The Cook's Wife

The cook's wife cleared tables, straightened ash trays, swashed out glasses with a wet rag then dried the dishes with a cotton towel she had ironed the night before.

The cook's wife met the fishermen at the dock, bargained for the best fish, filled her apron with fish smell and the blood of fish as she cleaned and scaled them, cut them into stew.

The cook's wife handed plates from the cook to the waiters, her arms strong and wide, extensions of the cook's arms, of the cook who wanted to take the food to the tables himself.

The cook's wife swept the floor at night, cleaned the tabletops.
The cook's wife cleaned up after everyone was asleep.
The cook's wife joined the cook in bed. The cook's wife was the cook's, his heart beating into the night this steady strong beating to which she woke.

Donna J. Gelagotis Lee