

SHARON E. RUSBULDT

Hardware Store

Fascinating foreign world—
what does a vertical band saw do?
Bins full of tenpenny nails,
bolts, washers, screws; there is
a water cooler one could order and
a poster advertises
a clean-out-the-air machine—
and I am curious
and jealous.

Will they tell me
"Do not touch"? And can
these anvils then be broken?
I lift a sledge hammer
just an inch
and I am
impressed by its heaviness.

(The tool show in Chicago:
machine tools—really
huge machines themselves—
perused as in a shop by those
industrial executives;
men, such thousands of men.)

A few things I do know:
caulking, solder
(I once asked a friend for the loan
of a four-tinged screw driver), they
pay me no attention;
they speak of pipe dope,
male and female fittings.

Here I remember the
six-year-old I was:
chubby; with long, blond, braided hair
—two little bows — and me happily wearing
my favorite flared-skirt dress (the one
with the hidden side-seam pocket),
crinolines, white panties edged with white lace,
white socks and my hated
"practical" saddle shoes.
(Oh how I smiled, said, seriously,
"cheese" for my father's camera.)
In my arms, with infinite carefulness,
I held (bathed, dressed, combed prettily)
my favorite walking
blue-eyed, blond-haired doll.