

# The Thirteen Days of Christmas

By Dennis Knight

*In a quiet downtown bar on a winter's day some years ago, I came across a journal left behind on the bench in a corner booth. It doesn't have a name on it, but the writings show a feminine hand. I read the diary and came to understand why she set it aside and walked away after making her last entry, bookmarking the page with a tear-stained bar napkin. I'll share some excerpts...*

December 25. This is our first Christmas in a lifetime of holidays to come. It was a lovely morning with scads of nice things under the tree, but I treasure first this journal from my true love. Another surprise came this afternoon when the floral delivery brought a lovely partridge tethered in a pear tree. There was no sender's card but true love blushed and grinned like a silly galoot. I gave him a nice big hug.

December 26. Well, I guess Christmas isn't over because today my true love sent another partridge in a pear tree and this time it came with a pair of turtle doves, cooing ever so prettily. How appropriate. I hugged him again. I was so sad when the taxi whisked him off to DIA tonight. I know I should be happy with all the money he brings in as a daring soldier of fortune, but I worry and wonder where he may be going now. It's very secret but he promises to text me every day.

December 28. Either true love is obsessed with birds or he thinks I am. Today there came four birds of a different kind, all calling incessantly, as well as yet another trio of French chickens, two more doves, and another damned partridge stuck in a damned pear tree.

December 29. Finally something I can handle, a beautiful little box of five golden rings. Nice. But after today's other deliveries, there are now in the basement five partridges, five pear trees, eight turtle doves, nine fancy hens, and eight calling birds.

January 1. This is getting old. Today I answered the bell to find at my door eight bow-legged girls wearing rubber gloves, and each carrying a stool. Now what the hell do I do with them?

*On several more pages our journalist tallied and re-tallied her burgeoning populations of birds and humans. The pages begin to show smudges and there are particularly nasty comments about geese and swans, which are clearly messier than doves and partridges.*

January 5. It is the twelfth day of the siege, and this better be the end of it, because after today's deliveries I now have in the basement a cacophony of drummers drumming, pipers piping, swans trumpeting, geese squawking and calling birds calling. And it stinks.

January 6. This morning, on the feast of the Epiphany, I had one. The first thing I did was to meet with Pierre down at the French Café. I gave him outright the dozen partridges, twenty-two doves, thirty French hens, three dozen calling birds, forty-two geese and forty-two swans. They will be on the menu starting tomorrow. Pierre hired the forty maids-a-milking and will put them to work as cooks, servers, cashiers, bird handlers and shift managers.

I amassed my other humans on the lawn of the courthouse and arranged them in the order of twenty pipers, thirty-six ladies, forty lords, and twelve drummers. I taught some peppy songs to my pipers, told the ladies to dance their prettiest, challenged the lords to leap their highest, helped the drummers find a beat, and sent the whole lot off on a parade down Broadway, a very long parade.

I took my forty rings to the cash-for-your-gold store, stashed the wad in my purse, went back to the courthouse and filed for divorce.