

Fruiting Bodies

by sam chanse

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Characters

- Ben:** 60s, third-generation Japanese-American;
Mush: (Michelle), early 30s, mixed (ethnically Japanese-Finnish);
Vicky: late 20s, mixed (same as Mush);
Boy: a boy, about 12 years old;
Eddie: mixed (same as Mush & Vicky), but often passes for white; various ages;
played by the same actor playing Boy.
Morel*: a giant, human-sized morel mushroom, a manifestation of the spirit of the forest, which also manifests in other forms, including:
Rock Van Winkle: a rock;
Yellowist: not an artist, but not not an artist; Russian;
Reassuring Information From The Internet
Hamachi: a cat;
The Man*: a man at an open mic; 40s.

*Note: The actor playing Morel should most physically resemble The Man, including in dress; the Morel might wear jeans and flannel shirt (i.e., no literal giant mushroom outfit).

Time & Place

Winter, maybe February or March, 2014

The Bay Area:

San Francisco, Highway 1, a gas station, and the woods in and around an utterly fictional Bolinas, California.

A few notes

The stage directions “Light shift”/“Lights shift back” and “A shift”/”shift back” indicate shifts in reality, as experienced by Ben, Vicky, and Mush. Often, the shift involves or heralds a manifestation of the forest.

The stage directions “to us” indicate that the characters appear to be directly addressing us, the audience; these moments generally occur when there has been a shift.

Commas and line breaks are sometimes used to suggest rhythm and delivery;

/ forward slashes indicate an overlap in speech;

— em-dashes indicate the character’s speech is cut off by the next speaker, or that the character speaking cuts herself off;

[bracketed text] is not spoken out loud.

{Opening}

It's raining in the woods:
bouncy green ferns, a fallen trunk covered in moss;
the foresty intermingling of dying and growing things.

The rain stops. Leaves rustle, birds chatter it up.

BEN enters, eyes searching the ground. He spots something and lights up.

BEN

Okay, here we are!

(calling off to someone nearby)

You wanna take a look at this?

As he squats down to look: is that movement? —something indistinct
passing through the trees.

He turns; sees nothing.

He resumes his inspection; plucks a mushroom from the ground.

BEN (CONT'D)

First thing you want to pay attention to is the cap—coloration and texture—and look at the
gills here—see if they're attached to the stalk...

He turns it over, examining.

BEN (CONT'D)

Oh.

Well you're nothing special, are you. You tricked me.

(picking it up, putting it into a paper bag.)

No need to feel bad about it, it's normal.

Jingle of small bells, far away.

Ben stands.

The voice of a young boy, some distance off, singing:
a strange, lonely little tune.

The singing stops.

BEN (CON'D)

Alright, hold on—I hear you. I'll be right there.

He walks off toward the singing, disappears into the woods.

Something in the trees moves too.

{Scene 1}

The kitchen of Ben's home in the Sunset District of San Francisco.

The counters are covered with mushrooms in various states of decay, arranged haphazardly on pieces of wax paper.

Sitting among the assorted mushrooms in a small area she's cleared for herself is MUSH, examining a magazine and holding a Sharpie.

Every so often, she writes a word directly onto the page.

VICKY lets herself in; Mush looks up, surprised.
They look at one another. A moment.

VICKY

Why aren't you at work?

MUSH

My classes were canceled unexpectedly.
Why are *you* here?

Vicky's been looking for a place to put her purse down, in vain.

VICKY

God this is disgusting, why doesn't he throw some of this out?

MUSH

You know dad. He's trying to identify them or print them out or something.

VICKY

Make spore prints.

(Mush shrugs, returning to her magazine.)

This kitchen's probably one big fucking cloud of fungal matter...you know you're basically sitting here breathing in mushroom spawn, right? I'm opening a window.

(She does.)

I don't know how you can live like this.

MUSH

(not looking up)

What are you doing here.

VICKY

Picking dad up—where's his car? It's not in the driveway.

MUSH

(writing something on a magazine page)

He went hunting.

VICKY

What? He left already?

MUSH

Around five this morning. I heard him go out.

VICKY

We were supposed to go together, he told me to pick him up at nine.

MUSH

What, really?

VICKY

Yeah, Mush. Really.
He called to invite me.

MUSH

(skeptical)
Dad called to *invite* you? To go *mushroom hunting*?

VICKY

Uh huh.

Vicky pulls out her phone, presses a button, holds the phone up to her ear.
Mush watches.

MUSH

(unconvinced; returning to her magazine)
If you say so.

VICKY

So I took a *very rare* day off to go with him, because I felt *sorry* for him, and wanted to do something *nice*, and he left without me?
I can't believe this, I'm in the middle of a launch.

MUSH

(ripping out a page of the magazine)
No you're not. You'd be chained to your laptop.

VICKY

We're approaching a launch.
This project's awesome, it's an app that gives you more control over your online profile.

MUSH

(flipping through the magazine)
How can "an app" be awesome?

VICKY

(into the phone)
Dad, it's Vicky. I'm here, at the house—where are you? Call me.
(ending the call)
He knew I was coming.
(beginning to furiously tap out a text message)
I'll try texting him.

Mush watches Vicky text a moment.

MUSH

Eddie called last night.

Vicky looks up.

VICKY

They actually *talked*? Didn't mom and Takeru just get there?

MUSH

(writing something on another page)

Uh huh. They're staying at Eddie's until they find a place.

VICKY

Oh, mom *says* that but they're *never* leaving. You know she moved to Seattle just so she could have twenty-four hour access to Cammie.

MUSH

She does seem to be really into being an old granma.

VICKY

Guess we need to spawn babies if we ever want her to move back.

MUSH

She's not moving back. Takeru's got family out there, too, and mom's wanted to move for years.

I think dad thought she was bluffing about the two of them moving up there to be near Eddie.

VICKY

So he freaked out?

MUSH

(tearing out a page)

He just got quiet and started pulling stuff together for today, getting out the backpack and tupperware and everything...

(examining the magazine)

He probably headed out to that spot he likes in Mount Tam, if you want to try and catch up with him.

VICKY

I'm not going to drive all the way out to the Headlands so I can wander around on muddy trails looking for him as the fog rolls in. I'd probably get lost and die.

(she checks her phone)

He hasn't texted me back.

Vicky tries calling again.

MUSH

He doesn't do that stuff, Vicky.

VICKY

Great, and now it's going directly to voicemail. Why is it going directly to voicemail?

MUSH

(writing on a page)

A lot of places out there don't get service.

VICKY

Yeah, or he turned his phone off.
I gave him that iPhone and he never uses it.

MUSH

Not everyone needs an iPhone.

VICKY

They just make life better; Mush, it's fucking progress!
(Mush tears out another page.)

Why are you doing that?
(looking)

What is this, why did you write "WIPED" on these pages?

The landline phone begins to ring.

MUSH

It's an experiment.

VICKY

Is this an arty exercise you're doing with your students or something?

MUSH

I was *trying* to but it wasn't received very well.

VICKY

What?
(about the ringing phone)
Are you gonna answer that?

MUSH

The machine will get it.

VICKY

What do you mean it wasn't—

MUSH

(getting up to answer)
Oh I forgot, he disconnected it, so he wouldn't have to hear any messages from mom.

VICKY

What do you mean it wasn't received very well?

MUSH

Oh I was just writing on some posters the school had put up and—hold on.
(picking up)

Hello?

VICKY

You were writing on *posters*? What posters?

MUSH

(to Vicky)
For their Visiting Lecturer series.

VICKY
What?! What did you write?

MUSH
 Just on the photos of the lecturers, though, not like on the *calendar* part—
 (in phone)
 Yes.

VICKY
 What did you write?
 (Mush holds up a page with “WIPED” written across it.)
Why would you do that?

MUSH
 (to Vicky)
 Hold *on*—collect call.

VICKY
 People still make those?

MUSH
 (into phone)
 Dad—dad, where are you?

VICKY
 It’s dad, and he’s calling *collect*?

MUSH
 (to Vicky)
 He’s calling from a pay phone.

VICKY
 Oh my god, he never uses his iPhone.

MUSH
 (into phone)
 Vicky’s here, she said—

VICKY
 Did you vandalize university property?
 You *work* there, Mush, what’s wrong with
 you?

MUSH
 You’re *where*? I thought you were going to Mount Tam.

VICKY
 You have a job, you don’t have to go around losing them all the time—

MUSH
 Okay, we’ll come and get you, we’ll take Vicky’s car—

VICKY
 Why can’t we take *your* car?

MUSH

Look just tell me where exactly you are—
So ask the cashier. Is that someone singing in the background?—
(to Vicky)
Dad's stranded at some random spot off Highway 1.

VICKY

How did that happen?

MUSH

He says he was hiking around Mount Tam, and got lost. His wallet's back with his car.

VICKY

Tell me he didn't lose his iPhone.

MUSH

(into phone)
Yeah—what? It's hard to hear you, there's some weird—look just tell me where you are.
(writing something down)
...Uh huh...uh huh...got it. Okay, we'll head out there. See you soon.
(hanging up)
Apparently he hitched a ride to some gas station in Bolinas.

VICKY

This is great, I'm supposed to be working on the launch right now.

MUSH

Wasn't your original plan to spend the day looking for mushrooms in Mount Tam, anyway?

VICKY

That was before he left without me. Can *you* just get him?

MUSH

My car isn't running. I've been taking Muni to work.

VICKY

You mean the work you jeopardized by vandalizing their property?

MUSH

I didn't vandalize anything, I was just, wiping it. I was trying to demonstrate a principle.

VICKY

Well apologize or something, offer to pay for it, don't make it worse.

MUSH

It's okay.

VICKY

"It's okay"? When are you going back?

MUSH

I'm not. They fired me already.

Are you fucking kidding. VICKY

Wiped. MUSH

Mush goes.

What does that even *mean*? VICKY
(Vicky grabs her purse, knocking mushrooms off the counter.)
This house... (Picking them up, she notices something on the fridge. She looks closer.)
Dad's got a picture of Hamachi on the fridge? He hasn't thrown them all out by now?
(She looks at the photo a moment longer; then, making a cat noise)
Mrrrao.

She touches the photo, and goes.
End of scene.

{Scene 2}

The forest. Ben is stooping over a bit, eyes searching the ground. A backpack is nearby. He stops, looks up at us.

BEN

You know, in some countries, in Russia and eastern Europe, mushroom hunting is a popular family activity. They have a saying, “When you quarrel, you go mushroom hunting, and after an hour or two, you are friends again.”

Of course, that assumes you were friends with your family members to begin with.
(He spots something on the ground.)

Here we go.

(squatting down)

It looks like a pine cone, or a piece of bark, doesn't it?

But it's a morel. Morchella.

(He scoops it up.)

See, the honeycomb structure, those networks and pits?

Morels are pretty neat, there's a lot of uncertainty, about the taxonomy—are they true mushrooms or are they cup fungi, are they mycorrhizal, in a cooperative union with living plants, or are they saprotrophic, feeding off of dead and decaying things...hotly debated stuff.

You can tell true morels from the false ones that are poisonous by looking at the features—the false morels have wrinkles, on the cap. But *true* morels have sharp ridges, with shallow pits and depressions—looks like sponge, or pumice stone.

The darker ones look like they've been burned. You can find them growing around dead or dying trees. See, this dead elm?

But you know there isn't any one true formula to finding morels.

There's an old mushroom hunting joke: where can you find morels?

You can find morels...where you find them.

Morels are where you find them.

(He chuckles.)

This is fun, isn't it?

I used to go with my son. He was always good at spotting 'em.

Some people have a gift for it; they're a presence you can feel in the air.

You have to be careful, though, there have been a lot of those death caps sprouting up, lately. You don't want to eat those, they'll liquefy your liver. And they look harmless, like button mushrooms. Smell nice, too, almost a floral scent. Some people mistake the young ones for puffballs.

But you seem like you know your way around a forest.

I bet you wouldn't make a mistake like that.

End of scene.

{Scene 3}

Vicky's car. Vicky is driving; Mush is in the passenger seat, holding a pile of magazines and a marker. The pages are flapping a bit in the wind.

MUSH

Can we close the windows now?

VICKY

No. You're probably shedding spores all over my Tesla.

MUSH

All this air blowing into the car has stuff in it, too.

(Vicky doesn't answer, and Mush shrugs, returning to her magazine.)

(After a moment, she holds a page up to Vicky.)

What does this look like to you?

VICKY

I'm trying to drive.

MUSH

Just look at it for a second, what does it look like?

VICKY

(glancing at it)

Other than a photo of Angelina Jolie?

MUSH

Yeah, that. How does it make you feel?

VICKY

It doesn't make me feel anything.

MUSH

A lot of people might look at her and think about how she's a superstar, and they can't compare to her.

VICKY

Not people with their own *lives*.

MUSH

I don't think that's true. When you see the face of a celebrity, a part of you reflexively thinks that you are *not* a celebrity. *They* are someone, *you* are *no* one.

VICKY

I don't think that when I look at the face of a celebrity.

MUSH

A part of you does. A part of you *does*.
You can't help it. Admit it.

VICKY

I'm not gonna admit it, Mush, because it's not true. Was this worth getting fired for?

MUSH

(writing on the page)
 But *now* imagine you know nothing about her, you have no idea who this person is—
 (holding it up again)
 Okay, what do you see?

VICKY

(glancing at it)
 Yeah, it's still Angelina Jolie, Mush, and you wrote the word "Wiped" on her face, congratulations.

MUSH

No, you've never seen her before, you have *no context* within which to view or understand this face.

VICKY

It's a woman, what are you getting at?

MUSH

It now exists as a blank slate, no longer serving as a source of comparison that devalues the worth of the observer.
 By writing "Wiped" on it, I'm pronouncing this image wiped clear of all previous associations, context, whatever.

VICKY

So you want things to not mean anything. Sounds great.

MUSH

It works for non-people, too.
 (ripping it out, and holding it up.)
 This ad for SF MOMA? Wiped.

VICKY

Why would you want to wipe out SF MOMA?

MUSH

It's not wiping *out*, it's *wiping*.
 People hear "MOMA" and they have immediate associations—of prestige, of power, of bigness.
 It's about coming to something fresh.
 (The page in Mush's hand flies out the window.)
 Fuck! Can we please close the windows?

VICKY

No. That's what you get for vandalizing SF MOMA.
 Did we pass Bolinas? I can never tell.

MUSH

(opening the glove compartment)
 I don't think so. I'll check a map.

VICKY

I don't have hard copy maps, just use your phone.

Seriously?
 MUSH

Save paper.
 VICKY

You don't always have a signal.
 MUSH

We *have* a signal, it's the Bay Area.
 VICKY

Fine. (pulling out her phone)
 MUSH

Usually I use the touchscreen for navigation, but the connectivity went down this morning for some bullshit reason...
 VICKY

So sometimes you don't have a signal.
 MUSH

No we *have* a signal, the system's just not picking it up right now. And this never happens, anyway; it's a Tesla. I'm on the four-year service plan, they're fixing it tomorrow. How far away are we?
 VICKY

It's loading...
 MUSH

It'd be helpful if those Bolinas assholes would just leave a fucking sign up.
 VICKY

They don't want the tourists to know where they are, and Caltrans got tired of replacing the directional signs every time they got torn down. The county finally had a ballot measure, and they voted for no signs.
 MUSH

So annoying. Antisocial lunatics.
 VICKY

I *know*, they're probably not even on *Facebook*.
 MUSH

(missing the sarcasm))
 They probably *aren't*, right?
 Do you see where we are yet?
 VICKY

(about the phone)
 It's still thinking.
 MUSH

MUSH (CONTD)

(returning to the subject)

Caltrans was actually relieved when they voted that way—when I was there, nobody wanted to waste time with the Bolinas bullshit, they were all focused on getting funding together for the suicide net under the bridge—which they *finally* announced they're gonna build. Just a couple thousand dead people later...

VICKY

People who want to kill themselves will find a way to do it. They don't need a bridge.

MUSH

A bridge makes it easier. There's like fifty jumpers every year.

(a moment)

That was a cool job, that Caltrans internship.

VICKY

An internship isn't a *job*.

MUSH

It helped me get the SF State gig. The guy who hired me writes travel lit, he said the public transportation experience on my resume caught his attention.

VICKY

So they hire you as a writing instructor?
The last jobs you had were beer worker and camper.

MUSH

“Apprentice brewer” and “Ranger's Aide.”

VICKY

Whatever.

MUSH

People are impressed with the diversity of my experience.

VICKY

It's the resume of a schizophrenic person.

MUSH

This is San Francisco, Vicky. It's different from your little Silicon Valley campuses. Some people are really into the whole nontraditional, nonlinear paths and narratives thing.

VICKY

The tech industry is *built* by college dropouts, we're *very* into nontraditional paths. What *you* do is just sloppy and noncommittal.

MUSH

Not to people interested in actual In-Real-Life human interaction.

(looking at the phone)

Wait, wait—I can finally see where we are—
We did pass it.

VICKY

What?

MUSH

We're a little north of it, we passed it a while ago. We have to turn around and go back.

VICKY

Fuck.

(turning the car around.)

We'll keep an eye on the map this time, so we don't miss it again.

MUSH

I am. We're a little blue dot, moving toward Bolinas.

VICKY

(a moment)

We *are* interested in real human interactions, that's the whole point of the new app.

MUSH

Uh huh.

VICKY

It gives you more control over Liking things. Right now, while it's great that you can Like things, or be a fan of something, your emotional palette is basically a black and white binary. With the app, you'll have the option to "Kind of Like", "ReallyLike", or "SuperLike"—you can be a lot more specific about your level of enthusiasm. So if you "SuperLike" something, I know *right* away that you're really, *really*, into it. It'll help boost your profile, build your fan base, and connect you with a wider community. Real human interaction.

You know, I could help you with your profile page, Mush.

MUSH

Oh my god, could you totally help me build my fan base?

VICKY

I'm being serious.

MUSH

Me too I'm being totally serious! SuperSerious!

VICKY

Whatever, I was offering to do you a favor because apparently you're jobless, again, but if you don't want my help—

MUSH

(noticing)

Shit, the map just turned into a bunch of weird blocks—

VICKY

What do you mean a bunch of blocks?

MUSH

It just stopped working...no more moving blue dot. We don't have any bars all of a sudden.

VICKY

Oh great, are we passing through some stupid fucking dead zone?
 (A giant leaf blows into the car, covering Vicky's face.)

Agh!

The car swerves.

MUSH

Oh my god—brakes. Brakes!

VICKY

(swatting at her face)
 Get it off me!

MUSH

What are you doing, just brake and pull over!

Mush grabs the wheel and steers them over. They stop abruptly. A moment.

VICKY

Jesus.

MUSH

Nice survival instincts.

VICKY

I couldn't see. That thing just flew right into my face.

MUSH

I told you to close the windows.

VICKY

Is the map back yet?

MUSH

(looking)
 No...but I know we were pretty close...

VICKY

Fucking idiot losing his fucking iPhone getting lost in the fucking Headlands.

MUSH

(looking out the window, and noticing where they are)
 Oh, this is it, we're here!
 We're in Bolinas.

End of scene.

{Scene 4}

The forest. Ben is inspecting mushrooms.

BEN

These will be good for cooking.
 But you have to soak them, first, get the little worms and crawlers out.
 They like to take up residence in the crevices. Very cozy in there.
 (holding up the mushroom, talking to the little worms and crawlers)
 Isn't it? You're very cozy in your cool, mushroom home?
 Bet it feels like you can stay in there forever, protected.
 (to us)

When I was a boy in Stockton, my parents had a cabinet in the living room where they stored old shoes. They didn't like to throw things away.
 I used to crawl in there—smelled like dried leather, a touch of salt.
 I liked the feel of the shoes and the walls packing me in tight, holding me in place so I wouldn't fall.

(to the invisible mushroom dwellers)

You feel that way, curled up in there? Tucked in tight?

(to us)

You can't do that, when you're older.
 You go into a small space and curl up, people think you're crazy.
 So you should take advantage of being young while you can.

A shift:

EDDIE (O.S.)

Dad!

BEN

Right here.

A young boy, Eddie, about twelve, enters.

EDDIE

Look what I found.
 (Eddie shows Ben something in his hand. Ben inspects it quietly.)
 It's a Fluted Black Elfin Saddle. Isn't it? It is, right?

BEN

I don't know, could be lots of things...

EDDIE

Dad, of course it is.
 They're good for cooking, right? Mom can make some.

BEN

I don't know...you sure it's not an amanita?

EDDIE

A death cap? Gross, no! These don't look anything like amanitas.

BEN

I'm just teasing you.
We've got a nice haul, here. You've got an even better eye than your dad.

EDDIE

Can we bring them to the club tomorrow?

BEN

I'm counting on it.

EDDIE

What'd *you* find?

BEN

A whole crop of morels—must have been some sort of shake-up here.

EDDIE

Wait, is that a *blonde* morel?

BEN

It sure is. And look, a greenie, too—a pickle. The flavor will knock you over.

EDDIE

People are gonna be so jealous—you're the best, dad.
I'm gonna get some more, there were some candy caps back there—don't move!

Eddie darts out.

BEN

I'll be right here.

(Shift back: he looks at the mushrooms, talks to the mushroom dwellers.)

Hey there, little crawlers... You can't stay in there, you gotta get out sometime.

(he unzips his pack, removes a piece of tupperware, puts the mushrooms in.)

Time to go, little guys.

(He pours water into the tupperware.)

That's it, get the hell out of there.

(The mushrooms are submerged in water; he considers them a moment.)

(Then, to us:)

I know he's angry with me, but sometimes I like to talk to Eddie—that's my son, Eddie.
You sort of look like him, the way he looked, when he was your age.

A shift: a voice singing, the same melody Ben heard earlier:

EDDIE (O.S.)

(singing)

*Take a walk through those-a-woods,
those-a-ones, you see 'em...*

BEN

That you? You find some more?
(Eddie appears, slightly older.)
What was that you were singing?

I wasn't singing anything. EDDIE

You get those candy caps? BEN

Maybe. EDDIE

Eddie moves his hand as if to show him, but doesn't open it.

Well let me see. BEN

(snatching his hand away) EDDIE

I don't know, it's not anything, really.

More fluted black elfin saddles, maybe? BEN

You always guess the same thing. EDDIE

We'll bring them to the club tomorrow. BEN

Why? EDDIE

It's the fourth Sunday, isn't it? BEN

I don't wanna go. EDDIE

You love going to the club. BEN

Leo Ryles is a shithead. EDDIE

Eddie. BEN

Last time, you walked over to the kids' table to show me the matsutakes. EDDIE

Sure. BEN

EDDIE

Leo's new, he didn't know you were my dad until then. After you left, he started joking around—we were learning about internment camps in history today, and he kept saying how *his* dad's dad put *your* dad in prison camps in World War II. Everyone was laughing. He thinks he's so funny.

BEN

So what? That's a long time ago, that's history. We got out, didn't we? You go tell him *we're* taking over now, so it doesn't matter. You go tell Leo Ryles *his* grandpa doesn't matter anymore, and neither does his dad. And neither will he. You tell him.

EDDIE

I don't want to do that.

BEN

Why not?

EDDIE

I don't think he meant anything bad by it... I think he was trying to be funny. I don't want Leo to be mad at me.

BEN

You just told me you don't want to see him. Why do you care if he's mad at you?

EDDIE

I don't want to see him at the *club*. He made me feel...uh...embarrassed.

BEN

About what?

EDDIE

I don't know. Embarrassed about...

(He looks at Ben—"embarrassed about you"—but can't say it.)

I don't know. I like Leo.

BEN

You told me he was a shithead.

EDDIE

Yeah, I know. I don't want to go to the club, but I have to see him at school and stuff. I don't want him to not like me.

BEN

You shouldn't care if he likes you.

EDDIE

Mush says everyone likes me.

BEN

Everyone does like you.

EDDIE

Mush says it's 'cause I don't look like her and Vicky. Is that true?

BEN

Don't worry about what your sisters say, they're just jealous of you.

EDDIE

Mush says people can't tell right away that you and me are related, and that's why everyone likes me, and that I shouldn't feel proud of that or anything.

BEN

You should always feel proud. Everyone likes you, and you should feel proud.

Shift back: the Boy is in Eddie's place.

BOY

Uh, feel proud of what? I don't really know what you're talking about.

BEN

What? Oh, I was just telling you about my son.

BOY

Oh. Well, I don't really get it.
I should go, my parents are probably waiting for me.

But the Boy doesn't move. They stare at each other a moment.
End of scene.

{Scene 5}

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 he was here earlier, but he left.

VICKY

Why would he leave?

MUSH

It sounds like he started talking to some kid about mushrooms, and they went out on an impromptu hunting expedition. The guy said he saw them wander 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 just 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.

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

VICKY

This is a Tesla.

MUSH

It's a gas station, no one's gonna steal it.

Dad must be close by, let's go get him.

VICKY

Fine.

Vicky gets something out of the car, slams the door.

MUSH

Nice bag.

VICKY

It's made of tear-resistant fabric.

MUSH

Sounds really useful for all that work in cyberspace.

VICKY

A company in Italy makes them.

MUSH

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

(Looking at Mush, Vicky deliberately slips the bag over her shoulders.)

Okay, fine.

Mush walks off.

Vicky looks around.

VICKY

What is this, does Bolinas have more fog or something?

It seems like it's just pouring in from the coast.

(a moment; calling out after Mush)

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 6}

The forest. The 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

No. 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. Ben stares after him.)
 Oh.

Alone now, Ben holds up the tupperware of mushrooms, peering inside.

Light shift: a moment.

BEN

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 some cases.

I don't share those views of suicide, I'm third generation.
 But it's an interesting 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 irrelevant. *You're* becoming irrelevant."

I said to her, "You're a woman past menopause, how relevant do you think *you* are?"
 (a moment.)
 Guess I could have phrased that differently.

"Everyone's fine with it, Ben." "The world is changing, Ben." "For God's sake this is San Francisco, Ben."

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

He shakes the tupperware, peers in at the mushrooms.

End of scene.

{Scene 7}

The forest. Vicky and Mush walking, Vicky 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

(scanning the ground)

How's he taking some kid out mushroom hunting? There are no mushrooms *anywhere*.

VICKY

Well you have to actually *look*.

MUSH

(ignoring her; calling out)

...Dad?

Mush wanders off into the forest, disappearing. Vicky spots a large rock.

VICKY

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

(She sits.)

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 on this, Mush!

(A thought occurs to her.)

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.

(She 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, sitting up on the rock)

Mush, where are you?

(No answer. She lays back down on the rock)

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

VICKY (CONT'D)

That's dumb, I'm deleting that.

"Taking refuge in the wisdom of rock."

"Getting my snuggle on with big rock." "Big rock super-snuggle." "Snuggle-rock."

"There's no place like Rock."

Whatever, 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 circumstances that led to the post.

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

(the sound of whistling, the tune the Boy was singing earlier)

(the whistling continues)

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 a 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 me 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 soooo relaxing, they sit on it, and they never leave. They just become part of the forest.

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 pushes herself off the rock.)

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

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? 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 all 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.

BOY (CONT'D)

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.

End of scene.

{Scene 8}

Another part of the forest. 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 off, to Vicky)

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

(a moment)

Okay, I know you can hear me.

(a moment)

Look, you're annoyed by the whole me-getting-fired thing, I get it.

She puts her hand on the tree.

Light shift: The movement of something large and indistinct through the trees. Catching the movement in her peripheral, she turns; sees nothing.

MUSH (CON'T)

(to us)

I was inspired by idiots.

I read about this Russian 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 YELLOWIST appears.)

(Mush doesn't react to his appearance, as if he's part of her consciousness.)

The words he wrote were:

YELLOWIST

(defiantly, to us)

A potential piece of Yellowism.

MUSH

The meaning of which may not be immediately apparent;
it's about this organization or movement he was part of—

YELLOWIST

Yellowism.

MUSH

—which 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.

YELLOWIST

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 put something in a "yellow chamber"—and you can declare anything a "yellow chamber" by being one of these two guys, and signing your name on it—

YELLOWIST

I am not a vandal.

MUSH

—And then whatever is in the yellow chamber becomes a work of Yellowism and loses everything it was before. It's *freed* of its former meaning.

YELLOWIST

All the possible interpretations are reduced to one—
 are equalized,
 flattened to Yellow.

MUSH

A Rothko isn't a Rothko anymore, it's just Yellow. Flattened.

YELLOWIST

They stop being works of art,
 and 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 is 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*.
 That's what's at the heart of it—the pain driving it.

The Yellowist gives a howl of bottomless pain.

MUSH

They just, didn't want to let a Rothko be a Rothko.
 (a moment)

MUSH (CONTD)

So it's dumb what they did, I'm not saying it's cool.
But if you put aside the whole muddled description and self-justification aspect of it—

YELLOWIST

(to Mush)

Would *you* want to let a Rothko be a Rothko?

Mush turns for a moment, as if her train of thought has been interrupted.

MUSH

(brushing it off, pushing through with her thought)
—if you put all that aside, there's actually the seed of a worthwhile thought experiment there.

(She looks at the tree.)

God, you're beautiful.

Mush removes her pen, uncaps it.

Lights shift back:

Ben enters, spotting Mush, who doesn't see him.

Mush looks at the tree. She considers, her pen hovering over the trunk.

After a moment, she re-caps the pen, returning it to her pocket.

BEN

I thought I told you to meet me at the gas station.

MUSH

Dad.

BEN

Didn't I tell you the gas station?

MUSH

Yeah. And you weren't at the gas station when we got there.

BEN

Well then you got there too fast. Were you speeding?

MUSH

It took the normal time to get here.

Why didn't you wait for us?

BEN

I thought I might as well collect some more mushrooms while I was waiting.

Might need some for later.

MUSH

We should get Vicky and go back. She's stressed about work.

BEN

Hold on, I've been on my feet the last few hours, I just need to sit down.

He sits on the earth, leaning against the tree.

MUSH

How'd you get lost in Mount Tam, dad?
You've been going there for years, to the same spots, it's like your backyard.
Are you finally getting old and senile?

BEN

Someone came in and turned the forest around, is my guess.

MUSH

So did you find a lot of mushrooms?

BEN

Sure. Not as many as we used to out here, after the rain, but...
(handing her a paper bag)

Take a look...

(Mush accepts the bag, looking through it.)

Some morels, boletes, puffballs...

MUSH

I can't believe you even found *this* many, I haven't seen a single one since I got here...

BEN

They're everywhere, you're just not looking.

MUSH

What's this black wrinkly thing?

BEN

What, don't you recognize it? The blue-gray coloration on the cap, the wrinkles?

MUSH

No.

BEN

Sure you do. The pitted stem?

MUSH

Nope.

BEN

Fluted Black Elfin Saddle.
Eddie's favorite.

Mush stops looking through the bag. Hands it back to Ben.

MUSH

Nope, don't know it.

BEN

(chuckling, oblivious to Mush's turn)

He only likes 'em because they look so ugly; even when you fry them up, the flavor's nothing to write home about.

(Mush has begun to unconsciously uncap and recap her pen.)

You're gonna start spraying graffiti on trees, now?

MUSH

It's *writing*, not *spraying*.

BEN

I thought you said it was just, what—celebrities, politicians, evil powerful things in the world, / is that what you said? Things that make you feel bad?

MUSH

I didn't say "Evil", dad.
It's not things that make you *feel bad*, it's things that imply that your value is less.
Things whose accumulated significance in the culture diminishes your worth.

BEN

Things that make you feel bad. So, what, this tree makes you feel bad?

MUSH

I didn't write on it.

BEN

Why does a tree make you feel bad?

MUSH

The tree doesn't make me feel bad! It's a beautiful tree.

BEN

And that's why it makes you feel bad. What's wrong with you?

MUSH

Look, we drove all the way out here to get you, let's go.

BEN

I don't even know why you're here.

MUSH

Oh come *on*, you *called* me to come get you!

BEN

You weren't supposed to pick up, you weren't supposed to be home.
You were supposed to be at work.

MUSH

Why would you call if you weren't expecting me to pick up?

BEN

I wanted to see if anyone else would pick up.

MUSH

What? Who else would pick up?
I'm the only other person who lives there, and you disconnected the answering machine last night, so the *machine* wouldn't even have picked up.

(a short beat)

Don't say stuff like that, dad, it freaks me out.

BEN

Why weren't you at the school? I thought you had a class.

MUSH

Not today.

BEN

Why?

MUSH

I had to leave.

BEN

You had to leave? What does that mean?

MUSH

I was asked to leave. I was writing on school property.

BEN

Oh, smart. That was smart.

MUSH

I'll get another job, dad. You know I'm good at that.

BEN

That doesn't mean you should go around writing graffiti on things that make you feel bad.

MUSH

I told you, dad, it's not graffiti, and it's not things that make me feel bad.

If I were writing on things that make me feel bad,

I'd be writing on you.

(a moment.)

I was watching the kids all semester,
 how they're obsessed with tracking their value as determined by their stats on Facebook—
 they measure their own worth based on how many friends they have,
 how many likes their posts get,
 how many followers they have on Twitter—
 the meaning of their lives is completely numerical.
 They need an intervention.

BEN

So you see these kids, they're suffering, are they,
 they're feeling like they're just a pile of numbers.

They're feeling bad, they're crying?

Are they weeping into their textbooks?

MUSH

I mean dad they're not weeping into their textbooks because we don't use textbooks in this class, but of course they're—

BEN

They want to kill themselves, these kids?

MUSH

I'm sure some of them do—

BEN

They want to throw themselves out the window, because they can't get their numbers up? Is that what's happening? Are they sitting in your classroom sharpening their razor blades?

MUSH

It's not just the numbers, it's the *noise*. There's so much out there now, you're just, buried, under all that promotion and clamor. I was trying to give them a new perspective.

BEN

So you go and lose your job? You're a grown woman, aren't you.

MUSH

Okay, dad.

BEN

Vicky's younger than you, she's okay.
I mean she's got some problems, but she seems to know what she's doing.
Eddie's younger than the both of you, look at him—

MUSH

Let's *not* look at him.

BEN

—settled down, has a kid of his own—

MUSH

A kid you're never going to see, dad!
Are you seriously going to do this? You're comparing me to Eddie, when he's not even—
When you—

(cuts herself off.)

You are in like *zero* position to tell me *I'm* messed up, dad!

(beat.)

I'm gonna find Vicky, do you want to drive back with us or what?

BEN

I was talking to Eddie.

A moment.

Then, Mush sits, a little off from Ben.

MUSH

I know. He called last night.

BEN

You know I was telling him, I picked up a little something for Cammie when I was in the Mission, on Valencia—that whole street's changed, completely transformed—like someone took out all the old spots and replaced 'em with shiny new ones.
You remember El Rey? They had the fish tacos Eddie liked so much?

MUSH

(She starts plucking absent-mindedly at the ground.)

Uh huh.

BEN

Well it's gone, now. And instead there's this new, Box something or other—no idea what sort of shop it's supposed to be, nothing adds up—t-shirts they've got, jars of honey, bicycle parts, you name it.

But they had this pendant, shaped like a flower. Thought it was perfect for her.

MUSH

Sounds nice...

(Ben stares off a moment. Mush watches him.)

Dad, I know it must be hard for you, with mom moving up to Seattle with Takeru, and Eddie still not—

BEN

He said he wouldn't let me in the door.
Even if I flew in just to see them,
he wouldn't let me in.

MUSH

Well, I'm sorry, dad, but you know why that is.
I don't understand *why* you can't just...

(noticing her hands.)

Ew.

BEN

What's that.

MUSH

Gross, something's like, leaking pus on me or something.

(Ben rises, interested.)

Is it poisonous? Shit.

He walks over, inspects it.

BEN

It's just a milk cap, what's wrong with you.

MUSH

What's a milk cap? I didn't even see what I was touching...

BEN

(taking it from her)

This one's a weeping milk cap—
when it's damaged it secretes that white latex, from the gills there.
You know it doesn't hurt you.

MUSH

No, dad, I don't know any of this.

BEN

Of course you do.

MUSH

No, I don't. You only took Eddie hunting with you, remember?
You never wanted Vicky and me to come along with you.
I don't know anything about your fucking mushrooms.
(a moment)

Vicky said you left without her this morning.

BEN

What do you mean I left without her?

MUSH

She said you invited her, that you called to invite her to go hunting with you today.

BEN

No I didn't.

MUSH

She took the day off just to go with you.

BEN

What do I need company for?
Victoria wouldn't like it out here, she doesn't care for trees.
The two of you have a real problem communicating with one another.

MUSH

What? How did this become about the communication between me and Vicky?
It's about *you* and Vicky.

BEN

You get it from your mother.
Finns are notoriously poor communicators.

MUSH

Oh my god, dad.
(noticing)
The fog's really thick already, isn't it?
Forget it, let's just go get her.
(looking around)
We came in together, she just got ahead of me a little.
(seeing no sign of her)
We didn't come that far off the road... wherever that is...

The Boy enters.

BOY

Are you Michelle?

MUSH

Who are you?

BOY
 I think your sister's looking for you.
 (to Ben)
 Hi, again.

MUSH
 You two know each other?

BOY
 He gave me a mushroom talk.
 (to Ben)
 That was nice of you, but I knew all of it already.

BEN
 You seem like a bright boy.

BOY
 Like a blazing forest fire.

BEN
 Sounds like you know a thing or two.

BOY
 I know more than *that*.

MUSH
 (impatiently)
 Okay, so where's Vicky? My sister?

BOY
 What's it to you?

MUSH
 Didn't we already establish that she's my sister?
 We were looking for my dad, and now we've found him—this is my dad—so we can go home.
 Where'd you see her?

BOY
 Do you have kids?

BEN
 She couldn't handle kids, she can't even handle a regular job.

MUSH
 Oh, you're one to talk about not being able to/ handle kids—

BEN
 She started teaching in January, college kids, but she lost the job already.
 She doesn't stick with anything.

I— MUSH
 (stopping herself; to the Boy)
 Right. I'm basically a worthless human being.

Oh, wow. BOY
 I don't think I could live like that.

There's always suicide. BEN

Dad! MUSH

I'm not talking about you. I'm just letting the boy know, if you ever feel you can't live with something, you can always, you know: BEN

Ben makes a gesture suggesting some sort of suicide.

You're not supposed to do that. BOY

Says who? BEN

Okay! Let's just, move away from the subject of suicide— MUSH

A guy died here a few days ago. BOY

(interested)
 Oh yeah? Killed himself?
 How'd he do it? BEN

He didn't kill himself.
 Someone killed *him*. BOY

(losing interest)
 Oh. That's too bad. BEN

He was asking for it, though, he deserved it. BOY

Hey, hey—can we get back to where's Vicky? MUSH

My legs are tired. BEN

MUSH

You can rest in the car.

BEN

You go. I'll wait here until you find her and come back.

MUSH

No, that sounds like exactly the wrong thing to do.
I'm already having a hard time getting my bearings here.

BOY

You must not have a very good sense of direction.

MUSH

I don't have an inner compass, no.

BOY

Wow.
You shouldn't go around telling people that.

MUSH

What?

BOY

No inner compass?
It's a symbol for judgment.

BEN

I told you he seems bright!

BOY

My mom used to like to show me off.
I'm basically a party trick.

MUSH

You're not that impressive, okay?

BOY

You're not, either.

BEN

(sighing)

I know.

MUSH

Great. Thanks, dad. Side with the little boy with the overinflated ego.
You know this kid's gonna be a prick when he grows up, right?
Because people like you shower him with affection and praise and make him think he's the center of the universe.
That's how you get entitled dudes who walk around the planet expecting everyone to grant them infinite access, because people do.
Eddie would have been a monster if he was straight and you hadn't turned against him.

BEN

I never turned against him.
When was the last time *you* talked to him?

MUSH

He's been a little busy with the whole new family thing.

BEN

You never got along with him.

BOY

Eddie is your son, right?
Is he in the forest, too?

BEN

Yes.

MUSH

What?

BEN

Not right now, of course, but we used to come here a lot together.
Years ago.

MUSH

Alright, Dad, fine, stay here since the two of you are hitting it off so well.
Don't move, don't go anywhere, and I'll be right back.

BOY

I thought you were worried about getting lost.

MUSH

I am, but my dad needs to rest, and I need to find my sister, who has an even worse sense of direction than I do, unless her GPS is working, which I'm sure it's not.

BOY

I'll show you where she is.
The old guy can stay here until we get back.

MUSH

Hey, that's my dad. He's not "the old guy," what the hell is wrong with you?
Have some fucking respect and don't be such an asshole.

BEN

It's alright, Michelle. He's just a boy, let him be.

MUSH

(to Boy)
His name is Mr. Nakagawa.

The Boy turns to Ben, straightens himself, and executes a perfect forty-five degree bow.
It seems to be a real gesture of respect, one he's practiced before.

BOY

Mr. Nakagawa.
(completing his bow, and turning to Mush)
Your sister's over here.

He runs off.

MUSH

Okay, dad. Don't move.

BEN

I just want to rest my legs.

MUSH

We'll be right back.

Mush goes off, following the Boy.

The fog spills in.

After a moment, Ben gets up and walks off in the opposite direction.

End of scene.

{Scene 9}

Vicky is on the rock.

VICKY

Unplugging is totally overrated. How can you truly appreciate a crisis situation if you're not liveblogging it? Hashtag totally-about-to-die.

(A moment.)

Hashtag ha-ha-that's-a-joke, I'm-joking.

(Vicky removes something from her bag: a pocket knife with a wooden handle, and bristles at one end. She opens and closes it. She puts it back.)

(then, she removes a meal bar from her bag, begins to unwrap it.)

There are so many nutrition bars out there to choose from, it's really hard to know which one to pick.

She unwraps a bit more. Light shift:

REASSURING INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNET appears.

Vicky doesn't react to his appearance, as if he's a part of her consciousness.

REASSURING INFORMATION FROM THE INTERNET

Packed with ten whole foods and nineteen grams of protein, ProBars are rich in raw ingredients and healthy, nutrient-dense calories for lasting energy and nourishment.

VICKY

Thank god for reassuring information from the internet.

RIFTI

Verified GMO-free, ProBars are reliable fuel for strenuous activities—marathons, or mountain-climbing,

VICKY

Or pilates...

(she takes a dainty-bite)

They're one of the most highly-rated nutrition bars out there.

This one is the Superfood Slam—it's got acai berries, dark chocolate, wheat grass, barley grass, alfalfa grass...

RIFTI

A nutritional powerhouse.

She takes another dainty bite, chewing thoughtfully, as RIFTI begins massaging her (not in a creepy way, just in a helpful way.)

VICKY

I have a couple of these, in my bag.

(showing off the bag)

Which is made by a company in Italy. It had a lot of great user reviews.

RIFTI

Durable construction wedded to innovative design. Winner of the Red Dot and Outdoor Industry Awards.

VICKY

(nodding)

It's a really good bag.

RIFTI

The blue-ribbon choice of the serious hiker.

Another dainty bite; more elaborate chewing.

VICKY

I'm worried about my Tesla.
Of course you can't drive the car without the key FOB.

RIFTI

And there's the mobile app to track the car in the event that it's stolen.

VICKY

But I don't like that it's just sitting there at the mercy of crazy antisocial Bolinas people.
Of course I have comprehensive insurance.

(She looks at the bar; she's hardly had any.)

(She delicately folds the wrapper over the top, and puts it in her pocket.)

Save it for later.

(zipping up the pocket)

A lot of people think Lulu Lemon is only good for yoga apparel—

RIFTI

Which it is.

VICKY

—but their inventory includes clothing for a range of activities.
This is their Out And About Jacket. It's wind and water-resistant.
And there are these great zipper pockets—

RIFTI

Perfect for securing those small, easy-to-lose items, like your keys or iPhone.

VICKY

I like that feature, because the idea of losing my keys or iPhone causes me a lot of anxiety.
(unzips another pocket and removes her keys.)
See? Key FOB!

RIFTI

Like!

She unzips another pocket, whips out her phone.

VICKY

iPhone, right where I left it!

RIFTI

SuperLike!

She looks at it.

VICKY

Still no service.

ConflictedLike? RIFTI

VICKY
 Maybe if I try powering it down, and back up again, although —

She stares at the screen in shock. RIFTI takes a look.

...SuperConflicted Like. RIFTI

VICKY
Three percent charge left? How did that happen?
 (Then, recovering:)
 Not a problem, I can charge it in the car.

As she puts the phone back in the pocket, zipping it up:

RIFTI
 Sure, I guess. If you ever find it again.

VICKY
 (as if sensing another presence for the first time)

What?
 (RIFTI is gone. Lights shift back.)
 (shrugging it off)

Um...the other feature I love about this jacket is this center pleat in the back, so your arm movement isn't restricted —
 (still on the rock, she demonstrates, swinging her arms around.)

Isn't this great?

Vicky continues to swing her arms.
 Ben enters.

BEN
 What are you doing?

VICKY
There you are—Jesus. Tell me you're with Mush.

BEN
 I was.

VICKY
 So where is she?

BEN
 She left me, to look for you.
 You just laying around here?

VICKY
 It's a good rock to sit on.

BEN

Did you see the mushrooms I found?
 (handing her the paper bag)
 We could cook 'em up, I'm getting a little hungry.

VICKY

I have a ProBar, if you want.

BEN

A what?

VICKY

It's a meal replacement bar.
 (unzipping her pocket and reaching in)
 They're really good, they're GMO-free, with ten whole foods and nineteen grams of—
 (unable to find it)
 What? I just put it in this pocket...

Vicky begins to unzip all her pockets, looking for the ProBar. Ben removes a small, collapsible camping stove.

BEN

That's alright, we've got some natural food right here.

VICKY

What are you doing?

BEN

What's it look like? I thought we'd pan fry them tonight, I've got some oil with me.

VICKY

You want to cook them *here? Tonight?*
 No, we're getting out of here, finding the car you abandoned and the iPhone I bought you which better still be there, and going home. I have work to do. Which I never should have left in the first place.

BEN

It's getting late, and look at the fog. Once we re-group, we should just stick together until it's light out again, and the fog's lifted, and we can find our way.

VICKY

We don't have any sleeping bags.

BEN

I have an emergency blanket, you and Michelle are dressed in layers. We've got some food and water. Don't you have something in that bag?

VICKY

(unzipping pockets in her bag and checking)
 Well, *yeah*, I'd packed it for the day, because I thought we had a plan to go hunting—
 (relieved to find everything still there; pulling something out)
 —but that doesn't mean I want to stay here *overnight*—
 (handing him a bar)

Here.

BEN

(ignoring it)
That's a fussy-looking bag, isn't it?

VICKY

It's not *fussy*, it's well-designed.

BEN

Whole lot of zippers and pockets and things.

VICKY

(about the bar)
You want it?

BEN

No, we'll be making dinner soon, anyway.

VICKY

Dad? We are not sleeping here overnight.

BEN

It's just one night, what's wrong with you?

VICKY

It's not like we're miles into the wilderness. The gas station is *right there*.

BEN

Well when you've found it, you let me know.

Ben removes more equipment from his bag, preparing a small cooking area.

VICKY

This is the Bay *Area*! We can't be lost.

BEN

(looking into the tupperware of morels)
Oooh, these are good ones.

VICKY

(after watching him a moment)
Dad, why didn't you wait for me this morning?
I took a whole day off work to go with you.

BEN

(still absorbed in the mushrooms)
You should take a look at this—I tell you, every mushroom is different.
Always surprising you.

Light shift.

VICKY

Dad, I—
(Vicky spots something through the trees.)
(She stares, then looks into the container of morels siting in water.)

VICKY (CONT'D)

Yeah, they do look good.
(removing her knife)
We're gonna eat them, right?

BEN

It'd be a shame not to.
I think all the crawlers are out by now.

They stare into the tupperware at the submerged mushrooms.
End of scene.

{Scene 10}

The forest. The Boy enters, followed by Mush.

MUSH

You wouldn't get it...the basic idea is to give it a clean slate.

BOY

Like, no memories?

MUSH

No more perceived accumulated worth.

Like, with a famous painting. You imagine it's not famous anymore, so all the power it has just from being what people already think it is, is gone.

BOY

Could you do that with people, too?

MUSH

Sure, you could do it with anything.

BOY

She was right here. I guess she left.

MUSH

That was really helpful.

BOY

She'll come back, she liked this rock.

MUSH

I highly doubt Vicky would like a rock, unless it's been polished and repurposed in an Apple store somewhere.

BOY

Call her.

MUSH

She won't hear me.

BOY

Just try it.

MUSH

Vicky! Vicky!
(calling)

BOY

Vicky!

MUSH/BOY

Vicky!

MUSH

Okay, *you* don't need to call her. *I'll* call her.

BOY

I'm helping. Two voices are louder than one.

MUSH

Look, my dad may like the sound of your voice, but that doesn't mean everyone wants to hear you talking all the time.

BOY

You shouldn't be so mean to your dad. He's nice.

MUSH

He's nice to *you*.

BOY

You don't like that he likes me.
It makes you feel bad.

MUSH

It doesn't make me feel bad, it's just predictable. I'm sure everyone likes you.
My dad likes people that everyone likes.

BOY

I think he likes me because I remind him of Eddie.

MUSH

What?

BOY

That's your brother, right? He's younger than you, but settled down with a kid of his own?
Lives in Seattle?

(a moment)

I told you you guys were talking loud.
Do I look like him? Eddie?

MUSH

No.

BOY

You're not even looking at me.

MUSH

So? I've seen you. You need people to look at you all the time?
Eddie is a twenty-five-year-old adult, you don't look anything like him.

BOY

I hate my parents.

MUSH

That's okay, you're supposed to hate your parents.

BOY
 You are?
 Hey, will you try writing on me?

MUSH
 Why?

BOY
 I wanna see what it's like to have a clean slate.

MUSH
 You're like six years old, you don't need a clean slate.

BOY
 I'm twelve.

MUSH
 It's a thought experiment, just imagine yourself that way.

BOY
 But I want you to write on me, it'll work better!

MUSH
 Well too bad, you don't get everything you want all the time, do you.

BOY
 Come on write on me it'll just take a second!

MUSH
 No, we're supposed to be looking for my sister.
 (Silence. The Boy sulks a moment.)
 (calling out)
 Vicky! Vicky!

BOY
 You should relax. I told you she'll be back.

Mush looks around.

MUSH
 It's cool you live around here. It's pretty beautiful.

BOY
 It's okay.

MUSH
 In my world, beautiful things are usually complicated.
 But out here, beautiful things are just... beautiful things.

BOY
 (sudden anger)
 That's a stupid thing to say, you don't know anything.
 They're not just beautiful things.

BOY (CONT'D)

They're things that might be poisonous, or bite you, or attack you.
Things that might kill you.

MUSH

Okay, okay, sure. But it's not personal.

BOY

Maybe it's not personal out there, either.
(he looks at her a moment)
Is there something wrong with you?

MUSH

There are many things wrong with me.

BOY

Because it seems like you don't have many friends.
How many friends do you have on Facebook.

MUSH

That doesn't mean anything.

BOY

Does your sister have friends?

MUSH

My sister is very into friendship.
She's developing a new Facebook plug-in, or app, or something like that.

BOY

Everyone's developing one of those.

MUSH

Oh yeah? Are you? You got an app in development?

BOY

I'm just a kid.

MUSH

Yeah? That only gives you an advantage.
Where's your app, huh? Where's your app?

BOY

You seem really hostile.

MUSH

Good, I'm not trying to be your friend.

BOY

Why not? Is there something wrong with me?

MUSH

It seems like there's nothing wrong with you.
I'm sure you're friends with everybody, and everybody likes you.

BOY
You make that sound like it's bad.

MUSH
Well it's *boring*—
(spotting something)
What the hell was that?

BOY
What?

MUSH
I just saw something walking over there, something big, like a bear.

BOY
There are no bears here.

MUSH
It was something.

BOY
Maybe it was a ghost.
The ghost of that dead guy.

VICKY (O.S.)
Mush?

MUSH
God, finally.
(calling out)
Hey! Over here!

VICKY (O.S.)
No! *You* come over *here*!

MUSH
I'm sick of losing people!

VICKY (O.S.)
So come *here*!
We can't move, dad's getting the stove set up!

MUSH
What? The *stove*?

BOY
Oh good, I'm hungry.
I haven't eaten since Wednesday morning.

MUSH
Seriously? It's Friday.
(The Boy goes off in the direction of Vicky's voice.)
(calling after him)
Why didn't you just say something—I can give you a...

MUSH (CONTD)

(checking her pockets)
 ...ricola, or something...
 (He's gone.)
 Little prick.

After a moment, Mush follows the Boy off.
 The area is quiet and empty. The fog rolls in.
 {Scene 11 (continuous)}

A shift: a giant, human-sized MOREL mushroom is revealed; maybe it was always there. It regards us a moment.

MOREL

So actually it's illegal to pick mushrooms here beyond a limit. Morels, specifically. There are weight restrictions. People always forget. It's understandable why people collect more than they should; we do tend to dazzle the senses. Once your vision is attuned to our presence, spotting a morel among a pile of wood chips or a burned log is like catching a glimpse of a diamond. And who could walk past that? Mushrooms are actually the fleshy fruit of an organism that lives below the earth, the mycelium, an underground tree of thread-like tendrils that hold the soil together. Morel mycelia respond to disturbances in the environment—loggers, a forest fire... It senses its life is threatened, and the underground tree sprouts mushrooms in a desperate fit of activity to propagate the species before it dies.

I take form when my Being is under stress,
 suffering from fire,
 poison,
 on the verge of death:
 that is my time to bloom.

I won't last long.
 I'm here to exhale my cloud of spores,
 release them into the winds and earth and animals' digestive tracts:
 a final attempt to extend life.

My purpose,
 my relevance,
 is certain and fleeting.
 I mean something for a moment.
 I exhale:

(exhales)

And then,
 I dissolve out of,
 into,
 existence.

I bloom in suffering.
 When the world is under stress,
 and things are creaking and cracking,
 under attack,
 I grow.
 I fill with water,
 expand,

MOREL (CONT'D)

take shape.

Manifest.

I am a fruiting body,

the temporary expression of a vast being that lies below the surface.

A dying breath to give life.

(The fog swirls, as Ben enters, and sees the Morel.)

And it's illegal to collect us.

Two ounces, max.

Ben and the Morel stand looking at one another.

The fog swirls and thickens.

Both slip out of visibility.

In the darkness, we hear voices, overlapping:

BOY (O.S.)

(singing)

Take a walk down that-a-trail, that-a-trail, you see it...

VICKY (O.S.)

(offstage, to Ben)

Hello?

MUSH (O.S.)

(to Boy)

There's nothing here!

BOY (O.S.)

You say, "Take a walk down that-a-trail," but I don't think I see it.

VICKY (O.S.)

(to Ben)

Where are you?

MUSH (O.S.)

(to Boy)

I don't see anything!

The fog swirls, revealing Ben and the Morel, still facing one another.

A moment or so.

BEN

I'm not seeing anything.

MOREL

Hello.

BEN

I'm not seeing anything. Am I?

MOREL

Oh, you are. But you don't recognize it yet.

BEN

What's that?

MOREL

It's a common experience among mushroom hunters that they often can't *see* a particular mushroom when they first start looking for it.

BEN

Well I can see just fine...

MOREL

It's not a matter of visual acuity, but of pattern recognition. Your brain filters out what it doesn't consider significant. A certain key must be in place before your brain will process something as being seen, as being recognized. And there are real consequences to not recognizing something— How can you collect the exquisite chanterelle if you can't even recognize it?

BEN

I don't know about "exquisite," chanterelles are temperamental... they were more Marja's business—

MOREL

What we experience is determined by what we are able to perceive. If there's something you can't perceive, something you *won't* perceive, you could be standing in a forest of exquisite chanterelles without *seeing* a single one.

BEN

I told you, I can see just fine!
You're a giant mushroom. I can see that.

MOREL

Maybe *you* are a giant mushroom.

BEN

(after giving it some serious consideration)

No, I don't think so.
I'm a human being. Top of the food chain.

MOREL

Fungi were the first organisms to come to land, and are the largest biomasses on the planet. We hold the soil together, facilitate the transfer of nutrients and information among plants and animals, encourage habitat restoration, when homes are threatened, or destroyed—

BEN

That's enough—this isn't making any sense.

MOREL

This is Bolinas, strange things happen. We try to wipe ourselves off the map, erase ourselves. Maybe you'll get erased right along with us. Maybe this pocket of forest is going to be wiped.

BEN
You've been talking to Michelle?

MOREL
Flattened!
I am not a mushroom,
and I am not *not* a mushroom.

BEN
(reaching in his pocket)
You know I just need to call Marja...
(trying another pocket)
She's got that great recipe for preparing morels, Eddie won't eat them any other way.
Always meant to learn it from her, but you know the way it goes.
(searching more pockets)
Victoria's always asking me to use this thing, but I always forget about it...
of course when I actually want to use it, I can't find it...

MOREL
No luck?

VICKY (O.S.)
Dad? Where are you?
It's so foggy I can't make anything out...

BEN
(giving up on the phone)
Ah, forget it. I've got to get cooking, get a fire started...

MOREL
Took you long enough.

Morel vanishes. Shift back. Vicky enters.

VICKY
Finally. They really need to install some illuminated restrooms out here.

BEN
(looking up; after a beat)
Where is he?

VICKY
The kid? He's with Mush.
They're looking for the road. So we can get out of here.

Ben has begun brushing the mushrooms with a paint brush.

VICKY
(noticing)
What are you doing?

BEN
Cleaning these off, so we can cook them for dinner.

VICKY

I told you, we're not staying here tonight.
 (He doesn't answer.)
 (She watches him a moment. She sighs.)
 Here, dad, I'll help.

BEN

I don't need help.

VICKY

I'll help anyway. It's not like I've got anything else to do.
 (She removes her specialized knife, and begins brushing.)
 (Ben notices.)
 (meticulously brushing off a mushroom)
 So dad, I'm really excited about this new app we're working on, it's going to connect people in new ways—

BEN

(about the knife)
 What's that?

VICKY

It's a mushroom hunter's knife.

BEN

It's a what?

VICKY

It's a deluxe mushroom hunter's knife.
 (trying to show him)
 Wanna take a look?

BEN

Mushroom hunters don't need a special knife. You just use a knife.

VICKY

It's a really good knife, though, the brush is natural boar hair, the blade's made of high-chrome Rockwell stainless [steel]—

BEN

It's ridiculous.

VICKY

(after a moment, returning to her task)
 Well whatever dad, you don't have to use it, okay?
 (a beat)
 Anyway, as soon as we're finished building it, the app, I thought I could show you how it works—

BEN

I've got no use for any of that— you're always pushing this gadget and that gadget on me, but it's all games, it doesn't mean anything.

VICKY

Well of course it takes some getting used to, there's a learning curve at first, but I think you'll really like it. I had you in mind, actually, when we were designing some of the features, you [might even be able to]—

BEN

(brightening)

There he is!

Boy and Mush enter.

MUSH

Aren't you *from* here? Why don't *you* know where the road is?

BOY

There's more fog than usual.

BEN

You're back just in time; getting ready to cook some mushrooms.

(to the Boy)

You want to help me clean these off? Got an extra brush for you...

BOY

Okay.

The Boy sits next to Ben, and begins to brush off some mushrooms.

VICKY

(to Mush)

You didn't find anything?

MUSH

It's weird—it's like the forest goes on forever.

VICKY

It doesn't go on forever.

BOY

Sometimes it goes on forever, when it wants to.

BEN

It's fine, we'll just be here for the night.

Mush and Vicky exchange a look.

MUSH

Well this kid needs to eat.

BEN

He's alright, he eats with his parents everyday.

MUSH

He said he hasn't eaten in—

BOY

I usually eat with them every day, but they're on vacation.

VICKY

Without you?

BOY

I didn't want to go. Vacations are boring.

BEN

Independent spirit, that's good.

VICKY

(opening up her bag)

I have a few ProBars.

BOY

I don't eat that stuff. That's like what grandmas eat.

VICKY

(reaching into her bag)

It's a ProBar. It's what athletes eat.

BOY

Granma athletes.

VICKY

(searching)

It's not like I'm offering you a Chai Luna Bar.
One of these bars has nineteen grams of protein—

BOY

I don't want it.

BEN

Don't make the boy eat if he doesn't want it.
He's young and strong, he doesn't need much.

MUSH

He said he hasn't eaten in two days.

BOY

Yeah but those bar things are gross.

MUSH

A-ha—because you see a ProBar and you have all these preconceived ideas about what it is, so you *think* you don't want one. But what if you could come to it fresh? What if you could defamiliarize ProBar?

(taking her Sharpie out)

Give me one, Vicky.

VICKY

(still looking)

I'm not letting you tag my food, I'm sick of your stupid acts of vandalism...

VICKY (CONTD)

(unable to locate one)
Where the fuck did they go?

MUSH

It's not vandalism, it's a thought experiment.

BOY

Thought experiments are cool.
Like, imagining the dead cat in the box.

VICKY

What dead cat?

BOY

(continuing to brush off the mushrooms)
The dead cat—my mom told me about it once.
It's this thought experiment about the idea that two things can exist at the same time, like two realities.
Like a cat that got murdered and a cat that didn't get murdered can *both* be in the box, both possibilities existing at the same time, and the only thing that forces nature's hand one way or the other is the person opening up the box to look to see what's inside.
It's the person who opens it up and looks who forces the decision.
And if the cat's dead, it's the observer checking who killed it.

A moment.

BEN

We had that cat once, Hamachi.
What happened to Hamachi.

MUSH

Mom took her.

VICKY

She died.

A moment as Mush and Vicky hear each other.

MUSH

Hamachi didn't die.

VICKY

Mom didn't take her, she died before she left.

BEN

No, I remember now. I told your mother to take Hamachi with her and she said, "No. I'm the one who always cares for things. Your turn." And she left without the cat.

MUSH/VICKY

That's not what happened.

BOY

You have a cat named Hamachi?

VICKY

Had.

BEN

Marja named her.
She likes Japanese things.

BOY

My mom's from Japan. A lot of people can't tell.

VICKY

We can tell, we're mixed, too. You kinda look like our brother.

MUSH

No he doesn't.

BEN

He's such a good-looking kid, isn't he?
Think we've done enough for now—I'm gonna gather some wood, see if we can make a fire.

(to the Boy)

You want to join me?

BOY

I know where all the good spots are.

MUSH

Well aren't you amazing.

BEN

(to the Boy)

How about showing me where they are, then?

The Boy goes off, Ben following. Mush watches them go.

MUSH

Well *dad* seems to be enjoying himself.
When have you ever seen him this enthusiastic about anything?

Vicky silently resumes her mushroom cleaning.
After a moment:

VICKY

Eddie's eagle scout graduation.

MUSH

When was that?

VICKY

Same day as Eddie's seventeenth birthday. Scout graduation and birthday dinner.
You weren't around—it was when you were living on that boat for a few months.

MUSH

Can't say I'm sorry I missed it.

VICKY

It would have been nice to have not been there alone with mom and dad. Especially when Leo showed up, and dad went into asshole mode.

Vicky continues to clean the mushrooms. Mush notices.

MUSH

Nice knife...brush.

VICKY

It *is* nice. Natural boar hair bristles. The blade is high-chrome Rockwell stainless steel. Highly resistant to corrosion, cuts right through mushroom stems.

MUSH

Uh huh.

VICKY

And there's this serrated section for scraping off larger bits of debris. This model's really popular among mushroom hunters, it's made by Opinel.

MUSH

I thought you hated fungus spores.

VICKY

No, I just hate filthy kitchens.

MUSH

Okay, but why do you have a specialized mushroom hunter knife-brush?

VICKY

Why not? We grew up with dad.

MUSH

But he never took us on those expeditions. I don't know anything about mushrooms. I certainly don't own a mushroom hunting knife.

VICKY

Well, that's you. You don't take initiative.

MUSH

It looks brand new.

VICKY

Yeah, some people actually take care of the things they own, so they stay in good condition.

MUSH

But it looks like you've never used it before—

(removing the box from Vicky's bag)

and why are you carrying around the box when it's got its own case? Is this the box it came in?

VICKY

(trying to get the box back)

Put it back—can you not go through my bag?

MUSH

(continuing to look through her bag)

There's like, a built-in basket...

...Oh my god, is this a special mushroom-hunting *bag*?

(Vicky is silent.)

And the tags are still on this—wait...you like *just* got this stuff—

VICKY

Yeah I ordered them for today, alright?

Dad called Tuesday to ask if I wanted to go hunting with him. I went online and did some research, and ordered them on Amazon prime, next day delivery.

He'd never asked me before, I wanted to make sure I had all the equipment.

(a moment)

This bag is really cool. It's made of tear-resistant fabric, and the built-in net holds the mushrooms so they don't get bruised, but also lets the spores fall out as you walk through the forest. This bag transforms its owner into an agent of spore dispersal.

It's made by a company in Italy.

Vicky continues to clean the mushrooms and place them in the bag.

Mush watches her.

MUSH

Sorry I wasn't around then, for Eddie's graduation.

VICKY

Scout graduation. Not that you were really around for his high school graduation the year after that, when Hamachi died.

MUSH

Hamachi didn't—

VICKY

Hamachi *died*, Mush. Because of *you*.

MUSH

What?

VICKY

Remember, it was when mom and dad were in the middle of that epic fight? Eddie and Leo were getting married since they wanted to be all historic and shit, and dad had donated to that stupid fucking campaign, and the whole house was a mess?

I go away for *one week*, to that conference in Korea, and when I come back mom's gone, and the cat's dead, because *you* never fed it. You killed the fucking cat.

MUSH

Well okay that's not what I remember, because I distinctly remember mom taking her. She was like, "Eddie moved out, and I'm moving out." And she took Hamachi and left.

I mean whatever, dad remembers something else.

VICKY

Right, dad who's clearly losing his mind.
You're living there—shouldn't you be taking better care of him?

MUSH

I didn't know he needed to be taken care of. I didn't move in to be his nurse.

VICKY

No, you moved in so you could live rent-free and not have to worry about keeping a job.

MUSH

He wasn't this bad before. What do *you* do, drop by once a month so you can give him some stupid fucking device he's never gonna use? Or have it shipped *next-day delivery* when you're too busy to drive the whole twenty minutes from Potrero Hill?

VICKY

Sorry I have a demanding job. I *try*.

(a beat)

I want my rock.

MUSH

What?

VICKY

I was sitting on a rock before. I want that rock back.

MUSH

There are lots of rocks.

VICKY

I want *that* rock. It was amazing. I sat in it and felt held and comforted.

MUSH

That sounds like a nice rock.

BOY

(entering, carrying a pile of branches)

Rock Van Winkle.

(pointing)

That one.

VICKY

Oh. I thought it was back somewhere else.

BOY

Nope. That's it. Sometimes it sneaks up on you.

Vicky sits.

Ben enters, also carrying a pile of sticks. He puts the pile down.

BEN

Right here will do.

BOY
Okay.

The Boy dumps his pile next to Ben's.

BEN
That's good. Good work.

MUSH
All he did was drop a pile of sticks on the ground! Anyone can do that!

BOY
So why aren't you doing it?

MUSH
I wasn't invited to.

VICKY
Mush, you have to sit on this. Come on, there's room for both of us.

Mush joins Vicky.

MUSH
Ohmygod it'ssocomfortable.

VICKY
Isn't it?

MUSH
Yes!

BOY
I curl up on it, too, sometimes. I roll myself into a little egg shape.
(Mush and Vicky relax into the rock.)
Sometimes people like to nap in it, even.
But then they don't always wake up.

A shift. Vicky and Mush fall asleep. The Morel appears, maybe snuggling up to Vicky and Mush.

BEN
Alright, we can start cooking, I just need to take a look at this wood here...
(Ben looks up and spots the Morel with Vicky and Mush. He looks back at the wood pile.)
...see if we can't get ourselves a fire started...

BOY
I'm gonna find more sticks—I want enough for us to make a bonfire.

The Boy runs off.

BEN
Alright good, that's good...

He walks over to join Morel looking at the sleeping girls.

MOREL

Looks like they're worn out.

BEN

They used to fall asleep on the couch like that, with Eddie. The three of 'em in a little pile, one on top of the other.

(a moment)

It's not rational, what he's saying—it's Cammie's birthday coming up, why shouldn't I go up there? Where's the harm in that?

MOREL

Could be they've already got birthday plans. Marja went and found herself a real, first-generation Japanese.

BEN

...guess she wanted the real thing.

(something occurs to him)

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

...Will they even tell her about me?

(Vicky shivers in her sleep. Ben instinctively reaches out to her, but stops before making contact.)

A little chilly isn't it. We should get a campfire going....

MOREL

The wood's pretty wet you know. It's been raining for days.

BEN

I think I know how to build a fire in these conditions.

Besides, I've got Eddie helping me. He's good at everything he puts his hand to—camping, sports, you name it.

MOREL

Is that right?

BEN

You bet! Everyone loves him, they can't help themselves.

You should've seen him when he was younger—such a beautiful kid. A real charmer, a natural. Great head of hair—so light it looks blonde, especially in the sun—he got that from Marja. And big eyes, with those long lashes—"Bambi lashes," we called them.

MOREL

So what happened?

(jump)

EDDIE

(appearing)

Dad.

BEN

Why'd you invite him? It's just family.

EDDIE
Dad, it's my birthday. You *know* Leo is my—

BEN
Yeah, yeah, he's your best friend.

EDDIE
He's more than that, dad.

MOREL
What's so wrong with that? Isn't it nice to be in love?

BEN
You know it's not the same.

(Jump.)

MOREL
And the year after that?

EDDIE
Dad, I have something to tell you.

BEN
I don't want to hear it.

EDDIE
Leo and I are a family together, we want to make it official.
He makes me feel like I belong—not just to him, but to myself.
That I belong *in* the world.
I don't think I've ever felt that way before.

BEN
Of course you haven't felt that way before, you're eighteen!
No one feels like they belong to anything when they're a kid.

EDDIE
I want you and mom to give me away at the wedding.

BEN
It won't be giving you away, it'll be throwing you away.

MOREL
You don't make him feel like he belongs to the world.
You don't make him feel like he matters.

BEN
He knew he mattered to me, I always made him feel he mattered.

MOREL
Did you?

EDDIE
I only mattered to you as a little kid, before I became the person I am.

BEN
You still matter to me!

The Morel vanishes. Shift back:

BOY
Who matters to you?

BEN
You do!

BOY
You're thinking I'm your son again, aren't you.

BEN
No, of course I know you're not my son!

BEN
I'm just, I'm tired. We need to cook, let's get cooking.
Victoria, Michelle!

Mush and Vicky stir, as Ben lights the stove and begins slicing and cooking the mushrooms.

VICKY
Dad?

MUSH
How long were we asleep?

BOY
Just a couple lifetimes.
It's the future now, and everyone you knew is long gone.

MUSH
Oh my god you're so hilarious.

VICKY
(rubbing her arms for warmth)
Why has the temperature dropped like fifty degrees?

MUSH
Put your jacket back on if you're cold.

VICKY
(realizing she's not wearing her jacket)
Okay, give it back. It's *cold*.

MUSH
I didn't take your fucking jacket.

VICKY
(to the Boy)
Did *you* do it?

BOY

What would I want with a girl's jacket?

VICKY

It's Lulu *Lemon*—

BEN

Victoria! It's not the end of the world, we'll find your jacket later.

VICKY

It's freezing—

BEN

If you two get to work prepping the campfire while I cook, you can be warmer. Here, take these sticks...scrape the wet outer layers of wood off. Expose the dry parts so the fire can catch.

(Vicky takes her knife out of her back pocket, opening it.)

You don't use your mushroom knife to cut wood, you'll dull it!

(handing her a knife.)

Use this one.

(handing Mush a knife.)

One for you, too.

Vicky and Mush begin scraping together, as Ben continues to cook.

BOY

What do I do?

BEN

You can help me finish up these mushrooms. I've been sauteeing them—you want to put some salt and pepper on 'em?

BOY

Yeah!

He does so.

MUSH

Of course you want to work with him.

VICKY

Will you stop acting like an eight-year-old?

MUSH

Look who can't deal if she's not plugged in. You're like freaking out because you can't tweet about what's happening every five seconds.

VICKY

Well it would help if we could actually connect to the world right now.

MUSH

This *is* the world, you asshole.

BEN

(to the Boy)
 Pretty good seasoning! Looks like they're ready.
 Who's hungry.

BOY

Me!

Ben puts mushrooms on a small tin plate for the Boy, who begins eating.

MUSH

Hold on, we're still scraping.

BEN

He can start eating while you two finish up.

BOY

These are good!

BEN

Glad you like 'em.

MUSH

(sarcastic)
 Yeah. I can't wait to try them.

BOY

Could I have seconds?

BEN

Sure.

Ben puts more mushrooms on the Boy's plate. As he eats, the aroma of mushrooms fills the campsite.

MUSH

Some of us haven't gotten firsts yet.

BEN

You said he hasn't eaten in three days.

MUSH

Two days. And Vicky offered him something that would have given him a meal's worth of nutrition, and he didn't want it.

BOY

I'm hungry again.

VICKY

(about the wood)
 Okay, dad, we're done.

BEN

(going over to inspect)
 You didn't get all the outer layers off—see here?
 You need to go through them again, otherwise we won't be able to get the fire going.

Vicky sighs, Mush rolls her eyes; they resume scraping.

VICKY

That smells delicious, dad.

MUSH

Could we try some now?

BEN

There's only one left.

Mush stops scraping.

MUSH

One? He ate them *all*?

BOY

They were really good.

BEN

Here, might as well have this one, too.

BOY

(taking it and eating it right away)
 Thanks.

BEN

We'll find more.

BOY

I'll look for some more now!

The Boy starts looking around.

BEN

That's the spirit, real go-out-and-get-'em attitude.

MUSH

Great, dad, encourage the boy, give all the food to the boy,
 because even when it's a complete stranger, you're *still* more into him.
 (getting her Sharpie out, uncapping it)
 See, *this* is what I'm talking about.

BEN

Oh great, here comes the graffiti...

VICKY

(still scraping)
 Put that stupid marker away.

MUSH

(grabbing the Boy's arm)

You grant all this privilege to the boy, because you subconsciously associate him with all this other stuff...

BOY

Stop, what are you doing? Let go.

MUSH

—you said you wanted me to write on you—

BOY

That was before.

MUSH

(starting to write on his arm)

... you assign him a higher value, and you suggest the rest of us have *lesser* value...

VICKY

Mush, are you fucking crazy?

MUSH

...that the rest of us do *not* have meaning!

VICKY

He's a kid, stop attacking him!

MUSH

It's just *marker*, it's not gonna kill him.

BEN

What are you doing?

VICKY

She's, vandalizing the kid.

BOY

Let go!

(Finished, Mush releases him.)

(He pulls away, looking at his arm.)

Why did you do that?

MUSH

I am liberating you of context.

BOY

I don't feel liberated. Just *violated*.

MUSH

Oh please—

VICKY

No wonder they fired you.
Jesus it's fucking cold.

BOY

(noticing)

Hey, there's a whole bunch of mushrooms right here!

The Boy begins to pick mushrooms. Vicky continues to scrape.

MUSH

So dad, *now* try looking at him,
as if you've never seen him before and you have no context within which to view him, and
no prior associations—

BEN

He's a bright kid, so he makes you feel bad.

MUSH

That's not what I said—

BEN

So you say, "Oh I'm *hurt*, I'm *buried*, things are *outshining* me in the world,
so what am I gonna do, I'm gonna *wipe* out the meaning"—

MUSH

Not wipe *out*, *wipe* the meaning—

BEN

"I'm gonna *obliterate* the meaning of things, if I don't get to have value, then *nothing* gets
to have value"—is that what it is with you?

MUSH

I am trying to *demonstrate a principle*.

BOY

Like when you open the box, and seeing whether or not you did it.

MUSH

(vicious)

No one is talking to you.

VICKY

Did what?

BOY

Killed the cat.
Hey, look at all these mushrooms I got.

BEN

You were always so good at finding mushrooms.
You have a sense for them.

MUSH

Dad, this is *not Eddie*.

BEN

Why do you hate your brother so much?

MUSH

I don't hate my brother, dad, but this kid's not him.

A shift: HAMACHI appears. Only Ben sees him.

HAMACHI

Hello.
I am Hamachi the cat.

BEN

What? No you're not.

HAMACHI

I am Hamachi the cat.
Would you like to know what happened to me?

BEN

...I know what happened to you, I don't need you to tell me.

HAMACHI

Did I die because Michelle neglected me?
Did I go with Marja, and live happily ever after with her and Takeru?
Did I leave on my own, traversing the wilds of San Francisco, perhaps making my way out here?
Or am I all these things,
am I all the possible states of Hamachi,
are all three Hamachis true Hamachis?

BEN

You're not making any sense.

HAMACHI

Are *you* Hamachi the cat?
Do all the possible states of *you* exist until someone opens the box?
And if someone opens it, and one truth manifests, takes form,
are not *all* truths still present, just below the surface?
Hamachi the cat is going away now.

BEN

I don't really know why you were here in the first place.

Shift back: Hamachi vanishes.

VICKY

We were looking for *you*, Dad.

BOY

(showing Mush)
These look good, don't they? They smell like roses.

MUSH

(pushing him away)
Mushrooms don't fucking smell like roses.

BEN

(closing his eyes again)
Well, *some* do, but...

VICKY

(getting up to see)
...like roses?

BOY

Maybe they taste like roses, too.
(giving Mush his paper bag)
Here, I'm gonna pick some more.
I'm sorry I ate all the others. Try one.

He darts off, as Mush picks one up.
[next page is p85 in script]

MUSH

Where is he finding all these?
(as she's about to pop one in her mouth, Vicky knocks it out of her hand.)
What the fuck, Vicky?

VICKY

Those are amanitas, you asshole.

BEN

(hearing this, his eyes still closed)
Oh, don't eat those.

VICKY

They destroy your organs, they've got like a million toxins that attack the liver.
That's why they're called death caps?

MUSH

They look normal.

VICKY

Did you even look at them? Greenish color? round bulb, detached gills?

BEN

And smell like roses...

MUSH

How do you know all that?

VICKY

How do you *not*? There were like a hundred mushroom books in the house.
I had nightmares about the death caps, and my internal organs turning to goo.

The Boy walks on again, carrying some mushrooms in his shirt.
He is chewing.

BOY

That sounds gross.
Hey, I found some more. They're really good. They taste like the mushrooms my mom used to cook.

VICKY

(whacking him on the back)
Oh my god, kid, spit that out. Spit it out!

He spits a little.

BOY

Ow! You guys are a really violent family.
Why'd you do that?

BEN

Leave the boy alone, Vicky.

VICKY

Dad, he was eating an amanita!

BEN

No, he wouldn't do that.

BOY

I just ate *one*, before you started hitting me.

VICKY

Can you make yourself throw up?

BOY

Gross, no.

BEN

Eddie knows what amanitas look like.

VICKY

Stick your finger down your throat.

BOYEVISION

No! I can't, I don't want to do that!

BEN

Amanita was the first one I taught him to identify.

VICKY

This isn't Eddie, dad.
Please, kid, throw up!

BOY

(vicious)

No!

A shift. The Morel appears; only Ben sees him.

MOREL

Don't worry, you taught him everything he needed to know.

BEN

I did.

MUSH

You can't force him to, Vicky. Wouldn't he just throw up naturally if it were bad?

VICKY

No, Mush, he wouldn't.

MOREL

The death cap, *Amanita phalloides*, responsible for nine out of every ten mushroom poisoning fatalities.

VICKY

Fuck.

MOREL

Fungi are pretty neat. We're really good chemists, we make potent chemical compounds.

MUSH

Relax, he said he only had one. And he spit some of it out.

BOY

I spit almost *all* of it out...it's over here somewhere...

The Boy begins searching.

MOREL

The deathcap alone contains several deadly toxins.

VICKY

(to Mush, so the Boy doesn't hear)

The poison in like half of one of these is enough to kill you.

MOREL

The first symptoms appear six to twelve hours after ingesting—stomach pains, vomiting...

BEN

But he wouldn't—

MOREL

Without early medical intervention, coma and death occur within a few days. You teach him all that? Everything he needed to know?

I did...I thought I did...
BEN

Shift back. The Morel vanishes.

Dad!
VICKY

Did he really...?
BEN

We have to get him to a hospital, now.
VICKY

We can't see anything. Don't know where the trail went.
BEN

Well we have to find it, we have to—
VICKY

I know. *I know!*
BEN

Silence. Only the Boy seems unconcerned, absorbed in his search for the mushroom.

Uh—oh! Give me your water bottles.
(to the Boy)
You should be drinking water. Here.
VICKY

I don't want to.
BOY

It's for your liver.
VICKY

Gross, I don't care about my—
BOY

Drink.
VICKY

The Boy drinks, and then turns back to searching the ground.

I don't know why he ate it, he knew about it.
BEN

Dad, for the last time, the kid is *not Eddie*, he didn't know about it.
VICKY

BEN

(suddenly turning on Vicky and Mush)
How did you let this happen? What's wrong with you two? You're supposed to be watching him, *you're* the older ones, and that's your younger—

MUSH

That is not our younger *anything*, dad! Eddie is *not here*. Maybe if you had tried, oh I don't know, acknowledging Leo's existence—

EDDIE

You wanted us to not count. You wanted me to not count.

VICKY

Drop it, Mush, we've got other things—

MUSH

Why *wouldn't* Eddie tell you to stay away?

EDDIE

You can fly up here with a suitcase and a gift for Cammie, but I'm not letting you through the door.

MUSH

He has to protect his family from you.

EDDIE

I have to protect my family from you.

BEN

I'm your family.

EDDIE

No.

BEN

You're my son. You grew up in my house, eighteen years.

EDDIE

So what? That's a long time ago, that's history. We got out, didn't we?
We're taking over now, so it doesn't matter.
It doesn't matter anymore. And neither will you.

BEN

Now stop it, let me just show you what I got for Cammie—it's perfect for her.
(He reaches for it.)
You tell her it's from grandpa. It's in my pocket—

EDDIE

You don't have anything. There's nothing there.

BEN

Tell her grandpa gave it to her...
It was right here, I had it right here...

EDDIE

I don't see it.

MUSH

You're fucking obsessed with him!

VICKY

Dad obviously needs help, Mush, you're the one who's obsessed!

BEN

I'm fine, everything's going to be fine, I just need to find this...

Ben begins an extensive search through his pockets and backpack.
The Boy continues his own search for the mushroom he was eating.

VICKY

Yes, dad loved Eddie more, dad was more invested in Eddie, he was prouder of Eddie. So what. It's just a thing that happened, move on. You feel disconnected or whatever, *do* something about it, help people *connect*—that's the whole *point* of what I do. If dad learns how to use the apps I'm building, he can reach out to people, maybe he can even talk to Eddie, and—

MUSH

(an explosion)

Oh god, why does it always come back to this meaningless bullshit, Vicky?
Not all roads lead to your stupid fucking App.

VICKY

It is not stupid, and it's not meaningless. It's about bringing people together. What's wrong with people sharing who they are in the world, what's wrong with people mattering?

MUSH

Because we don't!
(beat.)
We don't matter.
And all that stuff doesn't make us matter,
it doesn't make anyone matter.
You know that.

VICKY

No I don't.

Ben has curled up near the rock. Mush and Vicky haven't noticed.

MUSH

You make us think we can be celebrities, with fans,
that we *should* be celebrities with fans,
and we aren't that, we'll never *be* that.
You create this need,
this hunger,
and make us starved for more and more of something we'll never get.

VICKY

That's *not* what's happening, and at least I'm trying to do something—
you think *you're* so awesome with your endless parade of quirky jobs?

MUSH

Right, because I don't have some fantasy that I'm Master of the Universe who can perfectly control the world, and order anything I want with the swipe of my finger. Oooh, look at my cool clothing, look at my fancy knife, look at my...

(picking up Vicky's nylon bag)

my new fucking *bag* from *Italy*!

Mush tries to tear the bag.

VICKY

It's tear-resistant, Mush.

MUSH

Oh yeah?

Grabbing Vicky's specialized mushroom knife, Mush punctures the bag, slashing into it.

She tosses the knife aside and tries to pull the bag apart with her hands: a slow, loud ripping sound.

Mush drops the torn-up bag on the ground.

MUSH

Looks like it's not tear-*proof*.

Vicky stares at the bag carcass a moment.

VICKY

You fucking asshole!

(She lunges at Mush, and they fall to the ground, tearing at each other.)

We *do* think people matter!

MUSH

Not everyone *can* matter!

VICKY

You *want* to not matter!

MUSH

That's not true!

Mush and Vicky roll around, getting winded as the fighting intensifies. Ben, still curled up, begins to softly hum the tune the Boy was singing.

VICKY

Oh
so what
you tagged university posters to get
a teaching *promotion*?

MUSH

I wasn't
even *teaching*,
ha!

VICKY

You said you were
a writing instructor!

MUSH

I lied!
I was
an instructor's aide,
they paid me hourly
to make copies
and order books!

The fighting is getting vicious and bloody.
Ben's humming continues, almost inaudibly, underneath.

VICKY

You're such a fuck up!

MUSH

I know!
And you're so *not* a fuckup!
Eddie has a house,
and a job,
and a family,
and *you*
have a Tesla!
You
have a *Tesla*!
How could you *possibly*
be a *fuckup*
when you
have a Tesla?

Vicky wrestles Mush to the ground, grabs the knife out of Mush's hands.

VICKY

Fine, you don't want to matter? You don't matter!

Vicky drops the knife, grabs Mush's pen out of her pocket,
and writes "WIPED" across Mush's forehead.

VICKY (CON'T)

There. Is that what you fucking want?
You are wiped of all the bullshit meaning you've accumulated.
You are Wiped.

MUSH

Good!
(Vicky and Mush lie on the ground, panting.)
You think I *want* to be me?

A moment.

BOY

Hey, I found it.

BEN

You did?

(sitting up, reaching back into his pocket)
I knew I had it in my pocket, see how the petals are—

VICKY

You found what?

BOY

The mushroom I was eating that you made me spit out.
I had just put it in my mouth.
See? I barely had any.

VICKY

It doesn't matter if you only had a little, it's still—
(seeing the mushroom)
...wait, *this* is the one you were eating?

BOY

Yeah.

VICKY

This is the *only* one? You're sure?

BOY

Uh huh.
I'm gonna start building the fire, okay?

The Boy begins to build a campfire.

VICKY

Dad, look at this.

BEN

(looking)
That's not an amanita.

VICKY

Well *those* were, that he'd been picking...I just thought...

BEN

...no, definitely not an amanita...this is just a button mushroom. *Agaricus bisporus*.
(gazing at the Boy, almost dreamily)
See, you got us all worked up for nothing, he'll be fine, I told you...that's good...

VICKY

Dad, are you okay?

BOY

Hey, I got the fire started already.
(He has. A few flames are crackling.)
Pretty good, huh? Look at it.
(They all look.)
(A quiet takes over as they look at the flames.)

BOY (CONT'D)

Hey, do you guys want to hear a poem?
 (a moment; no one answers.)
 This is a poem that dumb homeless guy,
 that bum,
 would do every night at the open mic on Wednesday.

VICKY

Oh no. Let's not hear the poetry from the slain homeless man.

MUSH

What?

VICKY

He was telling me about some guy who did poetry and got killed in the woods.

BOY

A homeless guy, a bum, a worthless guy who didn't matter.
 He'd do this poem every Wednesday.
 Want to hear?

MUSH

Not really, not if it's about a dead guy—

BEN

(to the Boy, as if under a bit of a spell)
 Sure, have some poetry in front of the fire.

BOY

Okay. So it goes like this. It's called—
 Well, he'd call it something different every time.
 This time he calls it, "Take a walk."
 (singing a tune, but with a drunk-guy imitation)
Take a waaalk through those-a woods...
 (making fun of the person, in an awful way)
Those-a-ones, you see 'em?

The Boy stumbles like a drunk guy, laughing.

VICKY

God, don't make fun of someone who just died...

BEN

Let the boy do the poem.

Ben tends to the fire, watching the Boy sing his poem.
 Vicky and Mush also become mesmerized, watching him.

BOY

(dropping the drunk-guy stuff, and losing himself in the tune)
"Take a walk through those-a woods, those-a-ones, you see 'em?"
You say, "Take a walk through those-a-woods," but I don't think I see 'em.
"The woods are where you find them, the woods are where you find them."
That's what she would always say, she'd hold my hand down by the bay,
before she went and jumped that day, before she took the light away.

BOY (CONT'D)

(fire flames flickering.)

"Take a walk down that-a trail, that-a-one, you see it?"

A shift. THE MAN at the open mic appears.

Only the Boy senses his presence, although he doesn't look directly at him. The Man does not seem aware of the Boy; sings as if he is alone.

Ben, Vicky, and Mush continue to watch the Boy singing; when they join in the song throughout, they are unaware they are doing so.

BOY/MAN

You say, "Take a walk down that-a-trail," but I don't think I see it.

BOY/MAN (AND BEN)

"The trail is where you find it, the trail is where you find it."

BOY/MAN

*That's what she would always say, I'd hold her hand to make her stay,
but still she went and jumped that day,
but still she took my life away.*

MAN

*Take a jump off that-a bridge, that a one, you see it.
Take a jump off that-a-bridge, I'm pretty sure I see it.*

BOY/MAN (AND BEN, MUSH, VICKY)

The fall is where you'll find it, the fall is where you'll find it.

MAN

*That's what I can hear her say, I think I'll go and jump one day,
don't got a life now anyway, don't got a life now anyway.*

The Man begins to move off, beyond the fire.

BOY

*That's the only thing he'll say, I think I'll go and jump some day,
(The Man looks directly at the Boy; he holds the Boy's gaze for a moment,
and walks off.)**don't got a real life anyway...**(A moment. The Man is gone. The fire's roaring now.)**(The Boy stands, staring, lost.)**(Then, snapping back to himself, and spitting out the words violently:)**"But I'm not gonna do that,
because I'm too much of a coward,
and I want another drink!"
And then most of the time he laughs,
this stupid loud animal laugh,
and takes a drink from a bottle in a paper bag,
and sometimes he falls over, or stumbles out.
And I have to go after him.
Stupid drunk bum.
I hate him.*

The Boy stares into the fire.
Ben, Mush, and Vicky stare at the Boy.
A moment of quiet.

He's dead? BEN

I wish he were dead. BOY

More quiet, more crackling.

He's...that guy, that's your... VICKY

He's a bum. BOY

So he's not, dead? MUSH

He wants to be. BOY
So what, she left him. She left me, too.
But I'm still here, what about me?
I'm not worth anything?
She went away, and I'm just this leftover?
Now all he does is stumble around, talking about her,
like he doesn't remember I'm here.
I tried to follow him Wednesday,
and he looked at me like he didn't know me.
He spit at me and pushed me away
he said to get away from him
he said to get away
get away

The Boy is standing, shaking before the fire.
Ben stands, walks over, tentatively touches the Boy's shoulder.

Hey, hey now. BEN
(smoothing the Boy's hair)
Hey now.
Why don't you just sit down, right here...that's it...

Ben gently guides the Boy over. The Boy sits.
Vicky spots something by the rock—her jacket.

Hey. VICKY

She goes over, picks up the jacket.
Ben is weeping, trying to comfort the Boy.

BEN

That's alright.
You're gonna be alright...
You're gonna be alright.

Mush and Vicky watch their father's tenderness to the Boy.
Both are wrestling with something.
Mush turns away, staring out. She takes her Sharpie out.

Vicky is about to put her jacket on, but then, seeing the Boy,
she stops, and goes over to him.

VICKY

(putting it around him)
Put this on, it'll keep you warm.
(zipping it up)
It's two-layer Twill fabric. Good for damp foggy weather.

Then, Vicky sits next to Ben and the Boy.

Mush is still staring out, refusing to watch.
She is uncapping and recapping her Sharpie.

The sound of the crackling fire, and the Boy's cries, like howls.

BOY

he doesn't want me
why doesn't he want me
why don't I mean anything to him
why don't I mean anything

Hearing him, Mush turns to the Boy;
a flash of sudden, profound recognition.

She returns the marker to her pocket, and goes over to the Boy.
She gently pulls him to his feet.
Then, Mush pulls him into a powerful hug.

It is a long hug.

MUSH

(You do.)

Mush releases the Boy, who sits back down.

She sits next to him, joining the circle.

They sit a moment in the silence, looking at the fire.

The Boy has quieted, now. He gets up.

BOY

(an explanation)

I had a lot of water.
I can't hold it anymore, I'm about to explode.

VICKY

Stay close.

The Boy goes.

A moment as Vicky, Ben, and Mush stare into the crackling fire.

Mush spots something at her foot.

MUSH

Hey.
I see one. Finally.

VICKY

They're all over.

MUSH

(seeing them)
Holy shit. They are.

VICKY

Your eyes just needed to adjust.
(A moment. Vicky breathes in.)
It still smells like the mushrooms you were cooking, Dad.

BEN

Hm.

MUSH

Remember how mom used to cook mushrooms...those porcini?

BEN

Boletes.

VICKY

They were amazing.
She always talked about how they had more spirit, or something.

MUSH

That they had energy.
(imitating her mother)
"Ah! Porcini have so much energy! But now Chanterelles..."

MUSH

"Chanterelles are delicate."

VICKY

"Chanterelles are delicate."

Mush and Vicky look at each other, and continue together.

MUSH/VICKY

“When you bring mushrooms into the kitchen...”

MUSH/VICKY

“You are bringing the forest.”

BEN

(softly; almost to himself)
“You are bringing the forest.”

Mush and Vicky look at him, surprised.

BEN

(unaware of their reaction)

Her parents were Finnish, and the Finns are big into mushroom hunting. She said it was like church for them, all the children would pin little bells to their clothing, so they wouldn't get lost. She said she remembers walking through the woods, They'd hear this tinkling all around, like the forest was filled with fairies.

We hear a soft tinkling of bells.

VICKY

You called me to go hunting with you, dad. You don't remember?

BEN

I wanted to go back. I wanted to be back there.

The sound of bells grows.

VICKY

This is the first time the three of us have ever gone to Mount Tam together. Or the Mount Tam area, anyway...

BEN

I didn't mean for it to happen.

A moment.

VICKY

Maybe we could try doing it, again, but on purpose. With the proper equipment for not dying.

Another moment.

MUSH

I'd be into that, what do you think dad?
The three of us could plan a trip together, we've never done that...
It could be fun.

VICKY

It doesn't even have to be Mount Tam.
We could go to Yosemite or something.

MUSH

I've never been to Yosemite!
I mean I have, but I was fucked up and I don't remember much of it.
You've been there, haven't you dad?

(a moment; Ben isn't responding)

Hey, we could even see if the kid wants to come...

The bells get louder and louder.

BEN

(suddenly panicked)

Where is he?

VICKY

He just went to the bathroom, he'll be right back.

BEN

He's gone—where'd he go?

MUSH

Dad, he'll be back, he just went to—

BEN

(as the sound of bells crescendos)

I let him think he didn't belong to me.

I let him think he didn't matter.

(a moment, and the sound of bells dissipates, fading away.)

Now he's gone.

Ben continues to stare off after the Boy.

VICKY

But we're here, dad.

We're still here.

MUSH

Will that ever mean anything?

Will we?

After a moment, Ben turns to Mush, as if he's just heard her.
He looks at her a moment, uncertain.

BEN

Will we?

The Morel appears, lumbering through the campsite;

the three of them look up and see the giant morel,

just before he puffs away,

mid-stride,

into a cloud of spores,

and the three of them are left standing there,

looking at one another,

as the fog clears.

End of play.