

= A Very Supernatural Christmas =

" A Very Supernatural Christmas " is the eighth episode of the paranormal drama television series Supernatural 's third season . It was first broadcast on The CW on December 13 , 2007 . The narrative follows series protagonists Sam (Jared Padalecki) and Dean Winchester (Jensen Ackles) as they confront a pair of pagan gods (Spencer Garrett and Merrilyn Gann) who annually take human sacrifices .

Written by Jeremy Carver and directed by J. Miller Tobin , the episode was intended to be " the most violent Christmas special in the history of television " . Flashbacks were added to the plot when the main storyline came up short , allowing the writers to expand upon the childhoods of a young Sam (Colin Ford) and Dean (Ridge Canipe) .

While critics universally praised the flashback sequences and the performances of Ford and Canipe , they had differing opinions of the main storyline .

= = Plot = =

As the episode opens , a man visits his grandson for Christmas in Seattle , Washington . He dresses up as Santa Claus , but is pulled up the chimney and slaughtered by a mysterious figure . One year later , Sam (Padalecki) and Dean Winchester (Ackles) pose as FBI agents to investigate a disappearance in Ypsilanti , Michigan . The discovery of a bloody tooth in the fireplace leads Sam to suspect that an evil version of Santa ? many world lores tell of those who punish the wicked during Christmas ? is at work . As the brothers search the town and debate about whether to celebrate Christmas that year ? Dean insists while Sam refuses ? another man is taken by a Santa @-@ dressed being . Upon investigation the following day , Sam notices that both families have the same wreath over their fireplaces . The wreath is found to be made of meadowsweet , an herb often used in pagan rituals to lure gods to a human sacrifice , which leads Sam to believe that they are dealing with Hold Nickar , the god of the winter solstice . Dean later admits that he wants to celebrate Christmas since it will be his last chance to ? his demonic pact with a demon in " All Hell Breaks Loose , Part Two " only left him with one year to live . Sam responds that he cannot sit around celebrating and pretending that everything is okay while knowing that Dean will not be alive the next Christmas .

Further investigation and research lead the brothers to Edward (Garrett) and Madge Carrigan (Gann) , an apparently perfect couple whom Dean later refers to as " Ozzie and Harriet " ; the makers of the meadowsweet wreaths , the Carrigans lived in Seattle a year prior . Realizing that the couple are actually pagan gods , Sam and Dean break into their home , finding human remains in the basement . However , they are captured by the Carrigans and tied to chairs in the kitchen . The gods reveal that they have been attempting to blend into human society , reducing their annual sacrifices to only a few . They begin preparing Sam and Dean to be sacrificed , but are interrupted by a neighbor at the front door . When the Carrigans return , they find that the brothers have broken free . Knowing that the gods can be killed by evergreen wood , Sam and Dean stab them to death with branches of the Christmas tree . Later on , Dean is surprised to find that Sam has decorated their motel room with Christmas paraphernalia . They exchange gifts , all which were bought from the local gas station , and happily watch a football game on TV .

Throughout the episode , flashbacks depict a young Sam (Ford) and Dean (Canipe) on Christmas Eve of 1991 ; with their father out on a hunt , the brothers are staying alone in a motel room until he returns . As Sam wraps an object he obtained from Bobby Singer as a present for his father , he begins to question Dean about what their father is doing . Although Dean brushes him off , Sam reveals that he has read their father 's hunting journal . Dean acquiesces , and confirms that their father hunts monsters . This revelation terrifies Sam , who is afraid that the monsters will come after them . Later that night , Dean wakes Sam up and claims that their father briefly returned and left presents . When Sam 's gifts end up being a Barbie doll and a sparkly baton , Dean admits that he stole them from a nearby house . Despite this , Sam appreciates what Dean tried to do for him , and gives him the gift meant for their father ? the amulet necklace that Dean has worn ever since .

= = Production = =

= = = Writing = = =

A fan of Christmas television specials growing up , series creator Eric Kripke desired to make " the most violent Christmas special in the history of television " . The myth of the anti @-@ Claus ? an evil antithesis of Santa who " stuffs his victims in sacks and takes them off to eat them " ? became the episode 's inspiration . However , the writers were hesitant to establish the creature as an anti @-@ Claus because it would implicate the existence of an actual Santa Claus . To remedy the dilemma , they incorporated the mythology of the pagan god Hold Nickar , who generally is believed to be the precedent of Santa . Kripke proudly noted that the lore is " one of [their] most accurate " since most Christmas traditions have pagan origins .

Though the episode itself was penned by Jeremy Carver , the writing staff contributed their ideas to the storyline . Within five minutes of brainstorming , they envisioned three scenes they had to do : the teaser , where a grandfather pretending to be Santa is pulled up the chimney and slaughtered ; a boy witnessing the Santa @-@ dressed villain brutally killing his father and then eating one of the cookies for Santa ; and the Winchesters killing someone with a Christmas tree .

= = = Flashbacks = = =

The initial draft of the script focused solely on the brothers ' attempts to kill the pagan gods ; when the episode came up short , Edlund suggested the addition of flashbacks to Sam and Dean 's childhood . The narrative device provided two revelations : the origins of Dean 's necklace , and the " beginning of Sam 's estrangement from his father and his indoctrination into the supernatural world " . Kripke noted that the staff loves to delve into the Winchesters ' childhoods , and deemed it " too good an opportunity to pass up " to be able to depict how Sam " lost his innocence " . Child actor Ridge Canipe reprised his role as a young Dean , while Colin Ford made his debut as a young Sam . Ford had not viewed the series prior to his audition , but watched the first season to research his character .

= = = Christmas theme = = =

Principal filming took place in Vancouver , British Columbia , and many visuals were influenced by the holiday theme . The " very festive , warm Christmas tones " of the Carrigans ' home were intended by set designer Jerry Wanek to create a contrast with the brothers ' " little coal @-@ burning old motel " . Diane Widas created the costumes , and had fun making the Carrigans ' Christmas sweaters " very campy " ; Edward 's sweater was originally going to be " over @-@ the @-@ top " with 3D snowmen . Because Santa and his elves worked in a " very tired little theme park " , the elves were given " ill @-@ fitting " costumes ; though new , they were altered to look " shabby " . The Santa 's " grungy " appearance reflected his drunken state .

Despite the dark storyline , Kripke found it important to maintain the " trappings of ... a really cheery , traditional Christmas special " . The spinning " A Special Presentation " title at the beginning of the episode was used by CBS in the 1980s , and Kripke was adamant on including it . Though it was very difficult to find who created and scored it , they eventually received permission . Keeping to the holiday theme , the episode shied away from the usual rock @-@ heavy soundtrack , and instead featured Christmas songs remade in different styles by composer Jay Gruska .

= = = Effects = = =

Visual effects shots often are produced but ultimately unused , and the episode was no exception . After Madge is killed , the script describes Edward as screaming her name " in all his godlike glory "

. The visual effects department interpreted this literally , and had him transforming into a tree creature , " all wooden and gnarled " . However , it was deemed " a little too on the nose " .

= = Reception = =

On its initial broadcast , the episode was watched by 3 @. @ 02 million viewers . It received mixed reviews from critics . Julie Pyle of *Airlock Alpha* " really enjoyed " the " well directed , well written " episode , and " [giggled] with glee in anticipation of each ghastly Christmas nightmare " . Although she continued her criticism of the third season 's brighter lighting , she deemed it overall " another Christmas tradition to watch every year with our *Charlie Brown Christmas* DVDs " . Tina Charles of *TV Guide* enjoyed the monster of the week , but was " hooked " on the brothers ' storylines . She noted that Ford 's casting as a young Sam was " perfect " , and felt that Canipe 's performance as a young Dean had improved since his previous appearance in the first season . Likewise , Maureen Ryan of the *Chicago Tribune* called it one of the " gems " of the third season . However , Karla Peterson of *The San Diego Union @-@ Tribune* disagreed , and gave the episode a C- . While she enjoyed the flashback sequences and praised Canipe and Ford for their " fierce little performances " , Peterson posited that the main storyline " seemed slapped together " and the pacing " felt sluggish " . Overall , she found it to be " your basic TV fruitcake ? a dense combination of half @-@ baked dialogue and stale storytelling studded with chewy bits of sentimentality " .