



The Tin Soldier

Once upon a time, a clever toymaker made twenty-five tin soldiers out of the metal of one tin spoon. They were all alike except for the last one. There hadn't been enough tin, and he only had one leg. Nevertheless, he was as brave and proud as the others. When the soldiers were bought by a boy and taken to his house, the one-legged soldier made sure to play along with the rest. He always stood up straight and tall.

One toy in the boy's room caught the soldier's eye. High in a cardboard castle, there lived a pretty ballerina. She was more beautiful than anything the soldier had ever seen. Whoever made her, had positioned her like a ballet dancer. She was balanced perfectly on the toes of one foot, with her arms outstretched. The soldier was in love. But how could he ever hope to meet somebody who lived in a castle?

That night, he rolled away from the other toys and hid behind a small box. He had a perfect view of the ballerina. At midnight, the box burst open and up popped a Jack-in-the-box. He had mistakenly thought that the soldier was staring at him, and he became angry. He promised the tin soldier that he would get his revenge the next day.

When the boy came back into his room the following morning, the tin soldier was waiting for him on the windowsill. Unfortunately, a strong gust of wind blew him out of the window. He tumbled to the ground where he became wedged between two cobbles in the street. He saw his owner trying to find him, but soldiers do not cry out for help, so he remained silent.

After a while, it began to rain. Heavy raindrops loosened the soldier, and he began to float down the street. Two boys picked him up and placed him into a paper boat. He continued onward at a tremendous pace. Suddenly, he slipped between two planks of wood and dropped into the gutter. For the entire time, he thought about the beautiful ballerina and how he missed her.

A dirty sewer rat leapt from the darkness and demanded that the soldier pay him a toll to pass. The tin man held onto his musket and said nothing. Soldiers do not complain. Even though the rat chased him, he didn't say a word. Eventually, the bottom of the boat gave way, and he sank into the water. Before he could react, he was swallowed by a fish.

After a while, the fish was caught and taken to market. It was bought by the boy who first owned the tin soldier, and he was surprised to see him again when he prepared the fish that night. The boy carried him back to his room. The soldier was delighted to see that the ballerina was still there waiting for him.



As if by magic, or maybe it was the Jack-in-the-box getting his revenge, another gust of wind picked up the soldier and carried him into the fireplace. As the flames grew around him and his metal started to melt, he felt the heat of his love for the ballerina rising as well. But then, tragedy! Another gust of wind picked up his beloved and dropped her next to him.

When the servants cleaned the fire the next morning, all they found was a lump of tin, melted into the shape of a heart.

SUMMARY FOCUS

1. Why did the tin soldier only have one leg?
2. Who did the soldier meet first: the ballerina or the rat?
3. What happened after the soldier escaped the rat?
4. What was the first thing that happened to the tin soldier after he spoke to the Jack-in-the-box?
5. Why didn't the soldier speak to anybody on his journey?

VIPERS QUESTIONS

R

Who promised to get revenge on the soldier?

R

What did the boys put the soldier in to send him down the street?

V

Find and copy a word that tells you the Jack-in-the-box was wrong to think the soldier was staring at him.

V

Which word tells you that the soldier was happy to see the ballerina again?

I

What can you tell about the soldier by how he acts in the story?

Answers:

1. There hadn't been enough tin to make another
2. The ballerina
3. He was eaten by a fish
4. He fell out of the window
5. He didn't believe that soldiers should ask for help or shout out

R: The Jack-in-the-box

R: A paper boat

V: Mistakenly

V: Delighted

I: He is proud to be a soldier and doesn't want to do anything that soldiers aren't supposed to.