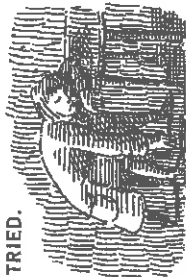
'Oh, but it's easy! What would you like? Wealth? A beautiful bride? Wind up the future, my friend! Say what you want, and it will be yours! Fame, power, riches - what would you like?'

'You know very well what I want!' cried Karl. 'I want a figure for the clock! Something to show for all the time I should have spent in making it! Anything to avoid the shame I'll feel tomorrow!'

'Nothing could be easier,' said Dr Kalmenius. 'You spoke - and there is what you wished for.'

And he pointed to the little sledge he'd pulled behind him into the parlour. The runners stood in a puddle of melted snow, and the canvas cover was damp.

... AND HERE IT IS: YOU DON'T WIN RACES BY WISHING, YOU WIN THEM BY RUNNING FASTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE. AND TO DO THAT YOU HAVE TO TRAIN HARD AND STRIVE YOUR UTMOST, AND SOMETIMES EVEN THAT ISN'T ENOUGH, BECAUSE ANOTHER RUNNER JUST MIGHT BE MORE TALENTED THAN YOU ARE. HERE'S THE TRUTH: IF YOU WANT SOMETHING, YOU CAN HAVE IT, BUT ONLY IF YOU WANT EVERYTHING THAT GOES WITH IT, INCLUDING ALL THE HARD WORK AND THE DESPAIR, AND ONLY IF YOU'RE WILLING TO RISK FAILURE. THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH KARL: HE WAS AFRAID OF FAILING, SO HE NEVER REALLY TRIED.



'What is it?' said Karl, who had suddenly become very afraid.

'Uncover it! Take off the canvas!'

Karl got unsteadily to his feet and slowly untied the rope holding the cover down. Then he pulled the canvas off.

In the sledge was the most perfect piece of metal sculpture he had ever seen. It was the figure of a knight in armour, made of gleaming silvery metal, holding a sharp sword. Karl gasped at the detail, and walked round looking at it from all angles. Every piece of armour-plating was riveted in such a way that it would move smoothly over the one below, and as for the sword—

He touched it, and drew his hand back at once, looking at the blood running down his fingers.

'It's like a razor,' he said.

'Only the best will do for Sir Ironsoul,' said Dr Kalmenius.

'Sir Ironsoul ... What a piece of work! Oh, if this were in the tower among the other figures, my name would be made for ever!' said Karl

bitterly. 'And how does he move? What does he do? He does work by clockwork, I suppose? Or is there some kind of goblin in there? A spirit or a devil of some kind?'

With a smooth whirr and a ticking of delicate machinery, the figure began to move. The knight raised his sword and turned his helmeted head to look for Karl, and then stepped off the sledge and moved towards him.

'No! What's he doing?' said Karl in alarm, backing away.

Sir Ironsoul kept going. Karl moved aside, but the figure turned too, and before Karl could dodge away, he was pinned in the corner, with the little knight's sword moving closer and closer.

'What's he doing? That sword is sharp – stop it, Doctor! Make it stop!'

Dr Kalmenius whistled three or four bars of a simple, haunting little tune, and Sir Ironsoul fell still. The point of the sword was right at Karl's throat.



The apprentice eased his way past the figure and sank onto a chair, weak with fear.

'What – who – how did it start? This is uncanny! Did you set it off?'

'Oh, I didn't start him,' said Dr Kalmenius. 'You did.'

'I did? How?'

'It was something you said. His mechanism is so delicate, so perfectly balanced, that one word and one word alone will start him moving. And he's such a clever little fellow! Once he's heard that word, he won't rest until his sword is in the throat that uttered it.'

'What word?' said Karl fearfully. 'What did I say? Clockwork ... goblin ... move ... work ... spirit ... devil ...'

Once again Sir Ironsoul began to move. He turned round implacably, found Karl, and set off towards him. The apprentice was out of his chair in a flash and cowering in the corner.

'That was it!' he cried. 'Stop it again, please, Doctor!'

Dr Kalmenius whistled once more, and the figure stopped.

‘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 marvell! 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!’

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.

‘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.

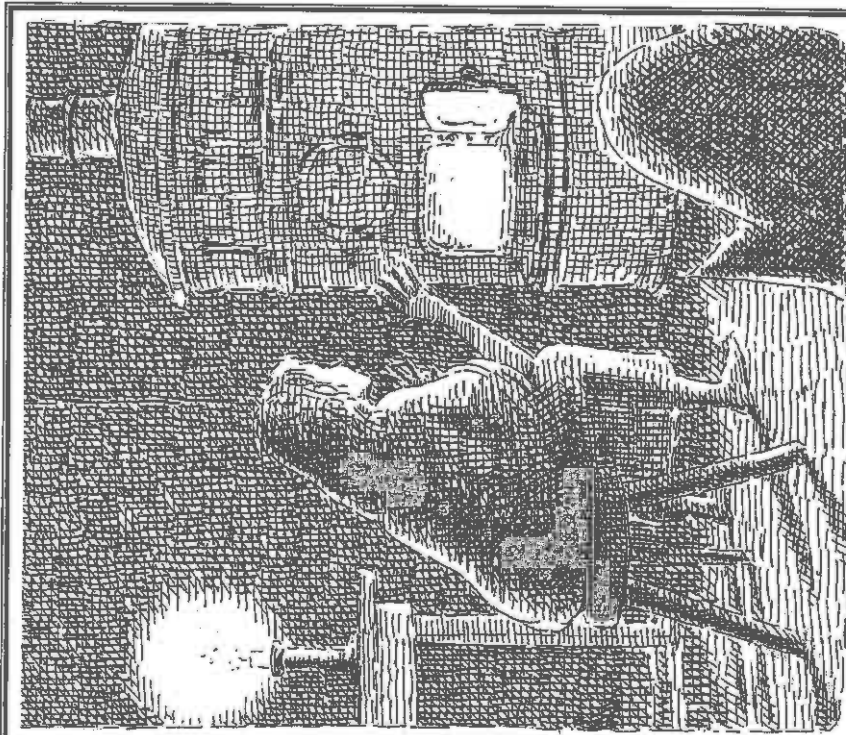
Now, as it happened, there was one other person awake, and that was Gretl, the landlord’s little daughter. She couldn’t sleep at all, and the

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 SCORNE

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.

