

The brave little windup-man

An artistic fairy tale

***** 1. The Circus I*** (2:05)**

Some time ago, not that far from here, a circus encamped on a large meadow next to a lake. Colorful jugglers and nimble artists belonged to the circus and traveled with it through the land. A little windup-man was also part of them, made of sheet metal, with a winding key on his back. Over the years, the red color had peeled off in some parts and his joints had become a little bit inflexible. When the windup-man marched through the arena with his clumsy, awkward movements, the audience usually started laughing.

***** 2. The little windup-man ** (1:00)**

Only a few days before the circus had come to camp on the meadow, a dancer had joined them, an enchanting ballerina. She had been exercising every day and soon was going to have her first performance. The little windup-man had been observing the dancer practicing many times and was enraptured by her grace and elegance.

***** 3. The dancer*** (1:10)**

"I wish I could dance as beautiful as she", the little windup-man thought "but I stumble around awkwardly. The audience would not laugh at me, because they would hold their breath in amazement." The little windup-man had often imagined how it would be to attract the dancer's attention, but she had never noticed him until then. "Why should she possibly be interested in an old pile of sheet metal?", thought he mournfully. He indeed was not the only one who was pleased by the dancer. The strict ringmaster was observing her dance practice every day. He had noticed the little windup-man's attraction to the dancer and was secretly thinking about the best way to get rid of him.

***** 4. The ringmaster*** (1:10)**

The day came when the first show of the circus company was going to happen at the new venue. The large tent was packed with spectators, who were waiting for the artists with joyous impatience. The ringmaster took the dancer aside.

"Finally you will see all artists of my magnificent circus! You will be amazed!" And he directed her to sit on the seat next to him. The show began. First, a juggler entered the arena. He juggled with balls, rings, clubs and burning torches, three, four, five, six at a time.

***** 5. The Juggler*** (0:40)**

The crowd applauded enthusiastically. "You see how great my circus is!", whispered the ringmaster in the dancer's ear. The dancer nodded and did not say anything.

Just then, a clown bounced through the curtain. He tripped over his enormous feet, whistled on a nose flute and played with a heard of tiny fleas. The people laughed so hard, that they started crying.

***** 6. The Clown *** (1:20)**

The dancer laughed with her bird-like voice. "Has anyone ever made you ever laugh as much as the clown of my stunning circus? ", shouted the ringmaster and clapped his hands. The dancer giggled. The laughter suddenly fell silent and gave way to a mix of awe and astonishment, when a classy horseman on a proud steed trotted into the arena. They sped wildly in a circle, the horse jumping and galloping, as the audience gasped in amazement.

***** 7. The wild horseman *** (1:40)**

The spectators were so enthralled by the acrobatic art of horse riding that they wished, they were sitting on the horse themselves and feel the wind on their cheeks.

"What a gorgeous animal!", slobbered the ringmaster and looked at the dancer. "If you would like to, we could ride through the green forests on it together."

The dancer did not say anything and stared towards the horse, which had just disappeared behind the curtain.

Next, it was the mysterious magician's turn. For all the world to see, he conjured three white mice out of his top hat and yet made them vanish again.

***** 8. The magician *** (1:40)**

The dancer had covered her face covered in astonishment. "I said that I would not disappoint you.", said the ringmaster with pride. "In my circus only the very best perform, because I will throw out everyone that I do not like!"

At that point, there was a short intermission. A hurdy-gurdy man came to the arena and played on his instrument while the audience chatted and expressed admiration for the artists. The little musician was quite nervous and at first turned the crank handle on his hurdy-gurdy a little bit too fast. But then he took a deep breath, calmed down and the music became slower.

***** 9. The hurdy-gurdy man *** (1:00)**

The dancer seemed to enjoy the cheerful music. "If you stay with me, I will command the hurdy-gurdy man to play for you every evening, until you are tired of it!", promised the ringmaster. The dancer hummed along with the music.

After the intermission, the wind-up man's performance finally was about to happen. As always he had to amuse the spectators with his funny attempts at dancing. He tried to move a little bit more elegantly this time, maybe it would work that day?

*****10. First part of "The little windup-man (No.2)*** (0:20**

But when he saw the dancer next to the strict ringmaster, he suddenly felt tight in the chest. His movements became even more stiff and clumsy than usual, and he became more and more slow. Finally, the winding key on his back stopped spinning, and he stood still.

*****11. The windup-man stops*****

This had never happened to him. The little windup-man could only blink with his eyes and desperately winked in the direction of the curtain, hoping someone would come to help him.

***** 12. The windup-man blinks, clown and magician observe *****

People remained silent that day. If he had been able to, the poor little windup-man would have blushed from top to bottom. Luckily, the magician and the clown were observing the incident through the curtain.

*****13. Blinking, consulting and carrying out of the arena*****

They hurried to help the windup-man and carried him out of the arena. The ringmaster clenched his fists. "By far the worst performance of the circus. I should fire him!", he snarled, and the dancer frightenedly looked at him.

The audience had already forgotten what had happened, because their focus was now on the Japanese bubble-artist. Calm and thoughtful, she stood in the middle of the arena and blew shimmering soap-bubbles in the air, glowing in all colors of the rainbow. There was even a bubble in the form of a heart. At the end, she disappeared in a cloud of soap-bubbles, and when they all popped, she had vanished.

***** 14. The Japanese bubble-artist *** (1:30)**

The dancer held her breath, entranced. "I will instruct the Japanese bubble-artist to bring you a heart from me every morning", whispered the ringmaster in the dancer's ear, at which she jumped up and rushed backstage. At last, the highlight of the circus show had come: the dancer stepped in front of the public. Bashfully, the windup-man watched her through a gap in the curtain. Gracefully like a butterfly, she fluttered through the arena, jumped, scurried and span around.

***** 15. The performance of the dancer *** (1:50)**

Endless Applause filled the air, and the dancer bowed many times. "I have never seen something that beautiful", marveled the windup-man and sighed. "Will she ever pay attention to me?"

The last spectators had left a long time ago and dusk had fallen outside, while the windup-man was still sitting behind the curtain, brooding. If only he could present an outstanding performance, maybe the graceful dancer would notice him. Just then, the windup-man had a bold idea. "Everybody will see how brave I am", he thought proudly. He tightened a rope firmly from one side of the tent to the other and climbed up.

***** 16. The windup-man climbs up*****

He tried to walk on the rope, but his stiff tin legs made balancing difficult. With unpleasant feeling, he looked at the floor. His knees started shaking and he felt dizzy.

***** 17. Dizzy und Fall *** (0:40)**

The little windup-man fell to the ground with a clattering crash that was as noisy as if someone had thrown all pots and pans of a kitchen together. He picked himself up quickly and ran out of the tent. Luckily, all parts of his body were intact, but he had suffered a few additional dents from the fall, and a big piece of paint had flaked off his chest.

Meanwhile, night had fallen outside. The artists were already sleeping to recover from their performances, and the windup-man believed himself to be alone in the darkness. With a heavy heart, he wandered around the meadow and between the trees. "Why am I such a boring tin man? The graceful dancer does not pay attention to me and the audience laughs at me. Maybe I should disappear completely while it is still night and never come back again."

***** 18. Grief *** (1:30)**

The windup-man had just come to his sad decision when he reached the lake that adjoined the large meadow. Surprised, he noticed that he was not alone out there after all. On a little rock at the shore of the lake sat the beautiful dancer and was humming to herself quietly. "Before I leave, I could maybe at least bid her adieu", thought the windup-man. With all the courage he was able to muster, he approached the dancer, who seemed not to notice him. Just as he was about to talk to her, the windup-man suddenly noticed a gentle murmuring that he had never heard before. Voices like from leaves in the wind and from the ripples of water. It exerted such a pull that he could barely escape it. In addition, there was a fine shimmer in the lake around the feet of the dancer, which became brighter and brighter.

***** 19. Ondine *** (0:40)**

Enraptured, the dancer and the windup-man were listening to the enchanting voices, when several watery creatures arose from the lake. Pale water nymphs with empty eyes that reached out for the dancer with their cool hands. The dancer screamed desperately, but she was too far away from the tents for anyone to hear. The windup-man was so frightened, he was barely able to budge. Yet, the water nymphs grasped the dancer's feet and tried to pull her into the water.

The windup-man gathered his courage and stumbled to the shore of the lake. He plodded through the water until he reached the rock, grabbed hold of the dancer's arm and pressed his feet firmly against the rock.

***** 20. Desperate fight *** (1:20)**

The water nymphs snarled and hissed, but finally, they released the dancer and disappeared in the foaming water. Their watery limbs were no match for the hard iron sheet of the windup-man. The windup-man carried the dancer to a tall oak tree near the shore of the lake. Exhausted, she leaned on the trunk took a deep breath. The little windup-man still did not dare to say anything. So he sat next to the dancer and watched the night sky. The moon shined peacefully, the stars sparkled like diamonds. When the windup-man saw some falling stars over the circus tent, he became calmer and enjoyed the quiet moment.

***** 21. Starry night *** (1:30)**

When the dancer was able to breathe normally, she placed her hand on the hand of the windup-man. "Thank you! You saved my life! How fortunate that you are made from sheet metal ", she whispered.

The windup-man was deeply moved by the gentle touch of the dancer - and was wondering a lot.

"Fortunate?", he shouted. "The audience laughs at me, because I am boring and stiff."

"My dear windup-man, that is not true at all. People are laughing, because your cheerful spirit makes them happy. And if you were not so strong, I would not be here anymore."

The little windup-man winced. These were shattering new findings for him.

"But I am only a dancer among many others. If I am not perfect, the ringmaster will throw me out and I will not be able to dance for the people any more."

The little windup-man took a deep breath.

"My dear dancer", he finally managed to say, "For me, you are unique. Before leaving you to the water nymphs, I would rather have plunged down there with you." Finally the dancer understood that she had found a true friend that she could rely on.

"I have an idea." The dancer smiled whimsically and kissed the windup-man on his cheek. "Let us dance together. You are strong enough to whirl me around such that people will hold their breath in amazement, and nothing will happen to me."

The little windup-man's face was lit up with joy and he embraced the dancer.

***** 22. Love *** (1:50)**

The next morning, the dancer awoke in the arms of the windup-man and gently knocked on his chest to wake him up. Yet, she realized frightened that he was not asleep, but laying in the grass completely stiff. The water of the lake had made his joints rust, such that he had become totally immobilized.

***** 23. Rust *** (0:45)**

The dancer started crying bitterly. She tried to wipe away the rust with her dress, but it did not help. Quickly, she ran back to the campground to look for help. She first met the ringmaster who was on his way to the circus tent and told him in tears what had happened. He grabbed her by the arm firmly. "I do not have any use for a rusty tin man. We will have to leave him behind." The dancer cried even louder in despair. Suddenly, she felt a furious rage arise inside her. She pulled herself free from the ringmaster and stamped on the ground.

"You are mean and arrogant! The windup-man belongs to us and needs help! I will not follow your heartless rules any more, and certainly not ride through the green forests with you! When the other artists will hear all this, you are soon going to be a ringmaster without a circus!"

***** 24. Despair *** (1:20)**

The loud clamor had woken up all the artists and they came running. Enraged, the dancer told them what had happened and that the ringmaster wanted to leave the windup-man behind because he did not have use for him any more.

"Unfortunately, I only know how to juggle", the juggler apologized "but I would like to help the brave little windup-man anyway."

"I only know how to joke", said the clown seriously, "but maybe I can at least cheer him up a little bit."

"I would like to look for help with my horse", said the horseman, and his horse neighed in agreement "but I do not even know where to ride."

"I wish I could use magic to make the rust disappear", sighed the magician "but I am afraid that such a spell does not exist."

"I only know how to play the hurdy-gurdy", explained the hurdy-gurdy man "but maybe the little windup-man can sit on my hurdy-gurdy."

"Help me to carry the windup-man to the circus tent, and I am sure we will have an idea!", shouted the dancer and ran in the direction of the old oak tree. The other artists followed her.

"Stop!", commanded the ringmaster, who suddenly was standing in front of the circus tent all by himself. But nobody turned around. He rushed behind the others.

When they arrived at the windup-man, they saw the Japanese bubble-artist next to the windup-man.

"Maybe my soap bubbles can save the windup-man", she explained. Then, she delicately poured out her shimmering elixir over the tin arms and legs.

***** 25. A miracle*** (1:10)**

The windup-man suddenly started to stretch and move, he rose from the grass and jumped to his feet. The soap bubbles had cured him! Joyfully, the windup-man and the dancer embraced each other. The hurdy-gurdy man happily started to play on his hurdy-gurdy and the clown joined with his nose flute, and the merry couple started dancing. With incredible ease, the windup-man whirled the dancer around and grinned triumphantly. The juggler began to throw colorful balls through the air along with the rhythm of the music, the magician let butterflies fly out of his top hat, the Japanese bubble-artist puffed shimmering soap bubbles in the air and the wild horseman galloped on his horse around his happy friends.

***** 26. The common dance *** (1:10)**

The ringmaster was standing aside, astonished, and was for the first time in a long while speechless. He had to admit that this could be a better finale of his circus show than he had ever imagined. Therefore, he needed each and every artist and had to accept that the dancer and the windup-man belonged together. Just at that moment, a huge soap bubble popped on the tip of his nose, the ringmaster swallowed his pride, entered the circle of his artists and danced with them, such that his big belly jumped up and down. The circus continued through the lands to the delight of many. Maybe it is going to come around here soon as well.

***** 27. The Circus II *** (2:20)**