

# The Christmas Carving

Book, Lyrics & Music  
by  
Chuck Puckett

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### **Setting**

The village of Nordovik, in the Far North country.

### **Time**

Long ago.

### **Cast of Characters**

**Nicholas Walken.** A woodcarver and toymaker, hard-hearted and avaricious.

**Kristen Bergen.** The mayor's daughter and ex-romantic interest of Nicholas.

**Stranger.** A stranger to Nordovik, mysterious and magical.

**Mariel.** His travelling companion, impish and of very questionable morals.

**Jan Thorenson.** A young man, Nicholas' best friend.

**Frieda Baldersen.** Jan's fiancé and Kristen's best friend. Somewhat of an airhead.

**Mayor Bergen.** The mayor of Nordovik, pompous but good-hearted.

**Dame Hilda Bergen.** The mayor's wife, level-headed and protective, even if a bit bossy.

**Waldo Bergen.** His teenage son, overly fond of the dinner table.

**Sonja Bergen.** His young daughter, also not unfamiliar with the dinner table.

**Herr Geldlieber.** A merchant, the richest man in town. He is greedy, cruel and heartless.

**Dame Walken.** Nicholas' widowed mother, in ill health, but wanting only happiness for her son.

**Fritz.** Geldlieber's coachman.

**Villagers and children**

## Musical Numbers

### Act I

#### Scene 1.

"Easy To Find". *Stranger, Mariel*

"Christmas In Our Town". *Jan, Waldo, Dame Bergen, Kristen, Chorus*

"When He Was a Lad". *Jan, Waldo, Mariel, Nicholas*

"A Toy By Nicholas". *Children's Chorus*

"Christmas In Our Town (Reprise)". *Chorus*

#### Scene 2.

"What I See In Him". *Kristen*

"Perfect Stranger". *Jan, Frieda, Stranger, Mariel*

"No Magic Needed". *Stranger*

#### Scene 4.

"Advantageous". *Stranger, Mariel, Geldlieber*

"No Magic Needed (Reprise)". *Stranger*

#### Scene I-5.

"No Magic Needed (Dance)"

"How Did We Fail To See?". *Nicholas, Kristen*

#### Scene I-7.

"All In An Afternoon". *Nicholas*

### Act II

#### Scene 1.

"Ribbons and Bows". *Chorus*

"My Life Is My Work". *Nicholas, Jan, Frieda*

#### Scene 2.

"Traveling Light". *Stranger, Mariel, Geldlieber*

"We Can Do Without the Men". *Kristen, Jan, Frieda*

#### Scene II-3.

"When the Snow Lies". *Nicholas, Chorus*

#### Scene II-4.

"Flying Out of Time". *Chorus*

## Scene Synopsis

### Act I

Scene 1. Nordovik village square, at night, 4 days before Christmas

Scene 2. Village square, the next morning

Scene 3. Walken home that night

Scene 4. Village square, the next morning

Scene 5. Village square, that afternoon

Scene 6. On the path to the Walken home, that evening

Scene 7. Walken home, immediately following

### Act II

Scene 1. Village Square, Christmas Eve morning

Scene 2. Village Square, that afternoon

Scene 3. Just outside the village, that night

Scene 4. Village Square, near midnight

ACT I

I.1.1 "Overture"

SCENE 1

The village of Nordovik, a snow covered scene. A torch pole is up center, and a bench sits at its base. A butcher shop and blacksmith shop stage are to one side of the town center. On the other side is a shop that proudly proclaims "Geldlieber's Toy and Gift Shoppe", in front of which is a bench. These buildings flank the town gate, up center. Just above the gate is a clock tower, which prominently displays "6:00". It is evening and a torchlight flickers. Lights shine in the shop windows. As music fades, shoppers hurry back and forth from shop to shop, some talking to each other. A cloaked STRANGER enters through gate at back and strides down center. His elfin companion, MARIEL, warily follows him.

MARIEL

This is the coldest place we've ever been. Speaking of which, where are we this time?

STRANGER

Mariel, you may die content, knowing that you have set your feet in the village of Nordovik.

MARIEL

You must be joking. I mean, I'm frozen half to death already, and I am definitely *not* content. So this is Nordovik. Could we could get any further off the beaten path?

STRANGER

My dear, you must learn to tone down your enthusiasm. Nordovik *is* in the north country, it *is* the dead of winter, and all things in consideration, we should expect to suffer a small chill.

MARIEL

You're right about the suffering. Brrr.

STRANGER

History will denote this period as the "Little Ice Age", a time of particularly frigid climate, caused by certain volcanic effects. The really amusing thing is that most people think that he caused it  
**(points upward)**  
as some sort of reprisal for human transgressions.

MARIEL

He likes his little jokes, doesn't he?

**Thunder rolls threateningly. Some VILLAGERS look up in surprise.**

MARIEL (CONT'D)

**(cowering a little)**

Oh, I like them, too!

STRANGER

Please try to be more professional, my dear. We are here on a mission.

**STRANGER snaps his finger, and all the VILLAGERS freeze. Music plays a tremolo chord underneath.**

I.1.2 "Easy To Find"

MARIEL

Nice trick.

STRANGER

I have friends in very high places.

I am looking for a man

THOUGH I DO NOT KNOW HIS NAME  
NOR THE COLOR OF HIS EYES  
NOR HIS SHAPE OR VOICE OR SIZE  
BUT I'LL KNOW HIM JUST THE SAME

MARIEL

YOU ARE LOOKING FOR A MAN  
BUT YOU HAVEN'T GOT A CLUE  
NOT A SOLITARY TRACE  
TO THE FEATURES OF HIS FACE

STRANGER

BUT I'LL KNOW THEM WHEN I DO

He'll be so easy to find

A MAN OF HIS KIND

BOTH  
HE'LL BE SO EASY TO SEE  
SINCE HE MUST BE

STRANGER  
SOMEWHERE

MARIEL  
OUT THERE

BOTH  
I SWEAR

STRANGER  
THIS MYSTERY MAN  
HAS GOT TO BE SOMEWHERE

As they sing, they look closely at each VILLAGER. MARIEL checks their teeth, STRANGER turns faces to see in better light. One VILLAGER is turned completely around from the friend he's been talking to.

MARIEL  
YOU ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE  
BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHO IT IS  
THERE'S A BILLION SOULS ON EARTH  
BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE WHO'S WORTH  
THE ANSWER TO YOUR QUIZ

STRANGER  
IT'S A PERSON NEAR TO US  
WHO WILL BE THE CHOSEN ONE  
AND THOUGH WE MAY HAVE TO TRY  
EVERY SINGLE PASSERBY

BOTH  
STILL WE'RE BOUND TO GET IT DONE

HE'LL GIVE US A SIGN 'Cause he'll be easy to find

STRANGER  
AND HE'LL BE EASY TO SPOT  
WITH THE DESCRIPTION I HAVE GOT-

MARIEL  
(spoken)  
Wait. You have a description?

STRANGER takes out a small book

STRANGER

So to speak.

THUS IT IS WRITTEN,  
"HE HAS NO PEER,  
WHEN IT COMES TO CARVING TOYS  
YET CHILDREN RUN FROM HIM  
WHEN STARES AT THEM  
WITH HIS OH, SO BALEFUL EYES  
HIS FACE IS STERN, HIS GREED IS GREAT  
WITH THE LOVE OF GOLD HE'S SMITTEN"  
THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO STATE  
THAT'S ALL THAT'S HEREIN WRITTEN

MARIEL

YOU KNOW...  
YOU READ THE STRANGEST BOOKS

STRANGER

It's a real page-turner.

BOTH

WE ARE SEARCHING FOR A MAN  
WHO COULD BE MOST ANYWHERE

STRANGER

HE COULD LIVE HERE IN THE TOWN

MARIEL

IN THE COUNTRY-SIDE AROUND

BOTH

MAYBE IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE

BUT HE'LL BE EASY TO FIND  
A MAN OF HIS KIND  
HE'LL BE SO EASY TO KNOW  
I'M SURE HE'S SO  
DISTINCT

**They look at each other**

WE THINK

HE'LL SEEM TO BEAM  
LIKE A BEACON IN THE SNOW  
WE'D FIND HIM IF WE WERE BLIND  
HE'LL BE EASY FOR THE TWO OF US TO FIND

**STRANGER claps his hands, a small  
THUNDER is heard, and VILLAGERS  
unfreeze. The one who was  
completely turned around is now  
gesticulating to no one.**



**MAYOR BERGEN, his wife HILDA,  
daughters KRISTEN and SONJA, son  
WALDO, and JAN THORENSEN enter.**

WALDO  
Father! Who is that?  
**(points to STRANGER)**

MAYOR BERGEN  
It's not polite to point, Waldo.  
**(points at STRANGER)**  
Ho, Stranger! Welcome to the village of Nordovik!

STRANGER  
Good evening to you, Lord Mayor.

MAYOR BERGEN  
You know me, good sir? Have we met? I'm afraid you  
have the advantage of me. What with the passing  
years, and the duties of my office, my memory is not  
what it used to be.

DAME BERGEN  
My dear, your memory was never what it used to be.

MAYOR BERGEN  
Hilda!

STRANGER  
No, Lord Mayor, we have not met. But the fame of  
Nordovik, and your fame as well, are renown  
throughout the kingdom.

MAYOR BERGEN  
Do you hear that, children? The whole world has  
heard of me, that is, of Nordovik.

WALDO  
Yes, papa.

STRANGER  
My card, Lord Mayor.

**Business card appears in his hand.**

MAYOR BERGEN  
**(reading)**  
"Bacchanalia, Regalia, Parades, Promenades,  
Festivals, Fairs, Carnivals Extraordinaire.  
Christmas our Specialty. His Majesty's Royal Holiday  
Examiner" My, my, that *is* quite an odd occupation,  
Herr...?"

STRANGER

Quite happily at your service, Mayor. And may I introduce my traveling companion and Assistant Examiner, Mariel. Naturally, we are here to observe the event for which Nordovik is most famous: your celebration of Christmas.

MAYOR BERGEN

Yes, well, naturally. And may I introduce my wife Hilda, and these are our children, Sonja and Waldo. And this is our eldest, Kristen.

KRISTEN

You're both most kindly welcome to our village.

STRANGER

Thank you. Mayor, would it be possible to observe your townsfolk as they hark and herald and so forth?

MAYOR BERGEN

Right this way, sir. The annual Four Days of Christmas Processional should begin any moment.

MARIEL

Four Days of Christmas. I thought it was twelve?

MAYOR BERGEN

What a marvelous idea! Hilda, make a note of that. Now what exactly had you heard of me?

**The STRANGER and the MAYOR cross to stand beneath the torch. More VILLAGERS begin to enter.**

WALDO

So, you and your master have heard of our celebration.

MARIEL

Master? Oh, him. Yes, everybody knows about uh, what was the occasion?

JAN

Christmas.

SONJA

You do know that it's Christmas, don't you?

MARIEL

Christmas, Halloween, Leif Erickson Day: when you're a holiday examiner, they all sort of run together.

KRISTEN

Surely everyone has heard of Christmas in Nordovik.

I.1.3 "Christmas In Our Town"

WHEN WINTER NIGHTS GROW LONGER  
AND DARKER THAN BEFORE  
THE STARS ARE ICY TORCHES  
AND WIND BLOWS THROUGH THE DOOR

JAN  
THE SNOW PILES UP IN MOUNTAINS  
AND NEVER EVER MELTS

KRISTEN, WALDO & JAN  
JUST THEN IN NORDOVIK  
IS WHEN CHRISTMAS CHEER IS FELT

CHORUS  
WHEN CHRISTMAS CHEER IS FELT

FIRES ARE LIT, THE TREES ARE GREEN  
THE WREATHS SECURELY HANGING  
UPON THE HEARTH THE CIDER STEEPS  
AND CHRISTMAS BELLS ARE CLANGING  
WE RAISE OUR VOICES LOUD IN SONG  
OF YULETIDE UNDERTAKING  
JOY TO PEOPLE, ONE AND ALL  
THE NEWS IS QUICKLY BREAKING

CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN,  
WHEN THE CANDLES BURN SO BRIGHT  
THE HOLLY HANGING DOWN,  
AND TREES SHINE IN THE NIGHT  
CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN,  
AMONG OUR KITH AND KIN  
WE'VE NEVER BEEN AS HAPPY,  
AND NEVER WILL AGAIN

KRISTEN, SONJA & WALDO  
MOTHER BAKES AND BAKES AND BAKES  
'TILL THE STOVE IS ALMOST CRIMSON  
SHE DOESN'T MIND THE TIME IT TAKES  
IT'S HER SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MISSION

DAME BERGEN  
THE CHILDREN HOLD THEIR BREATH TO SEE  
WHAT THEY'VE ANTICIPATED  
THE GIFTS WAIT WRAPPED BENEATH THE TREE  
TO BE EMANCIPATED

CHORUS  
CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN,  
WHERE THE SPIRIT NEVER DIES  
THE SINGERS NEVER CEASE  
SINGING CAROLS TO THE SKIES  
CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN,

AMONG OUR KITH AND KIN  
WE'VE NEVER BEEN AS HAPPY,  
AND NEVER WILL AGAIN

STRANGER

It almost sounds as if you have Christmas all year  
long.

MAYOR BERGEN

I've never thought about it. But it seems a fine  
thought now that I'm thinking it!

KRISTEN

THIS TIME OF YEAR IS ALWAYS BLESSED  
BY CHILDREN AND THEIR PLEASURE  
THEY HAVE NO TIME TO TAKE A REST  
TILL THEY'VE TASTED EVERY TREASURE

KRISTEN & CHILDREN

OUR FATHERS AND THEIR FATHERS TOO  
HAVE ALWAYS LOVED THIS SEASON  
THERE'S HOPE AND JOY FOR ME AND YOU  
WE NEED NO OTHER REASON

**During chorus, KRISTEN leads  
children in a circle dance.**

CHORUS

CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN  
IS A THING OF RARE DELIGHTS  
WE LOVE THE CHRISTMAS SOUNDS!  
WE LOVE THE CHRISTMAS SIGHTS!  
CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN  
WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
WE WISH IT WOULD GO ON AND ON  
AND NEVER EVER END  
THE JOY WE FEEL AT CHRISTMAS TIME,  
WE WISH WOULD NEVER END

**The crowd exits, children  
clustered about KRISTEN. JAN,  
WALDO, MAYOR, STRANGER, MARIEL, &  
DAME BERGEN remain.**

STRANGER

Really, Mayor Bergen, the tales of your town don't  
begin to do justice to the reality. I've never seen  
such exuberance!

MAYOR BERGEN

I'm so pleased that you are so pleased. I've been  
trying for years to get the king to give some  
attention to Nordovik. Oh, the trials I've endured,  
the pains I've suffered.

DAME BERGEN

The pains you're going to suffer unless you get yourself home this instant! You promised to help string the garland, remember?

**(starts off, then stands and waits)**

MAYOR BERGEN

Ahem. Well, duty calls. Until I see you again, Herr... I'm afraid I never caught your name, my friend. You are...?

**STRANGER takes MAYOR's arm and escorts him off after DAME BERGEN**

STRANGER

Undoubtedly, certain very influential people I know in the capital will be very interested to hear of the goings-on in Nordovik.

MAYOR BERGEN

Really? I thought so. I've always thought so.

**They exit.**

JAN

That's an odd sort of fellow, don't you think?

MARIEL

You would never believe how odd.

WALDO

There's definitely something different about him.

SONJA

Of course, there's something a little odd about papa, too.

JAN

There's something a little odd about everybody.

**NICHOLAS enters, carrying a sack.**

JAN (CONT'D)

And here's one of the oddest of all. Nicholas!

NICHOLAS

Jan! Who is your friend?

MARIEL

My name is Mariel. I'm a visitor to your town.

NICHOLAS

More visitors means more customers, so welcome, Mariel. And how is everyone this fine day?

WALDO  
Ready for Christmas!

SONJA  
Me, too!

JAN  
And you, Nicholas? Filled with the Christmas spirit?

NICHOLAS  
**(indicating a pouch at his belt)**  
I will be when this is filled with gold. I favor a Christmas spirit of the golden variety.

**MAYOR BERGEN enters. DAME BERGEN sticks her head onstage.**

DAME BERGEN  
See if Geldlieber has any nice garland.

**She exits. MAYOR starts toward Geldlieber's, sees WALDO and others and joins them.**

WALDO  
Nicholas Walken. Is there nothing we can do to get your mind off money?

SONJA  
**(good-naturedly)**  
Not likely.

MAYOR BERGEN  
No, it's not very likely I'm afraid.

NICHOLAS  
But you're mistaken. Just give me enough of it so I'll never have to think about it again.

**He sits, takes out a toy and carves. MARIEL displays interest.**

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)  
Now, don't get me wrong. I love Christmas. Why, I sell more toys at Christmas than all the rest of the year combined.

WALDO  
This man is hopeless.

JAN  
But he hasn't always been hopeless.

I.1.4 "When He Was a Lad"

JAN, SONJA & WALDO  
WHEN HE WAS A LAD HE WAS A GLAD LAD  
BRINGING JOY TO EVERYONE HE COULD  
AND NOT SO LONG AGO

MAYOR BERGEN  
THE CHILDREN LOVED HIM SO

MARIEL  
FOR THE TOYS THAT HE COULD CARVE FROM WOOD?

MAYOR, WALDO, SONJA & JAN  
YES, FOR THE TOYS THAT HE COULD CARVE FROM WOOD.

MARIEL  
**(looking closely at NICHOLAS)**  
WHAT COULD EVER HAPPEN  
TO MAKE HIM GO ASTRAY?  
WHAT TRAUMA FROM HIS CHILDHOOD  
COULD MAKE HIM BE THIS WAY?

MAYOR, WALDO, SONJA & JAN  
THERE'S A STORY HERE TO TELL  
BUT NONE CAN SAY FOR SURE  
THE ONLY THING THAT'S CERTAIN:  
THERE SEEMS TO BE NO CURE  
ALL HE LIKES IS MONEY  
AND ALL HE WANTS IS MORE

MARIEL  
DON'T YOU FEEL UNEASY  
BY TREATING HIM THIS WAY?  
HE'S SITTING RIGHT BESIDE YOU  
AND HEARING ALL YOU SAY

MAYOR, WALDO, SONJA & JAN  
HE'LL KEEP CARVING ANYHOW  
JUST LIKE HE DOES EACH DAY  
AND COUNTING UP HIS MONEY  
AND SOCKING IT AWAY  
TRUTH IS HE IS HOPELESS AND  
THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO SAY.

ALL  
AS THE TWIG IS BENT  
A BOY GROWS UP NO DOUBT  
AND SOMEWHERE HE WAS TWISTED  
AND TURNED MOST INSIDE OUT  
NOW HE'S LIKE A PRETZEL  
WITH A SOUL LIKE SAUERKRAUT

HE IS OLDER NOW, BUT NONE THE WISER

HIS LOVE OF GOLD IS REALLY RATHER SAD  
FOLKS ARE HEARD TO SAY  
THEY WISH HIM FAR AWAY  
IN OSLO OR IN MOSCOW OR IN BAGHDAD

NICHOLAS, YOU NEED TO KNOW  
HOW CHRISTMAS REALLY MAKES US SO  
EXCITED AND DELIGHTED AND ENTHUSED  
EACH TOY YOU CARVE'S A SPECIAL THING  
AND IF YOU KNEW THE JOY THEY BRING  
YOU WOULDN'T ACT SO FOOLISH AND CONFUSED  
YOU REALLY WOULDN'T BE CONFUSED

MAYOR BERGEN

The garland!

**He exits into Geldlieber's.**

NICHOLAS

It's you who are confused. I know what I'm doing.

WALDO

That's good.

SONJA

No one else has a clue.

JAN

Nicholas, you've got to get your mind off money and focus on the really important things in life. Like fun and laughter.

WALDO

And food.

JAN

And dancing and singing.

SONJA

And food.

JAN

And poetry and music.

WALDO & SONJA

And food!

**JAN and NICHOLAS give them a look.**

JAN

And don't forget Kristen, Nicholas.



NICHOLAS

How could I? You remind me of her every time I see you. But what good does it do to remember? I have responsibilities, and I haven't got time to think about romance. Or Kristen. Understand?

JAN

Sorry. Pardon me. Just trying to help my friend.

NICHOLAS

You could help much more by avoiding the subject of Kristen. There are more important things in life than love and happiness.

WALDO & SONJA

Like food!

NICHOLAS

I fully intend to have love *and* happiness. But first I'll get enough money to afford them.

**(exits)**

JAN

I'll never understand how a person can believe he'd ever be happy when he's so busy being miserable.

**STRANGER enters.**

SONJA

I'll never understand how such a miserable man can make such wonderful toys.

WALDO

I mean, he's the finest woodcarver around.

STRANGER

Who's the finest woodcarver around?

JAN

Nicholas Walken.

MARIEL

A young man who was just here. A woodcarving, *toymaking* young man.

**STRANGER eyebrows. MARIEL nods.**

STRANGER

Does this young man by any chance have an overwhelming desire for money?

JAN

Overwhelming is an understatement.

WALDO

Maybe so, but I don't know anybody who doesn't love his toys.

**KRISTEN & CHILDREN enter singing.**

KRISTEN AND CHILDREN

WE'VE NEVER BEEN AS HAPPY,  
AND NEVER WILL AGAIN

PIPPI

Let's sing it again, Kristen!

SYLVIE

Please!

KRISTEN

Not now. It must be nearly everyone's bedtime.

ILSA

Not for hours.

**KRISTEN looks at ILSA**

ILSA (CONT'D)

Well, not for a few more minutes, anyway.

WALDO

Kristen, guess who was just here?

SONJA

It was Nicholas!

JAN

Sonja! Sorry, Kristen.

KRISTEN

That's all right, Jan. Did you hear that, children? Nicholas was just here.

**(to STRANGER)**

Nicholas is Nordovik's master toymaker. All the children love him.

KARL

Nicholas? Well, I guess. If you say so, Kristen.

INGRID

He used to be nice, but now he's such a grouch!

KRISTEN

Ingrid!

INGRID

Well, he is.

PIPPI

I say, God bless Nicholas!

KRISTEN

That's a much kinder thought, Pippi.

PIPPIN

At least until after Christmas.

I.1.5 "A Toy By Nicholas"

CHILDREN

OH, GIVE ME A TOY BY NICHOLAS  
A JEWEL, A TREASURE, A PLUM  
THERE'S NOTHING BETTER AT CHRISTMAS TIME  
THAN A TOY BY THAT SON OF A GUN

GIRLS

THE DOLLS ARE REAL, THEY ALMOST SQUEAL  
THERE FACES ARE ALWAYS SO PRETTY  
IF WE SHOULD MISS THE DOLLY'S KISS  
WOULD BE A CERTAIN PITY

**TOWNSPEOPLE begin to re-enter.**

BOYS

THE BOATS AND SHIPS ARE ALL EQUIPPED  
WITH SAILORS AND RUDDERS AND LADDERS  
IF THEY SHOULD FAIL TO EVER SAIL  
IT REALLY WOULDN'T MATTER!

CHORUS

OH GIVE ME A TOY BY NICHOLAS  
A TOY HE CARVED WITH HIS BLADE  
THERE'S NOTHING BETTER AT CHRISTMAS TIME  
THAN A TOY THAT RASCAL MADE

CHILDREN

THOUGH WE MUST ADMIT WHEN WE THINK OF IT  
HE'S STINGY AND ALWAYS AT WORK  
BUT HIS TOYS ARE GREAT, SO WHAT THE HECK  
WHO CARES IF HE'S A JERK?

CHORUS

HE CARVES AND CHIPS AND SCRAPES AND CUTS  
TILL THE TOYS ARE BRIGHT AND DANDY  
THERE ARE NO IF'S OR ANDS OR BUTS  
THERE'S NO ONE QUITE AS HANDY  
HIS FATHER AND HIS FATHER, TOO  
WERE MEN WHO CARVED WITH VISION  
THEIR TOYS ARE JUST THE BEST, IT'S TRUE  
THEY'RE PART OF OUR TRADITION

CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN

IS A THING OF RARE DELIGHTS  
WE LOVE THE CHRISTMAS SOUNDS!  
WE LOVE THE CHRISTMAS SIGHTS!  
CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN  
WITH OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
WE WISH IT WOULD GO ON AND ON  
AND NEVER EVER END  
THE JOY WE FEEL AT CHRISTMAS TIME,  
WE WISH WOULD NEVER END

**BLACKOUT**

I.1.6 "Christmas in Our Town" (Scene Change)

SCENE 2

Village scene, next morning. The clock reads "8:00". The SHOPKEEPERS and some VILLAGERS busy in and out the doors. They leave the scene as NICHOLAS, DAME WALKEN, and HERR GELDLIEBER come out of his shop doorway, followed by FRITZ. Nicholas carries a sack.

GELDLIEBER

I'm very sorry, Nicholas. I've already got more toys than I can sell. I don't need anymore of yours. And I've already extended more credit than I should.

DAME WALKEN

But, Herr Geldlieber, surely you could buy a few toys! You must know that things have been, well, a little hard for us.

GELDLIEBER

Hmm. I suppose I could give you, say, three coppers. For the whole bag.

NICHOLAS

The whole bag! Why, you- Come on, mother. We'll sell the toys somewhere else.

GELDLIEBER

Very resourceful, Nicholas. And pray, when you do sell them, please be so kind as to come back 'round here and pay your debts. Now I really must get back to my customers. My paying customers. Fritz, would you escort the Walkens away from my store.

**(exits into his store)**

FRITZ

Yes, Herr Geldlieber. You heard him. Move along. Please? You know how he is.

**FRITZ looks over his shoulder into store. NICHOLAS glares at him, then DAME WALKEN pulls him away.**

DAME WALKEN

Nicholas. We can't afford to anger Geldlieber. We owe him too much money.

NICHOLAS

I'll be able to sell some things-

DAME WALKEN

He should be selling them. In his store.

NICHOLAS

His store! Ha! You know well enough that he will never do any such thing. It galls me we've had to rely on him for credit in the first place.

DAME WALKEN

He was your father's partner.

NICHOLAS

Then he should deal more honorably with my father's widow. He cheated my father and now he owns the shop they built together. Anyway, it's better that the Walken family starve than to beg favors from the likes of Geldlieber.

DAME WALKEN

Pride makes a very unsatisfying meal, Nicholas. Your father had such a pride. You have more than just his hands. You have his stubborn head as well.

NICHOLAS

The Walken name once meant a great deal around here.

DAME WALKEN

It still does! And why is that? Because you *did* inherit more than your father's pride. You inherited his talent.

NICHOLAS

It's nothing to boast about. I'm just a woodcarver.

**They start off. KRISTEN enters,  
and they run into each other.**

KRISTEN

Dame Walken! Excuse me. Good day to you.

**NICHOLAS is continuing off.**

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

And you too, Nicholas.

**NICHOLAS turns back to KRISTEN.**

DAME WALKEN

Good day to you, Kristen. Nicholas, don't you have a greeting for Kristen?

NICHOLAS

Of course. Greetings, Kristen. Mother, we really must be on our way.

DAME WALKEN

It's not necessary to go right now, Nikky.

**(to KRISTEN)**

How is Christmas at the Bergen household?

KRISTEN

Like it is every year. Papa is more pompous than ever, Mama is cooking more than ever, and Waldo and Sonia, well, there is *more* of them than ever.

DAME WALKEN

But what about you, Kristen? You're the Mayor's daughter, you must be involved in everything. Parties! Dances!

KRISTEN

**(looking quickly at NICHOLAS)**

Oh, the parties. And the dances! Just one right after another, I can hardly tell them apart. Just one continuous Christmas celebration, that's me!

NICHOLAS

Mother, the clock? We must go. Kristen surely has lots of things she'd rather be doing than standing in the cold.

KRISTEN

Cold? No, not with all that running from one party to the next. No, no, I'm not cold at all.

DAME WALKEN

You look a little flushed, dear.

NICHOLAS

There, you see. And I am cold, and I've got too much work still undone. Good day, Kristen.

**(exits)**

KRISTEN

**(to NICHOLAS' retreating backside)**

Goodbye, Nicholas. Merry Christmas.

DAME WALKEN

I apologize for my son, Kristen.

KRISTEN

There's no need.

FRIEDA

**(entering)**

Kristen! I've been looking all over Nordovik for you. Good morning, Dame Walken.

DAME WALKEN

Good morning, Frieda. Well, I must catch up with my wayward son. Good day, girls.

**(exits)**

FRIEDA

Where have you been? We haven't much time, I've got to choose Jan's gift. He'll be by here any minute.

KRISTEN

Christmas will be here any minute. Why do you always wait until the last minute for everything?

FRIEDA

What? And spoil the surprise? If I had known what I was getting Jan a month ago, I'd be tired of it by now. This way, we both get to be surprised.

KRISTEN

The surprising thing is that you almost make sense.

FRIEDA

I always almost make sense. And so... what are you getting Nicholas?

KRISTEN

Get Nicholas? You know we wouldn't- How could you ever suggest such a silly idea?

FRIEDA

It's perfectly natural to give gifts to old friends.

KRISTEN

We were friends once.

FRIEDA

You were more than friends once.

KRISTEN

Nicholas hardly speaks to me. You should have seen him just now. He barely acknowledges my existence.

FRIEDA

Talk about being silly. Nicholas is just worried about his mother. And his carvings. And his money.

KRISTEN

And everything else in life but me! And if that's what he wants, that's just fine.

FRIEDA

Just fine?



KRISTEN

No, it's not fine. It's awful. It's horrible. If I were a sensible girl, I'd just forget him and find someone else. It's not like I couldn't, you know.

FRIEDA

It's just that you wouldn't, you know?

I.2.1 "What I See In Him"

KRISTEN

WHAT I SEE IN HIM  
WHAT I SEE IN HIM  
IS HARD TO SAY IN WORDS  
WHAT I SEE IN HIM  
IS SOMETIMES DARK AND DIM  
AND MOSTLY SO ABSURD  
HE IS DIFFICULT AND CROSS  
WHEN HE DOESN'T GET HIS WAY  
HE SUFFERS HARDLY ANY PAIN  
WHEN I AM GONE AWAY

WHY WOULD I STAY WITH HIM  
WHY SHOULD I STAY WITH HIM  
THE REASONS ARE NOT PLAIN  
SHOULD I STAY WITH HIM?  
WHY NOT STRAY FROM HIM?  
TO STAY SEEMS SO INSANE  
YET THERE'S SOMETHING IN HIS SOUL  
I KNOW WITH ALL MY HEART  
THAT MAKES ME FALL IN LOVE AGAIN  
EACH TIME WE FALL APART

AND WE FALL APART  
SO OFTEN IT SEEMS  
THAT I CAN'T HOLD HIM ANYWHERE  
BUT SOMEWHERE IN MY DREAMS

DOES HE STILL KNOW ME?  
WHAT'S HERE INSIDE OF ME?  
IT SEEMS SO LONG AGO  
HE MIGHT STILL LOVE ME  
THERE MIGHT BE LOVE FOR ME  
BUT WILL IT EVER SHOW?  
AND WHEN OUR PATHS ARE WOVEN  
LIKE THREADS UPON THE LOOM  
THEN WILL THE LOVE HE HIDES INSIDE  
EVER COME TO BLOOM?

WILL THE DAY EVER COME  
WHEN THE THINGS I HAVE SEEN  
AND WANT TO LOVE IN HIM  
WILL THEY EVER COME TO BE?

WHAT WILL BE WILL BE  
NO MATTER WHAT I SEE  
I CAN'T DECIDE ALONE  
HE MUST SEE IT, TOO  
HIS HEART MUST LEARN IT, TOO  
AND SEE WHAT I HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN

**JAN enters.**

JAN  
Frieda!

**They embrace.**

JAN (CONT'D)  
Hello, Kristen.

KRISTEN  
Hello, Jan.

DAME BERGEN  
**(entering)**  
Kristen! Time for lunch. Come along home.  
**(exits)**

KRISTEN  
I'll help you with your little "problem" later,  
Frieda. Jan, you better take charge of this scatter-  
brained fiancé of yours. Otherwise, your wedding day  
is going to be full of surprises. For both of you.

**She and FRIEDA hug. KRISTEN exits.**

JAN  
What in the world did she mean by that?

FRIEDA  
Never you mind. You just worry about Nicholas. Have  
you been thinking about them?

JAN  
Nicholas and Kristen? Constantly. Just like you told  
me to. Have I come up with a way to get them back  
together? No.

FRIEDA  
Jan!

JAN  
I haven't a clue, Frieda! First of all, Nicholas is  
only concerned with money. Secondly, Kristen is too  
shy to do anything unless Nicholas takes the first  
step. It's the old question of which comes first,  
and she's a chicken and he's a bad egg.

FRIEDA

And you're too dim to see the obvious.

JAN

Which is?

FRIEDA

If they won't do anything for themselves, then it's up to us to do something for them.

JAN

What a brilliant idea! So- what do we do?

**They sit on the bench and think.  
The STRANGER and MARIEL enter, and  
observe them.**

FRIEDA

**(jumping up)**

I have it! It's so simple!

JAN

What?

FRIEDA

Well, first, you tell Nicholas that Kristen has been abducted by that huge furry ape man everyone's been talking about, the one creeping about in the woods.

JAN

I haven't heard any talk about a huge furry ape man.

FRIEDA

Then start talking about him! Oh, and he needs a scary name.

JAN

Frieda-

FRIEDA

How about Squishsquash? Oooh, that's scary. Then you and Nicholas form an expedition to save her-

JAN

Frieda-

FRIEDA

And when Nicholas saves her, she'll swoon into his arms, and that's that!

JAN

Frieda, what are we going to save her *from*?

FRIEDA

Squishsquash, of course. He's awful!

JAN

Frieda, there *is* no Squishsquash.

FRIEDA

Oh. Oh, that's right. Okay, okay, how about this. I get Kristen to come with me into the forest, to look for, uh, oh, oh, I know: the *unicorn*.

JAN

Unicorn? What unicorn?

FRIEDA

You silly. The one that-

FRIEDA & JAN

Everyone's been talking about.

JAN

Of course.

FRIEDA

Then you tell Nicholas that you've heard there's a tiny little man with a pot of gold out in the forest, see? That'll get him, he loves gold,

JAN

You mean a leprechaun?

FRIEDA

Is that what they're called?

JAN

Leprechauns are in Ireland, not Nordovik.

FRIEDA

Well, make it a *Nordovikan*, get it?

JAN

Look, if you're going to make up a story, why not just say Kristen was abducted by Vikings?

FRIEDA

Vikings? *Here*? In the North Country? Who'd ever believe such a ridiculous story? I mean *really*, Jan.

STRANGER

**(in a deep mysterious voice)**

Perhaps I might be of assistance.

FRIEDA

**(surprised and a little frightened)**

Oh! Oh gracious, who are you?

JAN

Oh, hello. These are visitors to Nordovik. They arrived last night from the capital. May I introduce Frieda Baldersen. Frieda, this is Mariel and Herr-?

STRANGER

Fortunately, I couldn't help overhearing your conversation. I may be able to help you.

FRIEDA

**(suspiciously)**

Help us? I don't think we should accept help from a perfect stranger.

STRANGER

That's very ob\*servant. Few people are able to recognize perfection. My card.

**A business card magically appears in his outstretched hand. MARIEL & STRANGER sing opening line with JAN, as if they were reciting.**

I.2.2 "The Perfect Stranger"

MARIEL, STRANGER, JAN

**(reading card)**

"THE PERFECT STRANGER:

JAN

NO QUESTIONS ASKED  
SO NO QUESTIONS ANSWERED  
PERFORMS ANY TASK,  
FOR LOVE OR ROMANCE OR  
A SMALL BAG OF SILVER  
FOR A LARGE SUM OF FUN  
HE'LL DANCE WITH THE DEVIL,  
HE CAN TURN BACK THE SUN  
**(turns card over)**  
QUARRELS MENDED, ESTRANGEMENTS ENDED  
CHARMS YOU CAN TRY, CHARMS YOU CAN BUY"

FRIEDA

THAT CARD SAYS ALL THAT?

**STRANGER takes card, turns it over and hands it to FRIEDA.**

STRANGER

THERE'S MORE ON THE BACK.

JAN

I READ WHAT'S ON THE BACK.

**STRANGER turns card once more,  
gives it back to FRIEDA & JAN**

STRANGER

I MEANT THE BACK IN BACK OF THAT.

FRIEDA & JAN

"NO STRINGS ATTACHED,  
HE'S BETTER THAN A NEIGHBOR  
NO DECK IS STACKED,  
NO CHARGE FOR THE LABOR  
ALL PURCHASES FINAL  
AND THERE'S NO RECEIPT  
CAUSE THERE'S NO DENIAL  
THAT HIS SPELLS ARE COMPLETE

**STRANGER motions and FRIEDA turns  
card over once again.**

BREW A POTION THAT CLAIMS DEVOTION  
MAKE UP A SPELL, CANDLE, BOOK AND BELL"

STRANGER

I GUARANTEE THEIR LOVE

MARIEL

MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE THEIR LOVE

STRANGER

YOU JUST WAIT AND SEE HOW IT GOES  
I THINK YOU'LL BE PLEASED. NO, I KNOW!

JAN, FRIEDA, & MARIEL

HE KNOWS! HE KNOWS! HE KNOWS! HE KNOWS!

STRANGER

IF TRUE LOVE IS MISSING

MARIEL

THEN HE'LL GET THEM KISSING

STRANGER

THEY HAVE NO DESIRE?

MARIEL

THEN HE'LL LIGHT THEIR FIRE!

STRANGER & MARIEL

SO GO BUY THE BEDDING, WE GUARANTEE A WEDDING.

ALL  
WE GUARANTEE A WEDDING!  
WE GUARANTEE A WEDDING!

STRANGER  
I'M PERFECTLY APT  
I'M NOT FALSELY MODEST  
I'LL SOON HAVE THEM TRAPPED  
BY MEANS QUITE THE ODDEST  
TO LEAD THEM TO THE ALTAR  
I WILL GO THE EXTRA MILE  
AND THEY'LL NEVER FALTER  
TILL THEY DANCE DOWN THE AISLE  
A NEAT SOLUTION FOR THEIR CONFUSION  
AND A NICE REFLECTION OF MY PERFECTION

**(spoken)**

And for all of this what do I ask?

JAN & FRIEDA  
**(suddenly wary)**

Yes, what do you ask?

STRANGER  
THAT YOU REMEMBER IN THE FUTURE  
WHEN YOU CONTEMPLATE THE PAST  
WHAT A PERFECT STRANGER TOLD YOU:

**He takes card and points to it.**

"NO QUESTIONS ASKED."  
NO QUESTIONS ANSWERED  
IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

**ALL**

NO QUESTIONS ANSWERED  
IF THERE ARE NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

**STRANGER resumes silent position,  
drawing his cloak around him.  
MARIEL mimics him.**

FRIEDA  
**(aside to JAN)**

You know something, Jan. I think this man is a  
magician or sorcerer or something.

JAN  
So what if he is? That's better than a Squishsquash.  
Anyway, he says he can get them married, and neither  
of us can think of anything. That will work.

**(to STRANGER)**

Excuse me, sir. Just how did you intend to help us?

STRANGER

Leave the details to me. All you have to do is make sure Nicholas and Kristen are here in the square tomorrow afternoon. Now be on your way.

FRIEDA

But can't you tell us a little more than that? I'm not too comfortable with-

STRANGER

**(darkly)**

On your way!

**They exit quickly.**

MARIEL

What are you going to do?

STRANGER

How should I know? Confidence, Mariel! With a bit of confidence and a little luck-

MARIEL

And a lot of luck.

STRANGER

And a lot of luck, all things come to pass. Go follow them and see what you can see.

MARIEL

Always eager to learn what fools these mortals be!

**MARIEL exits as the MAYOR enters.**

MAYOR BERGEN

Hail, Stranger!

STRANGER

Hail yourself, Mayor Bergen.

MAYOR BERGEN

I'm so pleased to see you again. I've been thinking about what you said.

STRANGER

What I said? What did I say?

MAYOR BERGEN

About proclaiming the fame of Nordovik to certain officials in the capital.

STRANGER

Oh, yes, *that* saying.



MAYOR BERGEN

I should like to offer to do what is necessary, to help in any way I can.

STRANGER

Of course! I believe that Nordovik and all its inhabitants should get the recognition they deserve.

MAYOR BERGEN

Of course! Still, the capital is so far away, and Nordovik is so small.

**(chuckling)**

I suppose I could try doing some magical hocus-pocus. That might get their attention. Good day to you, sir.

**He exits.**

STRANGER

**(looking after JAN and FRIEDA)**

Magical, Herr Mayor? Why, there's nothing magical needed at all.

I.2.3 "No Magic Needed"

THERE'S NO MAGIC NEEDED  
WHEN I HAVE COMPLETED  
THE PLAN I AM PLANNING,  
IT'S NOT THAT DEMANDING  
PREDICTABLE AS WEATHER,  
DON'T HAVE TO BE CLEVER  
NO SPELLS MUST BE SPOKEN,  
NO CIRCLES UNBROKEN  
JUST BRING THEM TOGETHER,  
LET LOVE BE THE TETHER  
THEY'LL MAKE THE CONCLUSION  
THERE'LL BE NO CONFUSION

THERE'S NO MAGIC NEEDED  
IT MUST BE CONCEDED  
NO DARK INCANTATION  
FOR THIS SITUATION  
NO MIDNIGHT ENDEAVOR,  
NO, NONE WHATSOEVER  
NO SPELLS MUST BE SPOKEN,  
NO CIRCLES UNBROKEN  
JUST BRING THEM TOGETHER,  
LET LOVE BE THE TETHER  
WHERE LOVE HAS SUCCEEDED,  
THERE'S NO MAGIC NEEDED.

**BLACKOUT**