

The Manicure



Barbie, the manicurist at the Slash 'n Burn Hair Salon, was good at her job. Good? She was *terrific!* All her clients said so. Mrs. Rosencrantz even offered to pay her airfare to the World Manicure Tournament in Barcelona next March. (She could afford to, ever since her husband died in that freak accident at the Guildenstern Yak Works and left her with a humongous life insurance payout.) But Barbie was reticent. She kept having a recurring dream – a nightmare was more like it – in which she faced a hopelessly challenging customer. The lady's hands were all gnarled, and the nails were made of chitin and revolting to touch. Yet Barbie, ever the consummate professional, tried her darndest to make them look good. First she prepped her client's fingers by soaking them in a bath of warmed ratgum. Next she massaged knuckle gel into the old woman's suppurating finger joints. (Disgusting!) Then she applied *three* coats of polish over the basecoat, followed by a topcoat imbued with clever little scratch 'n sniff patches of patchouli and ginkgo. But Barbie really put an exclamation point onto her work by carefully spray-gluing Glamour Kitty Acrylic Glitter™ onto the cuticles. Voilà – a digital masterpiece! Such attention to detail would've wowed any other customer, but not this one. The old crone raged at Barbie, shaking her fist, which fell off and turned into an annoying anteater. Night after night the dream visited Barbie, eroding her self-confidence and dissuading her from entering manicure competitions. Slash 'n Burn's generous health plan allowed for long-term dream therapy, which did eventually end Barbie's manicurial visions. However, relief was only fleeting, because her subconscious promptly dredged up a *really* horrifying image: the old woman's pedicure!