

fruiting bodies | sam chause
10-page excerpt

Scene 7

*The gas station in Bolinas.
Vicky is by the car, checking her phone, which is not getting service.
Mush returns from inside the mart.*

Mush

The guy at the counter said an older Asian guy was here, earlier, but then he left, again.

Vicky

He left again? Why?

Mush

It sounds like he started talking to some kids about mushrooms, and decided to take them out on an impromptu hunting expedition. The guy said he thought he saw them just wander down that way, down the road a bit, where that clump of trees is.

Vicky

This is crazy, he called for us to get him. Why didn't he just wait?

(about her phone)

I can't believe there's no service out here. Fuck it, I'm going back to work.

Mush

We can't leave him, Vicky.

Vicky

He's an adult, he can take care of himself.

Mush

He's not been, so good, lately. We should go find him.

Vicky

We don't even know where he went.

Mush

Bolinas is a small place. Let's just leave the car and go look for him.

Vicky

This is a Tesla.

Mush

It's fine. It's a gas station, no one's gonna steal it. I'll go tell the attendant we're leaving the car here while we look for him.

Mush steps away.

Vicky

When are they gonna put up some more cell phone towers here?
Hello, people, it's the twenty-first century.

*Vicky shivers. She looks around at the fog. She zips her coat up.
She goes to the back seat, pulls out a green nylon bag.
She removes something from the side pocket: a pocket knife with a wooden
blade, and bristles at one end. She opens and closes it. Mush returns.*

Mush

Okay, he said it's fine to leave the car here. Dad must be close by, let's go find him.
Nice bag.

Vicky

I just got it yesterday. It's made of tear-resistant fabric.

Mush

Sounds really useful for all that work in cyberspace.

Vicky

It is useful. I ordered it online. A company in Italy makes them.

Mush

You don't need it, we're just getting dad and coming right back.

Mush exits. Vicky looks around.

Vicky

What is this, does Bolinas just have more fog or something? It seems like it's just pouring in from the coast. Maybe we shouldn't go.

*She stands there a moment, staring in the direction Mush went in.
But then, she follows Mush.
End of scene.*

Scene 8

Boy is staring at Ben.

Boy

We have dinner together every night. My parents cook as a team. They're the best.

Ben

That sounds nice. But you don't want to eat together too often; if you spend too much time with people, you start to notice things about them you don't like.
Better to pace yourself, in life, spending time with people.

Boy

My family eats together every day, and we love each other. The more time we spend together, the more we love each other. We look at each other and say, "I love you."
What do you make for dinner?

Ben

Me? Well...

Boy

Are you Chinese? Do you make Chinese food?

Ben

I don't make Chinese food. I don't cook very well, I make pasta dishes a lot. I like to cook with mushrooms.

Boy

If you were going to cook right now, what would you make?

Ben

I'm not going to cook right now.

Boy

But what would you make?

Ben

I don't know. What would you make?

Boy

Whatever I'm not hungry anyway. I'm gonna go look for my friends.

Ben

I thought you said your parents were waiting for you.

Boy

They *are*. My parents *are* my friends. What, do you think all families don't get along just because *yours* doesn't?

The Boy runs off.

Ben

I never said my family didn't...

But the Boy is gone. Alone now, Ben holds up the tupperware of mushrooms, peering inside. After a moment:

I've given suicide quite a lot of thought.

In Japanese culture, there's nothing wrong with suicide. It's considered the honorable thing to do, in a lot of cases.

I don't share those views of suicide, I'm third generation. But it's a different perspective.

Marja went and found herself a real, first-generation Japanese. Guess she wanted the real thing.

When she left, she told me I was "irrelevant."

"Men who think the way you do, who still have those kinds of views, you're a dying breed," she said. "The world's changing, it's moving forward, those views are becoming extinct. You're becoming irrelevant."

I said to her, "You're a woman past menopause, how relevant do you think *you* are?"

Ben (con't)

It wasn't the most politic thing to say. I was mad.

But it's all of us isn't it anyway. Life is a struggle to remain relevant. We go from maybe some passing moment of relevance, being the most important baby in the world, to irrelevance.

Sure I wish I were different. I wish I could think "that's okay, what they're doing. That's fine."

"Everyone's fine with it, Ben," Marja said. "The world's changing, Ben."

But it's wrong, I know it is. You can't change that it's wrong just because you want it to not be wrong. I can't change it.

So she left, and now she's found herself another Japanese husband, a real one this time.

A Japanese from Japan. Speaks Japanese way better than I ever could.
And this guy'll be in Eddie and Camelia's life.

She won't even know the difference will she.
Grandpa, she'll call him. She won't know.

Will they even tell her about me?

He shakes the tupperware, peers in at the mushrooms.

End of scene.

Scene 9

Vicky and Mush walking. Vicky is looking at her cell phone.

Vicky

Jesus.

(she pushes a button.)

I'm still not getting a signal.

Mush

Stop trying, there *is* no signal here.

Vicky

I don't understand how this is possible.

Mush

(calling out)

Dad?

Mush walks off into the forest, wandering off stage.

Vicky

(she spots a large rock)

Maybe we should just sit and wait for him to come to us.

(she sits)

Vicky (con't)

This rock is great.

(she relaxes into the rock)

Oh my god this rock is awesome.

(calling out)

This rock is awesome, Mush!

It's like a comfy Ikea chair. It's got this *firmness*, like it's pushing against my glutes, causing my glutes to push back. I'm getting resistance training just by sitting on this rock. It's Fitflops for your butt.

(she relaxes into the rock)

(calling out)

You have to sit in this, Mush!

(realizing something)

(calling out)

I just realized that even though I don't have a signal, I can still take photos! Why didn't I realize that before? I just assume that if I'm not connected, everything's broken.

(takes out her phone again)

(she takes a picture)

I have to post this to instagram later.

(she takes another picture)

Mush?

(realizing for the first time that she hasn't heard her sister in a while)

Hello?

(trying not to panic)

Mush, where are you?

(no answer)

(lying back over the rock)

If I could update my Facebook status right now, I'd write, "Rocking out."

That's dumb, I'm deleting that.

"Soaking up the wisdom of boulders."

Lame. Deleting.

"Lost in the wilds of Bolinas without a sister or cell service.

Send help immediately."

If I saw that post on a Friend's page, I'd give it a "Conflicted Like?", which is what you say when you read a post whose content is mildly troubling, vis-à-vis the circumstances of the person posting, and you want to let the poster know that you read it and are sending them support, but you're not actually "Liking" the fact that they're in the troubling situation that led to the post.

So "Conflicted Like" is another part of the app, by the way.

I mean, not yet, but why didn't we think of that already?

Mush! Mush!

Michelle!

The Boy enters.

Boy

Who's Michelle?

Vicky

Oh. Hi.

Boy

You've been screaming out for Mushmush, Michelle. Who's that?

Vicky

My sister, Michelle. Mush is her nickname. Have you seen her?

Boy

Does she look like you?

Vicky

I guess I little.

Boy

Is she like your age?

Vicky

No, she's older.

Boy

Whoa, older than you?

Vicky

I'm not that old.

Boy

Is she as old as that old guy who's wandering around?

Vicky

An older Japanese American guy? You've seen him?

Boy

This really old old guy. He looks Chinese.

Vicky

He's not.

Boy

Like an old kungfu shaolin monk Chinese guy. He was showing us some mushrooms. Did you know mushrooms are like fruits of a tree? But you can't see the tree part, because it's underground. He said mushrooms are "the fruiting bodies" of the fungus. He said, unlike plants, mushrooms are sexual beings.

Vicky

He told you that.

Boy

Because they have sex. Mushroom sex.

Vicky

Wow, he really taught you a lot.

Boy

He was okay.

Vicky

That's my dad, I've been looking for him. Where is he?

Boy

Do you like that rock?

Vicky

Ohmygodit'ssocomfortable.

Boy

You should watch out. It's so comfortable, people come through here, and sit on it, and it's soooo comfortable, and sooo relaxing, that they sit on it, and they never leave.

Vicky

Really.

Boy

It's called Rock Van Winkle around here. You could sit down, and no one would ever see you again. Not in your natural lifetime. By the time you got up from that rock, half the age has gone by.

Vicky

What?

Boy

But you got up, so I guess you survived! You survived Rock Van Winkle! We should make tshirts.

Vicky

Okay, so where'd you leave my dad?

Boy

I don't know. He started saying stuff that was weird, so I left.

Vicky

What kind of weird stuff?

Boy

I don't know, just weird. Why do you care? Are you worried or something?

Vicky

I'm just trying to find him.

Boy

Are you worried Bolinas isn't safe? It has a reputation for being a very safe, insular village. We're not incorporated. We don't have a mayor. We take care of ourselves here.

Vicky

I see. Well, if you don't know where you left him, I'll just head in the direction you're coming from. Stay safe.

She begins to walk off.

Boy

It's not that safe anymore. Bolinas.

(Vicky stops)

A guy was killed a few days ago. A homeless guy.

Vicky

Here?

Boy

In the woods around here. Not on this exact spot, but close by. He was homeless, didn't belong to anyone, so it didn't matter as much. No one cared about him and he was a loser. But everyone was used to seeing him around. He'd go to this Wednesday night open mic and do the same bad poem over and over.

Vicky

And he's dead?

Boy

Yeah. They beat him up bad first. And then they cut him up. Into pieces. Maybe to eat.

Vicky

Okay, I get it, you're trying to scare me. You're a very cute kid. Bye.

Boy

It's true. People think this town is safe, but it's not safe.

All the adults moved here when they were young, and wanted to be kids all their lives. And they removed the signs from the highway so no one could find them, and tried to wall themselves off in a fairytale castle, and they did drugs and drank beer and had sex and stuff.

And then they had kids of their own, but they weren't grown-ups, they didn't want to be grown-ups, and so their kids grew up raised by kids, which is worse than being raised by animals or something.

The adults were these big selfish kids who took up more space and breathed in more air and threw bigger tantrums and ate up more food and took bigger shits.

It's not a good way to grow up, being raised by big, strong children. Think about it. It's like a horror story.

So if you're raised like that, maybe sometimes you don't turn out so well.

Maybe you see a guy every Wednesday night at an open mic, doing the same dumb poem, and you can't stand it, you want to make him stop, you want to end him.

Because you can't believe something so stupid is out there, reminding you that this world is so stupid, and you're in that world, and you wanna end it.

And maybe one day you do. You end it.

(Vicky and the Boy stare at each other a moment. The Boy breaks the stare first, pointing.)

I think your dad's that way. I'll find him and bring him back.

He goes off.

Vicky

Wait, don't *leave* me here —

(but he's gone. Vicky stops, turns back and looks at the rock.)

...with Rock Van Winkle...

She eyes it warily: a standoff.

We see a giant, human-sized Morel, lumbering by upstage, unseen.

Vicky catches the movement in her peripheral, but when she turns to look, there's nothing there.

End of scene.

Scene 10

Mush is by a tree, her hand touching it.

She looks at it, blinking into the foliage.

Mush

Hello tree. You are beautiful. You are a beautiful tree.

(she pats it)

(yelling out to Vicky)

Hey, come over here! There's a beautiful tree!

(waiting for a response)

Okay, I know you can hear me.

(a moment)

Look you're annoyed by the job thing, I get it.

(a moment)

(She turns to us, stepping downstage.)

I was inspired by idiots.

I read about this guy who defaced a Rothko at the Tate. He just walked up to a fucking *Rothko* and wrote directly on it with a marker. Just like that, in a world-famous cultural institution, writing on a painting worth several million dollars.

The words he wrote were:

The giant Morel, now as YELLOWIST GUY, appears.

Yellowist

"A potential piece of yellowism."

Mush

"So what does that mean," everyone wanted to know.

It turns out this guy was one member of a two-member organization or movement—

Yellowist

Yellowism.

Mush

—that wasn't really an organization or movement.

Yellowist

Yellowism is not art,
and Yellowism is not anti-art.
And it is not *not* art.

Mush

Basically it defies category. They have a whole manifesto and website and youtube videos explaining in really circuitous language what “Yellowism” is,

Yellowism

It’s an element of contemporary visual culture.
It’s not an artistic movement.
It’s not art, it’s not reality,
it’s just Yellowism.

Mush

The way it works is, you can put something in a “yellow chamber” —by being one of these two guys, and declaring it a yellow chamber by signing your name.

Yellowist

I am not a vandal.
In Yellowism, all the possible interpretations are reduced to one — are equalized, flattened to Yellow.

Mush

And then whatever becomes a work of Yellowism loses everything it was before. It is now freed of its former meaning. A Rothko isn’t a Rothko anymore, it’s now just Yellow. Flattened.

Yellowist

They are not works of art anymore.
They become pieces of Yellowism.
Art already exists. Yellowism is a new context.

Mush

So people wanted to know, “*why* would you do this?”
And after spewing out a lot of incoherent bullshit, the guy says,

Yellowist

It’s very difficult in the contemporary art world to say something, to make people listen. It is very difficult to do anything in this world anymore that anyone will notice.

Mush

Right? It’s like a howl for recognition.
The cry of anguish of today’s post- post- social media’d, networked world.
It’s so hard to *be* anything, but at the same time there’s so much pressure *to be* something.
So it’s dumb what they did. I’m not saying it’s cool.
But the heart of it? The pain driving it?
(the Yellowist gives a howl of bottomless pain.)

They just, didn’t want to let a Rothko be a Rothko.