

A VERY DEADZONE CHRISTMAS

story pitch by

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Johnny reteams with his female counterpart Alex to solve the mystery of one very confused Santa. Sharing visions of their Santa's amazingly impossible life, Alex and Johnny wonder who this soldier-spy-cowboy-scientist really is (*think "Little Big Man" on a budget*) As they investigate the lost Santa, they pick up a collection of street characters, who all wind up coming back to Johnny's for the best, albeit strangest, Christmas any of them can remember.

THE STORY IN BROAD STROKES...

Johnny's having Christmas this year for the first time. Nothing big, just J.J., Sarah, Walt, Bruce and a date maybe. Johnny's excited, and maybe over planning a bit.

Christmas Eve, Johnny and Bruce are roughing in the tree and decorations. He's still got one last gift to buy, the hot, un-gettable toy, but Bruce heard a rumor where Johnny might get one.

Alex returns, just shows up at Johnny's unannounced. She's had some kind of premonition that Johnny needed help, but she's sketchy about just what she "knows."

Alex is very "bah humbug" about Christmas, enough that we sense there's more to it than just cynicism. (We'll eventually learn that Christmas has always been hard for her because she is tuned into people's anxiety and the holidays are the worst time of year. Particularly for her family)

Alex tags along with Johnny as he goes in search of the elusive hot toy. They leave Bruce behind to watch the food cook. (in a runner, Bruce keeps having to make more and more food and preparations as the scope of Johnny's Christmas party expands. He pulls it off, but not before going a little crazy like a caterer from hell)

Using their combined powers to locate and secure the toy, Johnny and Alex remember what they like about each other.

On their way back, they see an old man in a Santa hat get mugged by a small gang of street kids. Johnny and Alex chase the kids off, but not before they steal the pillow case full of belongings the old guy was carrying.

The old guy is confused, thinks he's Santa, but doesn't know where he's from and keeps mumbling odd cryptic phrases that sound like he's in some kind of danger. As they try to figure out who Santa is, they track down the street kids, following a bread crumb trail of

objects from the stolen bag. Each object triggers a vision, many of which Johnny and Alex “share” -- visions of lost Santa’s incredible life. He’s a soldier, a spy, a prisoner, a circus performer. Each vision just deepens the mystery as to who this old guy is -- and in all the visions, he seems in some kind of peril.

As they follow the objects with Santa in tow, they manage to catch each of the kids, winding up with a car load of trouble makers and lost Santa.

Late at night as it starts to snow, Johnny has no choice but to bring everyone back to his place for Christmas. He’ll turn everybody over to Walt in the morning.

Late at night, back at the house, after everyone else is asleep, Johnny and Alex sit watching an old movie on TV. Alex admits she didn’t really have a vision of Johnny in danger, she just needed an excuse to see him -- the only vision she had was of herself alone again on Christmas.

They have a nice moment, glad to be together for whatever reason, for however long.

Then they hear something on TV that startles them. The voice of their old Santa, saying one of his odd catchphrases. They look up and see a younger version of the old guy -- he’s an actor in a movie.

One last vision reveals who Santa is -- an old character actor. Their visions were flashes of the making of the movies he was in (actually him shooting the movie) but the visions were too short and chaotic to notice the crew -- although in retrospect there were always hints of some kind in every vision.

They find out he walked away from a group home two states away. He was going to be Santa for the party this year, and had put some of his movie memorabilia in his bag for gifts. When he stepped outside to make his entrance as Santa, something happened, a small stroke perhaps, and he forgot who and where he was, just walking away aimlessly until he was mugged by those kids.

First thing in the morning, they take him home, but when they see the bleak Christmas that awaits him, Johnny decides to move his entire party, tree and everything, over to the group home.

Alex, a tiny bit less cynical about Christmas, has to admit, she’s not lonely now -- and even among this group of tough luck stories, the only vibes she’s picking up, are good.

She apologizes to Johnny for fibbing about him being in trouble, but he tells her it’s okay. He got her a present. But how? She asks. When did he have time? He got it a week ago after he’d had a vision -- he knew she was coming the whole time.