

Bi-Mart Shopping

TIS THE SEASON TO GIFT SHOP WHILE PICKING UP PAPER TOWELS

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

I used to be crafty. I've made flax pillows as Christmas gifts, baked cookies, been thoughtful.

I'm not sure what happened, but that's just not me anymore. I can't even blame kids. I don't have any, and half the moms I know are super-crafty.

These days I'm more of a last-minute shopper with a coffee in one hand and last week's *Eugene Weekly* to use as wrapping paper in the other. Still, I do try to buy local and not have an Amazon Prime Christmas.

And don't get me wrong, there are so many absolutely adorable places to shop in downtown Eugene, like Passionflower, to gems in rural areas, like newly opened The Farmer's Wife off Highway 58 in Pleasant Hill.

It's just that I don't remember to go there, and next thing you know I'm shopping for paper towels and laundry soap at Bi-Mart when I remember I'm due to be at a holiday party in two hours, gift in hand.

When it comes to that, Bi-Mart is my savior. The employee-owned membership store (\$5 one-time fee) has what I need when I'm having my usual "whoops, I suck at shopping" holiday moment.

Bi-Mart is headquartered in Eugene, but there are 72 of them throughout the Northwest. I'm pretty darn sure a lot of the products are far from Oregon-made, so that puts an awkward little twist on "buy local."

Still, every time I go into the Creswell Bi-Mart I see someone I know, and if I forget my little yellow membership card, they just smile and buzz me in.

I try to make up for my lack of pre-holiday gift planning with some amount of thoughtfulness to my giving. To that end, Bi-Mart has an excellent beer selection, both national and local. Nothing says, "I love you, friend," like a couple big bottles of Ninkasi.

And if I'm going the "if I can't be sweet, I can at least be fun" route, then there's the "As Seen on TV" section of the store. Who doesn't need a "dancing Tiki light?" Or an



"18-tools-in-one" hammer?

Other actual gifts I've purchased at my neighborhood Bi-Mart include: a fluffy robe, coffee mugs, camping gear and cheesy romance novels.

For my kind of unplanned-shopper-who-cares thought-

fulness, it's not about the trouble I went to in order to get the gift, it's about what the recipient actually needs — a warm hat — or what might make them laugh, like a garden gnome.

Thank goodness Bi-Mart tends to have an excellent, and seasonal, variety of garden gnomes. ■

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