**From HELEN FIELDING’s**

**Bridget Jones's Diary**



**On Christmas and X-mas shopping for gifts:**

…Oh God, I am feeling awful: horrible sick hangover and today is office disco lunch. Cannot go on. Am going to burst with pressure of unperformed Christmas tasks, like revision for finals. Have failed to do cards or Christmas shopping apart from doomed panic-ridden yesterday lunchtime rush….

… Christmas is like war. Going down to Oxford Street is hanging over me like going over the top. Can the Red Cross come and help me!!! Aaargh. It's 10 am. Have not done Christmas shopping. Have not sent Christmas cards. Got to go to work.

I dread the exchange of presents with fiends as, unlike with the family, there is no way of knowing who is and isn't going to give and whether gifts should be tokens of affection or proper presents, so all becomes like hideous exchange of sealed bids. Two years ago I bought my friend Magda lovely designer earrings, rendering her embarrassed and was miserable because she hadn't bought me anything. Last year, therefore, I didn't get her anything and she bought me an expensive bottle of Coco Chanel. This year I bought her a big bottle of *Massage Oil with Champagne* and a soapdish, and she went into a complete grump muttering obvious lies about not having done her Christmas shopping yet. Last year Sharon gave me bubble bath shaped like Santa, so last night I just gave her Body Shop shower gel at which point she presented me with a handbag. I had wrapped up a spare bottle of posh olive oil as a generalized emergency gift which fell out of my coat and broke on Magda's kitchen towels.

Ugh. Could that Christmas just *b*e *without* *presents*! It is just so stupid, everyone exhausting themselves, miserably wasting money on pointless items nobody wants: no longer tokens of love but angst-ridden solutions to problems. (Hmm. Though must admit, pretty bloody pleased to have new handbag.) What is the point of entire nation rushing round for six weeks in a bad mood preparing for utterly pointless Taste-of-Others exam which entire nation then fails and gets stuck with hideous unwanted merchandise? If gifts and cards were completely eradicated, then Christmas as pagan-style festival to distract from lengthy winter gloom would be lovely. But if government, religious bodies, parents, tradition, etc., insist on Christmas Gift Rash to ruin everything why not make it that everyone must go out and spend £500 on themselves then distribute the items among their relatives and friends to wrap up and give to them instead of this psychic-failure torment?

