

**In The K-Mart at Galactic Central
by Bud Webster**

On the hardware aisle:

A quantum mechanic in oil-stained discoveralls
Picks through bins of quarks and neutrinos,
Considers, with some longing, an expensive periodic table-saw,
Then settles on a large bottle of Elmer's Gluons.

At the jewelry counter:

A young couple murmur excitedly, lovingly to each other
Holding hands as they hover over the display case
Before choosing just the right engagement ringworld.

In automotive:

A frazzled matron with two children
Pushes her cart past a rack of future shock absorbers
(Just the thing for that sagging rear suspension of disbelief)
And turns sharp right at haunted housewares to avoid the candy aisle.

At the camera counter:

A tall, muscular man in gray leather
Silently debates the relative merits of two second-stage lenses —
One with macro, and one without.

In groceries:

A young mother moves slowly down the canned foods aisle
Checking the salt content of the various primordial soups in stock
Her basket already filled with frozen clockwork orange juice concentrate
Green cheese and golden apples of the sun.

And, for a moment, all movement pauses, and heads turn
As this bright announcement falls free from overhead speakers-to-the-dead —
"Attention, K-Mart shoppers!
For the next fifteen minutes
Our faster-than-blue-light special is...."