Hugo often thought of his notebook. Had the old man really burned it? He thought of the mechanical man. His father, when he was alive, had called it an automaton. They had worked together, late into most evenings, ‘*restoring it to its former glory’*, his father had said. But it was still a mystery to Hugo. What was it for? What did it do?

Over the next few weeks he and the old man’s granddaughter, Isabelle, became firm friends. One morning, when the station was at its busiest, Isabelle came to find him. Commuters hustled and bustled and in the daily commotion Isabelle became confused. She dodged a man carrying a huge parcel and then another too busy to look where he was going. She lost her balance. She fell, hitting the hard ground with a cry of anguish. Hugo ran to her. She took his outstretched hand in hers. And then he noticed it; the curiously-shaped key on the chain around her neck. Was it? Yes! It was heart-shaped. Could it really be?

Up in his apartment, hidden away in the unknown parts of the railway station, Isabelle watched breathless as Hugo carefully inserted the key into the slot on the automaton’s back. It fit! He turned it once, twice, and then began to wind it as he wound the clocks in the station. When he could turn no more, he took a step back and waited…

Slowly, without a sound, the machine began to move. Its hand, with the pen gripped firmly, scratched across the page in front of it. Strange marks appeared on the paper. The children watched entranced. What was it drawing? As they observed a strange image formed before their eyes – a moon… with a face… and a rocket stuck in its eye!

Hugo recognised the drawing. It was a scene that his father had described from his favourite childhood movie. This was a message from his father. But what did it mean?

That’s when the children realised the mechanical man hadn’t finished. Hugo watched as one more time the mechanical man dipped the pen into the ink. Then it moved its hand into position and… signed a name.

*George Méliès.*

“That’s Papa George’s name!” said Isabelle. She looked completely confused. “Why did your father’s machine sign Papa George’s name?”