

A Partridge In A Pear Tree

By The Blintz

"Hey!" Starsky shouted indignantly, slapping Hutch's hand away from the radio dial. "What do you think you're doing?"

Hutch glared at his partner before turning his attention back to the radio control. "I am trying to find some music to listen to. It's bad enough we're out here patrolling on Christmas Eve, the least we can do is find a halfway decent radio station ..."

"Stop that," Starsky replied, once again deflecting his partner's questing hand. "I happen to like this song. Besides, it's my car so I should be able to listen to whatever I want to." Taking one last look to make sure that Hutch wasn't going to attempt to move the dial again, Starsky turned his attention back to the road, loudly singing along with the radio.

"On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me:

Twelve drummers drumming...."

"This song makes no sense, Starsk."

Starsky stopped singing long enough to glance quizzically at his partner. "Whatta you talkin' about, makes no sense? It's a classic."

"A classic what?"

"A classic Christmas song, that's what. All those drummers drummin' and frogs leaping and ladies dancin'"

"It's lords leaping, Starsk. Not frogs."

Starsky allowed himself a small smirk of satisfaction. "I thought you didn't like the song."

"I don't," Hutch stated emphatically, heaving a sigh of relief as the last strains of the chorus faded from the speakers.

"Well, ya coulda fooled me. You seem to know all the words."

"Maybe that's because they sing the same lines over and over and over..."

"Well, I think it's beautiful. All those wonderful gifts – one for each day of Christmas."

"Okay." Hutch settled back in his seat and turned slightly to his left so he could look at his partner as he talked to him. "Let's start there. In case you haven't noticed, mushbrain, Christmas is only one day. Not twelve. And that's just the beginning."

"Yeah, well, I'm sure, back in the old days things were different. They probably didn't see each other very often what with all the jousts and quests and damsels in distress and dragons and stuff. They were very busy back then so when they celebrated Christmas they took their time. Which, by the way, is a custom I think we should adopt today. Wouldn't it be great, Hutch? Twelve days off work, twelve days worth of eating and parties and presents..."

"That's another thing," Hutch interrupted. "What about those so-called presents? What kind of a gift is a partridge in a pear tree, anyhow? And which part was the gift? The tree? The partridge? Maybe he got her a partridge and it flew out the window and landed in the tree. Or, maybe he gave her the tree and the partridge was flying by and landed in it and he decided to take credit for that too. Or, maybe he got her both and wired the poor little bird's foot to the tree to make sure it didn't take off before she saw it. Do you see what I'm getting at Starsk? I can't imagine anybody being happy with a tree for a gift."

Starsky rolled his eyes heavenward and sighed heavily. "You know, you're about as much fun as a toothache. I think a tree would be a wonderful gift. You know, somethin' alive and growing, kinda symbolic of their love for one another. I think it's very touching."

"Touching?"

"Yes, touching. It shows a lot of thought."

"Well, then what about the rest of the gifts in that song? What's so *touching* about twelve drummers drumming and eleven pipers piping? And how do you give someone another person as a gift? It sounds like slavery to me."

"I'm sure it was customary in those days, Hutch. You know, they didn't have mini malls and K-Mart back then. Maybe that was the best he could do."

"Well, I'll tell you one thing. It certainly explains the four calling birds, three French hens and two turtle doves."

"Whatta ya mean? Why do those need an explanation? I'm sure they were quite beautiful and festive."

"Festive? What's so festive about a bunch of filthy birds? All they do is sit on their perches and eat and squawk, and eat and drop birdseed all over the place and eat and..."

"I get it, Hutch. They're not the cleanest animals in the world. So, and I have a feeling I'm going to regret this, how do *you* explain the birds?"

"Think about it Starsk. This poor girl is minding her own business, probably euphorically sentimentalizing about the season, and here comes Prince Charming. First he promises her all these wonderful gifts to express his love, and then they all come rolling in. By the time everything's said and done, she's stuck with twelve drummers, eleven pipers, ten lords, nine ladies and eight maids. That's fifty people, Starsk! Fifty more mouths to feed, all dancin' around and drumming and piping – can you imagine the chaos?"

"I'm sure there's a reason for all that. Besides, there were a lot of other neat things on that list. Like the five golden rings. Not even you can find anything wrong with those."

"Ah, yes. The rings. He probably had to slip those in there to bribe her not to run screaming from the house. Or the barn, for that matter."

"Barn? I don't remember anything about a barn in the song."

"Where do you think all those maids were milking? And what about the swans and the geese and all the other wildlife? You don't think she'd let them in the house, do you? C'mon. We both know better than that."

"I'll bet you didn't have many friends when you were a kid, did ya?"

"Don't change the subject. Now, where was I? Oh yes. All those people doing their respective piping and dancing and drumming – I'm sure they had to get hungry. And what do you think she fed them?"

"I don't wanna know."

"The swans, calling birds, French hens, turtle doves, and whatever the geese were laying. And I'd be willing to bet that the partridge was history too, if she could get her hands on it."

Starsky turned to look at his partner and shook his head. "Have you no Christmas spirit at all? Can't you just accept the song at face value? A simple little ditty about a wonderful party – sounded like everyone was havin' a good time to me. Can't ya just see it Hutch? The hall all decorated up and the musicians with their instruments polished to a shine and all the maids and ladies dressed up in their finest dresses dancin' the night away, celebrating Christmas and all the festivities?"

Hutch rolled his eyes. "Sounds more to me like a bunch of poor schmucks sold into slavery to entertain this frazzled woman who's having to slaughter her Christmas presents just to feed everyone. I'll bet she didn't get a lick of sleep either. And Don Juan was probably camped out by the fireplace, patting himself on the back for being such a thoughtful guy. Nothing says Christmas like chaos and blood-letting."

"You're really weird, ya know that? You're the only person I know that can take a wonderful, classic Christmas tune and turn it into something...sordid. Can't you see what

a beautiful sentimental song that is? Just for once can't you put your cynicism to rest and enjoy the euphoric sentimentalism you pretend to hate?"

"What are you trying to say? I'll bet you'd have a fit if I even thought about getting you just one of the things on that sorry excuse for a Christmas list, *if* I were going to get you anything, which I'm not. Only because it's against my principles and all."

"I think they're terrific presents, Hutch. And I know you're going to get me something for Christmas 'cause ya won't be able to help yourself. So what's it gonna be, huh? Some more materials for my model ships? Ooh, or that new camera I've been eyeballin'? Or maybe that sweater – you know, the red one with the white stripe that would match my car? Won't ya give me just a little hint? Hmmm?"

"There's nothing to hint about, Starsk. I'm sticking to my principles this year. Unless, of course, you'd like me to round up eleven pipers or twelve drummers or a pear tree and stuff them in your stocking."

"Of all the police officers in the Ninth Precinct, and all the detectives in the state of California, I get stuck with the one that makes Ebenezer Scrooge look like Jolly Old Saint Nick."

"Some people are just lucky I guess."

"Yeah," Starsky replied, executing a neat left turn into the police parking garage. "Maybe one day I'll meet one of 'em...."

The End