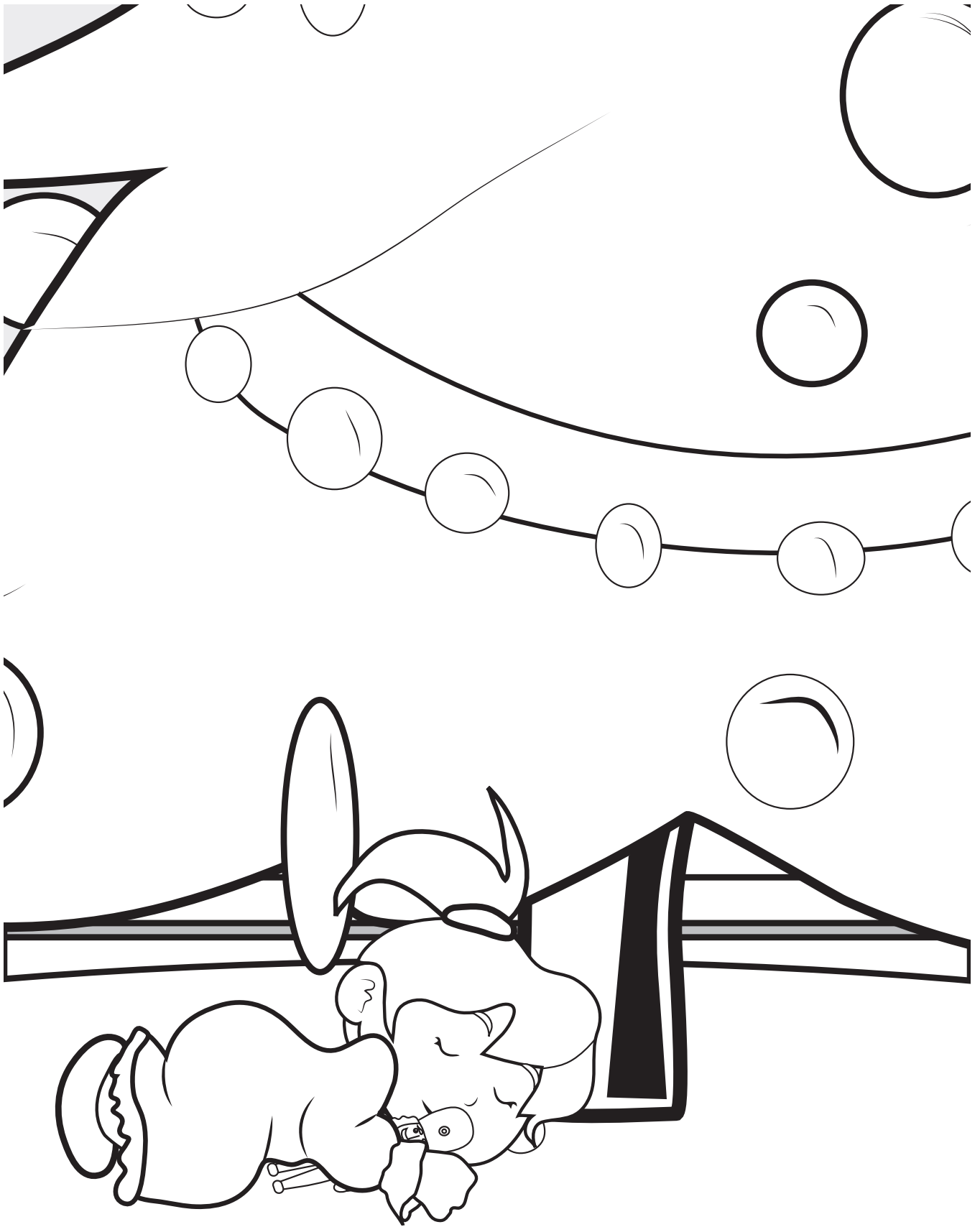




It was a cold Christmas night, and little Clara was helping her family prepare for their holiday party. All of their closest friends and family were invited! Clara and her brother Fritz were so excited, and they danced and pranced around the beautiful Christmas tree.



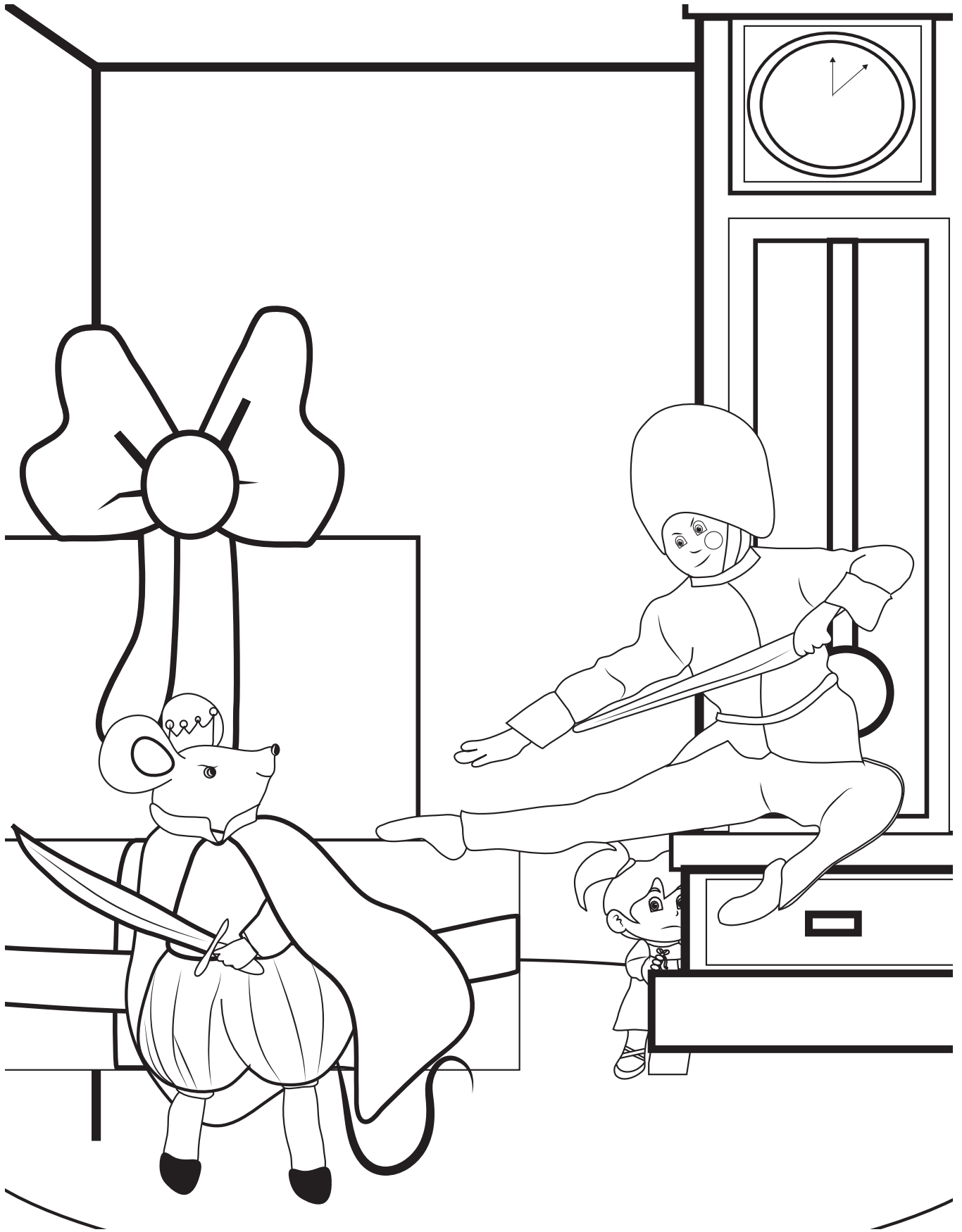
As guests began to arrive, the local toymaker, Godfather Drosselmeyer, arrived to bring gifts to the children. Godfather Drosselmeyer was a mysterious fellow, with a patch over one eye and unkempt hair, but all the children knew he was a good, kind person. He brought magical gifts for everyone – including a beautiful nutcracker for Clara.



The party guests danced and sang merrily into the wee hours of the morning. The children began to grow tired, and soon they were sent off to bed. Clara fell asleep under the Christmas tree with her new nutcracker in her arms.



Clara awoke to the sound of the clock striking midnight. When she opened her eyes, she was astonished – the room seemed to be growing! Suddenly, all the toys under the Christmas tree began coming to life, including Clara’s beloved nutcracker.



As the toys came to life, the room was stormed by enormous mice dressed as soldiers. They were led by a mean and mighty Mouse King. Clara watched as her brave nutcracker rounded up a group of tin soldiers and led them into battle against the mice.