Christmas, Again

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Abstract
This is a film review of Christmas, Again (2014) directed by Charles Poekel.

Author Notes
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Christmas is, of course, a Christian holiday that emphasizes "peace on earth and good will toward men." It is also a crassly commercial holiday that requires shopping and gift giving. But, even turning Christmas into Xmas has not been able to completely erase the idea that Christmas is a special time that calls upon human beings to exhibit some of their better characteristics, such as compassion, generosity, reaching out to others, and other characteristics that can be captured by the phrase "good will toward men."

The Sundance Film Festival had two movies showing this year that could be identified as Christmas movies. The first was the hilarious Tangerine – a tale about the adventures of two transgender prostitutes on Christmas Eve, adventures that call on the two prostitutes to reconcile their differences, to offer each other "good will." After all, it is Christmas Eve.

Christmas, Again
(2014)
Directed by Charles Poekel
The second Christmas movie was aptly entitled, *Christmas, Again*. *Christmas, Again* is the story of a young man, Noel (Kentucker Audley), who comes to the city from upstate to sell Christmas trees each year – *Christmas, Again*. It's a lousy job. He works for a belligerent boss. He works with a friend (and his friend's girlfriend) who does not seem to care much about the job or to have much respect for Noel. Noel sleeps in a small house trailer on the sales lot for the season. It's often bitterly cold and when Noel is not freezing he is trying to stay dry from the rain. His customers are demanding and unpleasant. And he has to make deliveries. It is not at all clear why anyone would want this job, except that Noel is a construction worker and there is no construction work upstate at this time of year. So, it's a job.

One night Noel discovers a young woman (Hannah Gross) passed out on a park bench. He carries her back to his trailer and puts her to bed for the night. In the morning, when she wakes, she sneaks away and goes back to her home. Feeling guilty, she returns and brings Noel a pie – a pumpkin pie with blackberries. Later a young man comes by to purchase a tree and recognizes the blackberries as belonging to the dessert that his girlfriend makes. The young man is mean spirited and self-absorbed – obviously a real jerk and not good for the girl that Noel saved from the park bench. He thinks that Noel has hooked up with his girlfriend and so one night he attacks Noel.

On Christmas Eve, Noel has a number of trees to deliver. The girl shows up and tags along. She begins to see the world differently, as Noel works hard to make people happy on Christmas Eve, fulfilling the spirit of Christmas. When they are done with the deliveries, they return to Noel's trailer, where she falls asleep on his shoulder. Late in the night, there is one exquisite moment of human connection and joy. But, she leaves Noel and returns to her mean spirited boyfriend. And then in a twist of fate, she wakes up and leaves the loser boyfriend and
returns to the Christmas tree lot to find Noel. But, the lot has been dismantled and all that is left
is a few pine needles. There is no sappy happy ending here. But there is a feeling of warmth
that breaks the cold spell of winter and reminds us of the Christmas spirit, "good will toward
men."