

Mushroom Boy

Brady Lea

The Cast:

Katherine – a woman in her late 30s to early 40s. She’s dressed in down-to-earth, casual but professional clothes (think Berkeley Therapist).

The #8 – A turkey, avocado and bacon on sourdough sandwich, presented on stage as an actual sandwich, but with a human actor providing the voice.

Mushroom Boy – Handsome young man, early to mid 20s. He’s a purveyor of mushrooms at a farmers market stand, and while painfully handsome, exhibits some questionable taste of the cheesy variety. (Unbuttoned shirt, big gold chain + medallion, etc.)

Kate – She’s Katherine’s alter ego. Mid 20s to early 30s, she is younger, taller, skinnier, prettier, etc, than Katherine. (None of those details particularly matter – just that she is presented as much more glamorous/elegant.) She wears an evening gown and a tiara, obscured at first by a drab overcoat and headscarf or large winter hat.

At Rise:

***Katherine** enters her apartment carrying a couple of plastic grocery bags. She puts them down on her kitchen/dining room table. From one she removes **The # 8**, a large turkey sandwich wrapped in standard white butcher’s paper. From the other plastic bag, she removes three small brown paper bags, each with mushrooms in them. She lines them up carefully, and opens one and takes a deep whiff, exhaling with satisfaction, dreamily. **The # 8** speaks as a voice from offstage, or miked and amplified onto the stage.*

The # 8 Smells good?

Katherine Mmmmm. Yes, it does.

The # 8 Like the very soul of the earth itself?

Katherine Mmmmm. Yes. Like the very soul of... (Katherine snaps out of her dreamy state and realizes there’s nobody else in her apartment, and yet there IS this voice.) Wha...? (She gets up to investigate.) Who...?

The # 8 You’ve been buying a lot of mushrooms lately, Katherine.

Katherine is panicking now, becoming more agitated and more focused in her search.

Katherine Who’s there!

The # 8 Oh, come on, Katherine.

Katherine Who are you? What do you want? Please don't...

The # 8 Oh, settle down.

Katherine, on the verge of becoming truly terrified, gives up and sits down in front of her sandwich, practically in tears.

Katherine Stop it. Just, please, stop it.

The # 8 You've just been a little obsessed lately is all.

*Katherine shakes off her fear and becomes annoyed as she realizes the source of the voice. She picks up **The # 8**.*

Katherine You...

The # 8 What about me?

Katherine You're a turkey sandwich.

The # 8 Please, not just a turkey sandwich. I'm The # 8.

Katherine Whatever! You're a goddamn sandwich.

The # 8 And you're a somewhat depressed pre-middle-aged woman with twelve bags of mushrooms in your apartment.

Katherine Three! Three bags of mushrooms!

The # 8 Just from today! What about the ones you bought last week? Have you used those?

Katherine And... pre-middle aged? What the fuck? *(She feels around her eyes and mouth for signs of aging.)*

The # 8 Katherine, you buy three bags of mushrooms twice a week, and you know I'm not even counting the white truffle from Oregon.

Katherine I am *not* discussing this with you.

Katherine picks up The # 8 and prepares to take a bite.

The # 8 Suit yourself.

Katherine *(She tries several more times to take a bite, and gives up.)* Ugh!

The # 8 He's young enough to be your son.

Katherine He is not!

The # 8 Well, ok if you'd been a child bride...

Katherine Ugh! Leave me alone. *(She stares at the sandwich, then bites.)*

The # 8 Fine. I see how it is. You fill your fridge with chanterelles, organic shitakes, criminis, morels...

Katherine Morels are not even in season. That was a matsutake I got...

The # 8 Okay, whatever, but every week you go to the farmers market, TWICE, and stock up on thirty dollar a pound mushrooms...

Katherine They are not all thirty...

The # 8 BECAUSE, you are obsessed with some 23 year old mushroom boy.

Katherine You don't know he's 23. *(She pauses.)* I mean, do you? Is he 23? Oh my god. He's 23?

The # 8 Twenty-three, twenty-five. You're missing the point.

Katherine Well, okay then, what's the point, Dr. Turkey and Avocado on Sourdough?

The # 8 Katherine, why are you doing this?

Katherine Doing what? Taking an interest in locally grown organically produced vegetables?

The # 8 Filling your refrigerator with an exhibit worthy of the Mycological Society of Northern California. What's the deal?

Katherine puts down the sandwich, and sighs.

Katherine I don't know. It's just... He's so...*(She begins to daydream)* ... I don't even know what it is. Its just that... I go to the market each week... well, it started as once a week...

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Kate enters, representing Katherine, as Katherine speaks. She's in a split scene, at the farmers market. She is covered in a large overcoat & looks downtrodden.

The # 8 Wait a minute... that's you?

Katherine Yeah.

The # 8 Okay, gotcha.

Katherine So, I go to the market, I buy some salad greens, tomatoes in the summer, citrus in the winter... and then I always get to...

Mushroom Boy enters, and a wave of romantic orchestral music swells, then fades. He postures hunkily, and it's as if a special gleam comes off his teeth.

The # 8 Mushroom boy.

Katherine sighs. Kate approaches mushroom boy.

Kate Hi. Can I get half a pound of ... ugly shitakes?

Mushroom Boy stares her in the eye, intensely.

MB Of course.

Romantic Orchestral music swells again.

Katherine See?

The # 8 See what?

Katherine He's so... he's a fun...

The # 8 Please don't say it.

Katherine I can't help it. It's ridiculous. I know. It's just that he... Oh, I don't know. He has good teeth? It was just... this one day last summer... our eyes met...

Katherine turns to look at Kate & MB staring each other in the eyes. She lifts The # 8 so the sandwich can see too.

MB Will that be all for you?

Kate Yes. I guess so.

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Kate turns to leave with a paper bag of shitakes in hand.

Katherine And I don't know. It's so stupid. I didn't want to walk away.

The # 8 Hard to walk with your panties in a knot like that.

Katherine I turned back.

Kate turns back and catches MB's eye again. She tosses her hat aside, revealing a sweeping updo crowned by a tiara, she dramatically sheds her coat, showing off her evening gown. Music swells.

Kate I was wondering...

MB Yes?

Kate and MB are face to face, it looks as if they might kiss. Music continues to build.

The # 8 Wait.. that's still you?

Katherine Shut up, baconface.

Kate ...about those matsutakes.

MB Yes?

Kate Why are they so expensive?

The music dies instantly.

The # 8 Oooh, good one.

Katherine *(banging her head on the table)* I know! I know. God, I am an idiot.

MB They are... *(he leans back in)* very hard. To cultivate.

Kate and Katherine both whimper in unison.

MB You know, in Japan, they will spend five hundred dollars on the perfect matsutake. Here, smell.

MB holds a single mushroom up to Kate. She inhales deeply. Katherine takes the paper bag she'd sniffed before and sniffs it again, so that Kate and Katherine are again in unison as they inhale deeply.

Kate Oh.

Katherine Ohhhh.

The # 8 Oh, come on.

MB You like that?

Kate I do.

MB It smells...

Katherine joins in.

MB & Katherine ... like the soul of the earth itself.

Kate and MB are again face to face, ready to kiss.

The # 8 I don't get it, Katherine. What is it you want?

Katherine I want him, I guess.

The # 8 You're not shy, ask him out.

Katherine Oh, I don't want to go out with him.

At his, Kate and MB break their near face-lock, exhaling and shaking off the sex vibe.

The # 8 Oh thank god. He's really cheesy. Cheese-o-rama. Look at that necklace. Cheese-filled.

Katherine He's not! Okay, he is. A little.

Katherine looks over at MB who is raising his eyebrows cheesily at Kate.

The # 8 Okay, so you don't WANT want him...

Katherine No! I don't! But I do.

MB It's all about the aroma.

Kate Mmmmmm.

Katherine Look at me.

MB Slice it up and toss it in with your steamed rice. Your whole house will smell...

Music swell.

All ... like the soul of the earth itself.

Kate Okay! I'll take one.

MB Mmmmm, you'll love it.

Kate TWO! I'll take two.

The # 8 Oh, Katherine.

Katherine I know, I know. *(She shakes her head at herself.)*

The # 8 Do you love him?

Katherine Maybe?

MB Kate, may I call you Kate?

Kate Of course...

The # 8 Nobody calls you Kate.

Katherine Shhusshhh

MB Have you ever had...

Kate and MB lean in together again.

Kate Yes?

MB An Oregon white truffle?

Kate Yes!

Katherine No.

Kate I love Oregon white truffles!

Katherine Fuck if I know what an Oregon white truffle is.

MB You must have one of ours.

Kate Yes! I must!

The # 8 So, you do love him?

Katherine Yes!

MB They are only four dollars.

Katherine I mean no.

The # 8 No?

Kate Yes!

MB Yes!

Katherine No. I don't love him.

The # 8 You keep buying mushrooms.

MB That comes to *(He calculates)* Forty-seven dollars.

Kate Great!

Katherine I do mean to cook them.

MB Thanks so much.

Kate No, thank *you*.

Katherine I just like that spark.

The # 8 It's not the produce?

Katherine Well of course it's the produce. I like to buy local. Buy fresh. Buy Organic. I just...

The # 8 That's so Bay Area.

Katherine I just don't have time to cook it. And, oh come on. Look at him.

She looks at MB, who looks past Kate and right at Katherine. He unbuttons his shirt one more button.

The # 8 Still cheesy.

Katherine Still cheesy, but.. I don't know. Hot?

Kate, exits with her various mushrooms clutched close to her chest, speaking to herself as she goes.

Kate Hot.

Katherine Okay, not even hot.

MB deflates somewhat.

The # 8 So, every week you stock up on vegetables that rot in your refrigerator. For thirty seconds of eye-contact and flirting?

Katherine Okay, yes. Is that so wrong?

She pauses and looks at the sandwich.

Katherine You're rolling your eyes.

The # 8 Eyes? What eyes.

Katherine Okay, your avocado... your, oh I don't know. Look, I get a little charge out of the guy. The BOY. Whatever. And you know what? This week I am cooking the chanterelles AND the matsutake. I looked up a recipe on epicurious.com.

The # 8 You looked those up four months ago.

Katherine But this week, I mean it. Otherwise, it'll just be the same old... *(She stops herself.)*

The # 8 The same old what?

Katherine You know.

The # 8 I know *I* know. Do *you* know?

Katherine The same old sandwich.

The # 8 The same old sandwich.

They pause and just sit together. MB starts to feel as if he's intruding, and he exits, to give them privacy.

Katherine I don't mean...

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The # 8 Oh, I know what you mean.

Katherine *(Brightening)* You do?

The # 8 Not hot.

Katherine *(Deflated)* No!

The # 8 That's ok. I'm not hot.

Katherine You're always here for me.

The #8 I know. I always want to be.

Katherine You're... my favorite, you know. Sure I mean to cook a matsuwwhatever with my steamed rice, but...

The # 8 You can, you know. That's ok with me.

Katherine I will someday, I think.

The # 8 I'm sure you will.

Katherine I... you are so good to me.

The # 8 Katherine?

Katherine Yes?

The # 8 You know, everything is better with bacon.

Katherine raises the sandwich to her mouth.

Katherine Mmmmmmm hmmm.

Lights fade out.