

Aisle Seven

by Carl Santoro

Emma paused from her Walmart Christmas shopping because the giggling behind her suddenly stopped. Instantly worried, she turned around in a sweat. With trembling lips, she screamed out those terrible words no mother wants to ever have to say, *"Girls, where are you! Teenie! June!"* Looking down the next aisle she saw no sign of them either. *"Oh my God, somebody help! Teenie! June!"*

Nearby shoppers feared a drama unfolding in aisle seven. Only minutes ago, Emma was playfully scolding six year old Teenie, and June, five, for dumping too many dolls into their cart. Two sales associates rushed up to Emma and began asking questions. A surge of shoppers came forward leaving their carts behind. More associates arrived. Even the "Take a Picture with Santa" posing chair in the Photo Center had been left empty.

Emma continued to scream. *"My babies! Nooo, this can't be happening!"* The sales people asked her to be calm. More concerned people arrived. It became a very noisy mob. Over the loudspeakers a manager's voice asked for cooperation and calm." Emma's head darted in all directions, searching, and crying out loud, "I promised them this morning that they could pick one item to give each other on Christmas. Oh my God, where are they? They couldn't decide, couldn't choose. *Teenie! June! Babies! They were right behind me, I turned for a minute!"* She was now hysterical.

A young boy, breathing heavily from running, stopped at her feet, barely able to speak, "I think I saw them, Miss," he said. "Oh, thank God! Where are they son? Where did you see them?" "Sitting in a shopping cart over there," the boy replied. He was pointing to the exit doors. The entire group all dashed in the direction of the exit. "There they are!" shouted a woman who had raced in front of the group. She reached out to dislodge the cart from between the exit doors which had closed in and held the cart trapped as in a vice. The group was now applauding with happy relief. In the cart, the girls

seemed confused and stood up to be lifted out into Emma's waiting arms.

"Are you alright girls? Oh my babies! What are you doing here? In the bottom of the cart, Emma noticed a lone large, white, glove; certainly not a woman's. Emma looked up, "Who put you in this?" The two girls were beaming with happiness. "Santa Claus!" they shouted with glee.

