

The Christmas Village

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

It was time; it was time! When the box started moving they knew it must be Christmas, finally! Suddenly, glorious light filled the box as it was opened, and all the ceramic figures blinked after so many months in darkness.

A gentle hand carefully removed each figure and miniature piece that made up the beautiful Christmas village. The town was set up the same way every year, and the little buildings were merrily decorated in lights and Christmas decorations. There was the town hall with the clock tower, several little cottages, a bakery, a library, the church, and the skating rink.

It was a lovely little village, and the ceramic townsfolk that lived there were equally as charming. The group of carollers always sang outside the town hall, the baker always had a fresh loaf of bread, the children carried stacks of books from the library, and the skaters were always gracefully twirling on the ice rink. It never changed. Oh, sometimes the cottage owners got mixed up, or the priest at the church might be placed next to the baker for a chat, but usually all the buildings and people were placed in the same spots, year after year. Everyone was happy. Well, almost everyone.

Nick was one of the ice skaters, and he enjoyed gliding in a figure eight on the skating rink. He was a handsome fellow in his long blue coat and festive red scarf, arms outstretched in frozen movement. From his position on the skating rink, he had a view of the carollers near the town hall. One singer in particular caught his eye every year.

Ellie was the young lady in the group of carollers. She was attached to several other figures, older men in top hats and women in bonnets, who Nick guessed were her family. He loved to listen to them sing as he skated. Their voices would join together in harmony, and Nick thought Ellie looked beautiful when she sang. Her curly hair bounced in ringlets around her angelic face, and she had a fluffy white collar and cuffs on her pretty green velvet dress. Nick was in love. And he thought maybe Ellie liked him too, but he would never know. The figures were too far apart in the miniature village to ever speak to each other. They could only exchange glances across the distance. (And when one is in love, even the smallest distance feels enormous.)

The truth was that Ellie had noticed the tall skater, and admired his form and skill on the ice rink. She would often watch him when he wasn't looking, as he traced an infinity symbol over and over with his skates. She wished the skating rink was closer to the town hall, so she could talk to him a little. Instead, they could only smile shyly at one another.

One day, the carollers were singing Nick's favorite Christmas song. He strained to hear Ellie's voice, as pretty and bright as a falling snowflake. He resisted turning in his familiar skating pattern and wanted to get closer to the edge of the ice rink. Nick struggled, and wiggled, and with a sudden snap! he broke loose –

and quickly fell over. The skates were still attached to the skating platform, but Nick was no longer attached to them! Ellie stopped singing and gasped when she saw that Nick had fallen.

Loud voices could be heard overhead, and Ellie watched as a big hand descended to pick Nick up off the ice.

“Hey, look! This figure fell over somehow, and broke! He can’t skate anymore. What should we do with it?”

Another voice answered. “We could try and glue him back onto his skates. Or maybe we should just toss him out? We have lots of other ceramic people in the village.”

The first voice was thoughtful. “I don’t know. I kind of like him; we’ve had him a long time. Maybe we can stick him somewhere else? How about here?” The large hand moved Nick away from the skating rink. It set him down next to the singers at the town hall. “There. If he leans up against the carollers, he can be one of them now.”

The second voice agreed. “Well, he can’t skate any more, so I hope he can sing!”

So, there was Nick, in his blue coat and jaunty red scarf, standing on wobbly feet, supported by Ellie and her family. His heart felt full and happy, and he began to sing with all his might. Ellie smiled into his painted green eyes, and joined her voice to his in perfect harmony.

Questions

1. How do the figures in the box know it must be Christmas time?
2. Who do the large hands belong to?
3. How would you describe Ellie? Use quotations from the text to support your description.
4. What motivates Nick to try and break free?
5. How does Ellie feel when the big hand moves Nick closer?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. Miniature
2. Lovely
3. Gracefully
4. Angelic
5. Exchange
6. Enormous
7. Strained
8. Descended
9. Jaunty

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1) "A gentle hand carefully removed each figure and **miniature** piece that made up the beautiful Christmas village."

- a. household b. animal c. small d. ceramic

2) "It was a **lovely** little village, and the ceramic townsfolk that lived there were equally as charming."

- a. beautiful b. gaudy c. small d. snowy

3) "...and the skaters were always **gracefully** twirling on the ice rink."

- a. happily b. silently c. carefully d. patiently

4) "Her curly hair bounced in ringlets around her **angelic** face..."

- a. round b. long c. sweet d. ugly

5) "They could only **exchange** glances across the distance."

- a. share b. buy c. imagine d. give

6) "(And when one is in love, even the smallest distance feels **enormous**.)"

- a. very small b. very dark c. very big d. very fast

7) "He **strained** to hear Ellie's voice, as pretty and bright as a falling snowflake."

- a. wished b. imagined c. walked closer d. struggled

8) "Loud voices could be heard overhead, and Ellie watched as a big hand **descended** to pick Nick up off the ice."

- a. moved quickly b. moved carefully c. moved down d. moved up

9) "So, there was Nick, in his blue coat and **jaunty** red scarf, standing on wobbly feet, supported by Ellie and her family."

- a. fluffy b. stylish c. warm d. disheveled