

12 Days: A Christmas Stalking

On the first day of Christmas...

Yes, I know, the first day of Christmas is really December 25th. Twelfth night heralds Epiphany (with pipes or drums depending on the version of the song). It's also the date decorations came down when I was growing up and a play attributed to Shakespeare. Regardless...



*On the first day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
A partridge in a pear tree.*

You might think I made a great shot, but I was aiming for my ex.

*On the second day of Christmas
My true love gave to me
Two turtle doves and a partridge in a pear tree.*

First off, I can see where this is going and if he keeps going I'm going to have an orchard on my hands. On the other hand, dove = pigeon = squab = dinner tonight.



I suppose I should mention that “My True Love” is how my sometimes boyfriend/mostly ex describes himself. My description of him varies.



*On the third day of Christmas My True Love gave to me
Three French hens, two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree.*

Anticipating the chickens, I adapted a Turducken recipe for partridge, hen and doves. If successful, I have a contract poised to sign with a local restaurateur.

*On the fourth day of Christmas "My True Love" gave to me
Four calling birds, three French hens, two turtle doves
And a partridge in a pear tree*

Having no idea what a "calling bird" was, my ex - oh yes he is definitely my ex now - sent me four CAWING birds. These being crows and my neighbours being superstitious, an argument ensued. Mrs Poppalov insisted that four crows meant I was going to give birth to a son. Mr Poppalov insisted that I was about to die. I'm not sure who made the most noise, the crows or the Poppalovs. In any case, one of my other neighbours called animal control.

"My True Love" is toast.



*On the fifth day of Christmas, My True Love gave to me
Five golden rings.*



No birds, fair or fowl, my ex showed up in cuffs and leg shackles. How he managed to escape custody is anyone's guess. The police were hot on his heels. It turned out he was stealing the livestock from a local

farmer - the same one who bought my “presents” when the neighbours complained about the smell.
(They don't call them fowl for nothing.)

Obsessed as he was, my ex wanted to deliver the five golden rings before skipping town. He also wanted to borrow my hacksaw. Unfortunately for him, I was giving my statement to a rather handsome police detective when he arrived.

Oops. :)

Silly me. I thought it was safe to go shopping for normal presents for normal people. I should have known my ex would make bail.

*On the sixth day of Christmas My True Love gave to me,
Six geese a laying...*

Not the geese. Just the eggs. All over my front porch. My new detective friend said they couldn't do DNA testing, but I bet six geese a laying were involved.

I'm a little worried about tomorrow.



One week to Christmas! Ex or no ex, I had to go shopping. While I was out I heard the following report on the radio: “On the lighter side, dancers from local production of Swan Lake were invited to assist in a Twelve Days of Christmas montage. When it was revealed that they were to pose outside in icy water, they respectfully declined.”

I rushed home.



*On the seventh day of Christmas My True Love gave to me
Seven swans a swimming*

Whew! My ornamental pond was full of half-submerged ballerina figurines and littered with feathers. I suspect he tried live swans first.



*On the eighth day of Christmas My True Love gave to me
Eight maids a milking...*

This morning I received a note from my ex. He had the nerve to be calling me up for bail money. He was caught attempting to cattle rustle dairy cows. He had rounded up seven Holsteins and a Jersey from Mennonite farms in the next county. His reasoning was that Mennonites would turn the other cheek.

Right. They're peaceful, not stupid. They notified the police and had him arrested *blitzschnell*.

I tried not to laugh until after I got off the phone. Naturally, I didn't go bail him out. I don't know who did, but he managed to dump a half ton of cow manure on my lawn while I was out mailing cards.

Fortunately, my neighbour (not the one who complained about the birds) is a member of the local garden club.

Next year they want him to dump horse shit. Nothing better for roses.



*On the ninth day of Christmas My True Love gave to me
Nine ladies waiting...*

It was time to get proactive. When my ex showed up, trying to wheedle me into dropping charges and testifying on his behalf as a character witness (I'd already agreed to do that for the Crown Prosecutor) he was greeted by eight women from my gym. Just so we couldn't be accused of trying to threaten him, we were doing synchronized barbell reps in my back yard. (The front lawn was still a bit wiffy from the manure dump.)

He didn't stay long.

That evening I received a package from England, scheduled to be delivered December 20. It contain nine Royal Doulton figures form the “Pretty Lady” collection. He must have thought this one out months ago. They made nice gifts for my Ladies in Weighting.

I almost put a restraining order on my ex. My new detective friend suggested it. Curiosity overcame good sense. Besides, would it have really worked?

*On the tenth day of Christmas My True Love gave to me
Ten lords a leaping...*

He outdid himself on this one. Every year, since I was a child, my mother takes me to see the Nutcracker. She loves ballet. I love the men in tights. My ex arranged a little entre-action with the male chorus leaping about the stage before opening a banner saying “Marry me.”



Next, a couple of toy soldiers escort my ex to our box and the spotlights turn on my delighted mother and a mortified me as an oversized ring box is presented to me.

This would have been very romantic if my ex weren't a Grade A fruitcake.

“Give the guy a break,” one of the soldiers whispered.

“You do realize that this is the guy who tried to make seven dancers in the swan chorus swim in an icy pond.”

The painted spots of colour on the soldiers' cheeks faded into their angry flushes. My ex discovered what I knew since childhood. Dancers are solid muscle. Soon my ex was leaping to make his getaway.



*On the eleventh day of Christmas My True Love gave to me
Eleven pipers piping...*

There is nothing like the sound of bagpipes in the morning.

It took me a while to figure out what they were playing. It's not often you hear “You're a Mean One Mr Grinch” with drones. I guess my ex wasn't pleased with my Christmas spirit.

On the whole, I thought I got off easy. This was less embarrassing than the ten lords a leaping; less work than the nine ladies weighting; less mess than the eight maids a milking, or the byproduct thereof; less intrusive than the seven swans; not as good as the five golden rings; only slightly noisier than the four calling birds; not as smelly as the three French hens, two turtle doves and a partridge in pear tree. Mind you, I still had a Part-dov-en with brandied pear sauce waiting for Christmas dinner, so the fowl was fine with me.

I stood on my porch with my morning coffee, listening to the music, when CRACK! Something hit me. The last thing I thinking before passing out was, damn, there goes my favourite coffee mug.

I came to, strapped into the front seat of my ex's SUV. I felt awful but my ex looked worse. He was a mass of bruises and abrasions. He looked so beaten up, before I demanded to know what he thought he was doing, I asked if the dancers had done all that damage.

“Not all of it,” he said, giving me a sidelong scowl before turning his attention back to the road.

We were headed north. I was pretty sure I recognized the highway and guessed we were headed for his grandparent’s cottage.

Going for the “put him at ease” ploy, I prompted him to tell me about his injuries. Most of the abrasions were from the wild and domestic fowl wrangling. He had a couple of broken toes from trying to steal milch cows. The dancers got in a few kicks, but he had to fight off all the pipers when they realized he was kidnapping me. He only escaped because their bags got in the way.

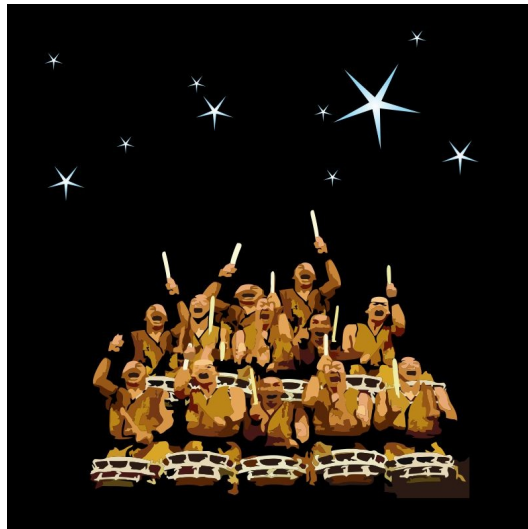
I only hoped that one of the pipers got my ex’s license plate because I was starting to get more scared than annoyed. Anyone who’d confront and escape eleven men in kilts was a psychopath capable of anything.

Since my ex was beyond reason, I gave up conversation and stared out the window. A small aircraft dipped low. My ex swerved, trying to get a better look.

“Relax,” I told him. “It’s not a police copter. It’s a single prop plane.”

“Since when do you know so much?”

I didn’t dignify the question with an answer. Any moron would know the difference between a helicopter and an aeroplane. I knew a little more than that. It was a bright yellow Piper Cub, just like the one my detective friend promised to take me up in when the weather warmed up.



*On the Twelfth Day of Christmas My True Love gave to me,
Twelve drummers drumming...*

Actually, what he gave me was a splitting headache listening to the soundtrack of Taiko Drumming.

It was almost midnight. I had tried getting him to stop for a pee break, a dinner break and for coffee to keep him awake. The drum music was his solution to staying alert; he packed sandwiches for dinner; and I won't share what I had to do about relieving my bladder.

I saw a sign telling us that Tim Hortons was 13 km down the road.

"If you don't stop and get me a coffee," I said, slamming the off button on the stereo, "I'll kick the door open and jump out. I want to wash up. I want coffee. And if you put that CD back on again, I'll ram it down your throat."

He grunted a suggestion that was anatomically impossible, but he turned off for the Tim Hortons. Of course, that might have had more to do with the R.I.D.E. checkpoint. ('Tis the season to reduce impaired driving.) If he went into Tim's, then out the far exit, he could avoid being pulled over.

"We're not going in if there're cops around," he informed me. "I'm not stupid."

I bit my tongue.

The huge windows made it easy to check out the interior. No uniforms in evidence. Not many patrons inside. Most people were using the drive-through.

He let me out and took my wrist in a lock grip. In his other hand he had hunting knife, let me see before letting his sleeve mask it. "Play nice or I'll stick you."

"Okay," I said. "Buy me a coffee and I'll be good. Can I go to the washroom while you order?"

He rolled his eyes. I guess that meant no.

We walked to the counter, to all appearances hand in hand. Before he had a chance to speak, I started ordering.

"I'll have a chili combo with a large coffee - in a mug - and an old-fashioned glazed donut. No make that a sour cream glaze. I'll have a biscuit with that, not the bun. Black coffee." I turned to my ex. "Do you have enough cash? Or should I go get me purse."

Automatically, he let go of my wrist to get his wallet. I stepped back. A few seconds later, my ex noticed that the lady behind the counter was levelling a pistol at him. His wallet and knife dropped from limp hands and a wet patch spread across the front of his jeans.

Then he backed up into a plainclothes officer bearing handcuffs.

Many hours and coffees later, I was checked into a motel, being too tired to contemplate driving

home. Thanks to my self-appointed True Love, I now had one day left to do all my preparations for Christmas. On the upside, I had a handsome and heroic New Love, with whose help me and my Christmas were rescued.

On the morning of Christmas, My New Love gave to me,

A commemorative charm bracelet with:

12 drummers drumming

11 pipers piping

10 lords a leaping

9 ladies waiting

8 maids a milking

7 swans a swimming

6 geese a laying

5 golden rings

4 calling birds

3 French hens

2 turtle doves

And a partridge in a *&%!!! pear tree.

