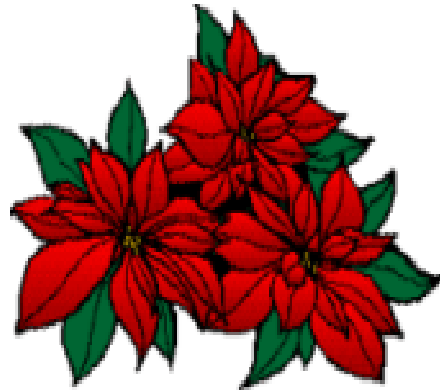


THE CHRISTMAS DIARY

By P.L. Parker





Dear Diary:

I am just so excited for Christmas this year! For the first time in like...forever, I have a boyfriend – the chance for a romantic holiday season. Did I tell you? He's a research assistant at the local college and his family is very big on celebrating with all the trimmings of a traditional Christmas. Very okay with me. Turkey and cranberries, mashed potatoes, the tree, presents. These are all good. I can hardly wait!



Dear Diary - Day 1:

I hear a knock at the door and when I answer, there is this cute little bird in a cage and beside it is this little bare tree. My neighbor Noelle is a bird watcher and she says the bird could be a Hungarian Partridge and the tree could possibly be a pear, but we won't know for sure until spring and the leaves pop out. The ground's frozen now so I won't be able to plant it until the ice melts,



The poor little guy looks lonely and too big to be a house bird. I'll let him run free in the back yard for now. Noelle says there's a flock of Quail living along the ditch. Maybe little guy can invite a few friends in and have a party. Will run to the store today and buy some bird seed or whatever he eats. He is cute, but as pets go, I'm a dog sort of person.

There's that damn feral cat skulking around in my yard again. Probably going to poop in my flower beds. Uh...what's that in his mouth?

OMYGAWD!



Dear Diary – Day 2

Today I'm doing my Christmas baking. Cookies, pies, candy, the works. I do love Christmas!



Two birds delivered today. Ask Noelle, the neighbor, again and she says they're turtle doves. I like doves but why call them turtle doves? They don't look like turtles at all! Really cute, cuddling and cooing in the cage. I just had to reach in and pet them...

They absolutely freaked! One latched onto my thumb, and boy, can he or she bite. The pain was horrendous. With the bird attached, I couldn't get my hand out of the cage so I had to drag it to the kitchen sink and nail him with my water sprayer. My thumb is now the size of a small sausage and while I was struggling to get free, my cookies burned.

Maybe the birds are psychotic being caged! They make me nervous, pretending to be so cute and cuddly and then – *BAM!*

I have a really big honey locust out back and that's where I'll put them. High enough so the cat won't get them, but at this point, I don't really care. Will have to get used to the noise as the tree is right outside my bedroom window. Really have to make a trip to town to buy bird seed.

I do love Christmas though!

Poor little guy from yesterday. I won't think about that!



Dear Diary - Day 3

Just got back from the Doc-In-The-Box. Went in for a tetanus shot. Thumb is healing well but the real problem is all the scratch marks and gouges on my face and arms!



Got a phone call this morning. A male voice said he was delivering 3 French horns. I thought it was strange, but I figured after Christmas, I could donate them to the BSU music department and get a good tax break. A definite plus in my book, but when the guy showed up, all he had was three black chickens. Said they were a special French breed of chickens called *LaFleche*, but just looked like black chickens to me. My sister raises chickens and said after this all blows over, she would take them but only if they were

hens. *Note to self* chickens don't take kindly to being examined. After the fight, I still didn't know if they were hens or roosters. Birds' private parts are totally different! Noelle has a dog run she said I could borrow it to put them in until I can give them to my sister. She looked them over and said the big one was a rooster. Wish I'd known that before. . .

So now I have three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary – Day 4

My spirits aren't too bright. I was having a good time stringing Christmas lights along the edge of my roof and humming Carols to myself when this stupid woman showed up carrying a covered box. After singing a very off-key rendition of *Joy to the World*, she whipped off the cover and told me inside were four colly birds or something like that.



Colly birds my eye! Even I know a crow when I see one. I picked up that cage and marched across the street to Cassia Park and let them go free. There's a flock of crows that hang out over there and I thought they'd fit in just fine. I came back to the house and resumed hanging lights. Birds must have followed me home because they were up on the rooftop pulling up my shingles and pecking at bugs. Then they started hopping towards me. Crows are really evil looking

creatures up close. I started thinking about that old Alfred Hitchcock movie *The Birds* and fell off the ladder. Fortunately, my barberry bushes broke the fall. Noelle was kind enough to help me pick the stickers out of my butt and the backs of my upper thighs.

Only got about half the string of lights up and the other half is hanging down in front of my door but it looks sort of festive anyway...sort of. On a good note, boyfriend called and he is taking me out to dinner tomorrow night. He asked how I liked my presents so far. I'm trying to be positive.

So now I have four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Diary – Day 5

Boyfriend came over and we went out to dinner at this really nice restaurant in downtown Boise called Angell's. Perfect name and place for celebrating a holiday dinner! During dessert, he reached into his coat pocket and handed me a little white jewelry box. I was so excited!

Was he trying to tell me something?



Not 1 but 5 gold rings!

Now we're talking! Do I wear them all on one hand, three on one, two on the other - or is one supposed to be a thumb ring? If so, it'll be awhile before I can use that one. At the door, he gave me a long lingering kiss and whispered, "This is only the beginning!" I was so excited! Visions of wedding gowns danced in my head.

Five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary - Day 6

This morning there were six geese penned up in my front yard! As I was counting beaks, the grouchy old man from down the street stopped by and asked me if I knew it was illegal to keep livestock in the city - something about a city ordinance or whatever. He complained about the noise and said if I didn't get rid of them, he'd call the cops.



I borrowed Noelle's husband Nick's truck and between the two of us, we managed to get the geese loaded and I headed for Julia Davis Park. There are always geese around the pond and I figured I could let them loose and they would be fine. About the time I got them all unloaded, a very rude man with the Parks Department came up and wanted to know what

I thought I was doing. I explained that they were a gift and that I was just trying to find them a nice home. He had the gall to snicker and then asked me what I'd been smoking. Anyone who knows me knows I don't smoke for goodness sakes. He told me I couldn't leave them. There were too many geese there as it was. So I had to load them up again - and believe you me it wasn't easy - and when I got home, I counted beaks and there were two more than I had originally. I didn't know what else to do so I shooed them into the garage until I could make a more definitive plan. My nieces left a blow up wading pool in my shed last summer so I blew it up and filled it with water. Maybe that will keep them happy for awhile. They are awfully noisy. Another trip to the pet store is in the offing.

So now I have six geese more or less, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary – Day 7

Sigh Seven swans have joined the geese in the garage. They are fighting for dominance of the wading pool. Need I say more?



Last count, seven swans, six geese more or less, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary - Day 8

Noelle and I borrowed her farmer father's stock truck last night, loaded up the geese and swans and after midnight, headed for Ann Morrison Park. Unloading went fine, my geese blended well with the park geese but I am a little concerned that someone might notice the swans.

While we were shooing the birds towards the river, a park transient hijacked the truck. Fortunately, my neighbor had her cell phone so we were able to call the cops. Unfortunately, the cops thought we were trying to steal zoo animals and we ended up sitting in jail until her husband Nick bailed us out. I was so exhausted. All I wanted to do was climb into my jammies and sleep. But *noooooo!* We have a knock at the door.



When I answered all these husky women were gathered on my porch. According to them, they'd been hired by the local farmer's co-op to come to my place and milk my cows! I explained I didn't have any cows and I even let them into the backyard to prove my point! But they wouldn't leave. They said they were being paid by the hour and were promised a day's wage! It is pretty cold outside and I felt bad about leaving them sitting out on the porch so I invited them in and told them to make themselves at home. Now, six of them are playing poker at my kitchen table and two are sitting on my couch watching TV and drinking my beer. Perhaps I should make tuna sandwiches or something. It's been a long day.

I now have eight women milkers, seven swans, six geese more or less, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary – Day 9

Boyfriend called this morning! Said today I'd get to see ballet dancers! My heart thrilled to the news. I've always wanted to see The Nutcracker and I know it is being performed right now in the Morrison Center!

But did I have an awe-inspiring moment at the Morrison Center? No I did not. What I got was belly dancers in my driveway.



I've never seen so many of my neighbors gathered in one place. For once, Mr. Grinch from down the street was actually smiling! I don't think that man's face has ever smiled before. I was afraid his face would break.

The dancers made me sit on a lawn chair and they circled me wiggling and shimmying. It was kind of embarrassing, especially when this chunky one was doing belly rolls right in my face. I just didn't know where to look although I did notice the goose bumps popping out on her flabby belly. They tried to get me to dance with them, but this body just won't do the things they were doing! Amazingly enough, boyfriend actually showed up for this one!

Present count, nine belly dancers, eight milkers, seven swans, six geese more or less, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary – Day 10

Well, as Christmas presents go this year, next to the five gold rings, today definitely deserved a high five. Bright and early ten young men from the local gymnastics team showed up and were leaping and jumping all over the front yard. Santa came early with a "bag" full of goodies!



Whew! I must say, the spandex outfits those young men wear certainly delineate...everything. All those broad shoulders, hard muscles, tight posteriors and ...other things.



I could tell the guys were starting to get cold. Me, I was feeling pretty warm, but in the spirit of Christmas, I just had to invite them in for some hot chocolate.

Noelle wanted to come too, but Nick her husband grabbed her arm and dragged her away. Must not be a gymnastics fan! Anyway, we had a nice visit and I decided to feed them lunch. Do you know how many pizzas gymnasts can eat? Almost my whole savings account! Expensive but worth the effort. I'm surprised by this present, but we don't look such a thought-provoking "gift horse" in the mouth!

Present count – Ten gymnasts, nine belly dancers, eight milkers, seven swans, six or so geese, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary – Day 11

Today was another strange but at least thoughtful gift. Eleven guys from the pipe fitters union showed up.



They spent about an hour piping or whatever they do.



When they left, they handed me an estimate for maintenance work on my pipes. The last gentleman to leave leaned over and whispered as he walked out the door that anytime I wanted my pipes cleaned, he'd be happy to do it for free. He put his fingers to his lips

and shushed. I suspect he didn't want the others to know he was making such a generous offer. I'll keep him in mind if and when the need arises.

So as of Day 11, I have an estimate from eleven pipe fitters, a visit from ten gymnasts, nine belly dancers, eight milkers, seven swans, six or so geese, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Dear Diary – Day 12

I levitated out of bed this morning, rushed to my porch and was greeted with twelve young boys banging furiously on twelve kettle drums. A woman stepped forward with sign in hand that said “Brought to you by the South Junior High Band.”



The noise was deafening. My heart was atwitter. Mr. Grinch down the street called the cops, I got a ticket for disturbing the peace, the band lady was offended and now boyfriend isn't speaking to me because he says I'm not appreciative.

So as of Day 12, twelve drummers placated by cookies and hot cider. I have an estimate from eleven pipe fitters, a visit from ten gymnasts, nine belly dancers, eight milkers, seven swans, six or so geese, five gold rings, four crows, three chickens, two doves

and we won't talk about the poor little guy from Day 1.



Christmas Day

Isn't what I'd hoped but that's okay. The 60" surprise TV I got my boyfriend for Christmas looks just great in my front room.

Nick and Noelle left a bag of goodies on the porch and later on today, I'll munch on my favorite caramel popcorn, swill it down with a big cup of hot chocolate and watch *You've Got Mail!* I'll have Christmas dinner with my family and open presents with them. So all in all, life is good. It has been twelve days of ups and downs.

I'll call the eleven pipe fitters one of these days and have the needed work done. The ten gymnasts are performing at BSU next week and I'll wander down to give support. The nine belly dancers are really nice ladies and I'm taking up lessons. The eight milkers are still on my shit list. I wonder how my seven swans and six or so geese are doing at the park but I suspect well. The five gold rings are on a chain around my neck and I love the tinkling sound. The four crows are still pecking up on my roof top but they seem happy. My sister took all three chickens as the rooster was so upset when the hens left, my sister just couldn't stand to see him suffer. I wonder – can

chickens be neutered. The two doves are cooing up a storm and I won't talk about the poor – WHAT IS THAT IN MY YARD! *It's the Hungarian Partridge!* He survived! Ohmygawd! I'm so happy. I'll put in him the dog run for safekeeping until I get a nice cage built. I'm going to call him Jerry or Jerri if he turns out to be female. What a wonderful Christmas!

From my house to yours, Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.



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