

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> May 1931

Dear Diary,

It has been some time since I last wrote to you, but I am finding life increasingly difficult and find comfort in writing on your faded pages. Since the day my father went away, it has been hard forgetting about him and now there is nobody real to talk to. This leaves me with my own thoughts, and, of course, the automaton.

I have just returned from the streets of Paris. My father's notebook was stolen by this old man who owns a toy booth in the station (admittedly, I was in the process of stealing a wind-up mouse from him). I chased him doggedly through the city until I realised he was leading me through a graveyard. If truth be told, I very nearly turned back at that point – I do not like graveyards, with their ancient stone epitaphs and dark shadows.

Anyway, even though I had successfully followed him all that way, he refused to give the notebook back to me and slammed the door rudely in my face. I guess, if I'm honest, it is difficult to hold a grudge against the old guy: I have actually been stealing clockwork from him for several weeks, ever since Uncle Claude disappeared.

Oh, that's right, I haven't relayed that story to you yet – it has just been too difficult to even commit to paper. After my father's passing, Uncle Claude took me to the station where he taught me to fix the clocks and climb through the vents. If I did something wrong, he would hit me hard on the hand, but it didn't bother me. He would often go out for a drink. One night, he never came back. Since he has been gone, I have been doing his jobs so I don't get caught – I was eavesdropping on the local station inspector a few weeks ago and I heard him say that they lock stray children in a little jail in the station. They are then taken to an orphanage. I don't want to go to an orphanage. So, in order to survive and live freely, I move around

the vents, fixing all the clocks and I steal Uncle Claude's pay-checks so nothing's suspicious.

A few days after my uncle's disappearance, I began to wonder where he had gone. I took my chances and ran for the entrance – I was hoping not to get caught. Walking through the streets of Paris, I was confused: I didn't know where to go. Turning in all directions, I finally came across the burnt down nursery. My heart was pounding. Looking around, I caught sight of the automaton in the corner (it was battered and missing pieces). I knew my father had wanted to fix it, had spent his last few hours on this earth trying to fix it; I knew I had to continue his work and, in a way, make amends for my part in his death: he would never have been at that museum if it weren't for my insistence on him fixing the mechanical man.

Despite how heavy it was, I carried the automaton home. Dragging it into my room, I put him by the wall and began to repaint. Splashing paint all over it, I finally finished. I felt so happy that I brought what was once my father's back to life. Adding the finishing touches, I gave him a brand new arm to hold his pen. Now I need to see the message that I believe my father has left for me. But to do that, I need the notebook (and I need the cogs and coils from the toy booth). Without both, I am stuck, hopeless, perpetually alone.

As you can see, life is hard now, sneaking about, trying not to get caught by the station inspector and now by the old man. Seeing families coming and going makes me think about how much fun my father and I had together – I feel that bringing the automaton back to life will give me some semblance of the world I used to know. But first, I have to get that notebook back. I will try again tomorrow. I have to!

I will write again in a few days when, hopefully, I have reclaimed my possession and ignited the spark of life in the automaton.