

Bow and Arrow

by Jeanine Stevens

At the five and dime, hot nuts rotating,
cashews the most expensive,
Spanish peanuts, 10 cents.
Also, arranged in front: greeting cards,
ribbon and thread, packets of sewing needles,
then domestics: bristle brushes,
scouring pads, dish cloths.
Toward the back, the women's section:
pink items disguised in small boxes,
red water bottles and other rubbery things.
A small shelf for men; we didn't go there.
Off to the side, canaries chattering, 75 cents.
Girl's toy section: kits for doll dresses
and jewelry made of dyed macaroni
(we ate before the necklace was finished).
For boys, cap guns, safari hats, sling shots.
My friend and I saved a quarter,
bought a bow and arrow with bright feathers,
stapled to cardboard. We never shot the arrows
but walked up and down Kenneth Avenue
just to show what girls could do,
just how useless this could be.
Vonnegut's Hardware was always
good to us, sold a yard of golden bathtub chain
we tucked in one pocket like Zoot Suiters,
and in the other, hot roasted peanuts.

Holden Vaughn Spangler Award Winner