

# The Sushi Meal

**ABIR  
HAMDAR**

62 **BRAND**

**I**nflammatory breast cancer in the right breast area, the doctor said. It requires aggressive and multiple treatment. I adjusted my Versace eyeglasses. A rehash of the '80s. Really in at the moment - like organic food and sushi in Lebanon. I don't buy organic food. But I eat sushi a lot. I pretend I like sushi. When Rami first invited me to dinner I pretended I was hooked on sushi. I suggested we could go either to Sushi Bar or Sushi Express. We went to Sushi Bar and sat in a dim-lit side table. The waiter placed the greta in front of me and I sighed softly. I dipped my chopsticks into the salmon belly sushi. I dipped my chopsticks into the salmon belly and established eye contact with Rami. When he looked back at me I slowly slathered the salmon sushi roll with the wasabi. I told Rami I like to glaze the sushi rolls only in this green horseradish paste. I did not tell Rami wasabi is Japanese for wake up. I did not tell

him sushi is an aphrodisiac. I did not tell him anything. I only sighed again over the sushi rolls. I sighed most over the oyster sushi. I don't like the taste of oyster. But I pretended to Rami oyster sushi is my favorite ... and the caterpillar roll wrapped in slices of avocado. I pretended so much to Rami he believed me.

Rami confessed his love to me after dinner. I do not confess to him I have breast cancer. Inflammatory breast cancer, the doctor said. Stage III B. All inflammatory breast cancers start with stage III B. Never a stage one or two, the doctor said. I adjusted my Versace eyeglasses. Inflammatory breast cancer. It requires multiple and aggressive treatment, the doctor repeated. I adjusted my eyeglasses then massaged my thumb.

Rami massages my body. He builds my arousal in stages. He starts with stage one, then two, then three. There are no A and B sections in my arousal-

al ladder. Rami kisses my lips, my neck, my collarbone. You like it don't you, he asks? He folds his palms over my breasts and strokes softly. You like it don't you? He nibbles my breasts with his lips and teases with his tongue. You like it don't you? When he reaches stage three, Rami stops asking. He just explains. I can see how much you like it. The skin of your breasts is red and firm and feels warm, he whispers passionately. Don't deny that you like it. I can see and feel how much you like it, he insists. Rami does not notice that one breast is redder and firmer and warmer than the other. He is busy unzipping his pants and squeezing the breast that feels more red and firm and warm.

I pretend to Rami that I like what he is doing to me. I pretend that I love it when he gets breathless because my breast looks red and firm and feels warm. I pretend my red, firm and warm breast is a sign of my arousal. I don't tell him it is one of the acute symptoms of inflammatory breast cancer. I don't tell him that my right breast is red and firm and warm because there are cancer cells blocking lymph vessels and channels in my skin. I do not tell him inflammatory breast cancer means the tumour has spread to the skin of my breast, chest wall and internal mammary lymph nodes. I do not tell him anything.

There are many things I've never told him and things I will never tell. I did not tell him I didn't like sushi and that I was in love with him ... that I slept with him because I was in love with him. And I never told him I stopped loving him right after I fell in love with him and slept with him. I will not even tell him I'll have chemotherapy because my breast is red and firm and warm. That right after chemotherapy, I'll have surgery

because my breast is red and firm and warm. And that if I remain alive through this, I'll have radiotherapy because my amputated breast was once red and firm and warm. I will not tell him ... I know he would not want me to.

My fake arousal arouses Rami. So he touches me more and tells me he knows I am aroused. I know your breasts and I can tell when you are aroused so don't deny it, he says. Rami, you have never known my breasts. You only know the shape of fat and the colour of my nipples and aureoles. But my doctor knows them very well. He knows my glandular tissue and lactiferous ducts and the subcutaneous fat and the suspensory ligaments. He knows each of my breasts contains lobes arranged in a circular fashion. He knows that my lobes are formed by groups of lobules. That the lobules are my milk producing glands. That each of my lobules is composed of grape-like clusters of acini. And that acini are the hollow sacs that would have made and held my breast milk.

So you see, Rami, my doctor knows my breasts more than you do. And he knows how to feel them properly. He touched, fondled, squeezed and stroked them inside out. He asked me if I felt pain. Just whether I felt pain. I didn't pretend with him. I remained silent. And he asked me again and again if I felt pain. He asked me once about my name and age and profession. When he touched my breasts he forgot my name and age and profession ... and his touching my breasts made me forget my name and age and profession.

I did not try to remember my name and age and profession. I only tried to remember if I had felt and feel pain in my breasts. I could not remember. I only remembered my

breast size. 34B. My breast size is a 34B, I tried to tell the doctor. Doctor do you want to know my breast size? The doctor did not care about breast sizes ... only about pain. I was not sure what and which kind of pain he was referring to. Do you mean an ache, doctor? A burning sensation? A heavy load? An itch? A scratch? A discomfort? A choking? A craziness?

The doctor continued to interrogate, badger, grill me. He would not leave my breasts until I told him if I felt and had felt pain. When I remained silent he touched my breasts even more. And gave them names! Peau d'orange, he said softly. When the fluid and edema build up, the skin of your right breast will look like the skin of an orange.

But you Rami ... you tell me I have vanilla breasts. You spread the vanilla ice-cream over my breasts and tell me I have vanilla breasts. You lick the vanilla ice-cream, then tell me how delicious my vanilla-like breasts taste. And after you lick every drop of vanilla ice-cream on my breasts, you see the small white drop still resting on my right nipple. You lick it hungrily. You lick then and suckle. You don't notice that the drop on my right nipple has a sticky texture and not a smooth slippery one. You only lick and suckle and imagine that my breasts taste like vanilla. And the white sticky drop on my right nipple does not disappear. It turns reddish brown. Like the colour of stale blood. I pretend it is the blood of my arousal. I tell you my right nipple is so aroused blood is pumping from it. And you believe me. You don't question the stickiness of my drops ... nor its brownness. You don't question anything! Rami, I can pretend anything about my breasts with you.

I can never pretend with the doctor. When he rubbed my right nipple

and a white sticky drop emerged, then another reddish brown one gushed forward, I didn't pretend anything. And the doctor did not say or do anything. He did not even lick my drops nor tell me they taste like vanilla. He just sent me to a lab. The lab milked out my nipple drops, placed them on a glass slide, preserved them with alcohol and examined them. And the doctor? The doctor remained in his office to ask me once more if I felt pain. I remained speechless throughout. I can't pretend to the doctor the way I pretend with you Rami. The doctor knows my breasts inside out. He will know I am pretending. And I know he was pretending when he said I don't have to worry. Put your trust in the hands of God and all will be well, he told me as he shook my hand at the door. And my breasts, in whose hands should I put them?