**Delicate Flower**

by Emi Tsuruta

One day a while back there, I was in an artsy mood, so I signed up for a course in ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging. It was through a local cultural center here in Oceanview, California. Ms. Takeda, the teacher, was a refined and elegant lady. She taught us many things, and not just about flowers. She taught us to take time out of our busy day to stop, and appreciate the beauty around us. Every leaf, branch, petal is different, but they each have a beauty all their own. I started to look at things with new eyes, noticing all the trees, plants and flowers in my neighborhood, and the little touches that people put in to make their surroundings more beautiful.

That summer, there was a Natsu Matsuri (summer festival) in the cultural center where all the different Japanese hobby groups put together an exhibition of their crafts or skills - tea ceremony, judo, kendo, what have you. Ms. Takeda asked if I could do a flower arrangement, and man the ikebana booth during the festival. I said 'sure.'

The morning of the festival, I got up early to go pick flowers to use in my arrangement. After my shower, I pulled on some cargo shorts, my safari jacket and a pair of leather sandals. At that back of our yard, there's a gate leading out into a park. I went out, and hiked along next to the creek looking for flowers or plants I could use. I could hear cicadas chirping away reminding me of my summers in Japan. I just love summer.

Anyway, I had to find some somber plants - grays and browns - with straight lines to make up the design. In the park, I found some small white wildflowers, rock cress I think, which I might be able to use, but I didn't see many straight-line plants at first. I thought a pussywillow would be nice or some bulrushes, but I had to go down to the far end of the park to get those. I eventually did find a pussywillow and some bulrushes, picked them, then hurried home to shower, and change into something more summery for the show.

Not long before that, I'd bought a new sundress. This one had a pretty yellow floral pattern on it. The skirt was quite short, and the top part was backless, so it showed quite a bit of skin, but I saw it as being more cute than sexy. It even tied up with a bow at the back of my waist.

Anyway, I put it on, wrapped up my flowers in a bouquet, pulled on my sandals, and headed for the bus stop. There weren't too many people around at this time of morning, but there was quite a breeze blowing in from the ocean, and it kept making my skirt billow up. I had on white cotton panties, a fairly loose weave, made in Japan, but I did my best to hold my skirt down with my free hand, delicately balancing the vase and flowers in my other hand.

There were a few more people on the bus, and when I walked by, a couple of guys turned to check me out. I think part of what drew their eye was the bow at the back of my waist, which swayed to and fro as I walked, calling attention to my caboose. Ah well. I was glad in a way, happy that they liked my dress.

At the cultural center, people were all scurrying around getting ready for the show. I recognized most of the other volunteers. They'd call out, "Hi, Emi," as they rushed on by. I eventually found Miyoko, one of the other girls from my Ikebana class. We headed up to the Japanese Association office to unpack the other flower arrangements, and bring them down to our table to get set up.

"Hey, Miyoko. Do you mind if I go freshen up?" I asked.

"Go ahead," she chirped. She seemed to be in a good mood.

In the washroom, I washed my hands and face again, but my body felt all sticky from the ride in. I lifted up my skirt to check my panties, and they were kind of stuck to my skin. Oh dear. Not sure what to do, I ended up peeling off my panties, and rinsing them out. At least, they're clean now, but they're still wet. I'd better hang them up to dry. I tied them to a string in the window, but then came back to the mirror. I wonder if I can get away with going out like this. I felt a bit naughty to be out of my panties - kind of excited actually - but I was worried that people might see my... uh... 'bikini region.'

One of the things I noticed though was when I retied the bow, that pulled up the hem of my dress at the back. You could see my butt cheeks from underneath. I guess that's why those guys on the bus had been staring at me earlier. They'd probably gotten a peek at my panties when I walked by.

Even so, I had to make a decision here. I couldn't wear my wet panties, and Miyoko was waiting for me. I stood here checking the dress length in the mirror, trying to convince myself that it didn't look too bad. It was kind of covering my pussy, and I would probably be sitting most of the time anyway. It was summer after all, and I'd seen American girls roaming around outside in some pretty short skirts. Maybe no one would notice. Anyway, I eventually decided to just scoot out, and see what Miyoko made of my outfit.

I walked past the receptionist, peering back at her over my shoulder. She didn't really look though.

I found Miyoko unpacking the different arrangements. To check her reaction, I walked right over, turning my back to her to see if she could tell. She didn't see anything wrong with my outfit at first, and just motioned for me to help her unpack. However, when I lifted my arms up to pick up a vase, she noticed, and asked,

"Emi. Isn't that dress a bit short?"

"Yeah, it's this bow at the back. It pulls the whole skirt part up," I explained, wiggling my behind to show her. She looked like she was about to say more, but just then, the Japanese programs director, Mr. Yoshimoto, came in. I turned towards him hoping he hadn't seen my little butt-wiggling dance. Fortunately, he had other things on his mind.

"You're the Ikebana group, right? You're at table five, halfway down the hall there."

Miyoko and I bowed a greeting, but he soon headed out to go get the other volunteers organized. Miyoko and I placed the first couple of arrangements on our table, and went back to get the others. Miyoko did seem a bit bothered by my dress, but she didn't say anything. Maybe it'll be OK.

Once we were all set up, we sat down on chairs behind our table. The cool vinyl of the chair seat felt strange on my bare behind, but at least, I was safe from prying eyes for the moment.

Some of the other volunteers came by to see our arrangements, and everyone seemed to like them. That was a good sign.

Soon, the first visitors started to arrive. When people stopped at our table, we'd explain. Our teacher worked in the 'Nageire cascading style,' but I joked that my own arrangement was more 'Jiyuuka,' free style, mainly because I didn't know how to do 'Nageire,' literally 'throwing the flowers in the vase.' People usually laughed at this, and our table seemed to be a hit.

Everything went along smoothly for the first little while. Unfortunately, there was this Chinese American boy, Wilfred, who was wandering around, taking pictures for the newsletter I guess. Wilfred was an earnest enough sort, a good kid most of the time, but before long, I caught him peering over at me, studying my bare back and thighs. I looked down, and straightened my dress, but I think what was setting him off was the lack of a bra strap running across my back. Every time I leaned forward, he'd stop, and peer over this way. At first, I wondered if he could see my boobs, but the dress was pretty tight on the sides.

I didn't really know Wilfred all that well. We didn't talk much, but I'd seen him around the center a few times. He often took pictures at our events I guess, or helped with the AV equipment. He clearly was intrigued by how I was dressed. He was too polite to stare, but he kept circling around our table, stealing glances at me when he thought I wasn't looking.

The customers kept coming, so I didn't have time to go check my undies. I felt a bit nervous with Wilfred eyeing me, but eventually, he went away. Soon though, this family of three came up, and started asking about the flower arrangement I'd made. I don't think it was really anything special, but they liked it so much that they ended up buying it! I was so happy!

"Here. Could you help bring it out to the car?" the mother asked me. She was carrying her baby in a sling, and her husband had his hands full with their stroller and other gear. I looked to Miyoko, hoping she might help, but they clearly wanted me, the creator of this arrangement, to bring it out, and show them how to set it up.

I slowly got up, but I could feel the breeze nipping at my bare behind. My hello kitty started heating up. I looked around for Wilfred, but luckily, he didn't seem to be around.

I motioned for the couple to lead on, but the wife wanted to talk to me about my creation. Reluctantly, I cradled my flower arrangement with both hands, and padded along towards the front door with the husband following along behind. I tried not to swing my hips as I walked, but I could feel the bow swaying back and forth, calling even more attention to my bare bottom. I glanced back at the husband, but he feigned innocence. 'Who, me? I wasn't staring,' he seemed to be saying. Despite my best efforts, I was getting more and more turned on.

Outside, there was a strong breeze blowing, making my skirt billow up even more. I don't think the wife noticed, and when I looked back at hubby, he seemed to be mulling over my outfit. Was I wearing undies or not? Hopefully, he thought I was wearing a thong, but he must have been getting quite an eyeful since the hem of my dress kept floating up.

Up ahead, two of the Japanese boys who were working the concessions were outside taking a smoke break. I quickly asked the wife which car was theirs, and luckily, they were parked on the far side, away from the two boys. The boys didn't spot me right away, but before long, they were looking over this way too. With my hands full, I couldn't smooth down my dress, so they may have gotten a peek at my pussy. Oh god! Don't look! This is so embarrassing!

The wife went to set her baby in their car seat. I had to stand there, and wait while the husband opened the hatchback of their SUV. The hem of my dress kept fluttering up in the wind. I had to do something before they all figured out I was naked. I swung around to the far side of hubby, so I was facing both him and the two boys, and tried to hold down my skirt with the vase. My hello kitty was tingling like crazy, but eventually, I got to set the vase down in their trunk, and fluff down my skirt.

The wife came back out to thank me. The husband still had this amused look on his face, but luckily, he didn't say anything. Eventually, they got in their SUV, and drove off.

The two boys were watching me carefully now as I made my way back. With my hands free, it was easier to hold down my skirt, but even so, they seemed awfully interested in my hips. I kept my distance though. I hoped that they hadn't realized I was naked, but I think actually they had.

The receptionist bowed to me as I walked past. She looked a bit perturbed this time as she watched me walk away. I don't know what I did to set her off, but it looked as if she knew that something was up.

I probably should have gone, and gotten my panties then, but Miyoko spotted me, and waved for me to come help her with the customers who had gathered around our table. I couldn't really ignore her, so I went back, and sat down. Then, the two boys from outside came in, making a beeline straight for me!

"Hey, you're that girl. The one who's always here doing... uh..."

"Ikebana?" I said finishing his sentence.

"Yeah, yeah. That's it. What's your name?"

"Emi."

They were awfully young, maybe late teens. They came right round to the side of our table to look at my thighs. I held my legs together in lady-like fashion hoping they couldn't see my bottom. Realizing they should say something, they glanced at our table.

"So you make these things, do you? Which one did you make?" the one boy asked.

"I just sold my arrangement to that family. Miyoko made this one though," I said, trying to get them to come around to the front. They didn't budge though. They were too fascinated by my bare hips.

"How do you make one of these anyway?" one boy asked.

I looked over to Miyoko for support, but she was ignoring me. Maybe she thought I'd been teasing them on purpose. Honestly, I hadn't meant to show them at all. It was hardly my fault that they'd been out in the parking lot when I went out.

One of the other customers asked me a question, so I turned to help her. The boys backed away, still watching me from afar. I think I managed to keep my bottom covered long enough that the boys eventually gave up, and headed back to the cafeteria.

Soon, Miyoko asked for my help wrapping up an arrangement for her customers. Reluctantly, I stood up, but when I reached out my arms to hold the vase, I felt my hem creep up my backside. The boys had gone back to work, but suddenly, a flashbulb went off.

Wilfred was right there behind me snapping pictures of my ass! He must have snuck up while I wasn't looking. I frowned at him, trying to get him to back off, but I couldn't let go of the bouquet while Miyoko was tying it. The way I was leaning, he could probably see maybe like half of my butt cheeks. I was so embarrassed, but I couldn't fix the hem, and hold the vase for Miyoko at the same time.

I don't think the couple we were wrapping the bouquet for could see my pussy because the table was in the way, but I'm sure they must have wondered why I was blushing. I bowed an apology to them, but that just pulled my skirt up even more. I looked back at Wilfred pleading him not to look, not to take my picture, but he was so excited to see me naked his hands were shaking.

Miyoko wasn't helping either. She kept tilting the bouquet away from me, forcing me to lean over even more. I think the hem must have been up around my waist by then. My hello kitty was buzzing away like a five alarm fire, but I still couldn't cover up.

Wilfred had got off a few shots, but soon his camera went silent. I think he was so nervous he must have pressed the wrong button. He could still see my bottom, but at least, he couldn't take my picture anymore. I nodded for Miyoko to hurry.

"Hold the vase steady," she chided. I wanted to tell her about Wilfred, but I couldn't without setting this couple off. To at least get this over with, I bent way over, and held the vase firmly, so Miyoko could tie the flowers. Wilfred was practically going cross-eyed by then at the sight of my upturned ass.

I was worried too that the girls at the crafts table or the other customers might notice. As Miyoko finally got the arrangement tied in, I let go, and quickly fluffed my skirt back down. I shot Wilfred an angry glance, and he backed off worried about what I might do. I asked Miyoko if I could go after him, and she nodded for me to go ahead. He made it to the stairs before I did, but I bolted up after him. He exited on the second floor, and I finally managed to corner him in the Japanese Association office. Luckily, there was no one else there.

"Wilfred! Give me that camera!"

He was freaking out, flailing his arms in the air, even knocking off his own glasses.

"Calm down for heaven's sake. I just want to delete the photos you took," I explained.

"Stay back. Leave me alone," he whimpered. I waded in, and grabbed the camera. He flicked up my skirt, but actually, he couldn't see without his glasses.

"Stop being silly. Just let me have the camera," I demanded. He wouldn't let go, so I finally leaned in, pressing my breasts against his chest. This proved to be a bit much for him. He finally slouched to the floor, and let go. I took the camera from him, and stood back up. I scrolled through the menus trying to find the button for 'delete.' He picked up his glasses off the floor, pulled them on, and peered over at me.

"Don't tell anyone about this, you hear?" I snapped at him. He shrugged a half-hearted apology.

"Why are you dressed like that?" he asked softly. I didn't know what to say.

"I was just... I... I don't know. No reason," I told him. He tried to peek up my skirt at my pussy, so I turned away. He was so worked up his face was all red. It was kind of funny.

I finally found the photos that he'd taken. I did look pretty indecent, bent over almost as if I was asking for it. I quickly scrolled through deleting each in turn until there were gone.

"Can I have my camera back?" Wilfred whined.

"Promise me you won't take any more pictures of me, or tell anyone about this," I demanded. Wilfred seemed torn. I smoothed my skirt down over my rear, trying to get him to focus. Before he could answer though, Miyoko appeared at the door, looking for me. Reluctantly, I gave him his camera back, and ran off with Miyoko, warning him not to follow.

"What were you two doing up there?" Miyoko asked.

"Oh nothing." No sense in getting her all in a tizzy. I was about to go rescue my panties, but unfortunately, just then, we bumped into the programs director Mr. Yoshimoto again.

"Miyoko and Emi, is it? You girls are doing a great job. I just received a whole bunch of compliments about your ikebana table."

I wondered about the timing, but I bowed to him anyway. Maybe other people had seen me, but I don't think he personally had figured out what I was wearing.

"If you girls don't mind, could I introduce you to a couple of people who sit on the board of directors? They want to thank you for your work."

I wanted to go get my panties first, but I couldn't think of a good excuse. We ended up following Yoshimoto down the stairs. How do I get myself into these situations?

These director people were sitting in the cafeteria. The two boys from earlier smiled at me when I walked in, but I just ignored them.

One of these directors was a lady lawyer, Junko something, and the other, Mr. Nakata, a former executive for the American branch of a large Japanese placement agency. I'd actually seen Mr. Nakata around the cultural centre before. I think he did tea ceremony. I originally thought that he was this refined connoisseur of the arts, but he actually turned out to be a fairly sly old charmer. He looked me over carefully, making me a bit nervous. He started asking me about how I'd come to the States and what my plans were. With his connections, he might be able to find me a job when I graduate.

While we were talking though, Mr. Yoshimoto had come around behind me, and was peering down at my bottom. I couldn't really fiddle with my skirt with all these people watching, so I just gave Yoshimoto a bashful smile, hoping I didn't look too indecent. He seemed puzzled by my outfit, but was trying not to stare. I was after all one of his prize volunteers and one of the reasons for the festival's success apparently.

Mr. Nakata cleared his throat, and asked me,

"Emi, could you be a dear, and bring me one of your arrangements? I'll set it up in the tokonoma in my home." A tokonoma is an alcove along the wall of a Japanese style room where people hang art or poetry.

"Oh I'm sorry, sir. I've already sold my own arrangement. I think Miyoko still has one of hers though."

Nakata's eyes darkened. I wasn't sure why, but he didn't seem quite so interested in Miyoko as he was in me. He expressed his regrets at not getting to buy my arrangement. I began to wonder if I could get away with giving him a peek just to thank him for his 'support.' The problem though was the lady lawyer sitting right next to him. I was pretty sure she wouldn't approve if she knew I were pantiless.

When Nakata turned to question Miyoko, I slid over, and stood next to him trying to hide from the lawyer lady. I smoothed down my dress at the front, but leaned over looking up at him with wide eyes. I waited for a lull, and then quietly asked him if I could get his email address. He agreed, but he didn't have a business card with him, so I invited him to come back with me to our ikebana table, where my stuff was. Miyoko stayed with Yoshimoto and the lady lawyer, so I finally managed to get away from them.

I led the way, but I was getting all excited by then, happy to have found an ally of sorts. I held my dress down at the front, but I could feel it creeping up at the back, leaving my booty exposed. He was trying to act all dignified and such, but he did sneak a brief peek down at my bottom.

When I got to our table, I scurried around behind to fetch a pen and paper from my bag. My hello kitty was tingling away like crazy, but I wasn't really sure how far I should take this. Should I let him see that I am naked? Would he look down on me? Or introduce me to the job of my dreams? I did feel like I could trust him, but there were a lot of people around, so I had to be careful.

Mr. Nakata was no shrinking violet. He followed me around behind our table, watching as I squatted down to get a pen from my bag. I felt for my skirt, but it had lurched up exposing even more of my behind. I felt so embarrassed. I hadn't really intended to flash him so soon.

I stood back up, hiding my face in my hair, curious as to what he thought of my bottom. I peered over at him, trying to gauge his reaction. He did seem surprised of course, but he gave me a gentle smile, reassuring me that it was alright. My whole body was tingling now in the warm glow of having found a new 'friend.'

Remembering what we'd come there for, I spread the paper out on the table, and set down the pen next to it, so Mr. Nakata could write his email address. When he went to write, I leaned forward, setting my elbows down on the table next to him, peering up at him with wide eyes. I was trying to act natural, but I was kind of exposing my ass again, almost daring him to look. He met my gaze, wondering what I was up to, but I just smiled sweetly, playing innocent.

I honestly didn't want people to see me naked, but I was riding on a bit of a natural high by then. I couldn't quite flash him my breasts either. My dress was backless, but wrapped pretty tight down my sides. I stretched my arms way out almost like I was practicing yoga or something. He glanced over at me, aware that I was trying to tease him, but didn't look down at my rear.

Complicating matters, I soon caught sight of Wilfred. I quickly straightened back up letting my skirt fall back down. Wilfred already knew I was naked, so in a way I wasn't so worried about him. I didn't want him to see me flirting with Mr. Nakata though. I maneuvered around, so Mr. Nakata was blocking Wilfred's view. Having to get creative, I lifted my arms a bit to pull up my dress, and then rested my butt cheeks on the edge of the table. He noticed, but was still trying to play it cool, so he didn't really react.

"Are you working still?" I asked.

"No, just volunteering. Were you thinking of working in the U.S. or Japan?"

"I don't know. Either. I haven't really decided yet."

"Send me your resume."

I smiled my appreciation. I took the paper from him, and double-checked the spelling of his email address. I kept leaning forward, showing him more and more of my bare bottom. His reaction was so different from Wilfred and the concession boys though. They were so hungry, eager to see, but Mr. Nakata looked like he felt guilty for catching me naked, worried maybe that his wife or someone would find us out. I smiled to signal it was alright, but I started to have doubts too, wondering if I'd gone too far.

Before I could do much, Miyoko came back. She glared at me, for standing here so close to Mr. Nakata, almost like we were thick as thieves. I straightened up, and pushed my skirt back down. I thanked Mr. Nakata, bowed to him, and then finally ran off to the washroom to retrieve my panties.

I ran into Mr. Nakata a few more times after that, but we never quite got around to talking about jobs.

More next time,