

CLAUDINE

“Don’t I know you?”

“What?”

“You work with my ex.”

“Your ex.”

“I moved here to be with him. And he helped me get my business going.”

“What do you do?”

“I import food products from Canada. I sell wholesale to grocery stores and restaurants.”

“There is actually a market for that.”

“It was a living. I am not sure that I can do it anymore. What do you do?”

“I am Steven Fisher, the writer.”

“I think that I have heard of you. I heard that your books are weird.”

“Not that weird. You could be in my next book.”

“What would you say?”

“We met in a supermarket. We plotted the transformation of the world.”

“I think that I got lost in the supermarket part.”

“We could stop there. We could create a different life for you?”

“What would that involve?”

“You are a biologist at Tech.”

“What?”

“Neurogeneticist.”

“Would I have taken the time to talk?”

“There is always time to talk?”

“Who is part of the experiment?”

“Is this going to start getting weird?”

“What did you come in here for?”

“I am looking for cheese.”

“I am going to cheat. I find you attractive. I like your shoes.”

“I thought that this was a competition regarding cheese.”

“I could pick out the tastiest cheese in this place.”

“I am probably better at discovering the best crackers.”

“You could build castles out of crackers.”

“That sounds like the American empire.”

“Are you tiring of the American empire?”

“I am tiring of the American cracker.”

“That could be the beginning of a new novel.”

“Cheese can’t do it all on its own.”

“Did you love your first husband?”

“I thought that he was adequate.”

“Was he good with hors d’oeuvres.”

“He was good at starting things that he could not complete?”

“Are you keeping track?”

“I kept track!”  
 “And he couldn’t take over for the completion of the meal.”  
 “He was not good with entrees, and he was terrible with desserts.”  
 “This is complex shit from a simple writer.”  
 “There were causes. He could not overcome his American exceptionalism.”  
 “Do you think that Americans will like to read about such colossal failures?”  
 “Look at me. I am a pro. He was an awful example of a husband.”  
 “So you really understand your cheeses.”  
 “I am not going to say that I am great with the nuances of politics. But my husband was an absolute dolt. I don’t think that he could read a world map.”  
 “I have never seen you before.”  
 “Are you all good friends here?”  
 “I feel as if run this super market.”  
 “This is going to become really outrageous.”  
 “Where are you going with this?”  
 “I do not want interrupt.”  
 “We are both merging into each other.”  
 “The cheese is melting, and we are losing our ability to distinguish ourselves.”  
 “What did your husband do?”  
 “He was an investment banker.”  
 “He told me that money always returned to the investors. It was patent nonsense. He was trying to destroy my business.”  
 “Did he succeed?”  
 “He thought that he was succeeding. He wanted to engineer a take over. He would sell the assets. Then he would just let everything fizzle on its own.”  
 “So you no longer have the business.”  
 “I have all of it. He tried to bring me down. He only made me better.”  
 “It often works like that!”  
 “Did you save the cheese?”  
 “And the crackers. I have some nice wine. Want to get together.”  
 “I have an appointment. Could you wait until later?”  
 “I don’t have all the time in the world.”  
 “I don’t often pick up guys in the supermarket.”  
 “I have a weakness for cheese.”  
 “I have a weakness for what comes after.”  
 “The cheese melts.”  
 “And so do I!”  
 “Some thing cannot hold together in the world.”  
 “We could melt together.”  
 “I was looking at your shoes. You have style.”  
 “And money.”  
 “What about pets?”  
 “Are you applying?”

“You have a naughty mind.”

“I don’t want to put things out there if you are not willing to take up on them.”

“I am willing. I’ve just had some problems recently.”

“You look as if you are holding it together pretty well.”

“I am doing okay. Just weird flashbacks.”

“Is that all?”

“I want something permanent in my life.”

“You are telling that to someone who you just met in a grocery store.”

“It is as if I am ordering my groceries early.”

“You have your own questions.”

“I could look across the way, and see that there was a man in the room. But no one else in the complex knew who he was.”

“THIS IS THE DAY WHEN EVERYTHING HAS TO CHANGE FOR THE BETTER!”

“I am not here for a pep talk.”

“You are so good at your business. Are you as circumspect about your personal life?”

“That seems rude of you. My husband was a responsible man.”

“Where is he?”

“Responsible maybe. But loving, never. I grew to hate him!”

“I don’t know what I should say to that.”

“Take up on my invitation.”

“Are you eating something?”

“The cheese and cracker samples.”

“That seems fair.”

“Fair. That is what I have been offered.”

“The world is not good to us.”

“Are you feeling sorry for yourself? I ran a successful business.”

“I have no idea who I am.”

“My husband was sure of himself.”

“You realize where that led him.”

“What do you want me to do for you?”

“Show me where I am going wrong.”

“Talking to me. I have nothing to offer.”

“Are you taking back the wine?”

“Come on over. But I can’t promise much past that. I am seeing someone. He is not in town. And I don’t want to jeopardize that. But I could use some company for a couple of hours.”

“I don’t think of myself like that.”

“Nor do I. Come enjoy the cheese.”

“That sounds like a beginning.”

“If you want to see it that way.”

“You can leave now.”

“Are you telling me where to go?”

“I am going to give you my address.”

“This is only going to get better.”

“I thought that you were in for the game.”

“I want to drink the wine. If you are recommending it.”

“It might be better if we leave it at that.”

“You are cute.”

“That is all well and good. I am not like you think.”

“What am I thinking?”

“That the wine leads somewhere.”

“I only want the cheese.”

“Spoken like a good mouse.”

“So where is this mouse supposed to go.”

“I want you to talk on extolling the cheese.”

“That is all that you are looking for. A good discussion.”

“Which we can finish here.”

“What about the party?”

“I don’t really know you. And you are getting pushy!”

“I only asked about the cheese.”

“I am not like you think. I like to drink wine, but I was not looking for a romantic companion.”

“You were talking about cheese in a seductive way.”

“The cheese is tasty. But nothing that you couldn’t find at your place. I can write down the name of the wine, and we can leave it at that.”

“I wouldn’t mind sharing a bottle.”

“Really, another time.”

“Now is as good as the present.”

“You are creeping me out.”

“I am a confident guy. I know what I want. And so do you.”

“I am not into reading. I love wine. And that is enough culture for me.”

“What about movies?”

“I’m never the kind of person who says cinema.”

“What would you call the most perfect food that you could eat?”

“I feel as if I am surpassing the perfection of food.”

“What could that possibly mean?”

“Nothing that I eat can satisfy me in the way that food once satisfied me.”

“That seems sad.”

“I am not going to eat more to make up. I have hit a wall!”

“You start eating as a baby, and it takes off from there.”

“Does the baby enjoy the taste?”

“This baby has no choice!”

“*There is a place where they serve the perfect food. It is perfect for the body and the soul.*”

“*What are you talking about?*”

“*It is wonderful for touch and for taste.*”

*“What is this idea for the mind?”*

*“It is eternally sweet!”*

*“That causes a habit!”*

*“There is a rise and a fall. A suggestion and a bang!”*

“Will there ever be any help for us?”

“We need to leave the country.”

“Better than leaving the planet.”

“Are you ready to do that? They are supposed to put us in work farms.”

“I have a year’s supply of cheese.”

“Is it a good idea to exaggerate the unfavorable prospects for our future?”

“If we don’t prepare, then we cannot take precautions.”

us?”  
“If we take for granted such a terrible ending to our good fortune, how will that benefit

“You the one who is going to move?”

“I have found a safe place where I can live and protect myself and my beliefs.”

“There is such a place. Can I come along?”

“We just met in a grocery store. I can’t even trust you.”

“It could have been so wonderful.”

“Indeed it could. But it won’t!”

“Imagine if we were locked together in a bomb shelter.”

“Is this some kind of sociological experiment?”

“More biological. We are lost together with a mouse and some pieces of cheese.”

“This is sounding dangerous.”

“The crazy mouse. It is always going places!”

“I am not sure that I want to play like that!”

“You have to understand the greater forces which cause us to act in certain ways.”

“The long range intentions of cheese manufacturers.”

“We try to create our lives based on our emotional needs, not our consumer behavior.”

“We react to little things that we cherish.”

*“I was trapped in this very tight space. I was sweating. The light was in my eyes.”*

*“You will be okay soon.”*

*“I don’t feel in good shape.”*

*“Calm yourself.”*

*“There’s little to be calm about.”*

*“You are worsening it for yourself.”*

*“It causes a habitat. A place where you can escape.”*

“Would you like to try a sample?”

“What is it?”

“Cheese!”

“It reminds me of living in a nice suburban home.”

“I am falling apart.”

“We both are.”

“You said that you liked the sample.”

“Did you try to sample as well?”

“I liked how it taste. But you have to try to cheese that is in my basket. It goes well with wine.”

“You withdrew your invitation to me.”

“I never entertained you.”

“What does that mean?”

“Buy the cheese yourself, and eat it at your home.”

“It is rather expensive.”

*“How were your cheese buying habits going to provide the basis for a new world?”*

*“It was not the cheese itself. It was the other associated behaviors.”*

*“I like pretending that everything is great!”*

*“Everything is great!”*

*“Drop dead.”*

*“I wasn’t doing anything.”*

*“You watched me buy cheese. Then you followed me around the store.”*

*“You dropped your wallet. You do want your wallet?”*

*“What can I do to help you?”*

*“It might be a little late for that.”*

*“In the other book, we would have already been friends.”*

*“I like pretending that everything is fantastic.”*

*This was one of the worst nights of the story.*

*“Are you blaming me for messing up?”*

“You could teach me things.”

“Things?”

“How to eat better.”

“That sounds like a good trade.”

“I suppose you thought that I made something else.”

“I thought that you implied a psychological change.”

“The voice. What have you been trying to tell me?”

“I wanted to buy you dinner.”

“Do I look hungry?”

*“You look a little desperate.”*

*“What does that mean?”*

*“You are going to take chances that could jeopardize my safety. If only we could resolve these problems here and now.”*

*“I would as what you meant. Could it make a difference in how we live our lives?”*

*“Words don’t make a difference if life doesn’t permit changes of their own.”*

*“Words follow those changes.”*

*“Words could mean something completely different.”*

*“You can track the meaning.”*

*“I am here for one thing.”*

*“I want to eat!”*

*“You can wait a little longer.”*

*"I understand the culture. Everything happens all at once."*

*"There is no need for words. Just the effects of words."*

*"A biology. Words for things."*

*"Two words do not make a right."*

*"They help determine a cheese!"*

*"How is that?"*

*"The same as fermenting."*

*"The body is changing."*

*"This is a new genetics!"*

*"The psychology has the ability to adjust internal processes."*

*"Are you trying to change the world?"*

*"Slowly and surely!"*

*"I was waiting in the hotel for my contact."*

*"What is a contact?"*

*"Someone who can link you to your intelligence assets."*

*"You are on vacation."*

*"I am part of a front group."*

*"What does that mean?"*

*"The group is sent to an international destination with the explicit intention of sharing cultural resources. In fact, the group is learning techniques to manipulate the natural flow of local institutions."*

*"How is this done?"*

*"There are some people who will yield to bribes. As well, the increase of economic resources can alter the social balance. That is the primary method to effect a social change."*

*"What is your role in this story?"*

*"I am venturing to a new country with the idea of sharing our customs. I have a company. I maintain that I want to assist the locals. But I am searching for advantages for my own company."*

*"Will you share resources?"*

*"The intention is to limit resources."*

*"I don't understand."*

*"That is why this is a government-sponsored program."*

*"Do you care that much?"*

*"I don't want to disrupt the ebb and flow of events."*

*"What is the international language?"*

*"Social interchange."*

*"The hoarding of resources."*

*"This is all out of control."*

*"I thought that you were sent here to make things right."*

*"I was a supplier. I had a list of possible customers. I did well at effecting my plan. We were taking over markets."*

*"The locals did not appreciate your actions."*

*"Locals never do."*

*"You were acting in an imperial way. You had the resources to absorb local industry. Consumers appreciated your variety. They switched to your products."*

*"I have studied stuff like this."*

*"Are you going to make a move?"*

*"I have loads of product sitting at the dock. It is going to spoil if I don't find buyers."*

*"You could make arrangements for local storage."*

*"That all fell through."*

*"Why should I care?"*

*"I have been importing products successfully for a long time."*

*"That doesn't mean that you have learned anything in the interim."*

*"I know my product. I know how I can benefit other people."*

*"I am glad that you are so magnanimous."*

*"We should be friends."*

*"This is getting messy."*

*"You are not going to collaborate."*

*"This would be a bribe."*

*"Who is running this operation?"*

*"I am. That is why I needed to push my husband out of the company. He was doing nothing but interfere with the operations."*

*"There was a flurry of activity."*

*"I knew that you would come through."*

*"I am good with markets."*

*"How could the notion of markets lead character-driven fiction?"*

*"You don't want to invite me over to your house."*

*"I don't know you that well. I am not sure that I can trust you."*

*"I am a very trustworthy person."*

*"You are going to eat all the cheese."*

*"And what are you going to leave for me?"*

*"I am going to leave you the world."*

*"I want to intercede."*

*"Neither of us can help the other. We just have to enjoy each other's company. We have to enjoy the cheese."*

*"Have you enough for the both of us?"*

*"I have a case of wine. The more you drink, the less cheese that you desire."*

*"That sounds like a convenient equation."*

*"There is more happening!"*

*"What is the back story?"*

*"We were in a grocery store. I asked you about cheese. We started to talk about the price of milk. We discussed politics. Milk subsidies."*

*"I did claim that I sympathized with milk subsidies."*

*"They may offer temporary help, but they could impede development of the market."*

*"I think that we were talking about romantic relationships."*

*"There is no story here, but there is a foundation for something greater."*



*"There is intrigue."*

*"There are lines to explore. Possibilities!"*

*"Can I get your number?"*

*"That wouldn't be a good idea."*

*"I would like to be a customer."*

*"It doesn't work like that. I don't mix business and pleasure."*

*"I can find pleasure in the business."*

*"What are your goals?"*

*"A meal. Some good conversation."*

*"I have told you enough already."*

*"Are you working for a front group?"*

*"What would that involve? A front group."*

*"You are using the cheese as the foundation of something greater."*

*"What could that be?"*

*"Spies. You are some kind of international economic interest. You are interfering with the progress of the rest of the world."*

*"This is getting way out of control."*

*"Is there a control issue?"*

*"There always is."*

*"Are you entertaining these people?"*

*"This could be big."*

*"I want to change the world."*

*"You plan a party, and you definitely have to accommodate for the different tastes of your guests!"*

*"Some people are lactose intolerant."*

*"Others can't tolerate other's opinions."*

*The people might object.*

*Where were we?*

*On the deck.*

*Most of this story took place on the deck. She had invited over a few friends on a lovely June night.*

*"What do you know?"*

*"Things about food."*

*"Is that code?"*

*"No, it is how I feel about myself."*

*"Everything is code for the self."*

*"One dot can contain all the details of the universe."*

*"What were you doing talking to him?"*

*"He asked me about cheese. It's not as if we have anything between us."*

*"You were seductive in the grocery store."*

*"Honestly, you are not my type. I was just filling out time."*

*"What are you telling me? Should I just leave?"*

*"Have you had enough to eat. I wanted to share my food."*

*"You were married. You seemed lonely."*

*"Not every women is looking to have the jerk in her life replaced with another. I am not calling you a jerk. But you need to chill."*

*"I thought that I'd hang out a little while longer."*

*"I have someone for the night. He understands cheese better than you do."*

*"Is he a business associate?"*

*"I wouldn't describe it like that."*

*"This is really a nice place."*

*"It really is. That is my architect."*

*"That is your ex."*

*"No, he is my ex's friend."*

*"You are dating him now?"*

*"No, he just likes my food."*

*"We all have desires."*

*"Food can satisfy. Eat a little more."*

*"Who are these guys with you? They all like to eat."*

*"They live to eat."*

*"Tell him to shut up."*

*"You are not that special."*

*"You were so nice in the grocery store."*

*"I was desperate. The guy who taking care of me was being a real jerk. Now, he is so nice."*

*"This is getting out of control."*

*"You are not part of the story."*

*"I would like to be a part. Please, let me stay."*

*"I have a guest bedroom. I hope that you don't mind that me and my friend will be having fun."*

*"Is that how you think about it?"*

*"It's not that different than drinking a little more wine."*

*"Can I have your number?"*

*"I don't want you to come to my place."*

*"This really is getting out of control."*

*"I dig your style."*

*"You complain how the world is. But you are all hanging with people who have no idea what is hardship."*

*"I thought there was money for me in this."*

*"There is no money to make."*

*"You have a sweet ride."*

*"You want me to take you for a spin."*

*"There are things that we can share."*

*"What are you talking about?"*

*"Money shit!"*

*"I would like to stay at your place."*

*"I have a guest room."*

*"Even in my fantasy, I can't get no satisfaction."*

*"What is behind all this?"*

*"I am behind it."*

*"This is getting way out of control."*

*"Who even has the money to take care of this?"*

*"You looked like someone who liked to have fun."*

*"What is fun?"*

*"Someone who could be frivolous."*

*"I am supposed to be having fun. But I think about it too much. I am playing a game. I don't know how to disengage."*

*"I am not really happy about any of this."*

*"You can't really get your revenge."*

*"Who is paying for any of this?"*

*"I am the kind of person who likes to pay."*

*"This could all turn into a disaster."*

*"Taste the cheese."*

*"Did you import this?"*

*"I have the contracts."*

*"This is where life gets murky."*

*"That is the beginning of the story."*

*"You look fit."*

*"You like to take chances."*

*"That was how the last story began."*

*"I really am hungry!"*

*"We both are!"*

*"I can make a snack."*

*"That is good!"*