

SAY CHEESE!
by Megan Cramer, for Luz Maldonado

Characters:

Pepper Jack: Chipper cheese loving Wisconsin native, played by Luz
Henrietta Gorgonzoliano: Surly turban wearing Owner of the Ye Olde Swiss Miss Cheese Shop, played by Megan

SCENE 1

Time: 8:05 am

Place: Ye Olde Swiss Miss Cheese shop

At Rise: Henrietta has been interviewing singing cheese sellers all morning. The last one is kicked out the door while she shouts after him.

HENRIETTA

(shouting to her last interviewee) AAHH! You were horrible!! Get out!! Your "Say Cheese" dance was pitiful. You didn't even know the difference between a camembert and a crème fraiche. You couldn't sell cheese to a starving rat!! *(Henrietta reaches inside her turban to take out a morsel of cheese to munch on)* Stinking Bishop!... what am I going to do? That was the last person scheduled to interview. Idiots. Pure unpasteurized idiots. *(she exits through the door to the back storage room)*

Pepper enters, cautiously, with a travel bag/suitcase, with the want ad in her hand. she looks around in awe at the immaculate shop. She sees a cheese display with a knife next to it. She looks around the store to see if anyone is around. She grabs the knife and cuts into the cheese to sample it.

HENRIETTA

(Pops her head through the window, takes a quick sniff) Who cut the cheese? Don't touch that! What do you want?

PEPPER

Oh, I'm sorry. It was just so beautiful....Is this the Ye Old—

HENRIETTA

Old-e. As in very old-y.

PEPPER

Cool. My name is Pepper. Pepper Jack. And I am here for the job of Singing Cheese Seller.

HENRIETTA

Oh? Is that right? *(enters through the door)* Well Pepper. Pepper Jack. I am Henrietta Gorgonzoliano. Owner. What makes *you* think *you* are going to be any better than all of the other losers I have seen today?

PEPPER

Well, Henrietta---*(she drops her bag on the floor)*

HENRIETTA

Miss Henrietta.

PEPPER

Okay, Miss Henrietta, I happen to be quite the cheese connoisseur! I mean, I *am* from Wisconsin. In fact aren't those some Wisconsin cheeses right there? *(she reaches towards a small display)*

HENRIETTA

(she swoops in and swats her away) I thought I told you not to touch the cheese. You'll get fingerprints on it, and there's nothing I hate more than having to dust the cheese.

PEPPER

Sorry.

HENRIETTA

(perks up) Wisconsin, you say?? THE Wisconsin?? The cheese mecca of the world?? I have always longed to go to Wisconsin. But I am stuck *here*, in Switzerland, with the pure mountain air, the crystal clear lakes, the majestic Alps....

PEPPER

But there's yodeling.

HENRIETTA

That's true. But here I am, a virtual prisoner in this miserable cheese shop, with no customers, no way to escape, no money to travel with, and no hopes for happiness... But it is such a quaint, fragrant shop, and you say you think you are up for the job?

PEPPER

Oh yes. You've never met anyone who loved cheese as much as I do. I love the overwhelming stench, the creamy texture, the gooey melted stringiness. I know my camel milk from my yak milk, can sense the subtle difference between a nutty, fruity Oka and a sharp, clean Bleu. I don't even mind a little musty Feta...mmm... reminiscent of sweaty gym socks.

HENRIETTA

Hmmm, well, let's just see about that.....are you up for a little test?

PEPPER

Hit me with your best shot.

HENRIETTA

Okay, We will start with a little geography quiz. I name the cheese, you name the country. Limburger.

PEPPER

Germany.

HENRIETTA

Asiago.

PEPPER

Italy.

HENRIETTA

(aside) She's good.... *(to PEPPER)* Branza de burduf!

PEPPER

ROMANIA!!!

HENRIETTA

Alright, alright, you wanna play hardball, try this one on for size---
Velveeta!

PEPPER

Trick question! Velveeta is a petroleum based product. It's not a real
cheese!

HENRIETTA

(Henrietta reaches inside her turban to take out a morsel of cheese to munch on)
You have passed. I have never met such a formidable fromage-adable
opponent.

PEPPER

Oh thank you! When do I start?

HENRIETTA

Halt right there. Knowledge will only get you so far in the wonderful
world of aged curd. If you are to be a *singing* cheese seller you must *sing*,
no? I will teach you our song, and then you repeat it, yes? With...A...Smile.

*(Henrietta breaks out her accordion—for the first two notes--? and sings the song
and the matching "Say Cheese" dance, but never smiles while she does it, and in
fact looks rather miserable.)*

Song "Say Cheese Polka"

HENRIETTA

WE'VE...GOT... GOUDA, SWISS, GORGONZOLA,
FETA, BRIE, AND MOZZAROLLA
WHICH ONE OF THESE CURDS WILL GET YOUR VOTE?
WILL ...IT... BE....QUESO, PROVOLONE, ROMANO,
RICOTTA, CHEVRE, PARMESAN-O
CHEDDAR, MONTEREY, OR GOOOOA--T
THIS BLEU, THAT MUNSTER WILL BEGUILLE
OUR CHEESE WILL REALLY MAKE YOU SMILE, SMILE, SMILE,
SMILE
SAY CHEESE!

PEPPER

Oh, that's cute. In Wisconsin, we have a song that goes---

HENRIETTA

I don't care about Wisconsin ditties! Sing THIS song!

PEPPER

Um, you do realize that you never smiled while you sang that song, right?

HENRIETTA

SING I SAY!

PEPPER

(PEPPER is very nervous, but she stands and sings the song, and does the movements very enthusiastically, and despite her nervousness, she has the most beautiful voice Henrietta has ever heard)

WE'VE...GOT... GOUDA, SWISS, GORGONZOLA,
FETA, BRIE, AND MOZZARELLA

HENRIETTA

MOZZA ---ROLLA

PEPPER

Oh, yes, right. ROLLA. Cause it rhymes. *(she starts to sing again, and freestyles on the note of "vote" way too long)*

WHICH ONE OF THESE CURDS WILL GET YOUR VOOOOOTE?

HENRIETTA

Stop, stop, stop!!! "vote" is a short note. The long note is on "GOOOOAA—T" And why are you changing the melody?

PEPPER

Miss Henrietta, ease up, I just thought it might sound better this way.

HENRIETTA

(Gasps) Stinking Bishop! You want to change the "Say Cheese Polka?" It has been this way for 167 years. My mother's mother's mother, Fermenta de la Curdlioso wrote it, and it has stayed in the family ever since. It is how our business has kept alive. *(She eats a piece of cheese from her turban to calm herself)*

PEPPER

Well, it doesn't seem to be doing you much good, does it?

HENRIETTA

Excuuuuuse me?

PEPPER

Well, hello! This place is dead! And if this is how you treat your customers, it's no wonder no one ever comes in here. You keep everything the way it was and won't tolerate any changes.

HENRIETTA

What?

PEPPER

(She walks around the store, moving displays and moving everything around in the shop) In order to attract a new customers, you need a new business plan. How about giving away samples---put together a party platter for crying out loud.

HENRIETTA

A party what?

PEPPER

Ooh! And maybe a fun inflatable talking cow outside that says, "It's Udderly Delicious!"

HENRIETTA

(cold quiet fury) Out. How dare you speak to me this way. Get out! Oh, just get out! I don't need you and your newfangled ideas anyway! *(she pushes Pepper towards the door)*

PEPPER

(Pepper refuses to be pushed out and turns to her) Oh, but you DO need me, I have more ideas where those came from, and this shop needs me.

HENRIETTA

(She leans on the cheese counter and starts to cry) Oh Pepper, can you blame me? I am like an old, mature, aged cheese. Crusty and hard with a waxy rind. A little moldy. I can't change; I'll crumble!

PEPPER

You have got to learn to soften up!! It's time you learned to tolerate a little change.

Song "Be a Brie"

PEPPER

I LOVE YOUR SHOP, WITH ALL ITS OLD TIME QUAINNESS,
BUT I MUST ADMIT I HAVE A FEW COMPLAINTS, MISS
WHERE I COME FROM, A SHOP IS A SUCCESS
WHEN PEOPLE TREAT EACH OTHER WITH NOBLESSE
AND CHANGE WHEN CHANGE IS NEEDED

YOU'RE CONTROLLING, RUDE AND OVERPROTECTIVE,

AND YOU NEED A LITTLE YOUTH AND NEW PERSPECTIVE
I KNOW YOU MIGHT NOT AGREE RIGHT NOW
BUT YOU'LL SEE, I'LL SHOW YOU HOW
TO FEEL LIKE YOU'VE SUCCEEDED

SOFTEN UP, HENRIETTA, YOU'RE MUCH TOO HARD (WHO ME?)
CHEESE IS BETTER WHEN IT'S WARM, LET DOWN YOUR GUARD (I
DON'T HAVE A GUARD
YOU'RE A PARMESAN WHEN YOU SHOULD BE A BRIE (I HAPPEN
TO LOVE PARMESAN)
CRACK YOUR RIND AND I THINK YOU WILL AGREE (BUT HOW?)
OTIS SAID THAT WE SHOULD TRY
SOME TENDERNESS OH MY OH MY (WHO'S THIS OTIS)
SOFTEN UP. YOU'RE TOO HARD. BE A BRIE

HENRIETTA

IT'S TOO HARD TO SOFTEN UP
I'M OLD, MATURE AND STUCK IN MY WAYS
I'VE NEVER EVEN CHANGED MY COFFEE CUP
AND I'VE BEEN ALONE FOR...ALWAYS
I KNOW THAT I'M TOO HARD
BUT IT'S TOO HARD
IT'S MUCH TOO HARD TO SOFTEN UP

PEPPER(HENRIETTA)

SOFTEN UP, HENRIETTA, YOU'RE MUCH TOO HARD (I KNOW)
CHEESE IS BETTER WHEN IT'S WARM, LET DOWN YOUR GUARD
(OH, OH)
YOU'RE A PARMESAN WHEN YOU SHOULD BE A BRIE (MMM BRIE)
CRACK YOUR RIND AND I THINK YOU WILL AGREE (I AGREE)
OTIS SAID THAT WE SHOULD TRY (I CAN TRY)
SOME TENDERNESS OH MY OH MY (OH MY)
SOFTEN UP. YOU'RE TOO HARD. BE A BRIE (I'LL BE A BRIE)

HENRIETTA

I have a confession.... I have become ...I hate to say it....change intolerant.

PEPPER

I didn't know that was a real affliction...

HENRIETTA

You'd be surprised how many people suffer from it. But now that you are here, maybe, just maybe, I can learn how to tolerate a little joy in my life. And, perhaps, make some ch-ch-changes. That is, if you still want the job.

PEPPER

Are you kidding? The smell alone in this joint is enough payment. Hey, when can we put in that talking cow?

HENRIETTA

Don't push it.

(A customer walks in, and the two ladies ready themselves for the sale. Henrietta grabs her accordian and gives Pepper some maracas. They both smile widely)

CUSTOMER

Hello, I'm just in from Monterey, and I'm looking for a recommendation for a nice aged Swiss...

(The ladies start to sing the "Say Cheese Polka" one more time, and the customer is smitten! He yells out the door for more people to come in, and more and more customers start to enter the store, all of them singing the last two lines)

"SAY CHEESE POLKA" REPRISE

ALL

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WHICH ONE OF THESE CURDS WILL GET YOUR VOTE?
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CHEDDAR, MONTEREY, OR GOOOOA--T
THIS BLEU, THAT MUNSTER WILL BEGUILLE
OUR CHEESE WILL REALLY MAKE YOU SMILE, SMILE, SMILE

HENRIETTA

(reaches inside her turban for a piece of cheese) Let's celebrate with this special piece of manchego!

PEPPER

Oh, no thanks. I'm lactose intolerant.

HENRIETTA

But...

ALL

SAY CHEESE!

END OF PLAY