

# The Christmas Carving *(An Excerpt)*

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## **Setting**

The village of Nordovik, in the Far North country.

## **Time**

Long ago.

I.1.1 "Overture"

ACT I

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". A sign hangs down from the clock, which proclaims: "4 Days To Go". 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 to. 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, 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.

#### Easy To Find

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 IT WHEN I DO!

HE'LL BE SO EASY TO FIND  
A MAN OF HIS KIND  
HE'LL BE SO EASY TO SEE  
SINCE HE MUST BE  
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  
THERE'S A PERSON IN THIS WORLD  
WHO WILL BE THE CHOSEN ONE  
AND THOUGH WE MAY HAVE TO TRY  
EVERY SINGLE PASSERBY

BOTH  
STILL WE'LL SURELY GET IT DONE

'CAUSE HE'LL BE EASY TO FIND  
HE'LL GIVE US A SIGN

STRANGER  
AND HE'LL BE EASY TO SPOT  
WITH THE DESCRIPTION I'VE 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 IN FEAR,  
ALL THE LITTLE GIRLS AND BOYS  
WHEN HE STARES AT THEM

WITH HIS OH, SO BALEFUL LOOKS  
HIS FACE IS STERN, HIS GREED IS GREAT  
WITH THE LOVE OF GOLD HE IS SMITTEN"  
THAT IS ALL I HAVE TO STATE  
THAT IS 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

IN THE COUNTRY OR THE TOWN

MARIEL

OR THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD AROUND

BOTH

EVEN IN THIS 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  
ENSHRINED  
DIVINE  
INCLINED  
TO SHINE  
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**, daughter  
**KRISTEN**, 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

Well! Well, well, well. Do you hear that, Waldo? The whole world has heard of me, that is, of Nordovik.

WALDO

Yes, Father.

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" 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. May I introduce my wife Hilda and my son, Waldo. And this is my daughter, 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.

STRANGER

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 Christmas celebration.

MARIEL

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

JAN

Christmas.

WALDO

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"**

<http://www.puckettpublishing.com/music/scores/ChristmasInOurTown.htm>

#### **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

THE 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 & 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  
THEIR 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 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'VE LITTLE TIME TO TAKE THEIR REST  
TILL THEY'VE TASTED EVERY TREASURE

KRISTEN & CHILDREN

OUR FATHERS AND THEIR FATHERS TOO  
HAVE ALWAYS HAD THIS PASSION  
THIS SEASON BRINGS THE BEST IT'S TRUE  
LET'S KEEP IT E'ER THE FASHION

**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! We have an eternity of  
things to do, and no time to stand around jawing.

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

MAYOR BERGEN

Ahem. Well, duty calls.

**(leans and whispers)**

Or something worse.

**(In a normal voice)**

**(MORE)**

MAYOR BERGEN (CONT'D)

Until tomorrow, 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. Of course, there's something a little odd about my father, 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! Waldo! 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 are you fellows this fine day?

WALDO

Ready for Christmas!

JAN

Past ready! And you, Nicholas? Filled with the Christmas spirit?

NICHOLAS

**(indicating a pouch at his belt)**

Perhaps when this is filled with gold. I favor a Christmas spirit of the golden variety.

**MAYOR BERGEN re-enters, calling  
back over his shoulder**

MAYOR BERGEN

Be sure to tell His Majesty all you've seen.

WALDO

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

MAYOR BERGEN

**(good-naturedly)**

Nicholas? Not likely.

NICHOLAS

Ah, but you're wrong, Mayor. 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"**

<http://www.puckettpublishing.com/music/scores/WhenHeWasALad.htm>

**When He Was a Lad**

WHEN HE WAS A LAD HE WAS A GLAD LAD  
BRINGING JOY TO EVERYONE HE COULD

WALDO

AND NOT SO LONG AGO

MAYOR BERGEN

THE CHILDREN LOVED HIM SO

MARIEL

FOR THE TOYS THAT HE COULD CARVE FROM WOOD?

WALDO & 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 & 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 & 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 IT'S SAID,  
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  
YOUR TOYS ARE SUCH SPECIAL THINGS  
AND IF YOU KNEW THE JOY THEY BRING  
YOU WOULDN'T ACT SO STUPID AND CONFUSED  
YOU REALLY WOULDN'T BE CONFUSED

MAYOR BERGEN

Waldo, you need to be home soon, understand?

**WALDO nods, MAYOR exits.**

NICHOLAS

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

WALDO

That's good. No one else has a clue.

JAN

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

WALDO

And food.

MARIEL

And love.

JAN

And dancing and singing.

WALDO

And food.

MARIEL

And love.

JAN

And poetry and music.

WALDO

And food!

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

MARIEL

And love!

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've got to see to my livelihood, 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 leaving the subject of Kristen alone. There are more important things in life than love and happiness.

WALDO

Like food!

**Another disparaging look at WALDO.**

NICHOLAS

I fully intend to have happiness and love. But the first thing I'll do is get enough money to be happy.

**(exits)**