

ACBA: Fiction and Prose

GRACIE'S SPECIAL DIARY

By Robert Spitzer
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Have you ever wondered what your pet truly thinks of you? What would your pet say if given the ability for one week to express its thoughts and feelings, honestly, about you. Gracie, your average redheaded Peruvian, was given that opportunity.

Dear Diary: Life is but a cage. Whatever Francine puts in here, I eat, then later, top quality garden compost.

Monday: Mondays are boring. Francine wakes up early to get ready for school and then I don't get to see her until after 3:30 in the afternoon. If I don't make enough noise, Francine forgets to give me my fresh water and food. You try drinking stale water in a scummy bottle! I tell you, it's no fun trying to swallow that putrid mess. But, I must give Francine credit today. She scrubbed out my bottle and everything, makes that water taste sooo sweet.

Francine left for school at 7:45 and gave me a big hug just before she left too. The rest of the day was quiet since Mom and Dad were gone to work.

Francine went to the feed store and brought home a new kind of guinea pig food. Boy, am I happy. This new stuff tastes great! That other kind was pretty bad. All it did was crumble, tasted like the alfalfa sat in a field for a couple of months. Why do some feed companies put out garbage like that anyway? I can't eat half rotted crumbles and dust. How do they manage to stay in business?

Another quiet evening. Mondays, Francine has a lot of homework. So, she does that and ignores me and my dirty cage. I guess that will have to wait until tomorrow. I would clean it myself, but I'm not tall enough to reach the shavings.

Tuesday: Nothing ever happens on Tuesday. There ought to be a law against Tuesdays, especially Tuesdays in a dirty cage. For that matter, there ought to be a law against dirty cages. What's a girl have to do to get some room service around here? Just for that, I'm going to eat half of Francine's favorite sweater. Tug a little into the cage, midmorning snack. Tug a little more and my lips have some more to smack. By mid afternoon, no more collar, left sleeve or nylon zipper on her new backpack. Wow! I did a poem. Ain't I somethin'?

Folks, never leave anything too close to a guinea pig's cage. We will eat everything. Our teeth are like scissors, sharpened knives, samari swords. We like paper and cups, metal and kettles, plastic and elastic, cardboard and, and...oh, you get the idea. We like to eat everything! One time I ate a whole fifty-five gallon garbage sack. As I said to Francine, "I can't believe I ate the whole thing!" Thanks to Alka-Seltzer, I was all right. This public service announcement was brought to you by me, Gracie.

Wednesday: On Wednesday mornings, the cleaning lady comes about 10:00. Her name is Agnes. Agnes doesn't like me. She brings this slobbering baby with her. I have to admit, he is cute, but scary to a little girl like me. Two weeks ago that thing got too close, so I did what any self respecting little girl would do. I bit him, not hard, just gave a good pinch to protect myself. You would think the world had ended! That kid screamed his lungs out, scared me to death. I jumped so hard I bashed my nose into the back of the cage. I still have a scab on my nose from that. Agnes came running, gave me a scolding. Most people just don't understand. Francine understands. She said it would never happen again. She said Agnes isn't going to bring that baby anymore, good!

Thursday: Today was great. Francine cleaned my cage, about time! Do you know what a dirty cage does to my pretty red hair? It uncurls my naturally curly hair, mats it good too. Then Francine rearranges my hair follicles, trying to make me look presentable again. Talk about pain! Try yanking on your own hair sometime. Do it good and hard. That will give you some idea what a matted little girl goes through.

Thursday evening was very interesting. Francine stayed in her room with me, giving me all kinds of treats. Mom and Dad kept whispering something about a friend coming to see Francine. I kept trying to figure it out. They wouldn't tell Francine her friend was coming, just whispered among themselves. Why the big secret? But then I have better ears than Francine, prettier too. I could hear Mom and Dad talking about this friend coming to visit Sunday and this friend is bringing something that costs thirty dollars to get here from Mr. Burn's. That must be the bus fare. I don't know. But that was all I could understand.

Friday: Friday's are my day off. I refuse to write on Fridays, so there!

Saturday: Francine cleaned my cage again today! Miracles will happen. This Burns fellow must be very important. Francine not only cleaned my cage, but her whole room, even under the bed. Mom about fainted when she said she could actually see the bedroom floor, usually too many scattered shavings all over. Now, what kind of a rude remark was that to make? I have to get my exercise also, don't I? I don't want to get fat. Everyone already calls me a guinea pig. So, when Mom puts on that Richard Simmons tape, I just have to run around, and around, and around, and...oh, you get the idea.

Also, Dad mumbled something at lunch about needing to find wire cutters, wonder what that's all about?

Sunday: Francine's tossing and turning kept me tossing and turning. She even talked in her sleep about something called a gorge. What the heck is a gorge? Maybe that is what Mr. Burns is bringing that costs thirty dollars. Well, I have to stop writing now. Francine's going to give me a stupid bath! I hate baths and why do I hate baths? Because I hate water, except to drink. I like water to drink, but not water for baths. I have baths, bath tubs, bathrooms, and...oh, you get the idea.

Later: Well, serves her right! I don't like water up my nostrils and the only way to get it out is to shake my whole body, like those two Persian cats, Latka and Simka, showed me. I shook and I shook, then she'd dunk me again. So I shook and I shook, but then she'd dunk me again, and again, more water up my nostrils. That's when I decided to give her a little nip on the thumb. Like I said, I hate water. Kind of reminded me of a song Grandma sang once about little fishies, "...and they swam and they swam, right over the dam." Stupid little song about three dumb little fish, but I sure felt like swimming over than dam.

Author's note: If you recognize this song, then you are very old. "Three Little Fishies" was written and recorded in the 1940's and was popular during World War II. Now, back to our feature presentation, "Gracie's Special Diary."

"Ding!" said the doorbell.

"Come in, Mr. Burns," yelled Mom.

Francine looked a little nervous as a very elderly man, smoking a cigar and carrying a box, slowly worked his way into the house, down the hall and

into Francine's room. He sat down and quietly opened up the box. By then, the whole family was in the room watching Francine's eyes brighten up as Mr. Burns lifted out something special for her, another guinea pig, a white Peruvian.

"For me?" Francine asked.

"For me?" chirped Gracie.

"If you and your parents like him, he is," replied Mr. Burns, puffing eagerly on his cigar.

"He?"

"A new friend for Gracie," said Mr. Burns. "His name is George."

"Oh, he's cute," purred little Gracie, her eyes gleaming in the light, big as saucers.

"Oh, he's lovely," said Francine. "Can we get him Mom, Dad? Wow! I think he's very nice. Can we, Mom, Dad? His name is George."

"George," said Mr. Burns with a smile as he puffed gently on his cigar.

Even Later Sunday: Dear Diary, Francine brought me a new friend. She said his name is George and boy, is he cute. Daddy made him his own cage and everything. Francine put it right next to mine. Sure am glad now that she gave me a bath because I think George likes me. He makes me think silly.

"Gracie, what's that you're working on?" asked George in a sort of gruff, hoarse voice.

"My diary and what's with your voice?" commented Gracie.

"My owner, he smokes cigars. The smoke damaged my voice box."

"...makes...me...think...silly. There, done writing for tonight," whispered Gracie as she closed her little book.

"And wouldn't you know it, of all the Gracie's in the world, I have to be next to one that stays up all night, keeping a diary. Say good night, Gracie."

"Goodnight Gracie," said Gracie.

"Just like at home," said George smiling as he dozed off to a dreamy sleep, just like Gracie.

For those children under the age of forty-five who don't get the meaning of the last several lines, ask your parents about the Burns and Allen Show by that same comedy team.

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