

I just was shopping at Target, late night, getting those last minute gifts for the out-of-town crowd. There was a mostly happy and deliberate group of shoppers, carefully going over shopping lists in the toy isle, looking confused in the small electronics isle. Speaking for myself, after a few false starts I did pretty well. A few kids and a couple adults will most likely be pleased when they dig into their stockings, or look under the tree, or whatever. It was in that somewhat buoyant spirit of the successful warrior, then, that I approached the checkout lanes. I sidled past the woman with the overflowing cart and moved towards the next register, there was only one person in line and she had only a few things. As I reached over to grab the little red plastic bar to separate my stuff from hers, I saw that this young woman, who didn't look more than 19 years old, had only three items: two sizes of Pampers and a pregnancy test multi-pack. A shiver ran through me; I suddenly felt very frivolous and a little smaller.

I watched her go as I asked for gift receipts for the niece's MP3 players. That young woman had paid her bill in singles and change. She asked for no gift receipts.

I assume she was hoping for some sort of Christmas miracle, I wonder which?