

SCREENPLAY SYNOPSIS and

PRODUCTION DETAILS

by Debbie Johnson

***Inspired by True Events**

(see bottom for true events)

Title: *The Art of Christmas Love or Lodged in Love for Christmas*

Genre: Hallmark-style Christmas Romance

Logline: Christmas Art turns magical when a senior accountant surrenders to love.

Length: 90 minutes with some room for cuts.

Story: Inspired by true events, involving Christmas-Birthday card mystery.

DANIELLE (DANI) loves art, especially related to Christmas, but she's vying for the new CFO position at her company, so no time for much art, interest in romance! She's so focused on her goal of CFO and setting herself up financially, due to some bad experiences, she almost misses Christmas with her family at the Lodge where they usually celebrate. Her family guilts her to joining them for the holiday weekend by saying her Grand'Mere (Grandmother), from France, may not come if Dani doesn't.

In order to win the CFO position, Dani has to show her versatility and work-life balance, so she gets her cute and funny assistant, Aaron, to help. Aaron knows Dani is an artist, so he sets her up as a volunteer to work with teen artists at the community center that his husband DYLAN manages. Carter is the director of the teen art program, but Dani doesn't recognize her Carter, her middle school classmate, because he used to have a bad limp and was super shy and withdrawn, even covering his face with long hair. Even as he recognizes her, it takes until the end for Dani to get who he is, since he is now very outgoing, fun, and caring, without any trace of a limp!

When Dani was in middle school, Carter was crushing on her, so he secretly slid Birthday/Christmas cards into her locker - with a special artistic drawing of Santa, because he knew they shared the same birthday: Dec. 24th. He was crushed that Dani had to move, but didn't know why she did.

When Carter runs into Dani at the Lodge during Christmas week, he learns eventually that she had to move away because her dad left the

family, and left them with a mountain of debt from a bad investment her mom didn't know about (thus, her focus on financial security). Dani's mom worked hard, but could never seem to get ahead, so Dani became driven to make money and steward it carefully.

Dani's Grand Mere, Simone, and Claudia, Lodge owner, plus Dani's sister Jada and Carter's brother Liam get Dani and Carter together in stages, as do some of the middle-schooler artists who show up at the lodge that week. There's a definite attraction between them, but Dani doesn't trust his financial security, due to his business of investments. She goes back and forth with her attraction to him, very conflicted. When Dani overhears Carter on the phone with his business partner about a loss from one of their investments, she freezes and gets more scared. Her sister and Grand Mere talk her down off the ledge. She is still hesitant until she discovers, during their mutual surprise-Christmas-birthday celebration, that Carter is the same boy from middle school with the limp and that he's the one who left her cards. She figures it out because he gives her a Christmas/Birthday card with the same artistic drawing and signature of "Your Secret-Birthday Santa. She melts, knowing he had to overcome so much to be who he is today.

CHARACTERS: 20 Main characters

DANIELLE (DANI)NADEAU - Senior Accountant of an A.I. company. But her true passion is art and especially related to Christmas. She's techy, but her artist side makes her sensitive to others. Her heart is open to all, but she doesn't give much to herself.

CARTER- Easygoing, small-town boy made good in business, but very modest about it. Still has his country charm.

LIAM - Carter's brother - Easy-going, likes everyone and has a teasing sense of humor.

JADA - Danielle's sister - Easy-going, a smart (and crafty) woman with a romantic imagination.

AARON - Danielle's assistant gay, married, fun and loving. He and Dani are super close and she trusts him implicitly.

SIMONE - DANIELLE'S GRANDMOTHER, "GRAND MERE" - French Canadian, loves life, a bit controlling, but for a "good cause." Also very spiritual, sometimes metaphysical. In great shape physically - yoga enthusiast!

CLAUDIA - (pronounced "cloudia" Trey's wife - dark-skinned French-Canadian - speaks with slight French accent.

TREY - Manager, desk clerk, sweet and caring, care-free, but service oriented. Claudia's husband

TERRA - TREY'S daughter and Claudia's daughter, and Server/helper-sweet and kind, bi-racial (mom is dark-skinned something).

GERARD - DANIELLE'S BIO DAD - Light French accent. Now humble and successful

YOUNG CARTER - Extremely shy due to walking with a limp. Hair over his face most of the time, so it's hard to see what he looks like, especially when he sees Danielle.

YOUNG DANIELLE - Energetic, kind, eager to please.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - **AIDEN** - open, kind, intelligent, fun

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - ETHAN - bit of an attitude, but loves art.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT - **MIA** - Open, loving, intelligent, White and Asian bi-racial or just Asian

EXTRAS - Four other middle-school students for community center Art class, school hallway, and school art class.

EXTRAS - Lodge guests - Family of four or five

TRISHA - Aiden's mom, Nice looking, friendly demeanor, gentle person but strong, nurse.

(Important: Will play opposite "VINCE" in my next screenplay with Valentine's theme.)

JONATHAN - Mia's dad, Caucasian or Asian

SUKI - Mia's mom - (Asian)

AKI - Mia's aunt- business-like, smart, but kind and positive.

VINCE - nice-looking, friendly and kind. (Important: Will play opposite "TRISHA" in my next screenplay with Valentine's theme.)

Locations: 12

A.I. Company hallway

A.I. Company office

Town of Crystal Falls-

with small businesses in quaint town and town center or square
Crystal Falls Community Center -

needs craft room and industrial kitchen.

Carter's home

Middle school hallway and classroom

Apartment Lobby with Elevator

Aaron's Apartment

Mountainous or hilly highway

(can be stock footage for this)

Lodge -

Small okay, with dining room and at least two guest rooms - one needs to be big enough for three people to do yoga, even if furniture moved. (Lodge needs to look big enough for 6 guest rooms), large kitchen, land around it with some pine trees, lobby large enough for Christmas tree.

Parkside area with fire ring (or Prop master can find one)

Different road - this one into Crystal Falls opposite way.

FX, Wardrobe, Hair, Makeup details at end of Screenplay.

True Events that Inspired this Screenplay: "J", my super-crush, and I were in middle school when I learned we had the same birthday—December 20th! I didn't think he knew I even existed then. He was a jock (though nice to everyone, like Dani), I was a klutz (even though graceful as a dancer) who befriended everyone, like Dani.

I secretly gave J a birthday card each year for three years by slipping it into the slot in his locker, knowing most people forget or ignore our birthdays, so close to Christmas.

Fast forward to high school when he would smile and nod at me as he walked by and I said "Hi." That was the extent of our contact until my best friend's sister got sick, couldn't sneak out with her, so she invited me to meet up with her crush, and her crush brought his best friend – guess who? Yup, "J." So, J and I connected, talked for hours and ended the night with a kiss and his promise to ride his bike by my house the next day. Never happened. I never knew why, but I suspected it was because I was Jewish and his family were strict Christians. I started dating others.

Cut to college when I met his ex-wife (Yes!). Evidently he married young. I was in between boyfriends, and I only saw her once. I could have found him from information she shared (no internet then!) but I didn't feel right about it, thinking he was still Christian and that wouldn't fit with me. I was more like Simone, following my inner spiritual guidance which has given me a (mostly – see bio) magical life! Also, I have had a guardian angel my whole life since I was about seven. Many times I have seen the effect, for example: I was on CNN worldwide because I *wasn't* killed when my car was crushed by a semi-truck, I survived!

I always wondered what would have happened with J. So Carter and Dani get to fulfill my teen dream. :)

Note: I made Dani's and Carter's birthdays fit with the timeline of the screenplay – Dec. 24th instead of 20th. And I had Carter leave the cards for Dani in the screenplay due to it being more romantic

Bio: Debbie Johnson is a best-selling author (*Think Yourself Thin*) and an award-winning filmmaker (*Angels-in-Training*, aka *Soul Survivors* series). She's a media veteran of national TV/Radio/major Magazines. She's accomplished nearly all her goals and dreams, the major one being to help others make their own dreams come true!