

With These Hands *by Pam Ayres*

With these hands so soft and clean,
On which I stroke the Vaseline,
I soothe the fever, cool the heat,
Lift verrucas out of feet,
Slap the plasters on the knees,
Dig the garden, prune the trees,
And if it doesn't work at all,
I throw the mower at the wall.
With these hands I crack the eggs,
Floss my teeth, shave my legs,
Write the cheques, count the fivers,
Make rude signs at piggish drivers,
Clean the goldfish, light the fires,
Pump up half a dozen tyres,
Feed the hamster, worm the dog
And decorate the Yuletide log.
With these hands I block the lens
When taking photos of my friends,
This is Mary, this is Fred,
See their eyeballs all gone red.
With them I gesticulate,
I wag a finger, say, 'You're late!'
Throw them up, say, "Don't ask me!"
And, 'What's that in your hand? Let's see!'

With these hands, I fondly make,
A brontosaurus birthday cake,
I'm sorry for the shape it's in,
But half of it stuck in the tin.
I pop the corn, I pick the mix,
I whack the cricket ball for six,
I organise the party game,
And clean up things too vile to name.
No pair of jeans do I refuse,
No Levis, Wranglers or FUs,
I wash them fast, I mend them quick,
I sew through denim hard and thick,
For no repair job makes me frown,
I take them up, I let them down,
I do the fly, I do the rip,
I do the knee, I do the zip.
And with these hands I dab the eyes,
Officiate at fond goodbyes,

As in the earth we gravely dig
The late lamented guinea pig.
I bow my head, cross my chest,
And lay his furry soul to rest,
Reflecting that, on many a day,
I could have helped him on his way.
I greet the folks who bang the door,
Fill the mouths that shout for more,
Scrape the trainers free of muck,
Gut the fish and stuff the duck,
I cart the shopping, heave the coal,
Stick the plunger down the bowl,
Take foreign bodies from the eye
And with these hands I wave
Goodbye.