

# Upon Learning the Fetus Has Fingernails

*by* Beth Thomas

Upon learning the fetus has fingernails, Missy texts her boyfriend: It has nails! He won't reply because he's just left for war, but she does it just the same. She walks home alone with ultrasound jelly sticky in her panties, swinging a bag of vitamins and supplements. She pictures a smiling baby with blond hair and tiny pasted-on bows, itty fingernails and toenails ripe for the painting. Her own fingernails are chewed down to nothing and her hands are so dry they look like her mother's. Missy steps into the pharmacy and looks over the nail polishes. Cranberry, Rum Raisin, Nude, a complicated kit for a French manicure. Old lady colors. She wants to call him to come get her and please take her to the mall, to Claire's where there is nothing but little girl colors and ribbons and lip gloss and maybe a color for herself, a respectable color for a girl of seventeen, like electric blue or black. But Claire's is too far to walk. On the bottom shelf in a smaller bottle, she finds a glittering pepto-bismol shade called PINK! and as she's squatting there with a hand on her rounded belly, she drops the bottle into her bagful of vitamins, folds over the top, then stands up with a grunt. When the baby is born she will name her Laci and paint her teeny fingernails PINK! and paint her own fingernails PINK! and he will see when he gets home all dusty and weary from having seen the world and the faces of his enemies, that his baby ain't no old lady.

