

Join Us

facebook [join our group](#)

twitter [Follow us on twitter](#)  
@OnefortheTable  
@AmyEphron  
@DailyWine

Pinterest

Recipes

- Dinner Entrées
- Drinks, Cocktails
- Appetizers
- Soups
- Salads
- Pasta and Risotto
- Side Dishes
- Breads, Muffins, Rolls
- Desserts
- Breakfast
- Sandwiches

Check out our other pieces by:

Fredrica Duke

Annie Stein

Susan Russo

Laraine Newman

Alan Zweibel

Amy Ephron

Katherine Reback

Bruce Cormicle

Steven Zaillian

Holly Goldberg Sloan

Evan Kleiman

Paul Mones

Bumble Ward

Lucy Dahl

Lisa Dinsmore

About Us

Search

Map

Privacy Policy

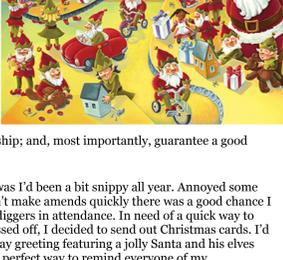
Who we are

About Us

## The Shroud of Tamago

by Alison Grambs

Last year, a few weeks before Christmas, a gnarly mole on my shoulder was deemed 'highly suspicious' by my dermatologist. Although the biopsy results weren't in yet, I prepared for the worst. Death. Just two months shy of my fortieth birthday a growth the size of a peanut was going to take me out – rob the world of all I had to offer it, and rob me of the third season of *Jersey Shore*. With death imminent I needed to get my affairs in order. There was a lot to do: sort out my will and testament; cancel my Netflix membership; and, most importantly, guarantee a good turnout at my funeral.



The funeral part was tricky – trouble was I'd been a bit snippy all year. Annoyed some people. Burned some bridges. If I didn't make amends quickly there was a good chance I was getting buried with just the gravediggers in attendance. In need of a quick way to redeem myself with everyone I had pissed off, I decided to send out Christmas cards. I'd never done it before, but a joyful holiday greeting featuring a jolly Santa and his elves wrapping glittery presents seemed the perfect way to remind everyone of my wonderfulness. Cards, address book and pen in hand, I dipped in to a new sushi restaurant in the neighborhood to grab lunch and pen my final correspondence to loved ones.

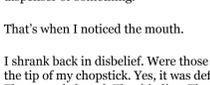
The place was empty, and *Jingle Bells* was blasting on the radio. From behind a black curtain emerged a scowling waitress. She handed me a menu with a grunt, escorted me to a table with a grunt, took my order with a grunt, and stomped off behind the black curtain with a grunt. I wondered if she, too, was dying. A few moments later, she returned to slam down a variety of serving dishes containing my appetizers... with a grunt.

In between nibbles I pondered deathbed Christmas card etiquette. Do I mention that I'm dying? Include a "hold the date" notice for the wake? A reminder list of who owed me money? A snapshot of my murderous mole? Hungry and pressed for time I decided to keep it simple. At the top of each card I inscribed the name of the recipient; at the bottom, my own. Then, in the finest penmanship I wrote out my profound holiday sentiment:

**"MERRY XMAS!"**

There. My legacy was complete. Everyone would love me again. As *Frosty The Snowman* piped in on the radio my mind danced with visions of weeping, mourners lining up in droves at my funeral, clutching my Christmas card against their chests! Grievors hurling themselves on top of my coffin, crying out that Christmas would never be the same without another one of my cards! The post office issuing a commemorative Christmas stamp in my honor!

The waitress stomped back to the table and slammed down my sushi plate. There was the usual clump of ginger. The blob of pale green wasabi. Three tekka maki rolls. Some salmon sashimi. An eel avocado roll. Some shrimp. A few of those plastic fake shrubbery things I always chewed on accidentally. But wait... something was wrong.



"Um, I didn't order this," I said, pointing to a lone piece of tamago at the center of my sushi plate.

"No return!" the waitress growled back.

"But I *hate* egg," I balked, indicating with a wave of my hand that she was to remove the spongy yellow interloper immediately.

The waitress indicated with a wave of her middle finger that I was to shut my trap immediately. Then she stomped off behind the curtain, muttering something about my bangs as she disappeared behind the curtain. Snapping again my chopsticks as *Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer* came over the radio, I leaned over the plate, preparing to fling the tamago off my plate and maybe hide it behind the napkin dispenser or something.

That's when I noticed the mouth.

I shrank back in disbelief. Were those eyebrows? Was that a nose? I poked at the egg with the tip of my chopstick. Yes, it was definitely a face. In fact, the face looked oddly familiar. The scraggly beard. The thin lips. The sunken cheeks. The anguished eyes pleading upward. The thorny crown. Although I could not be sure which version of the esteemed man this was residing in my sushi – Robert Powell- Max von Sydow- Willem Dafoe- James Caviezel – the resemblance was uncanny. It was definitely Him....

Jesus. Incarnate in dairy form.

"Put it back!" the Holy Tamago hissed.

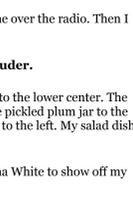
I gasped. "Put what back?"

"Put it back!" was all the Holy Tamago said.

Clearly, this was some sort of test to get into Heaven; and although I wasn't a particularly religious person, I was smart enough to know that when Jesus gives a dying person a command – especially from an omelet – you obey it.

"Put it back!" the Holy Tamago hissed again, its eyes bulging.

I began to put back everything I had moved on the table while writing out my cards. Perhaps Jesus was a stickler for proper table settings – some sort of hang-up from hosting the Last Supper? I slid my tea cup back to the center of the table. The ginger pot back to the right. The porcelain chopstick holder back to the left. The soy sauce dipping dish back to the upper right.



"There!" I smiled proudly as *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town* came over the radio. Then I gave the Holy Tamago the thumbs up sign.

**"Put it back!" the Holy Tamago hissed again, this time louder.**

Disappointed, but eager to please the relic, I shoved the rice bowl to the lower center. The miso soup bowl to the upper left. The fake orchid to the right. The pickled plum jar to the left. The Kirin beer bottle to the right. My half-eaten soba noodles to the left. My salad dish and gyoza trays to the middle.

"How's that?" I asked, waving my hand around the table like Vanna White to show off my handiwork.

"Put it back!" the Holy Tamago groaned, its voice now raspy and strained.

Fine. I continued putting more things back. I flung my dirty napkin back on my lap, and the ginger dressing spoon back in its dish. I stuffed my chopsticks back in their paper sleeve, and slung my purse over the back of the chair. Then I jammed my address book back in my purse, snapped the cap back on my pen, and stuck the Bandaid I had flung on the floor back on my pinky.

"Done!" I announced, bowing my head reverentially to get some extra points. *Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer* was on the air now. I couldn't help but tap my foot to it under the table.

**"Put it back!" the Holy Tamago huffed angrily.**

Great. Another person I had pissed off. Desperate to please, I put my coat back on. My hat. My gloves. My scarf. Looped my belt back to the second hole. Rolled my sleeves back up, then rolled them back down. I pulled my bangs back off my face, tucked my hair back in a ponytail, and put my candy cane flavored lip gloss back on.

"We good now?" I asked.

"Put... it... back!" the Holy Tamago hissed again, its body twitching and gurgling noises violently.

I leaned in, Xikes. The Holy Tamago wasn't looking too good. Its face was all wrinkly now and its complexion had a slightly brown hue to it. At a loss, I scanned the restaurant for more things to put back. I righted the crooked photo of a Geisha that hung on the wall, and replaced the missing "L" in the word "Samon" on the chalkboard menu. I shoved all the chairs back under the empty tables, and rearranged the umbrella stand I had kicked on my way in. Begrudgingly, I reached into my coat pocket and returned the five mints I had swiped from the candy dish.

"How'd I do?" I asked, sliding back into my chair, eager to have this test over.

"Puuuuuuuu... it... baaaack!" the Holy Tamago wheezed, its gelatinous figure shivering intermittently.

Oh dear. It was looking really sick now. Its brownish hue had changed to a deathly pallor – the corners of its once spongy and sprightly figure were now shrunken and taut. With the back of my hand I felt the Holy Tamago's forehead. It was ice cold. My God, it was dying! I pulled my napkin off my lap and gently laid it over the Holy Tamago. To keep it warm. Then I grabbed a pen from my purse and wrote on the top of the napkin:

**"DO NOT REMOVE!"**

I scampered off to the restroom in search of more things to put back as a recording of *Santa Baby* began playing. Using what I could find in the supply cabinet I replaced the empty toilet paper roll, and stuffed more paper towels into the towel rack. Then I filled the empty soap dispenser with more liquid soap, and replaced a burned-out bulb in the ceiling. I put the toilet brush back in its holder while I was at it. Then I raced back and pulled back the napkin shroud.

"NOOOOOOO!" I yelled, falling to about half its original size – its thorny crown fading from view.

**"Puuuuuuuuuu... it... baaaack," the Holy Tamago gasped weakly as its body started to convulse.**

"BREATHE!" I urged, dipping the corner of the shroud in my water glass, then dabbing it against the Holy Tamago's mouth. With the tip of my chopsticks I loosened the Holy Tamago's nori waistband to help it breathe. Then I propped the Holy Tamago upright, showing the end of my straw into the Holy Tamago.

"STAY WITH ME!" I pleaded, performing sushi CPR now – breathing slow and steady through the straw

"Puuuuuuuuuu... ituuuuuuuu... baaaack..." the Holy Tamago sputtered, choked and gasped, its beard fading into the egg.

"I'M NOT GONNA LOSE YOU, GOD DAMN IT!" I screamed, then apologized for taking the Holy Tamago's name in vain.

"STAY WITH ME!" I cried, pumping the Holy Tamago's heaving chest rhythmically with the tip of my index finger.

The Holy Tamago coughed, wheezed, and choked. The features of Jesus's face were fading rapidly.

"I DON'T UNDERSTAND! TELL ME WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO PUT BACK!" I screamed.

The Holy Tamago let out a long sigh as I watched the face disappear into the egg. Then it said a single word.

"Meeeeeeeeeeeeeee."

And then Jesus was gone. The tamago was just a tamago.

What did it mean? Where was I supposed to put the Holy Tamago? On a plane? In a hamper? Jesus had taken the time to come to me in omelet form to deliver some special message before I died – and I'd missed it. I had failed the most important test of my life. Laying the napkin over the deceased tamago, I bowed my head and cried.

The grumpy waitress stomped back to the table and began clearing the appetizer dishes. *Silent Night* came over the radio. It had been a long time since I'd paid attention to the words of that song:

*"Silent night, holy night.*

*All is calm, all is bright.*

*Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.*

*Holy infant so tender and mild,*

*Sleep in heavenly peace,*

*Sleep in heavenly peace."*

Wait! That was it! I finally understood! The grumpy waitress reached for my sushi plate.

"PUT IT BACK!!" I suddenly heard myself shriek.

The grumpy waitress slammed the sushi plate back down.

"I'll be right back," I informed her, gesturing that she was not to remove the sushi plate.

"Tossing my stack of holiday cards in a nearby trash bin, I faced out of the restaurant, down the street to the card store, and returned a few moments later. The waitress peeked her head out from behind the black curtain, then rolled her eyes, grunted, and disappeared again. I laid out the new set of holiday cards I had purchased across the table and admired the artwork. Gone was the jolly Santa cartoon. The elves. The gittery presents. In their stead, a traditional nativity scene. I smiled at the Blessed Virgin Mary and Joseph kneeling beside the manger. Then I took out my pen and began writing in all the cards the words I should have written the first time around....

**"MERRY CHRISTMAS!"**

When I was done, I called to the grumpy waitress and gave her permission to clear the plate. A sense of relief washed over me. Although the Holy Tamago was no longer around to see it, I had done the divine sushi proud. I'd finally put the right thing back, and could now die in peace.

The grumpy waitress stomped back to the table, and just as she lifted the plate in the air and pivoted toward the kitchen I detected the slightest quivering movement from beneath the napkin. As the plate slowly passed by me I surreptitiously lifted up the corner of the napkin and peeked in. To my shock the tamago's bright yellow color had returned – its mouth and eyes and scraggly beard as vibrant as when we first met.

"Thank you," the Holy Tamago whispered.

"No," I whispered, "Thank you."

With that, the Holy Tamago shriveled up and died... again.

The next morning the dermatologist called. Turns out my mole was benign... disgusting, but benign. I was going to live! I thanked my dermatologist for the good news, and then I thanked Jesus – wherever he might be. I felt lucky to have met Him that day at lunch – even if it was just in omelet form. And since that day I make a weekly pilgrimage to that same empty sushi restaurant. My lunch order is always the same: an avocado salad, miso soup, gyoza, two tekka maki rolls... and one piece of tamago.

One day, I hope to see the Holy Tamago again. But until then, I'll just keep trying to get the grumpy waitress to smile. She hasn't yet, of course. But thanks to my Christmas miracle there's plenty of time.

*Alison is the author of "The Man Translator: Your Essential Guide to Manland" and "The Smart Girl's Guide To Getting Even", a couple of children's joke books and works at the Friars Club in New York City.*

[Tweet](#) [reddit this!](#)

[Share 0](#) [Like 0](#)

[Save](#)

Comments

#1 **Jed** 2010-11-29 04:36  
Irreverent, intelligent, inappropriate and awfully funny. Great start to the holiday season.

[Refresh comments list](#)  
[RSS feed for comments to this post](#)

Comments have been closed for this piece.

Search One for the Table...

search...

Search

Happy Thanksgiving!

Duckhorn Merlot  
Veuve Clicquot Pink Champagne

Caviar Pie & Salted Crackers  
Assorted French Cheeses & Sliced Apples

Puffed Breast Turkey  
Smoked Sweet Potato Souffle  
Mashed Potatoes  
Green Beans with Almonds  
Brussels Sprouts with Bacon  
Corn Bread Stuffing  
French Meat Stuffing  
Apricot Jello Mold  
POM Cranberry Sauce  
Old Fashioned Cranberry Sauce

Pumpkin Pie  
Deep Dish Apple Pie  
Cherry Pie  
Gingersnaps

Brandy & Coffee

Senator Biden's Favorite Oatmeal Raisin Cookies

1 cup shortening or butter  
1 cup firmly packed brown sugar  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3 cups old fashioned oats  
1 cup raisins  
nuts (optional)

[Read recipe...](#)

Favorite Things

Blue Bloods Cookbook

THE BEST RECIPES BEING SERVED AT THE BLUE BLOODS RESTAURANT

BRIDGET MOYNAHAN & WENDY HOWARD GOLDBERG

[Buy Now](#)

For This We Left Egypt?

For This We Left Egypt?

A PASSIONATE MEGALOMANIA FOR JESUS AND THOSE WHO LOVE THEM

DAVE BARRY JEAN ZWISLOCKI STAN WASSERBACH

[Buy Now](#)

One for the Table Gifts

for weddings, birthdays, and just for fun

POM Cocktail Recipes.

## Restaurant News

The Best Two Unhealthy Decisions I ever Made

Italy

by Libby Segal



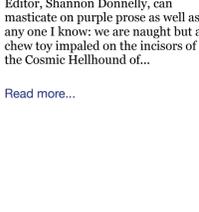
"You know, I once saw an American TV show where someone was eating a fried Oreco." This was the phrase that poured out my host in Torino's mouth as we discussed the difference of the food in each...

[Read more...](#)

Traveling the Yellow Brick Road

Florida

by Nancy Ellison



Our friend, Shiny Sheet Society Editor, Shannon Donnelly, can masticate on purple prose as well as any one I know: we are naive but a chew toy impaled on the incisors of the Cosmic Hellhound of...

[Read more...](#)

Bar Hayama

Los Angeles

by Fredrica Duke



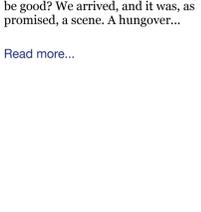
What is wrong with me? Why do I drive past intriguing places and keep on driving? Or, why do I keep going to the same places because I know them, they are familiar and safe? My friend, another...

[Read more...](#)

Morgenland

Europe

by Anna Harari



It was a Lonely Planet recommendation, but the description made it hard to tell – it was definitely trendy, but would it be good? We arrived, and it was, as promised, a scene. A hungover...

[Read more...](#)

## Latest News

- Pavlova
- Fresh Tomato Cucumber Israeli Chopped Salad
- La Vie Bohème en Giverny – Monet's Palette
- A Truffle Hunt to Remember
- Wearin' the Alt Green – Kinda

## Popular Today

- Donald Trump Loves His Mother's Meatloaf
- The One True Copy of Jackie Kennedy's Real Fake Pearls
- Liveblogging from the SeaChange Ideas Forum in Denver
- The Pig Roast
- Wolf in Sheep's Clothing
- Chinese Chicken Salad at Cornfort's Cafe
- St. Patrick's Day Ice Cream Beer Float
- Grandma Moore's Chocolate Mayonnaise Cake
- St. Felix Bar
- Kai Lobach's World, and His Currywurst

Feed Entries

