THE LITTLE TIN SOLDIER
(THE STEADFAST TOY SOLDIER)

Written by
Hans Christian Andersen

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This adaptation by
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Hans Christian Andersen is a Danish writer best remembered as one of the greatest storytellers of children’s Fairy Tales. “The Steadfast Tin Soldier" was written between 1835 and 1872 and tells of the love and adventures of a one legged tin soldier and a paper doll dancer he falls in love with.

By Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1975)
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

Once upon a time, a toymaker fashioned twenty five Brothers, all soldiers, from the same piece of tin.

They all shouldered muskets, They all looked straight ahead and they all wore splendid uniforms of red and blue.
Alas, When it came to the last soldier there wasn’t quite enough tin left.

The toymaker only had enough to give the last soldier one leg.

But that soldier didn’t mind, he was very proud to be different, he was very proud of his one leg.

He too stood erect, shouldering his musket, looking straight ahead, in his bright red and blue uniform.
The toymaker packed all 25 soldiers tightly, into a box.

It was very dark in there.

Then he carefully gift wrapped the box. They were a birthday present for a small boy.

When the little boy saw the box, he let out an exciting yell, “Tin Soldiers! Thanks, Mum!”
The little boy emptied the soldiers out on the floor and selected the last tin soldier (because he was different) for sentry duty.

He placed him on a tower of blocks where the soldier could see: a brown Teddy Bear; a box labelled ‘Jack’; a magnificent castle with swans floating on a lake; and …
Standing at the castle door was the most beautiful girl the soldier had ever seen.

In fact, she was the only girl the soldier had ever seen, but he loved her because, like him, she only had one leg.

Well, he thought she did.
“She is perfect,” the Little Tin Soldier said to himself, “I shall make her my wife.”
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

But what the soldier didn’t realise,

The beautiful lady was a Dancer,

She held her other leg high in the air behind her.
At midnight, when the clock struck twelve, all the toys would came alive.

The Little Tin Soldier was determined that then, he would visit the castle and ask for the beautiful lady’s hand in marriage.
At the stroke of midnight, the little tin soldier pushed open the lid of his box and climbed out.

He breathed deeply, because he was very nervous, then he began to hop in the direction of the castle.
Suddenly the lid of the jack-in-the-box popped open and an ugly grinning face jumped out and stared down at the Little Tin Soldier.

The face had sharp beady eyes that shone and flashed, “I’m Jack!”
Jack stared at the Little Tin Soldier,

“She’s out of your league, soldier boy. and anyway, ya only got one leg.”

There was a moment silence between them.

“You live in a box! She lives in a castle. Give up!”
The Little Tin Soldier looked up at the castle.

The beautiful dancer had been watching him.

She smiled.

The soldier’s tin heart melted.

He jumped down onto the floor and started bouncing towards the castle.
“Tin soldier,"

Jack practically spat the words out,

“Don’t wish for what does not belong to you.”

The Tin Soldier pretended not to hear.
Jack’s voice became ominous,
“Very well! wait until tomorrow.
Bad things will happen.
An ill wind will carry you away,”
and with a fiendish laugh he disappeared back, inside his box.
“I wouldn’t take any notice of Jack.”

Standing beside the soldier’s elbow was a Teddy Bear.

In spite of his growly voice, he sounded very friendly to the Little Tin Soldier.

“He’s bitter. He’s got no legs. He can’t join in our games.”
The Teddy Bear sighed, “Sad thing is, no-one would play with him even if he could move.”

The Little Tin Soldier glanced towards the castle and the stunningly beautiful lady.

“Go,” growled the friendly Teddy Bear, “Most important! Don’t let Jack’s words get into your heart.”
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

But the friendly Teddy Bear was too late. The Little Tin Soldier had taken Jack’s words deep into his heart.

Jack had frightened him.

He lay down beside the lake, watching the Dancer;

He never took his eyes off her.

Finally he drifted off to sleep.
The next morning, when the little boy came in, he saw the tin soldier lying on the floor, he picked him up, placed him on a shelf, near an open window.

From there the soldier could see the whole room: Jack’s box; the Teddy Bear; the castle and … the beautiful lady was smiling at him.

He smiled back.
Suddenly, a gust of wind caught the curtain. It flipped the Little Tin Soldier backwards, out of the open window.
As he fell down towards the ground, Jack’s words tumbled through his mind,

‘Tomorrow, an ill wind will carry you away,’

And he was sure he heard Jack’s fiendish laugh in the wind.
The Little Tin Soldier landed upside down with his bayonet wedged between the cracks in the pavement.

The little boy and his mother rushed down to rescue him.

But they couldn’t find him, although at one time, they almost stood on him.
Now the soldier felt really miserable.

To make him feel even worse, large, heavy drops of rain started to fall.

It wasn’t long before water was pouring down the gutter beside him.

‘What bad thing is going to happen next,’ he said to himself.
As if in answer, two boys came running down the street.

They thought it would be fun to send him out to sea.

They quickly made a small sail boat out of an old newspaper and placed him inside.
They sent the newspaper boat sailing down the gutter, then raced alongside laughing and splashing in the puddles.

The Little Tin Soldier, shouldered his musket, looked straight ahead, and he wondered, ‘Will I ever see my beautiful Dancer again?’
Large waves rocked the boat up and down.

It became soggy.

At times it swirled a full circle, quickly, in the water.

The Little Tin Soldier trembled.

He held on to his musket tightly.
Suddenly the boat dipped down and rushed into a drain.

‘What on earth is happening?’ thought the Soldier,

‘I bet Jack is behind this, his evil words put a magic spell on me!’
Inside the drain it was very dark.

As dark as the box the soldier lived in.

In the distance he saw what looked like, the headlights of a car.

But that was silly, for cars hadn’t been invented.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

As the newspaper boat floated closer, the soldier realised that the two lamps, were in fact, eyes.

The eyes of a huge, ugly, fat, water-rat with a chewed off ear,

“Passport!” it cried.

It was the border patrol!
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

The Rat’s eyes reminded him of Jack’s sharp, beady eyes, that shone and flashed.

Unlike Jack’s the rat’s eyes didn’t flash, but they just were as mean and unfriendly.

The Tin Soldier remained silent and held tightly to his musket.
The Water Rat’s hand reached out to make a grab for his passport.

But the Little Tin Soldier was too quick.

He crashed his boat through the straw barrier, and sped away.
Hollering and gnashing his teeth
the Rat gave chase.

He screamed to the wood and the straw,

“Stop ‘im, stop ‘im.
‘E as’n’t paid
me his toll.

‘E ‘ain’t got no
pass.”
But the roaring water surged on.

The Little Tin Soldier could already see daylight ahead.

‘Freedom, freedom,’ he thought,

‘I might still get home to see her smile once more.'
As the little boat rushed towards the daylight, the Soldier heard a noise.

It was a waterfall.

The little boat shot out into the air.

Way, way, way below was a canal.

‘Not again,’ thought the soldier. Although he was frightened, he refused to close his eyes.
The boat spun and swirled and crashed onto the surface of the water and shattered into a thousand pieces.

(Do you think the soldier actually counted the pieces?)

The soldier was thrown into the thunderous water, with millions of bubbles rising up all around him.

(He definitely didn’t count the bubbles!)
There was a sudden silver flash, everything went dark.
He thought of the beautiful Dancer’s smile.
He sighed, ‘will Jack’s curse never end!’
An old tune popped into his head,
‘Farewell, warrior! Ever brave, drifting onward to thy grave.’
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

It was then the soldier understood, he had been swallowed by a fish.

He lay full length, shouldering his musket.

The fish began to thrash about; the soldier held on for dear life.

Then suddenly it lay still.
As the soldier lay there, a flash of lightning struck the fish; daylight flooded in.

Then, he heard a voice he recognised.
“Why, it’s the little one legged Soldier that fell out the window. Goodness gracious!”

The voice belonged to the little boy’s mother.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

The fish that had swallowed him, had been hooked from the canal, taken to the market and sold to the mother.

When the mother sliced it open, she found the Little Tin Soldier.
She carefully dried and showered the Soldier, then put him in the castle, next to the beautiful Dancer.

“Don’t they make a lovely couple, both standing there on one leg?”
The soldier felt the presence of the Dancer. Her smile melted his heart. When the clock chimed midnight, he would boldly take her hand, ask her to marry him and … perhaps, even kiss her.
But Jack’s words still shadowed his heart.

Suddenly the little boy’s sister came into the room,

“That soldier is ugly, he’s deformed.”

She grabbed the Little Tin Soldier, and threw him into the fire.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

The fire burned, smoke poured from his uniform.

He was suffocating, because of the flames, maybe because of the fire of his love, he was totally unsure.

All he knew was, he was melting away.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

He stared up at the beautiful Dancer.

She smiled back at him.

But there was a tear that fell from her eye.

The tear finally washed Jack’s words from the soldier’s heart.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

As he was watching the curtain moved.

A breeze swooped in, caught the paper dancer in its arms,

and rushed her into the flames beside her love.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

Happy at last,
wrapped in each others arms,
the paper Doll and the Little Tin Soldier,
danced close in the flames.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER

The next morning, when the mother came in to clean up the ashes.

She discovered, lying in the fireplace, snuggled together,

the soldier’s heart;
and beside it,

the paper Dancer’s little red tinsel rose.
LITTLE TIN SOLDIER
...

... together forever.

THE END
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Hans Christian Andersen is a Danish writer best remembered as one of the greatest storytellers of children’s Fairy Tales. “The Brave Tin Soldier" was written between 1835 and 1872 and tells of the love and adventures of a one legged tin soldier and a paper doll dancer he wants to make his wife.

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