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*The Golden Pot
and Other Tales*

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
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THE SANDMAN



Nathanael to Lothar

You must all be very worried by my not having written for so long. Mother is probably angry, and Clara, I dare say, thinks that I am living in the lap of luxury and have completely forgotten the lovely, angelic image which is so deeply imprinted on my heart and mind. That is not so, however; I think of you all, daily and hourly, and in my sweet dreams the amiable figure of my lovely Clara passes, smiling at me with her bright eyes as charmingly as she used to whenever I called on you. Oh, how could I possibly have written to you in the tormented state of mind which has distracted all my thoughts until now! Something appalling has entered my life! Dark forebodings of a hideous, menacing fate are looming over me like the shadows of black clouds, impervious to any kindly ray of sunlight. It is time for me to tell you what has befallen me. I realize that I must, but at the very thought mad laughter bursts from within me. Oh, my dear Lothar, how am I ever to convey to you that what happened to me a few days ago has indeed managed to devastate my life so cruelly! If only you were here, you could see for yourself; but now you must undoubtedly consider me a crack-brained, superstitious fool. To cut a long story short, the appalling event that befell me, the fatal memory of which I am vainly struggling to escape, was simply this: a few days ago, at twelve noon on 30 October to be precise, a barometer-seller entered my room and offered me his wares. Instead of buying anything, I threatened to throw him downstairs, whereupon he departed of his own accord.

You will apprehend that this incident must gain its significance from associations peculiar to myself, reaching far back into my own life, and that it must have been the personality of this unfortunate tradesman that had such a repulsive effect on me.

That is indeed the case. I am using all my strength to compose myself so that I may calmly and patiently tell you enough about my early youth for your lively imagination to visualize everything in distinct and luminous images. As I prepare to begin, I hear you laugh, while Clara says: 'What childish nonsense!' Laugh, I beg you, laugh and mock me as much as you please! But, God in heaven! the hair is rising on my scalp, and I feel as though I were begging you to mock me in mad despair, as Franz Moor begged Daniel.* Now, let me get on with the story!

During the day, except at lunch, my brothers and sisters and I saw little of our father. He was no doubt heavily occupied with his duties. After dinner, which was served at seven in accordance with the old custom, all of us, including our mother, would go into our father's study and sit at a round table. Our father would smoke tobacco and drink a big glass of beer with it. He would tell us many wondrous tales, and would become so excited over them that his pipe always went out; I would then have to light it again by holding out burning paper, which I greatly enjoyed. Often, however, he would give us picture-books and sit silent and motionless in his armchair, blowing such clouds of smoke that we all seemed to be swathed in mist. On such evenings our mother would be very melancholy, and hardly had the clock struck nine than she would say: 'Now, children, time for bed! The Sandman is coming, I can tell.'

Whenever she said this, I would indeed hear something coming noisily upstairs with rather heavy, slow steps; it must be the Sandman. On one occasion I found this hollow trampling particularly alarming, and asked my mother as she was shepherding us away: 'Mother! who is the wicked Sandman who always chases us away from Papa? What does he look like?'

'There is no such person as the Sandman, dear child,' replied my mother; 'when I say the Sandman is coming, that just means that you are sleepy, and can't keep your eyes open, as though someone had thrown sand in them.'

My mother's answer did not satisfy me; indeed my childish mind formed the conviction that our mother was only denying the Sandman's existence so that we should not be afraid of him; after all, I could always hear him coming upstairs. Filled with curiosity about this Sandman and his relation to us children, I

finally asked my youngest sister's old nurse what kind of man the Sandman was.

'Why, Natty,' replied the old woman, 'don't you know that yet? He's a wicked man who comes to children when they don't want to go to bed and throws handfuls of sand into their eyes; that makes their eyes fill with blood and jump out of their heads, and he throws the eyes into his bag and takes them into the crescent moon to feed his own children, who are sitting in the nest there; the Sandman's children have crooked beaks, like owls, with which to peck the eyes of naughty human children.'

I now formed a hideous mental picture of the cruel Sandman, and as soon as the heavy steps came upstairs in the evening, I would tremble with fear and horror. My mother could extract nothing from me except the stammering, tearful cry: 'The Sandman! the Sandman!' I would then run to my bedroom and be tormented all night by the frightful apparition of the Sandman.

Soon I grew old enough to realize that the nurse's tale of the Sandman and his children's nest in the crescent moon could not be exactly true; yet the Sandman remained for me a fearsome spectre, and terror, indeed horror, would seize upon me when I heard him not only coming upstairs but also pulling open the door of my father's room and entering. Sometimes he would stay away for a long period; then he would come several times in quick succession. This went on for years, during which I never became accustomed to these sinister happenings, and my image of the hideous Sandman lost nothing of its vividness. His dealings with my father began increasingly to occupy my imagination; I was prevented from asking my father about them by an unconquerable timidity, but the desire to investigate the mystery myself grew stronger as the years went by. The Sandman had aroused my interest in the marvellous and extraordinary, an interest that readily takes root in a child's mind. I liked nothing better than hearing or reading horrific stories about goblins, witches, dwarfs, and so forth; but pride of place always belonged to the Sandman, and I kept drawing him, in the strangest and most loathsome forms, with chalk or charcoal on tables, cupboards, and walls.

When I was ten, my mother made me move from my nursery to a little bedroom just along the corridor from my father's

room. We were still obliged to go to bed whenever the clock struck nine and we heard the unknown being in the house. From my bedroom I could hear him entering my father's room, and soon afterwards a fine, strange-smelling vapour seemed to spread through the house. As my curiosity increased, so did my resolve to make the Sandman's acquaintance by some means or other. Often, when my mother had gone past, I would slip out of my bedroom into the corridor, but I never managed to discover anything; for the Sandman had always entered the room before I reached the spot at which he would have been visible. Finally, impelled by an irresistible urge, I decided to hide in my father's room and await the Sandman's arrival.

One evening I perceived from my father's silence and my mother's low spirits that the Sandman was coming; accordingly I pretended to be very tired, left the room before nine, and concealed myself in a recess just beside the door. The front door creaked and slow, heavy, rumbling steps approached the staircase. My mother hastened past me with my brothers and sisters. Gently, gently, I opened the door of my father's study. He was sitting, as usual, silent and motionless with his back to the door, and did not notice me; I slipped inside and hid behind the curtain which was drawn in front of an open wardrobe next to the door. The rumbling steps came closer and closer; strange sounds of coughing, scraping, and muttering could be heard. My heart was quaking with fear and anticipation. Right outside the door, a firm step, a violent tug at the latch, and the door sprang open with a clatter. Bracing myself with an effort, I peeped cautiously out. The Sandman was standing in the middle of the room, facing my father, with the lights shining brightly in his face. The Sandman, the frightful Sandman, was the old advocate Coppelius,* who sometimes had lunch with us!

But the most hideous of shapes could not have filled me with deeper horror than this same Coppelius. Imagine a big, broad-shouldered man with a massive, misshapen head, a pair of piercing, greenish, cat-like eyes sparkling from under bushy grey eyebrows, and a large beaky nose hanging over his upper lip. His crooked mouth was often distorted in a malicious smile, and then a couple of dark red spots appeared on his cheeks, and

a strange hissing sound proceeded from between his clenched teeth. Coppelius was always seen wearing an ash-grey coat of old-fashioned cut, with waistcoat and breeches to match, but with black stockings and shoes with little jewelled buckles. His small wig scarcely covered more than the crown of his head, his greasy locks stood on end above his big red ears, and a large, tightly tied pigtail stuck out from the back of his neck, disclosing the silver buckle that fastened his crimped cravat. His entire appearance was repellent and disgusting; but we children had a particular aversion to his big, gnarled, hairy hands, and anything touched by them ceased at once to be appetizing. Once he noticed this, he took delight in finding some pretext for fingering a piece of cake or fruit that our kind mother had surreptitiously put on our plates, so that our loathing and disgust prevented us, with tears in our eyes, from enjoying the titbit that was supposed to give us pleasure. He behaved in just the same way on special days, when our father would pour out a small glass of sweet wine. Coppelius would then quickly pass his hand over it, or he would raise the glass to his blue lips and utter a fiendish laugh on seeing us unable to express our vexation other than by suppressed sobs. He used to refer to us only as 'the little beasts'; in his presence we were forbidden to utter a sound, and we cursed the ugly, unfriendly man, who was deliberately intent on spoiling our slightest pleasures. Our mother seemed to hate the odious Coppelius as much as we did; for as soon as he showed himself, her good spirits, her cheerful, relaxed manner, were transformed into sorrowful and gloomy gravity. Our father behaved towards him as though Coppelius were a higher being whose foibles must be endured and who had to be kept in a good mood at whatever cost. Coppelius had only to drop a hint, and his favourite dishes were cooked and rare wines opened.

On seeing Coppelius now, I realized with horror and alarm that he and none other must be the Sandman; but to me the Sandman was no longer the bogey man in the nursery story who brings children's eyes to feed his brood in their nest in the crescent moon. No! He was a hateful, spectral monster, bringing misery, hardship, and perdition, both temporal and eternal, wherever he went.

I was rooted to the spot. Despite the risk of being discovered and, as I was well aware, of being severely punished, I stayed there, listening, and poking my head between the curtains. My father welcomed Coppelius with much formality.

'Come on, let's get to work!' cried Coppelius in a hoarse, croaking voice, throwing off his coat.

My father, silent and frowning, took off his dressing-gown, and the two of them donned long black smocks. I did not notice where these came from. My father opened the folding doors of a cupboard; but I saw that what I had so long taken for a cupboard was instead a dark recess containing a small fireplace. Coppelius walked over to it, and a blue flame crackled up from the hearth. All manner of strange instruments were standing around. Merciful heavens! As my old father bent down to the fire, he looked quite different. A horrible, agonizing convulsion seemed to have contorted his gentle, honest face into the hideous, repulsive mask of a fiend. He looked like Coppelius. The latter, brandishing a pair of red-hot tongs, was lifting gleaming lumps from the thick smoke and then hammering at them industriously. It seemed to me that human faces were visible on all sides, but without eyes, and with ghastly, deep, black cavities instead.

'Bring the eyes! Bring the eyes!' cried Coppelius in a hollow rumbling voice.

Gripped by uncontrollable terror, I screamed out and dived from my hiding-place on to the floor. Coppelius seized me, gnashing his teeth and bleating, 'Little beast! Little beast!' He pulled me to my feet and hurled me on to the fireplace, where the flames began to singe my hair. 'Now we've got eyes—eyes—a fine pair of children's eyes', whispered Coppelius, thrusting his hands into the flames and pulling out fragments of red-hot coal which he was about to strew in my eyes.

My father raised his hands imploringly and cried: 'Master! Master! Let my Nathanael keep his eyes! Let him keep them!'

With a piercing laugh, Coppelius cried: 'All right, the boy may keep his eyes and snivel his way through his lessons; but let's examine the mechanism of his hands and feet.' And with these words he seized me so hard that my joints made a cracking noise, dislocated my hands and feet, and put them back in

various sockets. 'They don't fit properly! It was all right as it was! The Old Man knew what he was doing!' hissed and muttered Coppelius; but everything went black and dim before my eyes, a sudden convulsion shot through my nerves and my frame, and I felt nothing more. A warm, gentle breath passed over my face, and I awoke from a death-like sleep; my mother was bending over me.

'Is the Sandman still there?' I stammered.

'No, my dear child, he's been gone for a long, long time, he'll do you no harm!' said my mother, kissing and cuddling her darling boy who was thus restored to life.

Why should I weary you, my dear Lothar? Why should I dwell on minute details, when so much remains to be told? Suffice it to say that I was caught eavesdropping and was roughly treated by Coppelius. Fear and terror brought on a violent fever, with which I was laid low for several weeks. 'Is the Sandman still there?' These were my first coherent words and the sign that I was cured, that my life had been saved. Now I need only tell you about the most terrifying moment of my early life; you will then be convinced that it is not the weakness of my eyesight that makes everything appear colourless, but that a sombre destiny has indeed veiled my life in a murky cloud, which perhaps I shall not penetrate until I die.

Coppelius did not show his face again, and was said to have left the town.

A year, perhaps, had gone by, and we were sitting one evening round the table, according to the old, unaltered custom. My father was in excellent spirits and told many delightful stories about the journeys he had made in his youth. Then, as it struck nine, we suddenly heard the front door creaking on its hinges, and slow, leaden steps came rumbling through the hall and up the stairs.

'That's Coppelius', said my mother, turning pale.

'Yes! It's Coppelius', repeated my father, in a dull, spiritless voice.

Tears burst from my mother's eyes. 'But, father, father!' she cried, 'does this have to happen?'

'This is the last time he will visit me, I promise you!' replied

my father. 'Go, take the children away! Go to bed! Good night!'

I felt as though I were being crushed under a heavy, cold stone; I could hardly breathe! As I stood motionless, my mother seized me by the arm: 'Come along, Nathanael!' I allowed her to lead me away, and went into my bedroom. 'Keep quiet, and go to bed! Go to sleep!' my mother called after me; but I was so tormented by indescribable inner terror and turmoil that I could not sleep a wink. Before me stood the hateful, loathsome Coppelius, his eyes sparkling, laughing at me maliciously, and I strove in vain to rid myself of his image. It must already have been midnight when a frightful crash was heard, as though a cannon had been fired. The whole house trembled, a rattling, rustling noise passed my door, and the front door was slammed with a clatter.

'That's Coppelius!' I cried in terror, leaping out of bed. Suddenly a piercing scream of lament was heard; I raced to my father's room; the door was open, a cloud of suffocating smoke billowed towards me, and the maidservant shrieked: 'Oh, the master! the master!' On the floor in front of the smoking fireplace my father was lying dead, his face burnt black and hideously contorted, while my sisters wailed and whimpered all round him and my mother lay in a dead faint.

'Coppelius, you abominable fiend, you've murdered my father!' I shouted; then I lost consciousness.

Two days later, when my father was laid in his coffin, his features were once again as mild and gentle as they had been during his life. I was comforted by the realization that his alliance with the devilish Coppelius could not have plunged him into eternal perdition.

The explosion had roused the neighbours; the incident got out and came to the attention of the authorities, who wanted to call Coppelius to account. He, however, had vanished from the town without leaving a trace.

If I now tell you, my cherished friend, that the barometer-seller who called on me was none other than the abominable Coppelius, you will not blame me for interpreting his malevolent appearance as a portent of dire misfortune. He was differently dressed, but Coppelius's figure and features are too deeply engraved on my mind for any mistake to be possible. Besides,

Coppelius has not even changed his name. I am told that he claims to be a Piedmontese mechanic called Giuseppe Coppola.

I am determined to try conclusions with him and avenge my father's death, come what may.

Say nothing to my mother about the appearance of this hideous monster. Give my love to my dear Clara; I will write to her when my mind is calmer. Farewell!

Clara to Nathanael

It is true that you haven't written to me for a long time, but I am still convinced that I am in your thoughts. For you must have been preoccupied with me when, intending to send off your last letter to my brother Lothar, you addressed it to me instead of to him. I opened the letter joyfully and realized your mistake only on reading the words: 'Oh, my dear Lothar!' I should of course have read no further, but given the letter to my brother. You have sometimes teasingly accused me of such womanly calm and deliberation that if the house were about to collapse I would pause before taking flight, like the woman in the story, to smooth out a fold in the curtains; however, I need hardly tell you that I was deeply shaken by the first few sentences of your letter. I could scarcely breathe, and my head was spinning. Oh, my precious Nathanael, what terrible thing could have entered your life! The idea of parting from you, never seeing you again, pierced my heart like a red-hot dagger. I read and read! Your description of the odious Coppelius is horrible. I did not know that your good old father had met such a terrible, violent death. When I gave Lothar back his rightful property, he tried to soothe me, but without success. The frightful barometer-seller Giuseppe Coppola followed me about wherever I went, and I'm almost ashamed to confess that he disturbed even my usually sound and healthy sleep with all manner of strange dreams. But soon, on the very next day, I regained my normal state of mind. Don't be cross, dearly beloved, if Lothar happens to tell you that, despite your strange notion that Coppelius will do you an injury, I am as cheerful and relaxed as ever.

I will confess frankly that in my opinion all the terrors and

horrors you describe took place only inside your head, and had very little to do with the real world outside you. Old Coppelius may have been odious enough, but it was his hatred of children that bred such a loathing of him in you children.

It was quite natural that your childish mind should connect the terrible Sandman in the nursery tale with old Coppelius, and that even when you no longer believed in the Sandman, Coppelius should seem a sinister monster, particularly hostile to children. As for his uncanny nocturnal goings-on with your father, I expect the two of them were simply conducting secret alchemical experiments, which could hardly please your mother, since a lot of money must have been squandered and moreover, as is said always to happen to such inquirers, your father became obsessed with the delusive longing for higher wisdom and was estranged from his family. Your father must have brought about his death by his own carelessness, and Coppelius cannot be to blame. Would you believe that yesterday I asked our neighbour, an experienced chemist, whether it was possible for such an explosion which killed people on the spot to occur in chemical experiments? He said, 'Why, of course', and gave me a characteristically long-winded account of how this could happen, mentioning so many strange-sounding names that I couldn't remember any of them. Now I expect you'll be angry with your Clara. You'll say: 'Her cold temperament cannot accept the mystery that often enfolds man in invisible arms; she perceives only the varied surface of the world and takes pleasure in it as a childish infant does in a glittering fruit which has deadly poison concealed within it.'

Oh, my precious Nathanael! don't you think that even a cheerful, relaxed, carefree temperament may have premonitions of a dark power that tries malevolently to attack our inmost selves? But please forgive a simple girl like me for venturing to suggest what I think about such inner conflicts. I probably shan't be able to put it into words properly, and you'll laugh at me, not because what I'm trying to say is stupid, but because I'm so clumsy at saying it.

If there is a dark power which malevolently and treacherously places a thread within us, with which to hold us and draw us down a perilous and pernicious path that we would never other-

wise have set foot on—if there is such a power, then it must take the same form as we do, it must become our very self; for only in this way can we believe in it and give it the scope it requires to accomplish its secret task. If our minds, strengthened by a cheerful life, are resolute enough to recognize alien and malevolent influences for what they are and to proceed tranquilly along the path to which our inclinations and our vocation have directed us, the uncanny power must surely perish in a vain struggle to assume the form which is our own reflection. Lothar also says there is no doubt that once we have surrendered ourselves to the dark psychic power, it draws alien figures, encountered by chance in the outside world, into our inner selves, so that we ourselves give life to the spirit which our strange delusion persuades us is speaking from such figures. It is the phantom of our own self which, thanks to its intimate relationship with us and its deep influence on our minds, casts us down to hell or transports us to heaven. You see, my darling Nathanael, that Lothar and I have talked at length about dark powers and forces, and now that I have, with some labour, written down the main points, it seems to me quite profound. I don't quite understand Lothar's last words, I only have a dim idea of what he means, and yet it all sounds very true. I beg you to forget all about the hateful advocate Coppelius and the barometer-man Giuseppe Coppola. Be assured that these alien figures have no power over you; only your belief in their malevolent power can make them truly malevolent to you. If every line of your letter did not reveal the deep perturbation of your spirits, if your state of mind did not cause me pain in my very soul, then, indeed, I could make jokes about the advocate Sandman and the barometer-seller Coppelius. Keep your spirits up! If the hateful Coppola should presume to annoy you in your dreams, I am determined to appear in your presence like your guardian angel and to drive him away with loud laughter. I am not the slightest bit afraid of him or his horrid hands; I wouldn't let him spoil my appetite as an advocate, nor hurt my eyes as a Sandman.

Eternally yours, my most dearly beloved Nathanael, etc.

Nathanael to Lothar

I am very annoyed that Clara should have opened and read my recent letter to you, although admittedly the mistake was due to my own absent-mindedness. She has written me a most profound philosophical letter in which she demonstrates at great length that Coppelius and Coppola exist only in my mind and are phantoms emanating from myself which will crumble to dust the moment I acknowledge them as such. Really, who would have thought that the spirit which shines from such clear, gracious, smiling, child-like eyes, like a sweet and lovely dream, could draw such intellectual distinctions, worthy of a university graduate? She appeals to your opinion. You and she have talked about me. I suppose you have given her lectures on logic to teach her how to sift and search all problems with due subtlety. Well, stop it at once!

Anyway, it seems certain that the barometer-seller Giuseppe Coppola is not the same person as the old advocate Coppelius. I am attending the lectures given by the newly arrived professor of physics, who is called Spalanzani,* like the famous naturalist, and is likewise of Italian descent. He has known Coppola for many years, and besides, his accent makes it clear that he really is a Piedmontese. Coppelius was a German, though not an honest one, in my opinion. My mind is not completely at ease. You and Clara are welcome to think me a melancholy dreamer, but I cannot shake off the impression that Coppelius's accursed face made on me. I am glad he has left the town, as Spalanzani tells me.

This professor is an odd fish. A tubby little man with projecting cheek-bones, a delicate nose, thick lips, and small piercing eyes. But you will get a better idea of him than any description can convey if you take a look at Cagliostro* as he is depicted by Chodowiecki* in some Berlin magazine. That is what Spalanzani looks like.

Not long ago, as I was going up his stairs, I noticed that a narrow strip of the glass door was left unconcealed by the curtain which is normally drawn across it. I can't tell how it was that I peeped in inquisitively. Inside the room a tall, very slim woman, beautifully proportioned and magnificently

dressed, was sitting in front of a small table on which she was leaning, with her hands folded. She was facing the door, so that I had a full view of her angelic face. She seemed not to notice me, and indeed there was something lifeless about her eyes, as though they lacked the power of sight; she seemed to be asleep with her eyes open. I had a rather uncanny feeling, and crept softly into the lecture-hall next door. Afterwards I learnt that the figure I had seen was Spalanzani's daughter Olimpia, whom, strangely and reprehensibly, he keeps locked up, so that nobody at all is allowed near her. There must be something peculiar about her; perhaps she is feeble-minded, for example. But why I am writing all this to you? I could have told you all this better and more fully by word of mouth. For let me tell you that in two weeks' time I shall be with you. I must see my dear sweet angel, my Clara, again. Her presence will blow away the mood of irritation which, I must confess, almost mastered me after that damnably sensible letter. That's why I won't write to her today.

Best wishes, etc.

No invention could be stranger or more extraordinary than the events which befell my poor friend, the young student Nathanael, and which I have undertaken to recount to you, dear reader. Have you, my kind patron, ever had an experience that entirely absorbed your heart, your mind, and your thoughts, banishing all other concerns? You were seething and boiling inwardly; your fiery blood raced through your veins and gave a richer colour to your cheeks. You had a strange, fixed stare as though you were trying to make out forms, invisible to any other eyes, in empty space, and your words faded into obscure sighs. 'What's wrong, my dear fellow? Whatever's the matter, old chap?' inquired your friends. And you, anxious to convey your inner vision with all its glowing colours, its lights and shadows, laboured in vain to find words with which to begin. But you felt as though you must compress the entire wonderful, splendid, terrible, hilarious, and hideous experience into your very first word, so that it should strike your hearers like an electric shock; yet every word, all the resources of language, seemed faded, frosty, and dead. You searched and searched, and

stammered and stuttered, and your friends' matter-of-fact questions were like gusts of icy air blowing on your inner glow and wellnigh extinguishing it. But if, like a bold painter, you had first sketched the outlines of your inner vision with a few careless strokes, you had little trouble in adding ever brighter colours until the swirling throng of multifarious figures seized hold of your friends' imagination, and they saw themselves, like you, in the midst of the picture that arose from your mind!

I must confess, kind reader, that nobody has actually asked me to tell the story of young Nathanael; you are aware, however, that I belong to the curious race of authors, who, if they are filled with such a vision as I have just described, feel as though everyone who approaches them, and all the world besides, were asking: 'Whatever's the matter? Tell me everything, my dear fellow!' Thus I felt powerfully impelled to tell you about Nathanael's calamitous life. Its strange and wondrous character absorbed my entire soul; but for that very reason, and because, dear reader, I have to put you in the right mood to endure an odd tale, which is no easy matter, I racked my brains to find a portentous, original, and arresting way of beginning Nathanael's story. 'Once upon a time . . . '—the best way to begin any story, but too down-to-earth! 'In the small provincial town of S. there lived . . . '—somewhat better: at least it provides some build-up to the climax. Or why not plunge *medias in res*: "Go to the Devil!" cried the student Nathanael, wild-eyed with fury and terror, as the barometer-seller Giuseppe Coppola . . . ' I had in fact written this down, when I fancied there was something comical in the student Nathanael looking wild-eyed; this story, however, is no laughing matter. Unable to find words that seemed to reflect anything of the prismatic radiance of my inner vision, I decided not to begin at all. Be so good, dear reader, as to accept the three letters, kindly communicated to me by my friend Lothar, as the sketch for my portrayal; as I tell the story, I shall endeavour to add more and more colour to it. I may, like a good portraitist, succeed in depicting some figures so well that you find them good likenesses even without knowing the originals; indeed, you may feel as though you had often seen these persons with your very own eyes. Then, O my reader, you may come to believe that nothing can be stranger or weirder

than real life, and that the poet can do no more than capture the strangeness of reality, like the dim reflection in a dull mirror.

In order to put you more fully in the picture, I must add that soon after the death of Nathanael's father, his mother had taken Clara and Lothar, the children of a distant relative who had likewise died and left them orphans, into the household. Clara and Nathanael became warmly attached to each other, and nobody could possibly have any objection to this; hence they were engaged by the time Nathanael left the town in order to continue his studies in G***. His last letter was written from G***, where he was attending lectures by the famous professor of physical sciences, Spalanzani.

I might now go on cheerfully with my story; but at this instant the image of Clara is so vividly present to me that I cannot look away, as always happened when she used to look at me with her lovely smile. Clara could by no means be called beautiful; that was the judgement of all professional authorities on beauty. Yet the architects praised her perfectly proportioned figure, while the painters raved about the chaste lines of her neck, her shoulders, and her breasts, fell in love with her wonderful hair, which reminded them of Battoni's Mary Magdalen,* and talked a lot of nonsense about Battoni's colouring techniques. One of them, however, a true fantasist, drew a very odd comparison between Clara's eyes and a lake by Ruysdael* which reflected the pure azure of the cloudless sky, the forests and flowery meadows, and the varied, happy life of the fertile landscape. Poets and musicians went further and said: 'Lake? Reflection? How can we look at the girl without perceiving wondrous, heavenly sounds and songs radiating from her gaze and penetrating and vivifying our very hearts? If we ourselves can't produce a decent song after that, we must be good for very little, and that indeed is the message of the sly smile that hovers around Clara's lips whenever we venture on some jingle that claims to be a song, though it consists only of a few incoherent notes.'

Such was the case. Clara had the vivid imagination of a cheerful, ingenuous, child-like child, a deep heart filled with womanly tenderness, and a very acute, discriminating mind. She

was no friend to muddle-headed enthusiasts; for although she uttered few words, being taciturn by nature, her clear gaze and her sly, ironic smile said: 'Dear friends, how can you expect me to treat your shifting, shadowy images as real objects full of life and motion?' Many people accordingly criticized Clara for being cold, unresponsive, and prosaic; others, however, who saw life clearly and profoundly, were very fond of the warm-hearted, sensible, child-like girl, but none so much as Nathanael, who was energetic and cheerful in his approach to art and learning. Clara was intensely devoted to him, and their parting cast the first shadow on her life. With what rapture did she fly to his arms when he entered his mother's room, having returned home as he had promised in his last letter to Lothar. Nathanael's expectations were fulfilled; for on seeing Clara he thought neither about the advocate Coppelius nor about Clara's sensible letter, and all his irritation vanished.

Nathanael, however, was quite right when he told his friend Lothar that the figure of the repulsive barometer-seller Coppola had made a malevolent intrusion into his life. Even in the first few days of his visit, it was apparent to everyone that Nathanael's character had changed entirely. He fell into gloomy reveries and took to behaving in a strange and wholly unaccustomed way. To him, all life consisted of dreams and premonitions; he kept saying that each individual, fancying himself to be free, only served as a plaything for the cruelty of dark forces; that it was in vain to resist, and one must acquiesce humbly in the decrees of destiny. He went so far as to assert that artists and scholars were under a delusion when they believed that their creative endeavours were governed by the autonomy of their will: 'for', said he, 'the inspired state which is indispensable for creation does not arise from inside ourselves; it is due to the influence of a higher principle that lies outside us'.

The sensible Clara greatly disliked these mystical flights of fancy, but there seemed no point in trying to refute them. It was only when Nathanael maintained that Coppelius was the evil principle that had seized upon him when he was eavesdropping behind the curtain, and that this foul demon would wreak destruction upon their happy love, that Clara would become very serious and say: 'Yes, Nathanael, you're right! Coppelius is

an evil, malevolent principle; he can do terrible harm, like the visible manifestation of a devilish power; but only if you fail to dismiss him from your mind. As long as you believe in him, he is real and active; his power consists only in your belief.'

Indignant that Clara conceded the existence of the demon only in his own mind, Nathanael would try to launch into the mystical doctrine of devils and evil forces, but Clara would irritably cut the conversation short by raising some trivial subject, to Nathanael's great annoyance. He concluded that such mysteries were inaccessible to cold and insensitive temperaments, without clearly realizing that he considered Clara's temperament to be such, and accordingly persevered in his attempts to initiate her into these mysteries. Early in the morning, when Clara was helping to make the breakfast, he would stand beside her, reading aloud from all manner of mystical books, until Clara asked: 'But, Nathanael dear, what if I were to scold *you* for being the evil principle exerting a malevolent influence on my coffee? For if I drop everything, as you demand, and gaze into your eyes while you read, the coffee will run over into the fire and none of you will get any breakfast!'

Nathanael would then clap the book shut and run angrily to his room.

In the past Nathanael had shown a special gift for composing charming and vivid stories which he would write down, and which Clara would listen to with heartfelt enjoyment. Now his compositions were gloomy, unintelligible, and formless, so that, even though Clara was too kind to say so, he was aware how little they appealed to her. Nothing had a more deadly effect on Clara than tedium; her unconquerable mental drowsiness would reveal itself in her expression and her speech. Nathanael's compositions were indeed very tedious. His annoyance with Clara's cold, prosaic temperament increased, while Clara could not overcome her irritation with Nathanael's dismal, obscure, tedious mysticism, and so, without noticing it, they became increasingly estranged from one another. Nathanael himself was obliged to confess that the figure of the hateful Coppelius had begun to fade from his imagination, and he often had difficulty in imparting lively colours to Coppelius in his compositions, where the latter appeared as a dreadful bogey man and emissary

of fate. Finally he conceived the plan of writing a poem about his gloomy premonition that Coppeliuss would destroy his happy love. He portrayed himself and Clara as joined in true love, but every so often a black hand seemed to reach into their lives and tear out some newly discovered source of pleasure. Finally, when they are standing at the altar, the fearsome Coppeliuss appears and touches Clara's lovely eyes, which leap into Nathanael's breast, burning and singeing him; Coppeliuss seizes him and hurls him into a circle of flames which is rotating with the speed of a whirlwind, dragging him along in its fury. A tumult springs up, as when the savage hurricane lashes the ocean, whose foaming waves rear up like black giants with white heads, filled with the rage of combat. But through all the tumult he hears Clara's voice saying: 'Can't you see me? Coppeliuss deceived you; it wasn't my eyes that burned in your breast, but red-hot drops of your own heart's blood. I have my eyes, just look at me!' 'That is Clara', thinks Nathanael, 'and I am her own eternally.' At that moment his thought seems to reach down forcibly into the circle of flames, bringing it to a halt, and the tumult fades away in a black abyss. Nathanael gazes into Clara's eyes; but what looks at him from Clara's kindly eyes is death.

While composing this, Nathanael was calm and collected; he revised and polished every line, and, having submitted to the constraints of metre, he did not rest until the entire work was pure and melodious. Yet, when he had finished and read the poem aloud to himself, he was gripped by wild horror and terror, and shrieked: 'Whose hideous voice is this?' Before long, however, he again decided that it was a highly successful poem, which could not fail to animate Clara's cold temperament, though he had no clear idea what purpose this would serve or what might result from alarming her with hideous images prophesying the destruction of their love by a terrible fate.

They were sitting, Nathanael and Clara, in her mother's little garden. Clara was in good spirits, because during the past three days, while working on his poem, Nathanael had no longer tormented her with his dreams and premonitions. Besides, Nathanael talked in a lively, cheerful manner about pleasant matters, as in the past, so that Clara said: 'Now you're completely

mine again. Do you see how we've driven that hateful Coppeliuss away?'

Only then did Nathanael remember that he had the poem in his pocket and had been meaning to read it aloud. He promptly drew it out and began reading, while Clara, resigned to the prospect of something tedious as usual, quietly began knitting. But as the cloud of gloom swelled up in ever-deepening blackness, she let her knitting fall from her hands and gazed fixedly at Nathanael. The latter was entirely carried away by his poem: his cheeks burned with the fire within him, tears gushed from his eyes. Finished at last, he gave a sigh of exhaustion. He seized Clara's hand and moaned miserably: 'Oh! Clara! Clara!'

Clara gave him a gentle hug and said in a low voice, but slowly and seriously: 'Nathanael, my darling Nathanael! Throw the crazy, senseless, insane story into the fire.'

Nathanael sprang up indignantly and exclaimed, thrusting Clara away: 'You accursed lifeless automaton!' He rushed away, while Clara, deeply hurt, shed bitter tears.

'Oh, he never loved me, because he doesn't understand me', she wailed.

Lothar entered the bower, and Clara could not help telling him what had occurred. Since he loved his sister with all his heart, every accusing word she uttered threw sparks into his mind, so that the irritation he had long felt with the dreamy Nathanael was inflamed into furious anger. He ran to Nathanael and rebuked him harshly for his senseless behaviour towards Lothar's dearly loved sister. Nathanael flew into a passion and replied in kind. They called each other a mad, fantastical coxcomb and a wretched, vulgar philistine. A duel was inevitable. They decided to meet next morning behind the garden and fight with sharpened rapiers, as was customary among the local students. In the mean time, they crept about, silent and scowling. Clara overheard their violent quarrel and saw the fencing-master bringing the rapiers at daybreak. She guessed what was afoot. Lothar and Nathanael arrived at the scene of their duel in gloomy silence; they removed their coats and were about to assail each other, their eyes burning with the blood-thirsty fury of combat, when Clara rushed through the garden gate.

'You dreadful savages!' she cried amid her sobs, 'strike me

down first before you attack each other; for how can I go on living if my lover has murdered my brother, or my brother has killed my lover!

Lothar lowered his weapon and looked silently at the ground, but Nathanael, with a shock of heart-rending sorrow, recollected all the love he had felt for his adorable Clara in the most glorious days of his youth. The fatal implement fell from his hand and he threw himself at Clara's feet.

'Can you ever forgive me, my only, my beloved Clara! Can you forgive me, my beloved brother Lothar!'

Lothar was touched by his friend's agony; amid floods of tears, the three embraced in token of reconciliation and swore unfailing love and loyalty to one another.

Nathanael felt as though relieved of a heavy burden which had been crushing him, and as though, by resisting the dark forces which had ensnared him, he had saved his entire existence from the threat of annihilation. He spent three more blissful days among his dear ones, then returned to G***, where he intended to stay for another year before returning to his home town for good.

Everything relating to Coppelius was kept from his mother; for it was known that she could not think without horror of the man whom she, like Nathanael, held responsible for her husband's death.

On returning to his lodgings, Nathanael was astonished to discover that the whole house had been burnt to the ground. Nothing remained amid the ruins but the fire-walls separating it from the adjacent houses. Although the fire had broken out in the laboratory of the apothecary who lived on the ground floor, and the house had burnt from the bottom up, Nathanael's bold and energetic friends had managed to get into his upstairs room in time to save his books, manuscripts, and instruments. They had removed all these things, which were undamaged, to another house, and taken possession of a room there, which Nathanael immediately moved into. He paid no particular heed to the fact that he was now living opposite Professor Spalanzani; nor did he think it specially noteworthy that his window looked straight into the room where Olimpia often sat by herself, so

that he could clearly make out her shape, although her features remained blurred and indistinct. He was eventually struck by the fact that Olimpia often spent hours sitting at a little table, just as he had previously glimpsed her through the glass door, without doing anything, but gazing rigidly across at him; he was also obliged to confess that he had never seen a more shapely woman, but, with Clara in his heart, he remained indifferent to the stiff and motionless Olimpia. Only occasionally did he glance up from his textbook at the beautiful statue: that was all.

Just as Nathanael was writing to Clara, there came a soft tap at the door. On his calling 'Come in!' it opened, and in peeped Coppola's repulsive face. Nathanael felt himself quaking inwardly; however, mindful of what Spalanzani had said about his fellow-countryman Coppola, and of his own sacred promise to Clara concerning the Sandman Coppelius, he felt ashamed of his childish superstition, pulled himself together with a great effort, and spoke as calmly and gently as he could: 'I don't wish to buy any barometers, my friend! Be off with you!'

Now, however, Coppola came right into the room; contorting his wide mouth into a hideous grin and giving a piercing look from under his long grey lashes, he said hoarsely: 'No barometer, no barometer! I 'ave beautiful eyes-a to sell you, beautiful eyes-a!'

'You madman,' cried Nathanael in horror, 'how can you have eyes to sell? Eyes?'

But Coppola had already put his barometers aside; he reached into the wide pockets of his coat and fetched out lorgnettes and pairs of spectacles, which he placed on the table.

'Now, now, glass-a, glass-a to wear on your nose-a, dese are my eyes-a, beautiful eyes-a!' And with these words he pulled out more and more spectacles, so that the whole table began strangely gleaming and shining. Innumerable eyes flickered and winked and goggled at Nathanael; but he could not look away from the table, and Coppola put more and more spectacles on it, and their flaming eyes sprang to and fro ever more wildly, darting their blood-red rays into Nathanael's breast. Overcome by mad terror, he shrieked: 'Stop! stop, you frightful man!'—and seized Coppola by the arm as the latter was reaching into

his pocket for yet more spectacles, even though the entire table was now covered with them. Coppola freed himself gently, uttering a horrible hoarse laugh, and with the words: 'No good for you—but here, beautiful glass-a!' he swept up all the spectacles, packed them away, and produced from the side-pocket of his coat a number of large and small spyglasses. As soon as the spectacles had been removed, Nathanael became perfectly calm; thinking of Clara, he realized that the hideous apparition could only have proceeded from within himself, and that Coppola must be a thoroughly honest mechanic and optician, who could not possibly be the accursed double or ghost of Coppelius. Besides, the spyglasses that Coppola had now placed on the table had nothing remarkable about them, let alone the sinister qualities of the spectacles, and, in order to make amends for his behaviour, Nathanael decided to buy something from Coppola after all. He picked up a small, beautifully made pocket spy-glass and tested it by looking out of the window. Never before in his life had he come across a spyglass that brought objects before one's eyes with such clarity, sharpness, and distinctness. He involuntarily looked into Spalanzani's room; Olimpia was sitting as usual at the little table, with her arms on it and her hands folded.

Only now did Nathanael behold Olimpia's wondrously beautiful face. It was only her eyes that seemed to him strangely fixed and dead. As he peered ever more intently through the glass, however, he thought he saw moist moonbeams shining from Olimpia's eyes. It was as though her power of vision were only now being awakened; her eyes seemed to sparkle more and more vividly. Nathanael remained at the window, as though rooted to the spot by a spell, gazing uninterruptedly at Olimpia's heavenly beauty. He was aroused, like somebody lost in a dream, by the sound of foot-scraping and throat-clearing. Coppola was standing behind him.

'Tre zecchini—three ducat!'

Nathanael, who had completely forgotten the optician, hastily paid the sum demanded.

'Beautiful glass-a, no? Beautiful glass-a?' asked Coppola in his repulsive hoarse voice, smiling maliciously.

'Yes, yes, yes!' replied Nathanael crossly. 'Good-bye, my friend!'

Coppola left the room, not without casting many strange side-glances at Nathanael, who heard him laughing loudly as he went downstairs.

'All right,' said Nathanael, 'he's laughing at me because I no doubt paid too high a price for the little spy-glass—too high a price!'

As he uttered these words in a low voice, a deep, deathly sigh seemed to send a grisly echo through the room. Nathanael caught his breath with fear. But no, it was he who had uttered the sigh, that was quite obvious.

'Clara', he said to himself, 'is probably right to think me tiresome and superstitious; but it's still a funny thing—oh, more than that, I suspect—that the silly idea that I paid too high a price for Coppola's spyglass makes me feel so oddly apprehensive; I can't think why this is.'

He then sat down in order to finish his letter to Clara, but one glance through the window convinced him that Olimpia was still sitting there, and at that instant, as though impelled by an irresistible force, he jumped up, seized Coppola's spyglass, and could not tear himself away from the alluring sight of Olimpia, until his friend and fellow-student Siegmund summoned him to Professor Spalanzani's lecture.

The curtain in front of the fateful room was drawn tight; Nathanael could neither glimpse Olimpia there nor, during the next two days, in her room, although he scarcely left his window and peered continually through Coppola's spyglass. On the third day the window was covered by drapery. In extreme despair, impelled by yearning and ardent desire, he ran out through the town gate. Olimpia's shape hovered in the air in front of him, stepped forth from the bushes, and looked at him with great radiant eyes from the clear water of the brook. The image of Clara had entirely departed from his mind; he thought only of Olimpia, and lamented out loud in a tearful voice: 'Oh, light of my life, you glorious, lofty star, did you rise upon me only to vanish again, leaving me in dark and hopeless night?'

Returning to his lodgings, he noticed a noisy upheaval going on in Spalanzani's house. The doors were open, all manner of utensils were being carried in, the first-floor windows had been taken off their hinges, busy maids were sweeping and dusting

everywhere with large brooms, and inside joiners and decorators were tapping and hammering. Nathanael stood there in the street, beside himself with astonishment; Siegmund came up to him and said: 'Well, what do you think of our old Spalanzani?' Nathanael declared that he did not know what to think, since he knew nothing whatever about the Professor, but was extremely surprised to see such frantic activity going on in the quiet, gloomy house. Siegmund then informed him that Spalanzani was holding a ball and a concert the next day, and that half the university had been invited. It was rumoured abroad that Spalanzani would allow his daughter Olimpia, whom he had fearfully concealed from every human eye for so long, to make her first public appearance.

Nathanael obtained an invitation and went to the Professor's house at the appointed hour, his heart beating violently, as the carriages were rolling up and the lights were gleaming in the splendidly decorated rooms. A large and brilliant company was present. Olimpia made her appearance, sumptuously and tastefully dressed. Her beautifully moulded features and her shapely figure compelled general admiration. The slightly strange curve of her back and the wasp-like slenderness of her waist seemed to be the result of excessive tightlacing. There was something stiff and measured about her gait and posture, which many people found displeasing; it was ascribed to the constraint imposed by such a large company.

The concert began. Olimpia played the piano with great skill and likewise performed a bravura aria in a clear, almost shrill voice, like a glass bell. Nathanael was enraptured; standing in the back row, he was unable to make out Olimpia's features clearly in the dazzling light of the candles. Without anybody noticing, he therefore took out Coppola's spyglass and looked through it at the fair Olimpia. Ah! then he perceived that she was gazing at him yearningly, and that every note she uttered found its full expression in the amorous look that pierced his heart and set it afire. The artificial roulades seemed to Nathanael to be the heavenly jubilation of a heart transfigured by love, and when the cadenza was at last followed by a long trill which rang and resounded through the room, he felt as though red-hot arms had suddenly seized him; unable to restrain him-

self, he shrieked out in agony and rapture: 'Olimpia!'

Everyone looked round at him, and many people laughed. The cathedral organist, however, scowled yet more darkly than before and said only: 'Now, now!'

The concert was over; the ball began. 'To dance with her, with her!'—that was now the goal of all Nathanael's wishes and desires; but how was he to find the courage to ask her, the queen of the ball, for a dance? And yet, he himself could not tell how it came about that when the dance had already begun he found himself standing close to Olimpia, who had not yet been asked for a dance, and, scarcely able to stammer out a few words, he seized her hand. Olimpia's hand was ice-cold: a shudder went through him like a hideous, deadly frost. He stared into Olimpia's eyes, which beamed at him full of love and yearning, and at that moment a pulse seemed to begin beating in her cold hand and her life's blood to flow in a glowing stream. Love and desire flared up in Nathanael's heart; he embraced the fair Olimpia and flew with her through the ranks of the dancers.

Nathanael considered himself a good dancer, but the peculiar rhythmic regularity with which Olimpia danced often disconcerted him and made him realize how badly he kept time. However, he was reluctant to dance with any other woman, and would gladly have murdered everyone who approached Olimpia to ask her to dance. Yet this only happened on two occasions; to his astonishment, Olimpia then remained without a partner, and he did not fail to draw her on to the dance-floor again and again. If Nathanael had been capable of seeing anything other than the fair Olimpia, all manner of quarrels and disputes would have been inevitable; for the young people in various corners of the room were having difficulty in suppressing their laughter, and their tittering was evidently directed at the fair Olimpia, whom they were looking at strangely for some unaccountable reason. Excited by the dance and by generous quantities of wine, Nathanael entirely cast off his usual bashfulness. He sat beside Olimpia, clasping her hand, and spoke of his love in fiery, enthusiastic words which neither he nor Olimpia understood. But perhaps *she* did; for she gazed fixedly into his eyes and sighed repeatedly: 'Oh! oh! oh!' whereupon Nathanael said: 'O you splendid, divine woman! You ray shining from the

promised afterlife of love! You profound spirit, reflecting my whole existence!' and much more along the same lines; but Olimpia only sighed repeatedly: 'Oh! oh!'

Professor Spalanzani passed the happy couple once or twice and smiled upon them with an air of strange satisfaction. Although Nathanael was in the seventh heaven, he suddenly felt as though down on earth, in Professor Spalanzani's house, darkness were falling; he looked round and noticed, to his consternation, that the last two lights in the empty ballroom had burnt down to their sockets and were about to go out. The music and dancing had long since ceased. 'Parting! Parting!' he cried in frantic despair; he kissed Olimpia's hand, he bent down to her mouth, his burning lips met ice-cold ones! Just as he had done on touching Olimpia's cold hand, he felt himself gripped by inward horror, and the legend of the dead bride* suddenly flashed through his mind; but Olimpia was clasping him tightly, and his kiss seemed to bring warmth and life to her lips.

Professor Spalanzani walked slowly through the empty ballroom; his steps sounded hollow, and his figure, surrounded by flickering shadows, had an uncanny, ghostly appearance.

'Do you love me—do you love me, Olimpia? Just this word! Do you love me?' whispered Nathanael, but Olimpia, rising to her feet, only sighed: 'Oh! oh!'

'Yes, you lovely, magnificent light of my life,' said Nathanael, 'you will shine on me, transfiguring my heart for evermore!'

'Oh, oh!' responded Olimpia, moving away. Nathanael followed her. They stood before the Professor.

'You have had a remarkably animated conversation with my daughter', said he with a smile. 'Well, my dear Nathanael, if you find pleasure in talking to the silly girl, I shall always welcome your visits.'

Nathanael was walking on air as he took his leave.

Spalanzani's ball was the main topic of conversation in the next few days. Although the Professor had endeavoured to display the utmost magnificence, the wags recounted all manner of oddities and improprieties, and criticism was levelled particularly at the rigid and silent Olimpia. Despite the beauty of her appearance, it was alleged that she was a complete imbecile, and that this was the reason why Spalanzani had kept her

concealed for so long. Nathanael heard this with suppressed anger, but he held his peace; 'for', thought he, 'what would be the point of proving to these fellows that it is their own imbecility which prevents them from appreciating the wonderful depths of Olimpia's heart?'

'Do me a favour, old chap,' said Siegmund one day, 'and tell me how a sensible fellow like you could be besotted with that dummy, that wax doll?'

Nathanael was about to fly into a fury, but he controlled himself and replied: 'You tell me, Siegmund, how, with your sharp perceptions and your appreciation of beauty, you could fail to notice Olimpia's heavenly charms? But I thank the fates that, for that reason, I don't have you as a rival; otherwise one of us would have to perish.'

Observing his friend's state of mind, Siegmund backed down and remarked that in love there was no disputing about tastes. 'It's odd, though', he added, 'that many of us share the same opinion of Olimpia. We thought her—don't take this amiss, old chap!—strangely stiff and lacking in animation. Her figure is regular, certainly, and so is her face. She would be beautiful, but that her eyes seem to have no ray of life; they almost seem to lack the power of sight. Her gait is curiously measured, as though her every movement were produced by some mechanism like clockwork. She plays and sings with the disagreeably perfect, soulless timing of a machine, and she dances similarly. Olimpia gave us a very weird feeling; we wanted nothing to do with her; we felt that she was only pretending to be a living being, and that there was something very strange about her.'

Nathanael refrained from giving way to the bitterness that Siegmund's words aroused in him. He mastered his annoyance and only said, in grave tones: 'Olimpia may well inspire a weird feeling in cold, prosaic people like you. It is only to the poetic soul that a similarly organized soul reveals itself! I was the only one to arouse her loving gaze, which radiated through my heart and mind; only in Olimpia's love do I recognize myself. People like you may complain because she doesn't engage in trivial chit-chat, like other banal minds. She utters few words, certainly; but these few words are true hieroglyphs, disclosing an inner world filled with love and lofty awareness of the spiritual

life led in contemplation of the everlasting Beyond. But you can't appreciate any of this, and I'm wasting my words.'

'God preserve you, my friend,' said Siegmund in very gentle, almost melancholy tones, 'but I feel you're in a bad way. Count on me if anything—no, I'd rather not say any more!' Nathanael suddenly felt that the cold, prosaic Siegmund was truly devoted to him, and when the latter extended his hand, Nathanael shook it very heartily.

Nathanael had entirely forgotten Clara's existence and his former love for her; his mother, Lothar, and everyone else had vanished from his memory; he lived only for Olimpia and spent several hours with her every day, holding forth about his love, the heartfelt rapport between them, and the elective affinities linking their souls, to all of which Olimpia listened with devout attention. From the darkest recesses of his desk Nathanael fetched everything he had ever written. Poems, fantasies, visions, novels, stories, were supplemented daily by all manner of incoherent sonnets, *ballades*, and *canzoni*, which he read to Olimpia for hours on end without ever wearying. But then, he had never had such a perfect listener. She did not sew or knit, she never looked out of the window, she did not feed a cage-bird, she did not play with a lap-dog or a favourite cat, she did not fiddle with scraps of paper or anything else, she never needed to conceal her yawns by a slight artificial cough: in a word, she stared fixedly at her lover for hours on end, without moving a muscle, and her gaze grew ever more ardent and more animated. Only when Nathanael finally rose and kissed her hand, and also her lips, did she say: 'Oh! Oh!' and then: 'Good night, my dear friend!'

'Oh, you wonderful, profound soul,' cried Nathanael, back in his room, 'no one but you, you alone, understands me perfectly.'

He trembled with heartfelt rapture when he considered how the marvellous harmony between his soul and Olimpia's was becoming more manifest by the day; for he felt as though Olimpia had voiced his own thoughts about his works and about his poetic gift in general; indeed, her voice seemed to come from within himself. This must indeed have been the case, for the only words Olimpia ever spoke were those that have just been mentioned. Although Nathanael did have moments of

lucidity and common sense, for example just after waking up in the morning, when he recalled how entirely passive and taciturn Olimpia was, he nevertheless said: 'Words? What are words! The look in her heavenly eyes says more than any terrestrial language. Can a child of heaven ever adjust itself to the narrow confines drawn by miserable earthly needs?'

Professor Spalanzani seemed highly delighted at his daughter's relationship with Nathanael; he gave the latter many unmistakable signs of his goodwill, and when Nathanael finally ventured to hint that he might ask for Olimpia's hand in marriage, the Professor smiled broadly and declared that his daughter should have a free choice. Encouraged by these words, his heart burning with desire, Nathanael resolved that on the very next day he would implore Olimpia to tell him in so many words what her lovely eyes had told him long since: that she was willing to be his for evermore. He looked for the ring which his mother had given him on his departure, so that he might present it to Olimpia as a symbol of his devotion and of the newly budding and blossoming life that he owed to her. As he searched, Clara's and Lothar's letters fell into his hands; he tossed them indifferently aside, found the ring, put it in his pocket, and dashed off to find Olimpia.

As soon as he climbed the stairs and approached the landing, he heard an extraordinary hubbub which seemed to be coming from Spalanzani's study. There were sounds of feet stamping, glass tinkling, and blows falling on the door, mingled with curses and imprecations.

'Let go! Let go! Scoundrel! Villain! You staked your whole life? Ha, ha, ha!—that wasn't part of our wager—I made the eyes, I did—I made the clockwork—stupid wretch, you and your clockwork—you confounded brute of a half-witted clock-maker—get out—Satan—stop—you tinker—you devilish creature—stop—get out—let go!'

The voices howling and raving in such confusion were those of Spalanzani and the horrible Coppelius. In rushed Nathanael, gripped by nameless fear. The Professor had seized a female figure by the shoulders, while the Italian Coppola was holding it by the feet, and both were tugging at it for dear life, while quarrelling violently over it. Nathanael started back, filled with

deep horror, on recognizing the figure as Olimpia; wild fury flared up in him, and he tried to tear his beloved from the hands of the enraged combatants, but at that moment Coppola turned round with gigantic strength, wrested the figure from the Professor's hands, and struck him such a terrible blow with it that he staggered and fell backwards over the table covered with phials, retorts, bottles, and glass cylinders, all of which were broken to smithereens. Coppola then threw the figure over his shoulder and rushed downstairs with a frightful yell of laughter, so that the figure's feet, which were hanging down in an unsightly way, gave a wooden rattling and rumbling as they knocked against the steps.

Nathanael stood stock still. He had perceived only too clearly that Olimpia's deathly pale wax face had no eyes, just black caverns where eyes should be; she was a lifeless doll. Spalanzani was writhing on the floor; his head, chest, and arms had been cut by broken glass, and blood was gushing out as though from a fountain. But he summoned all his strength and cried:

'After him, after him! Why are you standing there? Coppelius—he's stolen my best automaton—twenty years' work—I staked my life on it—the clockwork—language—walk—all mine—the eyes—he stole your eyes. The cursed scoundrel, the damned villain—after him—fetch Olimpia—here are her eyes!'

Thereupon Nathanael noticed a pair of bloody eyes lying on the floor and staring at him. Spalanzani picked them up with his unscathed hand and threw them at Nathanael, so that they struck him on the chest. Madness seized him with its red-hot claws and entered his heart, tearing his mind to pieces. 'Hey, hey, hey! Fiery circle, fiery circle! Spin, spin, fiery circle! Come on! Spin, wooden dolly, hey, spin, pretty wooden dolly . . .' and with these words he flung himself on the Professor and clutched him by the throat. He would have throttled him, but the hubbub had attracted a large number of people who forced their way into the room and pulled the frenzied Nathanael to his feet, thus rescuing the Professor, whose wounds were promptly bandaged. Siegmund, despite his strength, was unable to restrain the lunatic, who kept bellowing in a frightful voice: 'Spin, wooden dolly', and brandishing his fists. At last the united efforts of several people managed to overcome Nathanael by throwing

him to the ground and tying him up. His words were swallowed up in a horrible animal-like bellowing. Raving in a hideous frenzy, he was taken to the madhouse.

Before continuing, kind reader, with the story of the unfortunate Nathanael, let me assure you, just in case you should feel any sympathy for the skilful mechanic and automaton-maker Spalanzani, that he made a complete recovery from his wounds. He was, however, obliged to leave the University, since Nathanael's story had created a stir, and public opinion considered it monstrously deceitful to foist a wooden doll instead of a living person upon respectable tea-parties (Olimpia had attended some and made quite a hit). Legal scholars described it as a subtle fraud which deserved a condign punishment inasmuch as it had been practised upon the public, and so adroitly conducted that nobody (except for the sharpest students) had observed it, although everyone was now trying to display sagacity by referring to all kinds of suspicious-looking details. These details, however, threw virtually no light on the matter. For could anyone's suspicions have been aroused by the fact that, according to one elegant *habitué* of tea-parties, Olimpia had defied convention by sneezing more than she yawned? Her sneezing, explained this exquisite gentleman, was the sound of the concealed mechanism winding itself up, for there had been an audible creaking. The professor of poetry and eloquence took a pinch of snuff, snapped his box shut, cleared his throat, and said in solemn tones: 'My most esteemed ladies and gentlemen! Don't you see what lies behind all this? The entire matter is an allegory—an extended metaphor! You take my meaning! *Sapienti sat!*'* But many esteemed gentlemen were not so easily reassured: the story of the automaton had made a deep impression on their minds, and a detestable distrust of human figures became prevalent. In order to make quite sure that they were not in love with wooden dolls, several lovers demanded that their beloved should fail to keep time in singing and dancing, and that, when being read aloud to, she should sew, knit, or play with her pug-dog; above all, the beloved was required not merely to listen, but also, from time to time, to speak in a manner that revealed genuine thought and feeling. The bonds between some lovers thus became firmer and pleasanter; others quietly dissolved. 'One really

can't take the risk', said some. At tea-parties there was an incredible amount of yawning, but no sneezing, in order to avert any suspicion.

As mentioned earlier, Spalanzani was obliged to disappear in order to evade a criminal prosecution for fraudulently introducing an automaton into human society. Coppola had likewise vanished.

Nathanael awoke, as though from a terrible nightmare; he opened his eyes and felt an indescribable sense of bliss permeating his being with mild, heavenly warmth. He was lying in bed in his room in his father's house. Clara was bending over him, and his mother and Lothar were standing nearby.

'At last, at last, oh my darling Nathanael, you've recovered from your dangerous illness, now you're mine again!' said Clara, from the depths of her heart, folding Nathanael in her arms. The latter was so overcome by rapture and sorrow that bright, hot tears gushed from his eyes, and he uttered a deep sigh: 'My own, my own Clara!'

Siegmund, who had faithfully stood by his friend in time of trouble, entered the room. Nathanael held out his hand to him: 'My loyal friend, you did not abandon me.'

All traces of madness had vanished. Nathanael soon regained his health and strength, tended as he was by his mother, his sweetheart, his friends. Good fortune, meanwhile, had entered their house; for a miserly old uncle, from whom nobody had expected anything, had died and left Nathanael's mother not only a substantial fortune but also a small estate in a pleasant spot not far from the town. They all planned to remove thither: Nathanael's mother, Nathanael himself, with his bride-to-be Clara, and Lothar. Nathanael was now more gentle and child-like than ever before, and appreciated the heavenly purity of Clara's glorious soul for the first time. Nobody reminded him of the past, even by the slightest allusion. Only when Siegmund was leaving him did Nathanael say: 'By God, my friend, I was in a bad way, but at the right moment an angel guided me on to the path of light! Ah, it was Clara!' Siegmund prevented him from saying any more, fearing that painful memories might return with excessive clarity.

The four happy people were about to move to the estate. It was midday, and they were walking through the streets of the town. They had done plenty of shopping, and the lofty tower of the town hall was casting its gigantic shadow over the market-place.

'Why!' said Clara, 'let's climb up there one last time, and gaze at the distant mountains!'

No sooner said than done! Nathanael and Clara began the ascent, their mother went home with the maidservant, and Lothar, reluctant to climb the many steps, decided to remain below. Soon afterwards the two lovers were standing arm in arm on the highest gallery of the tower, gazing into the dim forests beyond which the blue mountains rose like a giant city.

'Look at that funny little grey bush, which really seems to be walking towards us,' said Clara.

Nathanael reached mechanically into his side-pocket; he found Coppola's spyglass, he looked sideways—Clara was standing before the glass! A convulsion ran through his every vein, he stared at Clara in deathly pallor, but an instant later rivers of fire were glowing and sparkling in his rolling eyes, and he uttered a horrible bellow, like a tormented animal; then he sprang aloft and cried in a piercing voice, interspersed with hideous laughter: 'Spin, wooden dolly! Spin, wooden dolly!'—and with superhuman strength he seized Clara and was about to dash her to the ground below, but Clara clung firmly to the parapet in the desperation born of terror. Lothar heard the madman raving, he heard Clara's shriek of fright, a horrible suspicion shot through his mind, he rushed up the stairs, the door leading to the second flight of stairs was locked. Clara's shrieks grew louder. Beside himself with fury and fear, he hurled himself against the door, which flew open. Clara's cries were growing fainter and fainter: 'Help! Save me! save me!' she moaned, her voice dying away. 'She's dead—the madman has murdered her,' shrieked Lothar. The door leading to the gallery was locked as well. Desperation endowed him with prodigious strength; he pushed the door off its hinges. God in heaven! Clara, in the grip of the frenzied Nathanael, was suspended in the air, over the edge of the gallery—only one hand still clung to its iron railings. With lightning speed Lothar seized his

sister, pulled her to safety, and dashed his fist in the madman's face, forcing the latter to reel back and relinquish his intended victim.

Lothar rushed downstairs, his sister unconscious in his arms. She was saved.

Meanwhile Nathanael was raving in the gallery, leaping into the air and shrieking 'Fiery circle, spin! Fiery circle, spin!'

People gathered below, attracted by his wild yells; in their midst loomed the gigantic figure of the advocate Coppelius, who had just arrived in the town and made directly for the market-place. As people began to climb the stairs in order to seize the lunatic, Coppelius laughed and said: 'Ha, ha—just wait, he'll soon come down by himself', and looked up, like the others. Suddenly Nathanael paused and stood stock still; he bent down, perceived Coppelius, and, with a piercing shriek of 'Beautiful eyes-a! Beautiful eyes-a!' he jumped over the parapet.

By the time Nathanael was lying on the pavement, his head shattered, Coppelius had vanished into the throng.

It is reported that several years later, in a distant part of the country, Clara was seen sitting hand in hand with an affectionate husband outside the door of a handsome country dwelling, with two merry boys playing in front of her. This would seem to suggest that Clara succeeded in finding the quiet domestic happiness which suited her cheerful, sunny disposition, and which she could never have enjoyed with the tormented, self-divided Nathanael.