

## 'TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

An endless ordeal ...

I look to my left,  
The usual sights.  
To my right,  
The same.  
Ahead, progress is interminably slow.

An unmarked item causes a loudspeaker's cries for help,

“someone (anyone) in cosmetics, *please!*”

No reply. They're likely all captured,  
held against their will

pressed backs to counters,

an angry mob threatening,

“this is supposed to be on sale” ...

An overweight, blue-jacketed, 40-something woman,

with nicotine-tanned, leather-like skin

emerges from the huddled masses,

“Oh – I thought you meant the blue one ...I'll be back”

and she's gone ... never to be seen again.

I look to my left ... to my right. I look at each person ...

I recognize them all – friends from another life, another planet.

Hey, I know her – the gal with the greasy, matted, gunky-blond strings for hair,  
the one with the make-up smeared, bumpy-colored face.

Hi, I say, and wave ... all in my mind, of course.

Fuck off, she says, and turns her back to me, all in my mind, of course.

I look ahead of me again – you know, to check on progress ...

Oh, she changed her mind – cool, yeah, subtract those ...

Oops, forgot the peanut butter ...

Naw, I don't mind, just a sec., be right back ... sure.

And on it goes ... Seconds turn to minutes, Minutes to hours, Hours to ...

The manager comes 'round with cots and bottled water, some of those mysterious blue blanket-y things stolen from an airline and we bed down for the night

One last time, I look to my right – still there, all there ... And to my left

oh, they moved a bit. Should I jump lines?

Should I give up, abandon my cart and flee?

No, it's not Christmas yet.

I have time. Yeah, I have time.