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TALES OF HOFFMANN



SELECTED AND TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY R. J. HOLLINGDALE

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*With the assistance of
Stella and Vernon Humphries,
and Sally Hayward*



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THE SANDMAN



Nathaniel to Lothario

You must all be very worried that I have not written for such a long time. I expect mother is angry, and Clara may think I am living here in a state of debauchery and altogether forgetting the dear angel whose image is imprinted so deeply into my heart and mind. But that is not the case. You are all in my thoughts every day and every hour, and in happy dreams my darling Clara's figure appears before me and smiles at me with her bright eyes as sweetly as she used to do whenever I came into the room. But, ah, how could I have written to you in the utter melancholy which has been disrupting all my mind? Something terrible has entered my life! Dark presentiments of a dreadful fate hover over me like black clouds impenetrable to any friendly ray of sunlight. I shall tell you what has happened to me — I shall have to do so, I can see that, even though only to think of it brings on a fit of insane laughter. Ah, my dear Lothario, how can I begin to make you feel in any way how what took place a few days ago might actually destroy my life? If only you were here, you could judge for yourself; as things are, you will certainly consider me a crazy spirit-seer.

In short, the terrible thing that has happened, and the deadly impression of which I strive in vain to eradicate, consists in nothing other than that a few days ago, namely on 30 October at mid-day, a dealer in barometers entered my room and offered me his wares. I bought nothing and threatened to throw him down the stairs. Whereupon he departed of his own accord.

You will understand that only some quite private association rooted deep in my life could bestow such significance upon this event that the mere person of that unfortunate tradesman should produce an inimical effect. And this is indeed the case. With all my strength I collect myself together to tell you quietly and patiently as much of my early youth as will suffice to make everything clear, distinct and vivid to your lively senses. As I begin I hear you laughing and Clara say: 'This is mere childishness!' Laugh, I beg you, laugh at me as much as you like! I beg it of you! But, God in Heaven! my hair is standing on end, and it is as if, when I plead with you to laugh at me, I do so in the madness of despair, as Schiller's Franz Moor pleaded with Daniel. But now to the business in hand!

Except at lunchtime, we, my brothers and sisters and I, saw little of our father all day. Perhaps he was very busy. After supper, which was, in accordance with the old custom, served as early as seven o'clock, all of us, our mother as well, went into our father's study and sat around a table. Our father smoked and drank a large glass of beer. Often he told us strange stories and became so excited over them that his pipe went out and I had to relight it for him with a burning spill, which I found a great source of amusement. But often he handed us picture books, sat silent and motionless in his armchair, and blew out thick clouds of smoke, so that we were all enveloped as if by a fog. On such evenings our mother became very gloomy, and the clock had hardly struck nine before she said: 'Now, children, to bed, to bed! The sandman is coming.' On these occasions I really did hear something come clumping up the stairs with slow, heavy tread, and knew it must be the sandman. Once these muffled footsteps seemed to me especially frightening, and I asked my mother as she led us out: 'Mama, who is this sandman who always drives us away from Papa? What does he look like?'

'There is no sandman, my dear child,' my mother replied. 'When I say the sandman is coming, all that means is that you are sleepy and cannot keep your eyes open, as though someone had sprinkled sand into them.'

My mother's answer did not content me; and in my childish mind there unfolded the idea that she had denied the sandman's existence only so that we should not be afraid of him, for I continued to hear him coming up the stairs. Bursting with curiosity to learn more about this sandman, and of his connection with us children, I at last asked the old woman who looked after my youngest sister what sort of a man a sandman was.

'Oh Nat,' she replied, 'don't you know that yet? It is a wicked man who comes after children when they won't go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes, so that they jump out of their heads all bloody, and then he throws them into his sack and carries them to the crescent moon as food for his little children, who have their nest up there and have crooked beaks like owls and peck up the eyes of the naughty children.'

The image of the cruel sandman now assumed hideous detail within me, and when I heard the sound of clumping coming up the stairs in the evening I trembled with fear and terror. My mother could get nothing out of me but the cry 'The sandman! the sandman!' stammered out in tears. I was the first to run into the bedroom on the nights he was coming, and his fearsome apparition tormented me till dawn. I was already old enough to realize that the tale the old woman had told me of the children's nest in the moon could not be true; nevertheless, the sandman himself remained a dreadful spectre; and I was seized with especial horror whenever I heard him not merely come up the stairs but wrench open the door of my father's study and go into it. There were times when he stayed away for many nights; then he would come all the more frequently, night after night.

This continued for some years, but never could I accustom myself to the uncanny ghost: the image of the cruel sandman never grew paler within me. What it could be that he had to do with my father began to engage my imagination more and more. An invincible timidity prevented me from asking my father about it; but to investigate the mystery myself, to see the fabled sandman myself – this desire grew more and more intense as the years passed. The sandman had started me on the road to the strange and adventurous that so easily find a home in the heart of a child. I liked nothing more than to read or listen to gruesome tales of kobolds, witches, dwarfs, and so on; but over all of them there towered the sandman, and I used to draw the strangest and most hideous pictures of him on tables, cupboards and walls everywhere in the house.

When I was ten years old my mother removed me from the children's room into a little room which lay on the corridor not far from my father's room. We would still have to make off for bed at once when, on the stroke of nine, the unknown visitor was heard arriving. From my little room I would hear him go into my father's, and soon afterwards it would seem to me that a subtle, strange-smelling vapour was spreading through the house. As my curiosity grew, so did my courage, and I would resolve to make the sandman's acquaintance by some means or other. Often I would creep out of my room into the corridor when my mother had gone past, but I could discover nothing, for the sandman would always be already inside the door by the time I had reached the place from which I might have seen him. At length, impelled by an irresistible urge, I decided to conceal myself within my father's room itself and there await the sandman.

One evening, my father's silence and the gloominess of my mother told me that the sandman would be coming. I pretended to be very tired, left the room before nine o'clock, and concealed myself in a niche on the landing.

The housedoor creaked, and slow, heavy, thudding steps crossed the hallway towards the stairs. My mother hurried past me with my brothers and sisters. Softly, softly I opened the door of my father's room. He was sitting as usual, silent and motionless with his back towards the door; he did not notice me, and in a moment I was in and behind the curtain drawn across an open cupboard just beside the door where my father's clothes were hung. The footsteps thudded nearer and nearer, and there was a strange coughing, rasping and growling outside. My heart quaked with fear and anticipation. Close, close behind the door – a quick footstep, a violent blow on the latch and the door sprang open with a clatter! Taking my courage in both hands, I peered cautiously out. The sandman was standing before my father in the middle of the room, his face clearly visible in the bright illumination of the lamps! The sandman, the terrible sandman was the aged advocate Coppelius, who sometimes came to lunch with us!

But the most horrible of forms could not have aroused in me a more profound terror than did this Coppelius. Imagine a large, broad-shouldered man with a big misshapen head, an ochre-yellow face, grey bushy eyebrows from under which a pair of green cat's-eyes blaze out piercingly, and a large heavy nose drawn down over the upper lip; the crooked mouth often distorted in a malignant laugh, at which times two dark red blotches appear on the cheeks and a strange hissing sound comes from between the clenched teeth. Coppelius always appeared in an ash-grey coat of old-fashioned cut and a similarly styled waistcoat and straight trousers, but in addition he wore black stockings and shoes with jewelled buckles. His little wig covered hardly more than the crown of his head, rolls of hair stood high over his big red ears, and a broad discoloured hairbag stuck out at the back of his neck, so that you could see the silver buckle which fastened the plaited cravat. The whole figure was altogether loathsome

and repellent; but what we children found repugnant above all were his great knotty, hair-covered hands, and we lost all liking for anything he touched with them. He had noticed this, and took pleasure in touching, under this or that pretext, any little piece of cake or delicious fruit which our mother had secretly put on to our plate, so that the sweetmeats we were supposed to enjoy then filled us only with disgust and revulsion. He did the same when, on special days, our father had poured for us a little glass of wine: he reached over quickly with his hand or even took the glass to his blue lips and laughed devilishly when we dared to express our anger only by gentle sobbing. He used always to call us the little beasts; when he was present we were not allowed to make a sound, and we cursed the malign and repellent man who deliberately sought to ruin for us even the most minute pleasure. Our mother appeared to hate the repulsive Coppelius as much as we did, for as soon as he showed himself her cheerfulness, her happy unaffected nature, was transformed into earnest gloom and sorrow. Our father behaved towards him as if he were a higher being whose ill-breeding one had to tolerate and who had to be kept in a good mood at all cost. He had only to drop the slightest hint and his favourite dishes were prepared and the rarest wines brought forth.

When I now saw this Coppelius, my soul was filled with fear, and with horror that it was he of all people who had turned out to be the sandman; the sandman was now no longer that bogeyman of the nursery tale who took children's eyes as food to his owl's nest in the moon: no! he was now a repellent spectral monster bringing misery, distress and earthly and eternal ruination wherever he went.

I stood as if rooted to the spot. At the risk of being discovered and, as I firmly believed, severely punished, I remained there listening, with my head stuck through the curtain. My father received Coppelius solemnly.

'Up! To work!' Coppelius cried in a hoarse, growling voice, and threw off his coat.

My father slowly and gloomily removed his dressing-gown, and both clad themselves in long black smocks. I did not see where they got them from. My father opened the folding doors of a wall-cupboard; but I saw that what I had for so long taken to be a wall-cupboard was, rather, a black cavern, in which there stood a small hearth. Coppelius approached it, and a blue flame flickered upon the hearth. All kinds of strange implements lay around. Good God! as my old father bent down to the fire, he looked quite different! A dreadful convulsive pain seemed to have distorted his gentle honest features into a repulsive devil-mask. He looked like Coppelius. The latter seized the glowing tongs and with them drew brightly gleaming substances out of the thick black smoke and began vigorously to hammer away at them. I seemed to see human faces appearing all around, but without eyes – instead of eyes there were hideous black cavities.

'Eyes, bring eyes!' Coppelius cried in a dull hollow voice.

Gripped by wild terror, I screamed aloud and fell out of my hiding-place on to the floor. Coppelius seized me.

'Little beast! Little beast!' he bleated, showing his teeth. Then he pulled me up and threw me on to the hearth, so that the flames began to singe my hair.

'Now we have eyes – eyes – a lovely pair of children's eyes!' Coppelius whispered and took a red-glowing dust out of the flame with his hands and was about to sprinkle it into my eyes. But my father raised his hands imploringly and cried: 'Master! Master! Let my Nathaniel keep his eyes – let him keep them!'

Coppelius laughed shrilly and cried: 'The boy can have his eyes then, and keep the use of them. But now let us observe the mechanism of the hands and feet.'

And with that he seized me so violently that my joints

cracked, unscrewed my hands and feet, and fixed them on again now in this way, now in that.

'They don't look right anywhere! Better where they were! The Old One knew what he was doing!' Coppelius lisped and hissed. But everything went dark around me, a sudden spasm shot through my frame – I felt nothing more.

A warm gentle breath passed across my face; I awoke as if from the sleep of death; my mother was bending over me.

'Is the sandman still here?' I stammered.

'No, my dear child, he has been gone a long, long time; he will not harm you!' my mother said, and kissed and embraced the child who had come back to her.

Why should I weary you, my dear Lothario, with all these minute details, when so much still remains to be said? Enough! I was discovered eavesdropping and was mishandled by Coppelius. Fear and terror had brought on a violent fever with which I lay sick for many weeks. 'Is the sandman still here?' were the first rational words I said: it was the sign that I was cured, that I was saved. The only thing I still have to tell you of is the most dreadful moment of my childhood, and then you will be convinced that it is not the weakness of my eyes which renders the world colourless to me, but that a dark destiny really has suspended a veil of gloom over my life – a veil which I shall perhaps rend asunder only in death.

Coppelius, however, was no longer to be seen and was said to have left the town.

It might have been a year later when, in accordance with our ancient custom, which was still unchanged, we were sitting at our round table one evening. My father was very cheerful and was telling us amusing things about the journeys he had made in his youth. Then, as nine o'clock

struck, we suddenly heard the housedoor creak on its hinges, and slow, leaden footsteps thudded across the entrance hall and up the stairs.

'That is Coppelius,' my mother said, growing pale.

'Yes, it is Coppelius,' my father replied in a lifeless, broken voice. Tears started from my mother's eyes. 'But father, father!' she cried. 'Must it be so?'

'For the last time!' my father answered. 'He is coming for the last time, I promise you. Go now, go with the children! Go, go to bed! Good night!'

I felt as if crushed beneath a rock: I ceased to breathe! My mother took me by the arm as I stood there motionless.

'Come, Nathaniel, come along!' she said. I let myself be led away. I went into my room.

'It's all right, it's all right. Lie down in bed and go to sleep,' my mother called after me; but, tormented by an indescribable inner fear and anguish, I could not so much as close my eyes. The hated, loathsome Coppelius stood before me with his eyes blazing and laughed at me maliciously; I tried in vain to banish his image.

It might have been already midnight when there came a fearful detonation, like the firing of a cannon. The whole house rumbled; there was a clattering and rushing past the door of my room; the housedoor slammed with a crash. 'That is Coppelius!' I cried in terror, and leaped from the bed. Then I heard a piercing, despairing cry of woe and I rushed out to my father's room: the doors stood open, billows of choking smoke welled out towards me, the serving-maid was crying: 'Oh the master, the master!' Before the billowing hearth, his face blackened with smoke and hideously distorted, my father lay dead on the floor, my sisters lamenting and wailing all around him, my mother unconscious beside him. 'Coppelius, you infamous devil, you have killed my father!' I cried out, and my senses left me.

When my father was laid in his coffin two days later, his features had again grown mild and gentle, as they had been in life, and in my soul I experienced the consolation of knowing that his bond with the diabolical Coppelius had in any event not plunged him into eternal damnation.

The explosion had awakened the neighbours and the affair became public and was brought to the attention of the authorities, who wanted to call Coppelius to account over it; he, however, had disappeared without trace.

When I now tell you, my dearest friend, that the aforementioned dealer in barometers was none other than this same infamous Coppelius, you will not blame me for interpreting his reappearance as a herald of the heaviest misfortune. He was dressed differently, but Coppelius's form and features are too deeply imprinted in my innermost being for there to be any possibility of a mistake. He has, moreover, not even changed his name: I hear that he gives himself out here for a Piedmontese mechanician and calls himself Giuseppe Coppola.

I have resolved to get the better of him and, whatever the outcome may be, revenge my father's death.

Tell my mother nothing of the re-emergence of the vile monster. Greet for me my dear Clara; I shall write to her when I am in a calmer mood. Farewell.

Clara to Nathaniel

It is true you have not written to me for a long time, but I believe nonetheless that I am present in your thoughts. For you were certainly thinking of me when you intended to send off your last letter to brother Lothario but addressed it to me instead. I joyfully opened the letter and first became aware of the mistake at the words 'Ah, my dear Lothario'. I ought to have read no further but given the letter to my brother. You used to tease me that I had so calm and womanly self-possessed a nature that if the house was falling down I would, like the lady in the story, stop and

smooth out the curtains before running, so it will be hard for me to convince you that the beginning of your letter affected me very deeply. I could hardly breathe and my head started to swim. Oh, my beloved Nathaniel, what dreadful thing had come into your life? To be separated from you, never to see you again: the thought pierced my heart like a fiery dagger. I read on and on! Your description of the repulsive Coppelius was horrible. Only now did I learn that your good father had died such a terrible violent death. Lothario, to whom I delivered up his property, tried to comfort me but could do so very little. The odious dealer Giuseppe Coppola pursued me everywhere, and I am almost ashamed to confess that he was able even to disturb my sleep, which is usually so sound, with all kinds of strange dreams. But soon – as soon as the next day – I saw everything differently. Do not be angry with me, my dearly beloved, if Lothario should tell you that, in spite of your strange presentiment that Coppelius is going to harm you in some way, I am now again as calm and cheerful as I always was.

Let me say straight out what it is I think: that all the ghastly and terrible things you spoke of took place only within you, and that the real outer world had little part in them. Old Coppelius may have been repulsive enough, but it was because he hated children that you children came to feel an actual revulsion for him.

The frightening sandman in the nursery tale naturally became united in your childish mind with old Coppelius; although you no longer believed in the sandman, Coppelius was still to you a spectral monster especially dangerous to children. The uncanny night-time activities with your father were no doubt nothing more than secret alchemical experiments they were making together, and your mother could hardly have been pleased about it, since a lot of money was undoubtedly wasted and, moreover, as is always supposed to be the case with such laboratory

experimenters, your father, altogether absorbed in the deceptive desire for higher truth, would have become estranged from his family. Your father surely brought about his own death through his own carelessness, and Coppelius is not to blame for it. Yesterday I asked the learned chemist who lives next door whether such an instantly fatal explosion is possible with chemical experiments? He said: 'Oh, to be sure!' and described to me in his own way how it could happen, with all kinds of examples, and named so many strange-sounding names I was quite unable to remember them. Now I expect you will become annoyed with your Clara and say: 'No ray of the mysterious world which often embraces men with invisible arms penetrates that cold heart: she sees only the motley surface and, like a childish child, rejoices at the deceitfully gleaming fruit and does not think of the deadly poison within it.'

Ah, my beloved Nathaniel, do you not then believe that in cheerful, unaffected, careless hearts too there may not dwell the presentiment of a dark power which strives to ruin us within our own selves? Forgive me if I, who am only a simple girl, attempt to indicate in some way what it is I really believe about such inward struggles. I am sure that in the end I shall never find the right words and that you will laugh at me, not because what I think is stupid but because the way I go about saying it is so awkward.

Perhaps there does exist a dark power which fastens on to us and leads us off along a dangerous and ruinous path which we would otherwise not have trodden; but if so, this power must have assumed within us the form of ourself, indeed have become ourself, for otherwise we would not listen to it, otherwise there would be no space within us in which it could perform its secret work. But if we possess a firm mind, a mind strengthened through living cheerfully, we shall always be able to recognize an inimical influence for what it is; and then that uncanny power must surely go

under in the struggle we must suppose takes place before it can achieve that form which is, as I have said, a mirror-image of ourself.

'What is also certain,' Lothario put in, 'is that this dark psychic power, once we have surrendered to it, often assumes other forms which the outer world throws across our path and draws them into us, so that the spirit which seems to animate those forms has in fact been enkindled by us ourselves. Through their inner affinity with us and their influence over our heart they have the power to cast us into Hell or transport us to Heaven, but that is because they are phantoms of our own ego.'

You will see, my beloved Nathaniel, that my brother and I have talked together very fully about dark powers and forces, and now I have set down our principal conclusions – not without effort – they appear to me extremely profound. I do not altogether understand Lothario's final words – I only sense what he means, and yet it seems to me all very true. I beg you, banish the repulsive Coppelius and the barometer-man Giuseppe Coppola from your mind altogether. Be assured that these forms from without have no power over you; only a belief that they have such a power can bestow it upon them. Were it not that every line of your letter spoke of the deep agitation you feel, were it not that the condition you are in strikes me to the very soul, I could laugh at the advocate sandman and the barometer-dealer Coppelius. Be cheerful, be cheerful! I have made up my mind to become your guardian spirit, and if the repulsive Coppola should presume to burden your dreams, I shall laugh him out of them. I am not afraid of him or his horrible hands: he can appear as advocate or sandman, but I shan't have him spoiling my cakes for me, or my eyes.

Ever yours, my most dearly beloved Nathaniel.

Nathaniel to Lothario

It happened through my own absent-mindedness, to be sure, but still I much regret that Clara opened that letter to you and read it. She has replied with a very profound philosophical letter, in which she proves at length that Coppelius and Coppola exist only within me and are phantoms of my ego which will vanish instantly into dust as soon as I recognize them for what they are. One would not have believed that the mind which so often shines out through such bright smiling eyes like a dear sweet dream could have been capable of so judicious and schoolmasterly an analysis. She appealed to you, and you talked about me. I suppose you gave her lectures in logic, so that she could sift and distinguish everything correctly. Let that be! It is virtually certain, moreover, that the barometer-dealer Giuseppe Coppola is by no means the old advocate Coppelius. I attend lectures with the newly arrived professor of physics, who is none other than the famous scientist Spalanzani and is an Italian. He has known Coppola for many years and says that you can in any case tell from his voice that he really is Piedmontese. Coppelius was a German. This has not, however, put me entirely at ease. Clara and you can go on thinking me a gloomy dreamer, but I cannot get rid of the impression which Coppelius's accursed face makes upon me. I am glad he has left the town, as Spalanzani tells me he has. This professor is an odd fellow: a little round man, with high cheekbones, a thin nose, turned-out lips, little piercing eyes. But Chodowiecki's picture of Cagliostro in a Berlin pocket calendar would give you a better idea of him than any description, for that is what Spalanzani looks like.

Recently I went upstairs in Professor Spalanzani's house and perceived that a curtain which was always drawn tight across a glass door up there was showing a chink of light. I don't know myself how I came to look through. A

woman, tall, very slim, perfectly proportioned and gorgeously dressed, sat in the room at a little table, with her arms lying upon it and her hands folded. She was sitting opposite the door, so that I saw the whole of her angelic face. She seemed not to notice me, and her eyes had in general something fixed and staring about them, I could almost say she was sightless, as if she was sleeping with her eyes open. It made me feel quite uncanny, and I crept softly away into the neighbouring lecture-room. I afterwards learned that the figure I had seen was Spalanzani's daughter Olympia, whom, incredibly and reprehensibly, he keeps locked up so that no one may come near her. But there may, of course, be something peculiar about her – she may be weak-minded or something.

But why am I writing you all this? I could have told you about it better and at greater length face to face – for you must now learn that I shall be with you in a fortnight's time. I have to see my dear sweet angel, my Clara, again. The ill mood which (I confess it) threatened to overcome me after her annoying judicious letter will then be blown away. That is why I am not writing to her today either.

A thousand greetings . . .

Nothing stranger or more singular could be invented than that which happened to my poor friend, the young student Nathaniel, and which, indulgent reader, I have undertaken to tell you of. Have you ever, kind friend, experienced anything which completely filled your heart and mind and drove everything else out of them? Which made you bubble and boil and drove the blood glowing hot through your veins, so that your cheeks burned red? Which transfigured your gaze, as if it were seeking out forms and shapes invisible to other eyes, and dissolved your speech into glowing sighing? Your friends asked: 'What is the matter, honoured friend? What is wrong?' And you wanted to express your inner vision in all its

colours and light and shade and wearied yourself to find words with which even to begin. You felt you had, as it were, to compress everything marvellous, glorious, terrible, joyful, harrowing that had happened to you into the very first word, so that it would strike your hearers like an electric shock, but every word, everything capable of being spoken, seemed to you colourless and cold and dead. You sought and sought, and stammered and stut-tered; the sober inquiries of your friends struck the fire within you like a breath of icy wind until it threatened to go out. If, however, you had, like a daring painter, first thrown down in a few bold strokes an outline of the image you carried within you, you would then with little effort have proceeded to lay on the colours in more and more glowing tints, and your friends would be carried away by the lively tumult of multifarious forms, and would, like you, behold themselves in the midst of the picture which had come forth out of your heart! I must confess to you, kind reader, that no one has actually asked me for the story of young Nathaniel; but, as you no doubt know, I belong to the strange race of authors who, if they bear within them something of what I have just described, seem to hear everyone they encounter (and in due course more or less the whole world as well) asking: 'What is the matter? Tell us about it!' So it was that I felt a strong compulsion within me to speak to you about Nathaniel's unhappy life: my soul was filled with the strange and marvellous in it, but for just that reason, and because, O reader, I had to produce in you the right frame of mind for the reception of things of no ordinary degree of marvellousness, I tormented myself to begin Nathaniel's story in a significant, original, gripping fashion. 'Once upon a time' – the loveliest opening for any story, but too sober! 'In the little provincial town of S. there lived' – a bit better, at least going back to the beginning. Or, as it were, *in medias res*: "'Go to the devil!" cried the student Nathaniel, his eyes

filled with rage and terror, as the barometer-dealer Giuseppe Coppola . . . ' – I did in fact write that at a time at which it seemed to me I perceived something comical in the wild eyes of the student Nathaniel; his story is, however, in no way amusing. I could in the end find no form of expression whatever which reflected anything of the colours of my inner vision, so I decided not to begin at all. Accept, kind reader, the three letters which my friend Lothario was good enough to communicate to me as the outline of the picture into which I shall now in the course of narration strive to lay more and more colour. Perhaps, like a good portrait painter, I shall succeed in catching more than one figure in such a way that, although you never knew its original, you will nonetheless think it lifelike, that you had indeed seen the person many times with your living eyes. Perhaps you will then come to believe, O reader, that there is nothing more marvellous or madder than real life, and that all the poet could do was to catch this as a dark reflexion is caught in a dull mirror.

All that has to be added to these letters is that, soon after the death of Nathaniel's father, Clara and Lothario, the children of a distant relation who had likewise died and left them orphans, were taken into her house by Nathaniel's mother. Clara and Nathaniel conceived a warm attachment to one another, to which no one on earth raised the slightest objection; so that, when Nathaniel left the town to continue his studies in G., they were betrothed. And G. is where he is in his last letter, attending lectures by the famous professor Spalanzani.

I would now confidently go on with the story, were it not that Clara's image stands so vividly before my eyes at this moment that I cannot divert my gaze from it – as was always the case whenever she looked at me with her face sweetly smiling. Clara could not possibly be called beautiful: that was the opinion of all those whose office it was to understand beauty. But if the architects lauded the perfect

proportions of her figure, if the painters found her neck, shoulders and breast almost too chastely formed, all were enamoured of her wonderful Magdalen hair and babbled about her complexion. One of them, however, a real visionary, had the very strange notion of comparing Clara's eyes with a lake by Ruisdael, with the pure azure of a cloudless sky, woodland and flowery meadow, the whole motley life of a rich landscape reflected in them. Poets and musicians, however, went further and said: 'What lake – what reflexion? When we behold her, we hear heavenly tones streaming towards us from out of her eyes; they penetrate our innermost heart, which then awakes and grows animated. If we are not then inspired to any truly accomplished song, that is because we are in general of very little account, and that fact we read unmistakably in the smile that plays about Clara's mouth whenever we venture to warble out before her something that presumes to think itself song, though it is indeed no more than a muddled confusion of notes.' That is how she affected them. Clara possessed the energetic imagination of a happy ingenuous child, a profound womanly-tender heart, a clear sharp understanding. Fantasists enjoyed little success with her: for, although she did not say very much – loquaciousness being in any case foreign to her reserved nature – her bright eyes and that subtle ironical smile told them: 'Dear friends! how could you believe of me that I should regard your transient poetic fancies as real beings, possessing life and action?' For this reason Clara was stigmatized by many as cold, unfeeling, prosaic; but others, who viewed life with clearer eyes, felt an uncommon affection for the cheerful, intelligent, childlike girl – and none felt it more than did Nathaniel. Clara, for her part, clung to her beloved with all her soul: the first clouds to pass over her life were those which appeared when he departed from her; with what a transport of joy did she fly to his arms when, as he had promised in his last letter to

Lothario, he returned home and appeared in his mother's room! And it was then as Nathaniel had believed it would be: at the first sight of Clara all thought of the advocate Coppelius and of Clara's letter was banished from his mind, all trace of the ill mood which had possessed him vanished away.

Nathaniel was right, however, when he told Lothario that his life had been influenced for the worse by the repulsive barometer-dealer Coppola – a fact apparent to everyone when in the very first days he exhibited a total change in his character. He would lapse into gloomy reveries, and he was soon behaving in a manner altogether foreign to his usual ways. Everything, the whole of life, had become for him a dream and a feeling of foreboding; he spoke continually of how each of us, thinking himself free, was in reality the tortured plaything of mysterious powers: resistance was vain; we had humbly to submit to the decrees of fate. He went so far as to assert that it was folly to think the creations of art and science the product of our own free will: the inspiration which alone made creation possible did not proceed from within us but was effectuated by some higher force from outside.

Clara found these mystical fancies in the highest degree antipathetic, but to attempt to refute them seemed pointless. Only when Nathaniel proceeded to demonstrate that Coppelius was in reality an evil force which had taken possession of him as he was hiding and listening behind the curtain, and that this repulsive demon was in a fearful fashion going to wreck the happiness of their love, did Clara become very serious, and say: 'Yes, Nathaniel, you are right; Coppelius is an evil, inimical force, he can do terrible things, he is like a demonic power that has stepped visibly into life – but only so long as you fail to banish him from your mind. As long as you believe in him he continues to exist and act – his power is only your belief in him.'

Incensed that Clara would grant the existence of the demon only as a force within him, Nathaniel was about to launch upon an exposition of his entire mystical theory of devils and cruel powers when Clara in vexation interposed some irrelevant remark and broke off the conversation. In his annoyance, Nathaniel consoled himself with the reflexion that such profound secrets as these were forever closed to cold, unreceptive hearts. Yet, failing to realize that he had thus numbered Clara among the subordinate natures, he did not cease his attempts to initiate her into these secrets.

Early in the morning, as Clara was helping to prepare breakfast, he stood beside her and read to her out of his mystical books, so that Clara asked: 'But, dear Nathaniel, suppose I were to call *you* the evil force which is having a bad influence on my coffee? For if, as you want me to, I neglected everything and stood and looked into your eyes as you read, the coffee would boil over and none of you would get any breakfast!' Whereupon Nathaniel shut the book violently and ran off to his room in a thorough bad humour.

In former days, he had had a great gift for lively and cheerful stories, which he would write down and Clara would listen to with the most heartfelt enjoyment; now his tales had grown gloomy, incomprehensible and formless, so that, even if Clara considerably refrained from saying so, he could nonetheless sense how little they appealed to her. Clara found boredom almost unendurable: when she was bored, the almost unconquerable weariness of mind she felt appeared in how she spoke and in the look in her eyes. Nathaniel's tales were indeed very boring. His annoyance at Clara's cold, prosaic disposition grew greater, Clara was unable to overcome the ill humour with which his obscure, gloomy and boring mysticism filled her, and thus without noticing it they became more and more estranged from one another. The figure of the

repulsive Coppelius had, as Nathaniel himself was constrained to admit, grown dim in his imagination, and in his tales, where Coppelius appeared as a malign agent of destiny, it often required an effort to bestow life and colour upon him. At length he hit on the idea of making his gloomy foreboding that Coppelius would disrupt the joy of his love into the subject of a poem: he depicted himself and Clara as united in true love; but now and then it was as if a black hand reached out over them and erased their feelings of joy; at last, as they were standing before the marriage altar, the terrible Coppelius appeared and touched Clara's lovely eyes, which sprang out like blood-red sparks, singeing and burning, on to Nathaniel's breast; Coppelius then seized him and threw him into a flaming circle of fire which, spinning with the velocity of a tempest, tore him away with a rushing and roaring; there was a commotion, as when the hurricane whips up the foaming waves of the sea and they rear like white-haired giants in furious combat, but through this commotion he heard Clara's voice: 'Do you not see me? Coppelius has deceived you: those were not my eyes which burned into your breast; they were glowing-hot drops of your own heart's blood - I still have my eyes; you have only to look at me!' Nathaniel thought: 'That is Clara, and I am hers for ever' - and the thought seemed to interpose itself into the circle of fire, so that it came to a stop and the hubbub subsided into the depths; Nathaniel looked into Clara's eyes, but it was death which gazed at him mildly out of them.

While Nathaniel was composing this poem he was very quiet and self-possessed: he polished and improved every line, and the constraint of metre made it possible for him not to rest until everything was clear and harmonious. Yet when he had finished the poem and read it aloud to himself, he was seized with horror and exclaimed: 'Whose dreadful voice is this?' Before long, however, it again seemed to him no more than a good poem, and he came to

think that Clara's cold disposition would certainly be inflamed by it, although at the same time he had no clear notion of what Clara's becoming inflamed might lead to or of what purpose could be served by distressing her with horrible images prophesying a terrible destiny and the destruction of their love.

Nathaniel and Clara sat in his mother's little garden; Clara was in a very cheerful mood, since for the three days previously, on which he had been working on his poem, Nathaniel had not plagued her with his dreams and premonitions. Nathaniel, too, was talking cheerfully of pleasant things, so that Clara said: 'Now at last I have got you back again. Don't you see how we have driven away the repulsive Coppélius?'

It was only then that Nathaniel remembered he had in his pocket the poem he wanted to read to her. He straightway brought out the pages and began reading from them; supposing it to be, as usual, something boring, but acquiescing in it, Clara began composedly to knit. But as the dark clouds arose blacker and blacker, she let fall the stocking she was knitting and gazed at Nathaniel in numbed amazement. The latter continued relentlessly on, inner fire coloured his cheeks bright red, tears welled from his eyes. At last he had finished and groaned with exhaustion; then he grasped Clara's hand and, as though dissolved in inconsolable misery, sighed: 'Ah! Clara, Clara!'

Clara pressed him gently to her bosom and said, softly but very slowly and earnestly: 'Nathaniel, my dear, dear Nathaniel! throw the mad, senseless, insane story into the fire.'

Nathaniel sprang up indignantly and, thrusting Clara away from him, cried: 'Oh, you lifeless accursed automaton!'

He rushed out, and Clara, deeply wounded, shed bitter tears: 'Alas, he has never loved me, for he does not understand me,' she sobbed aloud.

Lothario stepped into the arbour and Clara had to tell him what had happened; he loved his sister with all his heart and each word of her complaint struck into him like a fiery brand, so that the annoyance which he had for long secretly felt towards the dreamy Nathaniel was ignited into blazing anger. He ran to Nathaniel, in harsh words he reproached him for his senseless behaviour towards his beloved sister, and Nathaniel, provoked, replied in kind. Lothario called Nathaniel a crazy, fantastical coxcomb; Nathaniel retaliated by calling Lothario a wretched, commonplace fellow. A duel was unavoidable: in accordance with the academic custom there obtaining, they resolved to meet one another the following morning behind the garden with sharpened foils.

They crept about silent and with darkened brows. Clara had heard their violent contention and, as dusk fell, seen the fencing-master bring the rapiers. She sensed what was going to happen.

Arrived at the place of combat, Lothario and Nathaniel had at once thrown off their coats in gloomy silence and, with bloodthirsty belligerence in their burning eyes, were about to fall upon one another when Clara burst through the garden door. Sobbing, she cried aloud: 'You ferocious and dreadful men! Strike me down before you attack each other! for how should I go on living in the world if my beloved had murdered my brother or my brother had murdered my beloved?'

Lothario let his weapon fall and gazed at the ground in silence, and within Nathaniel all the love he had felt for his gentle Clara in their days of youth rose again in heart-rending sadness: the murder-weapon fell from his hand and he threw himself at Clara's feet. 'Can you ever forgive me, my only one, my beloved Clara? Can you forgive me, my beloved brother Lothario?'

Lothario was moved by his friend's profound pain, and the three, reconciled again, embraced one another with a

thousand tears and vowed that, united in constant love and loyalty, they would never more be separated.

It seemed to Nathaniel as though a heavy burden pressing him to the earth had been lifted from him – as though, indeed, by resisting the dark power that had encompassed him he had saved his whole being from the destruction which threatened it. He spent three beautiful days with his dear friends before returning to G., where he intended to study for one more year but then to return to his home for ever.

Of all that concerned Coppelius his mother was told nothing, for they knew she could not think of him without dread because, like Nathaniel, she held him responsible for the death of her husband.

Nathaniel was very astonished when he arrived back at his lodgings and saw that the whole house had been burned down, so that only the naked charred walls still stood amid the rubble. Although the fire had broken out in the laboratory of the chemist who lived on the lower floor, and the house had thus burned from the ground upwards, his valorous and agile friends had succeeded in getting to Nathaniel's room, which lay on the upper floor, in time to rescue his books, manuscripts and instruments. They had transported everything, unharmed, to another house, and there taken a room, which Nathaniel straightaway proceeded to occupy.

It did not seem to him especially noteworthy that he now lived opposite Professor Spalanzani, nor did he think it anything remarkable when he noticed that the window of his room gave directly on to the room in which Olympia often sat alone, so that he could clearly recognize her figure, though the lineaments of her face remained indistinct. He was, however, finally struck by the fact that Olympia would often sit for hours on end, altogether unoccupied at a little table, in the same posture as that in which he had once discovered her through the glass door,

and that she was quite clearly gazing across at him with an unmoving stare. He was also obliged to admit that he had never seen a lovelier figure. Nevertheless, with Clara in his heart he remained wholly indifferent to the stiff, rigid Olympia: only now and then did he glance fleetingly over his book across to the beautiful statue – that was all.

One day, he was in the act of writing to Clara when there came a gentle knocking at the door; it opened in response to his reply, and the repellent face of Coppola looked in. Nathaniel felt himself tremble in his innermost depths; recalling what Spalanzani had told him about his fellow countryman, however, and the sacred promise he had made to his beloved regarding the sandman Coppelius, he was ashamed of this childish fear, pulled himself together with all his might, and said, as gently and composedly as he could: 'I am not going to buy a barometer, my dear friend, so please be gone.'

At that, however, Coppola stepped bodily into the room and, his wide mouth distorted into an ugly grin and his little eyes blazing out piercingly from under long grey eyelashes, said in a hoarse voice: 'Not barometer, not barometer! – I also got *lov-ely occe, lov-ely occe!*'

Horrified, Nathaniel cried: 'Madman! how can you have eyes?'

But Coppola had already put aside his barometers and, reaching into his capacious coat pockets, brought out lorgnettes and pairs of spectacles and laid them on to the table. 'Here, here: glasses, glasses to put on your nose; they're my *occe, lov-ely occe!*'

And with that he fetched out more and more pairs of spectacles, so that the whole table began to sparkle and glitter in an uncanny fashion. A thousand eyes gazed and blinked and stared up at Nathaniel, but he could not look away from the table, and Coppola laid more and more pairs of spectacles on to it, and flaming glances leaped more and more wildly together and directed their blood-

red beams into Nathaniel's breast. Unmanned by an ungovernable terror, he cried: 'Stop! stop! dreadful man!'

Coppola was in the act of reaching into his pocket to fetch out more pairs of spectacles, although the whole table was already covered with them, but Nathaniel grasped him firmly by the arm. With a hoarse repulsive laugh, Coppola gently freed his arm, and with the words 'Ah! not for you, but here is lov-ely glasses' he collected together all the pairs of spectacles, put them away, and from a side pocket of his coat brought out a large quantity of telescopes of all sizes. As soon as the spectacles had disappeared, Nathaniel became quite calm and, mindful of Clara, realized that the spectre which so terrified him could have proceeded only from his own mind, and that Coppola might be a highly honourable optician and mechanician but certainly not the revenant and *Doppelgänger* of the accursed Coppelius. The glasses which Coppola was now laying on to the table had, moreover, nothing remarkable about them or anything sinister like the spectacles, and to make all well again Nathaniel now resolved actually to buy something from Coppola. He took up a small, very cleanly fashioned pocket-telescope and, in order to test it, looked out of the window.

He had never in his life before handled a glass which brought objects to the eyes so sharply and clearly defined. Involuntarily he looked into Spalanzani's room: Olympia was, as usual, sitting before the little table, her arms lying upon it and her hands folded. Only now did Nathaniel behold Olympia's beautiful face. The eyes alone seemed to him strangely fixed and dead, yet as the image in the glass grew sharper and sharper it seemed as though beams of moonlight began to rise within them; it was as if they were at that moment acquiring the power of sight, and their glance grew ever warmer and more lively. Nathaniel stood before the window as if rooted to the spot, lost in contemplation of Olympia's heavenly beauty.

An impatient scuffling and clearing of the throat awoke him as if from a deep dream. Coppola was standing behind him. '*Tre zechini* - three ducats.'

Nathaniel had completely forgotten the presence of the optician, and he quickly paid the sum demanded. 'It is so, eh? lov-ely glasses, lov-ely glasses?' Coppola asked in his hoarse repulsive voice and with his mocking smile.

'Yes, yes, yes!' Nathaniel replied in annoyance. 'Adieu, dear friend!'

Coppola left the room, but not without giving Nathaniel many strange sideglances, and Nathaniel heard him laughing on the stairway. 'Oh well,' Nathaniel thought, 'he is laughing at me because I must certainly have bought this little telescope at much too high a price - much too high a price!' As he softly spoke these words, it was as if a deep death-sigh echoed horribly through the room, and a wave of fear made Nathaniel catch his breath. But it was he himself who had sighed, he realized that well enough. 'Clara,' he said to himself, 'is surely right to consider me a tasteless spirit-seer; yet it is odd - no, more than odd - that the foolish idea I might have bought the glass from Coppola at too high a price still fills me with such strange trepidation: I can see no reason for it at all.'

Now he sat down to finish his letter to Clara, but one glance through the window convinced him that Olympia was still sitting there, and in an instant he sprang up, as if impelled by an irresistible power, and seized Coppola's telescope; he could not tear himself away from the seductive sight of Olympia until his friend and fellow-student Siegmund called him to come to Professor Spalanzani's lecture . . .

The curtain before the fatal room was tightly drawn and he could not observe Olympia through the door; nor, during the next two days, did he discover her in the room at all, although, hardly ever leaving his window, he gazed

across unceasingly through Coppola's telescope. On the third day a curtain was even put up at the window. In utter despair and driven by burning desire, he rushed out of the town into the countryside. The figure of Olympia hovered before him in the air, and stepped out of the bushes, and peered out at him from the limpid brook with great gleaming eyes. Clara's image had been wiped clean from his mind; he thought of nothing but Olympia; and he wailed aloud and tearfully: 'Alas, my glorious star of love, have you risen over my life only straightway to vanish and leave me in black and hopeless night?'

As he was about to go back into his lodgings, he became aware of noisy activity going on in Spalanzani's house. The doors stood open, all kinds of objects were being carried in, the windows on the first floor had been removed, busy housemaids were dusting and sweeping with great brooms, and from inside there came the sound of the knocking and hammering of carpenters and upholsterers. Nathaniel halted in utter amazement; then Siegmund, laughing, came up and said: 'Well, what do you think of our old Spalanzani?'

Nathaniel assured him he thought nothing, that he knew nothing whatever about the professor, but that he perceived with great surprise that there was a tremendous bustle going on in the usually silent and gloomy house; he then learned from Siegmund that Spalanzani intended to give a great party with a concert and a ball the following day and that half the university had been invited. It was, moreover, noised abroad everywhere that Spalanzani's daughter Olympia, whom her father had kept anxiously concealed from every human eye, would there be making her first appearance.

Nathaniel later found an invitation card waiting for him; and, when the carriages were arriving and the lights beginning to gleam in the decorated rooms, he went to the professor's house with heart beating high. The company

was numerous and glittering. Olympia appeared, very opulently but tastefully clad, and her face and figure compelled admiration. Her somewhat oddly bowed back and the wasp-like thinness of her body seemed to be the product of too tight lacing. Her pace and posture had about them something deliberate and stiff which many found unpleasing, but this was attributed to the constraint imposed upon her by the presence of company.

The concert began. Olympia played the piano with great accomplishment, and performed equally well a bravura aria in an almost piercingly clear, bell-like voice. Nathaniel was utterly entranced. He stood in the back row and, in the dazzling candlelight, could not quite perceive Olympia's features, so he took out Coppola's glass unnoticed and looked at her across the room. Ah! then he became aware how she was gazing across at him with eyes full of desire and how every note she sang merged with the look of love which was burning its way into his heart! The artificial roulades seemed to Nathaniel the heavenly rejoicing of a soul transfigured by love, and when at last, after the cadenza, the long trill shrilled out through the room, as though suddenly embraced by glowing arms he could no longer restrain himself and he cried aloud in pain and rapture: 'Olympia!'

Everyone turned and looked at him, and some laughed. The cathedral organist, however, pulled an even longer face than usual and said merely: 'Now, now!'

The concert was at an end, the ball began. 'To dance with her! with *her!*' – that was now to Nathaniel the goal of all desire, all endeavour; but how to raise the courage to ask *her*, the queen of the festivities, to dance with *him*? And yet – he himself knew not how it happened – as the dance was just beginning, he found himself standing close beside Olympia, who was still unengaged, and, hardly capable of stammering out the few words which did escape him, taking her by the hand. Olympia's hand was icy cold; he

felt a coldness as of death thrill through him; he looked into Olympia's eyes, which gazed back at him full of love and desire; and at that instant it seemed as though a pulse began to beat in the cold hand and a stream of life blood began to glow. And in Nathaniel's heart, too, the joy of love glowed brighter; he embraced the lovely Olympia and flew with her into the dancing throng.

He had hitherto thought of himself as an accomplished dancer, but the singular exactitude of rhythm with which Olympia danced, which frequently took him completely out of his stride, soon compelled him to recognize how defective his dancing was. Nonetheless, he no longer wished to dance with any other woman, and he would have liked to have murdered anyone who ventured to approach Olympia with an invitation to dance. Yet this happened only twice: to his astonishment, Olympia was thereafter left sitting, and he did not fail to draw her on to the floor again and again.

If he had been capable of noticing anything other than the lovely Olympia, a disagreeable scene must necessarily have taken place: the barely suppressed laughter which arose among the observant young people in this and that corner of the room was clearly directed at her. Enflamed by dancing and by the amount of wine he had drunk, Nathaniel had thrown off all his customary reserve. He sat beside Olympia with her hand in his and spoke passionately of his love in words incomprehensible to either of them. Yet she, perhaps, understood, for she gazed fixedly into his eyes and sighed time after time: 'Ah, ah, ah!' — whereupon Nathaniel said: 'O lovely, heavenly woman! O beam of light from the Promised Land of love! O heart in which my whole being is reflected!' and much more of the same, but Olympia merely sighed again and again: 'Ah, ah!' Several times Professor Spalanzani passed by the happy couple and smiled at them in a singularly contented way.

Although he now found himself in quite another world,

it suddenly seemed to Nathaniel that here below at Professor Spalanzani's it had grown noticeably darker: he looked about him and was not a little startled to see that the two lights left in the room had burned down and were on the point of going out. The music and dancing had long since ceased. 'Parting, parting!' he cried in wild despair; he kissed Olympia's hand, bent down to her mouth and his passionate lips encountered lips that were icy-cold! As he touched Olympia's cold hand, he was seized by an inner feeling of horror, and he suddenly recalled the legend of the dead bride, but Olympia had pressed him close to her; as they kissed, her lips seemed to warm into life.

Professor Spalanzani walked slowly through the empty room, his steps echoed hollowly, and his figure, played about by flickering shadows, had an uncanny ghost-like appearance.

'Do you love me? Do you love me, Olympia? Say but that word. Do you love me?' Nathaniel whispered, but as she rose to her feet Olympia sighed only: 'Ah, ah!'

'Yes, my glorious star of love,' Nathaniel said, 'you have arisen upon my life and you will illumine and transfigure my heart always!'

'Ah, ah!' Olympia repeated, moving away.

Nathaniel followed her and they found themselves standing before the professor. 'You have enjoyed an extraordinarily animated conversation with my daughter,' the professor said, smiling; 'well, then, dear Herr Nathaniel, if it is to your taste to converse with the witless girl, you will be welcome to visit her.'

Nathaniel departed with a whole radiant heaven in his breast. Spalanzani's party was the sole topic of conversation in the ensuing days. Notwithstanding the professor had done everything he could to make the affair an altogether splendid one, the local wits nonetheless told of all kinds of ineptitudes and oddities that had been in evidence, and assailed especially the deathly-rigid and

speechless Olympia, to whom, her lovely eyes notwithstanding, they ascribed total stupidity and thought to discover therein the reason Spalanzani had kept her hidden for so long. Nathaniel listened to this, not without inward anger, but nonetheless kept silent: 'For,' he thought, 'what would be the point of showing these fellows that it is their own stupidity which stops them from recognizing Olympia's profound and glorious nature?'

'Do me the favour, brother,' Siegmund said one day, 'of telling me how a clever chap like you could possibly have been smitten with that wax-faced wooden doll over there.'

Nathaniel was about to flame up in anger, but he restrained himself and replied: 'You tell me, Siegmund, how, being as a rule so quick to perceive beauty wherever it appears, you could fail to respond to Olympia's heavenly charm. Yet I am grateful for the fact, since it means I do not have you for a rival – for if I did, one of us would have fallen bleeding.'

Siegmund saw very well what condition his friend was in, skilfully turned the conversation in a different direction and, after expressing the view that in love there was no accounting for taste, added: 'Yet it is strange that many of us hold more or less the same opinion of Olympia. Do not take it ill, brother, but she has appeared to us in a strange way rigid and soulless. Her figure is well proportioned; so is her face – that is true! She might be called beautiful if her eyes were not so completely lifeless, I could even say sightless. She walks with a curiously measured gait; every movement seems as if controlled by clockwork. When she plays and sings it is with the unpleasant soulless regularity of a machine, and she dances in the same way. We have come to find this Olympia quite uncanny; we would like to have nothing to do with her; it seems to us that she is only acting like a living creature, and yet there is some reason for that which we cannot fathom.'

Nathaniel restrained the feeling of bitterness which

threatened to take hold on him at these words, mastered his ill humour and only said very earnestly: 'Olympia may well seem uncanny to you cold, prosaic people. It is only to the poetic heart that the like unfolds itself! It was only for me that her look of love arose and flooded through mind and senses; only in Olympia's love do I find myself again. To you it may not seem in order that she refrains from the dull chatter which amuses shallow natures. She says but few words, that is true, but these few words appear as genuine hieroglyphics of an inner world full of love and a higher knowledge of the spiritual life in contemplation of the eternal Beyond. But for all of this you have no understanding, and all these words are uttered in vain.'

'May God protect you, dear brother,' Siegmund said very gently, almost sadly, 'but it seems to me you are set on an ill-fated course. You can depend on me if – no, I shall say no more!' To Nathaniel the cold, prosaic Siegmund suddenly appeared a very true-hearted friend, and he shook with much warmth the hand that was extended to him.

Nathaniel had clean forgotten that there existed a Clara whom he used to love. His mother, Lothario, all had vanished from memory: he lived only for Olympia. He sat with her every day for hours on end and fantasized over his love, the sympathy sprung up between them, their psychological affinity, and Olympia listened to it all with great devotion. From the profoundest depths of his writing-desk Nathaniel fetched up everything he had ever written: poems, fantasies, visions, novels, tales, daily augmented by random sonnets, stanzas, *canzoni*, and he read them all to Olympia without wearying for hours on end. And he had never before had so marvellous an auditor: she did not sew or knit, she did not gaze out of the window, she did not feed a cage bird, she did not play with a lapdog or with a favourite cat, she did not fiddle with a handkerchief or with anything else, she did not find it necessary to stifle a

yawn with a little forced cough – in short, she sat motionless, her gaze fixed on the eyes of her beloved with a look that grew ever more animated and more passionate. Only when Nathaniel finally arose and kissed her hand – and no doubt her mouth, too – did she say: ‘Ah, ah!’ and then: ‘Good night, my dear!’

‘O you glorious, profound nature,’ Nathaniel exclaimed when back in his room, ‘only you, you alone, understand me completely.’

He trembled with inward delight when he reflected on the wonderful harmony which was day by day becoming ever more apparent between his nature and Olympia’s: it seemed to him that what Olympia said of his work, of his poetic talent in general, came from the depths of his own being, that her voice was indeed the voice of those very depths themselves. And that must actually have been the case, for Olympia never said anything more than the words already mentioned. But even Nathaniel was able, in moments of sobriety – on awakening in the morning, for instance – to realize how passive and inarticulate Olympia really was; then, however, he would say: ‘What are words? The glance of her heavenly eyes says more than any speech on earth. Can a child of heaven accommodate itself to the narrow circle drawn by the wretched circumstances of earth?’

Professor Spalanzani seemed highly delighted at the relationship which had grown up between his daughter and Nathaniel: he gave the latter many unambiguous signs of his goodwill, and when Nathaniel at last ventured distantly to hint of an engagement with Olympia, he smiled all over his face and said he would allow his daughter a completely free choice. Encouraged by these words, and with a burning desire in his heart, Nathaniel resolved to beg Olympia to say unreservedly in plain words what her look of love had long since told him: that she wanted to be his own for ever. He sought for the ring

his mother had given him on his departure, that he might offer it to Olympia as a symbol of his devotion, of the dawning new life they were to share together. As he searched, he encountered Clara’s and Lothario’s letters; he threw them indifferently aside, found the ring, put it into his pocket and ran across to Olympia’s room. As he mounted the staircase and arrived at the landing, he heard the sound of a strange uproar, which seemed to be coming out of Spalanzani’s study. There was a stamping, a clattering, a pushing and thumping against the door, with oaths and curses intermingled: ‘Let go! – Let go! – Wretch! – Rascal! – Is this what I staked my life on? – Ha, ha, ha, ha! – That isn’t what we agreed! *I made the eyes!* – I made the clockwork! – Poor fool with your clockwork! – Damned dog of a clock-maker! – Away with you! – Devil! – Stop! – Puppet showman! – Beast! – Stop! – Get away! – Let go!’

The voices thus raised in contention were those of Spalanzani and the dreadful Coppelius. Seized by a nameless fear, Nathaniel burst in. The professor had hold of a female figure by the shoulders, the Italian Coppola had it by the feet, and transformed with rage they were tearing and tugging at it for its possession. Nathaniel recoiled in terror as he recognized the figure as Olympia; flaring into a furious rage, he went to rescue his beloved, but at that moment Coppola, turning with terrible force, wrenched the figure from the professor’s hands and dealt him a fearful blow with it, so that he tumbled backwards to the table, on which retorts, bottles and glass cylinders were standing, and collapsed on to it – the glassware was shattered into a thousand pieces. Then Coppola threw the figure over his shoulder and, laughing shrilly, ran quickly down the staircase, so that the feet of the figure hanging down repulsively behind him thumped and clattered woodenly against the stairs.

Nathaniel stood numb with horror. He had seen all too clearly that Olympia’s deathly-white face possessed no

eyes: where the eyes should have been, there were only pits of blackness – she was a lifeless doll!

Spalanzani was rolling about on the floor: his head, chest and arms had been cut by pieces of glass and his blood was gushing as if from a fountain. But he gathered himself together with all the strength he possessed: 'After him, after him, what are you waiting for? Coppelius has robbed me of my finest automaton – it cost me twenty years' work! I have staked my life on it! The clockwork, speech, walk – all mine! The eyes, the eyes purloined from you! Accursed wretch, after him! Get Olympia back for me! – and here, here are the eyes!'

At this point Nathaniel saw that a pair of blood-flecked eyes were lying on the floor and staring up at him; Spalanzani seized them with his uninjured hand and threw them at him, so that they struck him in the chest.

Then madness gripped him with hot glowing claws, tore its way into him and blasted his mind. 'Ha, ha, ha! Circle of fire, circle of fire! Spin, spin, circle of fire! Merrily, merrily! Puppet, ha, lovely puppet, spin, spin!' – with this cry he hurled himself at the professor and took him by the throat, and would have strangled him if the uproar had not attracted a crowd, who burst in, wrenched the raging Nathaniel away and so rescued the professor, whose injuries were at once attended to. Strong though he was, Siegmund was unable to restrain the madman, who continued to cry in a fearsome voice 'Spin, puppet, spin!' and to flail about him with clenched fists. The united strength of several of them at last succeeded in overpowering him by throwing him to the floor and tying him up. The words he had been shouting dissolved into an awful animal bellowing. Thus, raging in hideous frenzy, he was taken to the madhouse.

Before I go on to tell you, kind reader, what further befell the unfortunate Nathaniel, I can assure you – sup-

posing you take any interest in the fate of the clever mechanician and automaton-maker Spalanzani – that the latter recovered fully from his injuries, though he was in the meantime compelled to vacate the university, since the tale of Nathaniel had made a great stir and it was everywhere regarded as an altogether impermissible piece of deception to have smuggled into respectable tea-circles (which Olympia had attended with great success) a wooden puppet instead of a living person. The jurists even termed it a refined and all the more culpable deception in that it was practised upon the public and so cunningly conceived that no one (with the exception of extremely astute students) had detected it, notwithstanding that everyone now put on a show of wisdom and pretended to recall all kinds of things which had seemed to them suspicious. But they brought to light nothing of any real note: could it have seemed suspicious to anyone, for example, if, according to the testimony of an elegant habitué of the tea-circles, Olympia had, contrary to all custom, more often sneezed than yawned? The former, so the elegant gentleman asserted, had been the sound of the clockwork winding itself up; there had at the same time been a noticeable squeaking; and so on. The professor of poetry and rhetoric took a pinch of snuff, snapped the box shut, cleared his throat, and said solemnly: 'Esteemed ladies and gentlemen! Do you not see where the difficulty lies? The whole thing is an allegory, an extended metaphor! Do you understand me? *Sapienti sat!*' But the minds of many esteemed gentlemen were still not set at rest: the episode of the automaton had struck deep roots into their souls, and there stealthily arose in fact a detectable mistrust of the human form. To be quite convinced they were not in love with a wooden doll, many enamoured young men demanded that their young ladies should sing and dance in a less than perfect manner, that while being read to they should knit, sew, play with their

puppy and so on, but above all that they should not merely listen but sometimes speak too, and in such a way that what they said gave evidence of some real thinking and feeling behind it. Many love-bonds grew more firmly tied under this regime; others on the contrary gently dissolved. 'You really cannot tell which way it will go,' they said. To counter any kind of suspicion, there was an unbelievable amount of yawning and no sneezing at all at the tea-circles.

As already stated, Spalanzani had to leave so as to avoid a criminal investigation into the deceitful introduction of an automaton into human society. Coppola had also disappeared.

Nathaniel awoke as if from a dreadful oppressive dream: he opened his eyes and felt an indescribable sensation of joy flood with heavenly warmth through him. He was lying in bed in his room in his father's house, Clara was bending over him, and his mother and Lothario were standing not far away.

'At last, at last, my beloved Nathaniel, you have recovered from your terrible illness! Now you are mine again!' said Clara from the depths of her soul, and took Nathaniel into her arms. He, however, wept hot glowing tears for sheer delight and misery, and sighed aloud: 'My Clara!'

Siegmund, who had faithfully endured his friend's distress with him, came in. Nathaniel reached out his hand to him: 'My faithful brother, you did not desert me.'

Every trace of madness had vanished, and soon Nathaniel grew stronger under the careful tending of his mother, his loved ones and his friends. Good fortune had meanwhile entered the house: an old miserly uncle from whom nobody had expected anything had died and had left Nathaniel's mother, in addition to a not inconsiderable sum of money, a small property in a pleasant region not far from the town whence the mother, Nathaniel, his Clara, whom he now wished to marry, and Lothario all intended

to move. Nathaniel had grown more gentle and childlike than he had ever been, and it was now he first really got to know Clara's glorious, innocent nature. No one alluded even in the remotest way to what had happened in the past. Only as Siegmund was about to depart did Nathaniel say: 'By God, brother! I was on a dreadful course, but when the time came an angel led me into the right way! Ah, that angel was Clara!' Siegmund would not let him go on for fear he would revive deeply wounding memories.

The time had come for the four happy people to move to the mother's little property. They were walking through the streets of the town at midday: they had done a large amount of shopping and the tall tower of the town hall threw a giant shadow over the market-place. 'Let us go up the tower just once more,' said Clara, 'and look across at the mountains!' No sooner said than done! Nathaniel and Clara climbed up together, the mother went home with the serving-maid, and Lothario, disinclined to clamber up the many steps that led to the top of the tower, remained waiting below. Then the loving pair stood arm in arm in the highest gallery of the tower and gazed out at the fragrant woodland and at the blue mountains that rose like a giant city beyond.

'Just look at that funny little grey bush that seems as if it is coming towards us,' said Clara. Nathaniel reached mechanically into his sidepocket; he found Coppola's telescope and gazed through it. Clara was standing before the glass! Then a spasm shuddered through him; pale as death, he stared at Clara, but soon his eyes began to roll, fire seemed to flash and glow behind them, and he started to roar horribly, like a hunted animal; then he leaped high into the air and, laughing hideously, cried in a piercing voice: 'Spin, puppet, spin! Spin, puppet, spin!' – and with terrible force he seized Clara and tried to throw her off the tower.

In mortal fear, Clara clutched at the railings of the

parapet; Lothario heard the raging of the madman, heard Clara's scream of fear; a dreadful presentiment flew through him and he ran up the stairs of the tower. The door to the second landing was shut; Clara's screams grew louder. Distracted with fear and rage, he threw himself against the door, which finally gave way.

Clara's cries were now getting more and more feeble: 'Help! Save me! Save me —' her voice died away in the air. 'She is lost — murdered by the madman!' Lothario cried.

The door to the gallery was also shut. Despair gave him strength, and he burst the door from its hinges. God in Heaven! Grasped by the raving Nathaniel, Clara was hanging in air over the parapet of the gallery; only one hand still kept hold on the iron railings. As quick as lightning Lothario seized his sister and drew her back in, and at the same instant dealt the raging madman a blow in the face with his clenched fist so that Nathaniel stumbled backwards and let go his prey.

Lothario ran down the steps of the tower, his unconscious sister in his arms. She was saved.

Now Nathaniel was running about on the gallery, raving and leaping high into the air, and screaming: 'Spin, spin, circle of fire! Spin, spin, circle of fire!' People came running at the wild screaming and collected below; among them there towered gigantically the advocate Coppelius, who had just arrived in the town and had made straight for the market-place. Some wanted to enter the tower and overpower the madman, but Coppelius laughed and said: 'Don't bother: he will soon come down by himself,' and gazed upward with the rest. Nathaniel suddenly stopped as if frozen; then he stooped, recognized Coppelius, and with the piercing cry: 'Ha! Lov-ely *occe!* Lov-ely *occe!*' he jumped over the parapet.

As Nathaniel was lying on the pavement with his head shattered, Coppelius disappeared into the crowd.

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Several years later, you could have seen Clara, in a distant part of the country, sitting with an affectionate man hand in hand before the door of a lovely country house and with two lovely children playing at her feet, from which it is to be concluded that Clara found in the end that quiet domestic happiness which was so agreeable to her cheerful disposition and which the inwardly riven Nathaniel could never have given her.