

Title: Nails

By Mary F. Striegel

I want to have nails
like those other women –
strong, smooth nails,
not the fake ones,
man's acrylic gift to women,
but real nails.

The kind that says
"I am full of calcium and vitamins
and I never see hard work –
the chemical deterioration of scrubbed floors
or acid bathrooms.

No, not the short
clipped nails
of the data processor
Who thinks in terms of keystrokes per minute,

Or the bitten sand chewed nails
of the worried housewife waiting
for her alcoholic husband
to come home again
in the middle of the night
after one more drinking binge.

I want glamour nails
Like my grandmother had –
Long and smooth
At the end of slender fingers.

She soaked them,
tinted them under the tips with white pencil,
painted them “Love that Red,”
a cream smooth red
like fresh blood glisten in the sun.

Then she’d tap them
On the countertop of Eddies Diner
Just to show them off.