

"The Miracle of Shopping"

Inspired by, or Ripped Off from, *A Visit From St. Nicholas*

'Twas the day before Christmas, and all through the mall
All the parents were shopping, over soft baby squall.
Sure, the stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
But most childrens' wish lists? Half the gifts just weren't *there*.

Dad wished he was nestled all snug in his bed,
But visions of crying kids danced in his head.
So wearing our pea coats and armed for the crush,
We geared ourselves up for the Christmas Eve rush.

Then in the Pavillion there rose such a fuss -
We squeezed past the crowd - they wouldn't stop us.
Away to the first store we flew like a flash,
Brandishing credit cards, checkbooks, and cash.

When what to our wondering eyes should appear
But a large empty sleigh with eight plastic reindeer!
It was blocking our path! What a dastardly trick!
Just where in the hell was stupid St. Nick?

And Dad reeled about for someone to blame,
And he whistled and cursed and called out rude names.
"Oh shut up, my dear," I said, my voice sweet,
"Let's go somewhere else, let's be more discreet."

So off to the next crowded store we departed,
Knowing we had to outlast the faint-hearted.
And then, in a moment, I saw our last chance -
A young store attendant with the nametag of Lance.

He was in red and green, as the store had demanded,
And his shoes were quite pointy - but he *was* empty-handed.
A bundle of toys stacked the shelves right behind him,
But no customers seemed to notice or mind him!

He looked all about and he nibbled his thumb,
As if waiting for one special person to come.
His cheeks, how they glistened! His eyebrows, how merry!
And he had a small zit on his nose, like a cherry!

He was skinny and short, like some kind of odd elf,
And I squealed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
Then, as if he'd been waiting for us the whole while,
He beckoned us over with a wink and a smile.

He spoke not a word but went straight to his task,
And filled up our shopping bags, no questions asked.
We went to the register, happily cheered,
Then turned to thank Lance - but he'd disappeared!

We shrugged and drove home and realized then -
He'd been some kind of sprite - we'd not see him again.
But we heard his voice whisper through the deep still of night,
"Happy shopping to all, and to all a good night!"