Why The Long Kiss Goodnight is a great alt-Christmas movie

Everyone has their favorite film that serves as alternative Christmas movie fare, with *Die Hard* (1988) and *Lethal Weapon* (1987) typically topping the list—at least when all you want for Christmas is buddy-cop banter, car chases, shootouts, and glorious explosions. (Massive gratuitous property damage is a given.) I love me some *Lethal Weapon* but it's high time to give some holiday love to another great action flick set during the Christmas season: *The Long Kiss Goodnight* (1996), starring Geena Davis as an amnesiac school teacher who turns out to have been a government assassin in her former life.

(Spoilers below for this nearly 30-year-old film.)

At the time, Davis was married to director Renny Harlin, coming off a disastrous showing for their previous collaboration, *Cutthroat Island* (1995), which remains one of the biggest box office bombs of all time. (It is indeed a pretty bad movie.) But Shane Black's smart, savvy script for *The Long Kiss Goodnight* seemed like the perfect next project for them; it was promising enough that New Line Cinema bought it for what was then a record $4 million.

Davis plays Samantha Caine, a small-town school teacher in Honesdale, PA, who has no memory since washing up on a beach eight years earlier with a head injury. Since then, she's given birth to a daughter, Caitlin (Yvonne Zima) and moved in with a kind-hearted fellow teacher named Hal (Tom Amandes). She's hired various private investigators to find out her true identity, but only the low-rent Mitch Henessey (Samuel L.

Jackson) is still on the case. Then Mitch’s assistant, Trin (Meloina Kanakaredes), finally finds some useful information—just in time, too, since Sam is attacked at home by a criminal named One-Eyed Jack (Joseph McKenna), who broke out of prison to exact revenge after recognizing Sam during her appearance as Mrs. Claus in the town’s annual Christmas parade.

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