

I Need Gourmet

By Danielle Aquilina

**Performer note: the gender of RHEA and subsequent Tray Boy can be changed to the opposite (ie. Tray Girl*

etc. RHEA: (In a state of post-euphoria)

Heyyy Gabz. What's up?

Your bed? Oh yeah, I guess I am.

Huh.

I just had a sandwich. My First Ultimate Sandwich.

It was a bit of a mess.

Clearly.

But I can explain...

So, I was walking home from school today and passed by the deli, which had this cute server boy out the front holding samples of cheese. He sees me and shove this cheese in my face, so I pop it in my mouth without thinking. And – Bam! My legs just crumble, and as I fall to the floor, the tray drops and he tries to steady me. My eyes fill with this white light – It feels like death.

And I have this primal urge, all I want to do it scoff down more cheese.

I get my vision back for a moment and see the cute server with this look of absolute terror on his face. I feel like I should care – but I don't. All I care about is getting this cheese into me again.

So, he's leading me inside to make sure I'm okay and – the smell of cheese, again – Wham! And you know how small this deli is - there is nowhere for smells to escape, so it just keeps building on top of itself. And I'm still reeling from outside so, if I stay here much longer, I'm not sure what's going to happen.

Tray boy's gone to get help out the back, and sitting on the counter I see original block that the sample cheese was cut from. I grab it and I run. The whole way home.

This is my chance to create the ultimate sandwich. So, I called out to see if anyone else is here.

No one – silence. Yes!

But I have to be quick. So, first things first – hide the cheese. I bring it in here. It's just sitting on my bed – staring at me. And all I can think is: Yes – I want you too. Again. And I've got the sandwich idea too, and you know how mum brought home leftovers from her fancy work party the other night? Yeah, cheap – I know. But that stuff is sandwich worthy!

I launch myself out of my room into the kitchen, but I'm stumbling all over the place. Into chairs and the corner of the table and then I'm down on all fours crawling and when I get to the tiles, I know I'm in the kitchen. My legs are weak, but my arms are still functioning. So, I reach out and pull on the fridge handle, hoping the whole thing doesn't fly open and have everything fall out and bury me. This is not the way I die. If death by food is how I go – it will be because I overindulge in gourmet products, not being crushed under 2-day old pasta-bake.

And I see it – lit up on the top shelf. Paper-thin prosciutto folded onto itself, and bright green pesto. This is a good start, but I need bread to make it a sandwich. And all we've got is 99cent white crap. Now, sandwiches are very personal. So, you have to try different things to see what you like. For me - I need gourmet. The only thing I can think we have is that expensive rosella jam from Christmas that we didn't use. And I know it's somewhere in the pantry. But we've got all of this crappy tin food which I start hauling onto the floor behind me, and then I see it – that small, blue lidded jar.

So, I'm headed back to our room, arms full and I can hear keys at the front door. I turn on the spot and start to run, but a can of tuna rolls under my foot and I lost my balance – crashing to the floor for the second time today and losing everything!

The jam glass shatters and splinters the paste inside. The prosciutto is spread across the floor gathering dirt and the pesto splattered – all over the walls.

My life is ruined. My dreams – gone. So, I sit there in the pool of food and wait.

But there's nothing, until I hear the door close next door. And breathe a sigh of relief. I take another deep breath and the cheese smell fills my nose and I am reborn! I am running on adrenaline now – pure, untapped adrenaline. I grab my keys and head out the door. It's like I'm possessed.

I can feel the wind on my face as I'm out the front gate, and find myself headed to back to the deli. Back where this all began. And back out the front with more cheese – Tray Boy.

But I don't have time for chit-chat so I just yell "I want the most expensive thing you sell!"

He drops the tray again, and rushes inside. As he's gathering the best bits in the cabinet my stomach is growling. Prosciutto's bagged, but before it can even reach the bench - it's in my hands. He's wasting time, so I bark again "I want that! And that!" It's coming out of me in violent bursts.

Hurry up!

This is the part where I'm supposed to pay, but instead – I run. Adrenaline sets in my legs are pumping.

It seems as though I just blink and I'm here again, sitting on my bed with everything laid out.

I reach in to the smallest packet. Paper. Thin. Close my eyes and bite. It explodes – not the same way the cheese did, but just as powerfully. The savoury juices run down the back of my throat. I'm feeling weak again. So, I grab the bed to steady myself and reach for the next bag.

I'm carefully removing the lid so I don't stain my bed, and I slip 2 fingers gently into the pot. I swirl them around for a bit and then stroke the little black olives. They're slippery and I don't want to drop them so I lean back and open my mouth – a little gasp escapes as I do and drop one in! And I never want this day to end.