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Navy Man

Adrienne Christian

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that first morning she saw his kitchen cupboards
needed emptying, sudsy-watering down, clear-
water wiping, lining with shelving paper,
patting dry and cinnamon stick perfuming,
so she did that.

and he watched but could not offer help.
with broom and mop he asked her to
pick up her feet so he could sweep and mop
instead, as he had done in the navy.

when she'd gotten everything out of the
cupboards – the jelly, the baking soda, open
box of spaghetti pasta, spaghetti sauce, etc.,
and instead of tossing them out properly
closed them and wiped them down and put
them back

she never knew how close she'd come
to making him weep for the first time
in his adult life
since the
navy.