



Part I



On the morning of his sixth birthday, Christian got many gifts. But he was most excited about one particular package. He knew what was in it before he even unwrapped it. He'd wanted it for so long. Yes, his room was filled with stuffed animals and spinning tops, Mikado pick-up sticks, a train, marbles, and so much more. But he didn't have the things inside this box. They were . . .

“**TIN SOLDIERS!** Look how perfect they are,” the boy cheered. “They almost look real!”



Christian took the soldiers out of the box one by one and placed them in two long rows. They stood neatly in line, looking splendid in their red-and-white uniforms and jaunty blue caps. The soldiers looked identical. But one soldier was different: he was missing part of one leg.

“You’re the strongest and bravest of them all,” whispered Christian when he put **THE SOLDIER** next to the others. “Because you can stand on one leg all day. That’s way harder than standing on two legs.”

