

# ***Twelve Days***

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The holidays are upon us and if you're keeping track of this sort of thing, Advent has begun, and purple is the in color till mid-January. It sparks the start of the Twelve Days of Christmas, at least for me.

Little backstory for you. I grew up on the grounds of a seminary and my late father was an Episcopal minister. That's right, I'm a preacher's kid—who writes about a swearing troll. Tracks for me.

If you've read any of the Leira Chronicles, you'll see my old home featured in them. Nobody tell the dean that I said he's really an Elf. The tall, lithe, powerful kind. Not the lawn ornament kind.

My childhood was spent hanging around scores of young men, and then finally women who wanted to become ministers. Mix in the ghost stories dating from when the place was used as a field hospital during the Civil War. Sprinkle all of it with how easy it was to build a softball team at a moment's notice, and it was a pretty good childhood. But I digress.

This is more about redoing the Twelve Days of Christmas to suit well, the troll. That's right, Yumfuck Tiberius Troll. Why not?

By the way, one more aside. I'm giving up on Italy as a backdrop for The Leira Chronicles, for now. I found a substitute closer to home that will work just as well so more books will be coming out before you know it.

Now, back to our revised Twelve Days.

On the FIRST day of Christmas, Yumfuck went out in his mask and cape and found a small mouse abandoned near an old house and went searching through the sewers for a Willen he heard about that lived near the subway. The Willen agreed to watch out for the mouse, a very distant cousin of Willens, and named him Ralph.

On the SECOND day of Christmas, Yumfuck crept quietly into the kitchen, darting between Correk's feet with a quick lick of some crumbs on the floor. He quietly opened a panel he built under a cabinet door and slid inside, squeezing through where he found two bags of Cheetos hidden behind the trash bags. He saved some to share with Ralph on his next visit.

On the THIRD day of Christmas, Yumfuck hung his stocking carefully on the mantel and got inside waiting patiently for Santa. Leira finally came to get him after three hours when he fell asleep. She found a small mouse curled up next to him covered in Cheetos dust and thought better of it, leaving both of them alone.

On the FOURTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck made his Christmas list. It had only four items. A new mask and cape for Batfuck, in yellow this time. A tiny bike to go in his room with an updated obstacle course. New supplies for the vending machine, also in his room. And a Ouija board to see if anyone in the World In Between could send a message. Leira looked at the list and back at him and called her grandmother to ask if that was really possible. Yumfuck went in search of a larger stocking. Correk noticed the orange paw prints and went to check on his stash, now almost depleted. Ralph was picked up by the Willen and they headed down the alley toward home.

On the FIFTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck binged on Christmas movies. His favorites in no particular order were Die Hard, A Christmas Story, It's a Wonderful Life, Elf, and Klaus. He went back and added, *some more Oriceran playing cards* to his Christmas list for Mara, hung his smaller stocking back up for Leira, gave back some of the Cheetos when he heard that Santa is always watching (some of them still damp where he licked them), and found a matchbox just Ralph's size for a bed that he wrapped with a bow.

On the SIXTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck visited the Donut Run on 4th Street in DC with his pal Samuel who bought him two mango coconuts, a cookies and cream, one French toast donut, a strawberry, and two Boston cream. They strolled back to their favorite park where Samuel put the box under the bench and smiled to himself, listening to the sounds of a hungry troll burrowing his way

through six donuts all at once. Followed by a satisfied and loud burp. Samuel heard the tsk of a woman passing nearby and tipped his hat, still smiling. Yumfuck finally joined him on the bench and told him the plot of Elf, partially mixing in the story from Klaus. He also shared his Christmas list and asked if it was true that Santa was some kind of new magical that could see everyone all the time and knew who was naughty and who was nice. Samuel said that was the rumor. Best not to test it. Yumfuck wondered if his large stocking might end up with only coal and asked Samuel if they could stop by the store on the way home to buy some Cheetos for Correk. He rode in Samuel's pocket along the way and told him all about Ralph.

On the SEVENTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck went out again in his blue Batfuck outfit and found seven dogs roaming through the alleys behind his house. Six large dogs and one chihuahua riding on the back of a pit bull. Yumfuck pulled a sharp thorn out of the paw of the large German Shepherd and was quickly added to the pack. They showed him where all the best dumpsters were in town behind the fast food joints and he climbed up with one tiny paw on the back of one dog, and another tiny paw on the back of another and guided them to the dumpster behind the Donut Run. Yumfuck climbed in and threw out donuts, taking his share in a few bites of each one. He told them all the entire story of the Grinch Who Stole Christmas, slowing down when he got to the parts about the mighty little dog, Max who could pull that giant sled and stuck by his friend, the Grinch, no matter what. The dumpster behind the Safeway had some smashed Cheetos still in the box, which were just as tasty. Just as the sun was starting to set, Yumfuck climbed up onto the back of the pointer mix and held onto his collar, directing him to the sewer for a short visit with Ralph.

On the EIGHTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck mailed seven Christmas cards and one long letter to Hagan. Correk took the letter with a promise to hand deliver it on his next visit with Harkin. There was scratching at the back door and Correk opened it to see six large dogs and one chihuahua standing on the back of a pit bull, barking at Correk. "I think it's for you," said Correk, arching a brow. The German Shepherd had a greasy, crumpled bag from Donut Run in his mouth with two day old donuts inside. Yumfuck waved them in, grinning at Correk showing all his tiny, pointed teeth. "They're here to watch a movie." Before Correk could stop them, they had all trooped past him, the chihuahua still barking, and headed for the living room. The chihuahua took his favorite spot on the couch. Leira came walking in carrying Yumfuck's list. "What is this about dog food? Since when do you..." Leira looked up startled at the crowded, furry living room, a crooked smile growing across her face despite her surprise. "Never mind, I think I get it." Yumfuck clapped his paws, starting the TV. "And a few more stockings please."

Correk noticed the large bowl of Cheetos and started to point but Leira stopped him. "Let it go. There's always more."

"But is there ever enough?"

A squeak could be heard at the back door and Leira opened it to reveal a small mouse grinning up at her. Yumfuck appeared at her side, his arms raised over his head. "Ralph! Come on, we're just getting started."

“Why do I still get surprised?” asked Correk, scratching his head.

“You’re a Light Elf from Oriceran who’s got a couple hundred years at least under your belt and have battled hairy monsters but you’re thrown by a troll and a dog party with a small mouse. Think about it.”

On the NINTH day of Christmas, Harkin came to visit and Yumfuck showed him around his room. There were nine little potted ferns along a shelf waiting for another visit from his friends. Harkin had brought two new ferns to add to his collection and helped him build another shelf. Correk handed him the letter for Hagan while Yumfuck put Christmas stamps on the other seven. Only the reindeer ones were applied to his chest. “Can we invite my friends to Christmas dinner?” he asked. “Sounds like fun,” said Harkin. “I’m in.”

“My grandmother will love this.” Leira patted Correk on the back as he gave a resigned shrug. “Sure, why not.”

“I brought these just for you,” said Harkin, handing over the pink box of donuts from Voodoo Donuts. “Aloha motherfucker!” squealed the troll, digging his claws into the side of the box and vaulting toward the top.

“Remember your Christmas list and who’s watching,” said Leira, as the troll stopped mid-chomp of a Gorilla Grape. He paused long enough to offer a donut to Harkin and Correk who wisely declined, and he happily went back to tunneling his way through a chocolate covered one.

“Want to watch a movie?” asked Harkin, startling his son. “You watch movies?”

“Lily has been catching me up.” He glanced over at the mantel at the long line of stockings in a wide variety of sizes. “You have new tenants?”

“Kind of,” said Leira, checking her list of gifts she still needed to buy. Something for Correk was at the top, and even Ralph was included.

On the TENTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck startled ten older ladies waiting for a bus to take them to their regular Bingo game. “A talking mouse!” exclaimed one of the ladies. “And he’s holding a... what is that? A fern?” asked another.

“Why are there pictures of reindeers stuck to him?”

“I think those are stamps. Do you think he was mailed somewhere like that?”

“Why do I keep smelling donuts. Damn, now I’m hungry. Dolores, do you still have that Kind bar in your purse?”

“We’re gonna be late for the movie, Lucy. Where’s that bus?”

“I still have things on my Christmas list to get. I wonder if my grandson would like a talking mouse.”

“Would fit neatly in a stocking.”

“A mouse with an iPhone. You think you’ve seen everything. Look, he’s taking our picture. Smile, girls.”

“Look! The mouse is eating a Cheetos. Or is that a worm? Hard to see that far away.”

“No kidding. That’s not a talking mouse. It’s more like a hamster. That’s a mouse,” said Delores, pointing at Ralph, who was busy hugging Yumfuck.

On the ELEVENTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck opened all his presents—eleven of them all carefully wrapped. His present to Correk were eleven bags of

Cheetos. Leira got some new Oriceran playing cards with pictures of older ladies smiling. Yumfuck got a gift card to the gardening store for more ferns and some nice stationery with a new pen to write to Hagan. Six large dog bowls, with one smaller one tucked into the last one. Correk gave him a gift card to Donut Run with a wink. Leira gave him Die Hard two and three. Everything on his list was there! Even the stockings were filled with M&M's and Snickers and candy canes and red vines. "I must have been really good this year," he exclaimed, as Leira rubbed his soft, furry head. Mara gave him two large cases of Cheetos, just the right size for his vending machine. And at last, there was a small present of cheese just right for Ralph.

On the TWELFTH day of Christmas, Yumfuck invited over twelve of his cousins from Oriceran (and one small mouse). Eleven slept in the ferns and one at the top of the slide. He showed them all his presents, sharing the red vines and Snickers. His cousin, Phil left a sticky paw print on his newly framed picture of the bus ladies who took him and Ralph to the movies with them, riding in Dolores' purse. Nine of his cousins were perched in their ferns, watching from the shelf. Cousin Mitch was dipping his paw into ink and dancing across a piece of paper. "Mail this with your letter," he squeaked.

"Are you guys ready? We're catching a ride with the dogs downtown," said Yumfuck, as he zipped over their heads on the wire.

"You promised donuts, right?"

"Always!"

"I think I like this Christmas thing," said Phil, smearing chocolate across his fur.

"Remember it's not Christmas till Hans Gruber falls off the Nakatomi Plaza building," cackled Yumfuck. He waved his hand at the line of furry, blank faces. "I'll show you later. You'll love it."

A head topped with neon yellow hair popped out of his stocking, the cheeks stuffed with M&M's. "Can we make lists too?"

"Sure! Why not?"

A troll leaning against the vending machine, rubbing his belly let out a loud fart as a perfect orange circle floated toward the ceiling. "That's gonna leave a stain," muttered Yumfuck, letting off one of his own. Yumfuck headed out the door followed by his twelve cousins—and one small mouse named, Ralph.

Happy Holidays everyone! More adventures to follow.

