

# A Delicate and Ancient Art

by XXXX

He was a sushi chef, and he would spend hours in their kitchen practicing his knife skills, and the speed with which he can put that there and this in that and so on; and she would see him on the floor most mornings, still wearing that dirty, tattered bandana so his sweat doesn't mingle with his creations, having fallen asleep, probably after telling himself that he would only rest his eyes on the floor, sometimes even after she hasn't cleaned it for days, and there would be bits of things on the tiles and between them that you can't even recognize anymore.

One morning she tapped him awake using her foot adorned with pink, fluffy slippers; and he snorted himself awake, sitting up suddenly. He reached for his wireframe glasses that were somewhere in the vicinity of his person, wore them, looked up, blushed at the sight of her pussy from up her robe, and said: "Good morning. I'm sorry. I was practicing last night. The boss isn't impressed with my sashimi. He keeps screaming: thinner! thinner! and I want to say: I'll cut your corpse thin, you Japanese motherfucker! But that won't be nice, and we'll have to lose the house."

"Sell the bed," she said. "Get a small one. It's not like the two of us use it. Get a roomba so you don't get an infection sleeping on the floor."

He stood up and hugged her, apologized. "Look," he said. "I made us sushi. We can have breakfast."

"We always have sushi," she said. "Let's have eggs."

"We have so much sushi here. What do we do with them?"

“Put them in the fridge.”

“They'll go stale.”

“Throw them away.”

The scandal washed over his face, and the sides of his mouth considered laughing, but failing reciprocation from the face of his lover aborted before it was too late.

“You're not joking.”

“No, I'm not joking.”

He looked away, walked toward his creations, place a hand over them, neglecting hygiene, something he also had to work on, and said: “Please don't make me choose between you and my craft.”

“It's uncooked fish,” she said. “How can you choose me over uncooked fish? Are you out of your mind?”

He looked at his sushi; and upon seeing this she pulled at the knot of her robe and exposed herself to him, and she stood there in contrapposto, regretting there was no giant clam out of which she could stand, regretting the lack of a wind machine to toss her hair to one side, placing an arm to her breasts and another to her groin.

She got his attention for a moment. Then, he stared back at his babies, fish and other sea creatues, sliced, with rice, alone, carved, dipped in sauce, rolled, and so on. They were so beautiful, he thought, and they were so because of his hands and his work, because of years of practice and toil.

His girlfriend, on the other hand: She had arrived here on Earth with those genes and those features. He used her body for his

pleasure, and many nights, especially when they first met, they would indulge in each other's body with frightening excess; but these sushi, they used him; they needed him to come into being; and regardless of her desire for him, the sushi needed him. It was his duty as a craftsman to never abandon his craft and pass it on, lest it forever disappear.

"I'm sorry," he said. "We're having sushi."

With these words, she began to heave, and after two or three she ran to the sink and vomitted a torrent. He shielded his creations, getting some stray splatter all over him. He looked away in disgust, and when he turned to look again, she was staring at him, her hair in disarray, her mouth still stained with puke, her eyes tearing up, breathing like a tired animal. "I'm pregnant," she said. "I checked last night. I'm pregnant."

"You can have sushi," he reassured her. "It's a myth pregnant women can't eat sushi."

With this she began to sob. She ran naked back to their room. Her looked around at the mess, stared at his work, thanked all the higher powers they were still clean, and began arranging them on a platter in the shape of a flower in bloom.

