

# Dishwater Panacea

by Dean H. Wild

The water—hot enough to make her hands ache—seemed depthless, the drain plug as unreachable as mercy. Suds, like gossamer bandages at her wrists, concealed the turbulence below but could not relieve it. She scrubbed harder and made the bottom of the pot slam against the side of the sink. Harsh business, getting things clean. A droplet—liquid exhaustion—traced the crease between her cheek and nose.

For a second she loathed the disorder; the chair lying on its back behind her, its rigged legs jutting above gouged and worn linoleum pits, the air over the table reeking of quitting time lager and the absence of bathwater. Then the droplet stung her lip which seemed full of hot and heavy clay as it continued to swell. All she said was *You're late*. What he said didn't matter. He couldn't possibly have meant it.

Seared-on smudges began to loosen under her efforts and eventually their traces would be rubbed clean, their memory dried off, their vessel stacked away, orderly until the next dinnertime. Tiresome. She wished the water could be hotter, somehow.

Another droplet streaked her face, this time from eye to chin.

