

## life with you is like a dream

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# life with you is like a dream

by [theglamourfades](#)

## Summary

Did you hear the one about the two comedians who got engaged? It's a funny story...

## Notes

Given the type of person I am, it was always on the cards that I was going to write a MidgeLenny wedding fic. So I decided to turn a previous one shot into the first part of a series!

You don't need to have read the first part for this to make sense, but if you should be so inclined, I wouldn't complain. ;)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Every so often, more than it really should have done, the ring on her finger caught her off-guard. She found herself staring at it when she was in the middle of making the kids' lunches, or when she was waiting to go out on stage, looking down at her hands. Sometimes it would even prove to be a distraction mid-set, when the glare of the spotlight happened to hit the neat row of diamonds, making the slightly larger one that sat in the middle glimmer and sparkle. It was a good thing that she was able to riff pretty much seamlessly, else the audience might have asked for their money back and she wouldn't have entirely blamed them.

She was engaged to Lenny. He'd asked her to marry him, and she'd said yes.

The ring sitting in place on her left hand was clear evidence that it hadn't been a dream, and she smiled every morning when she woke up and saw it there, after she'd taken in the sight of Lenny next to her, sometimes sleeping, others wide awake, his hand on her waist beneath the covers.

She had dreamt of it before it happened, and although she could tell Lenny anything, it was the one thing that she didn't mention to him. She hadn't wanted to put any pressure on him or make him think that she *needed* to get married. She really didn't. They were in love with each other and that was all that mattered.

Deep down, she supposed she was a little afraid of what might happen, given how things had turned out for both of them before. She knew that Lenny wouldn't stray and she had absolutely zero interest in even thinking about life with another man. What she did worry about, from time to time, was that their life might get a little too real. Mundane, boring. He'd told her about what his mother thought, that she had held Honey responsible for his career getting sidetracked and, in her opinion, he hadn't reached his full potential until after they'd divorced.

It was silly, really, and didn't hold much probability of coming true, not just because she was in the same profession. However it still remained as a possibility and her brain, as stupid as it could be, latched onto it. So even if she wanted to - and as the months turned into years she really, *really* wanted to - she never brought up the topic of marriage. They were happy, and the kids were too, and that was everything anyone could have asked for.

But then Lenny had. Taking her more than a little by surprise, but that was one of the things that she loved most about him. And, it had turned out that he had planned, a lot more than when they had first got together (though she still maintained that it had been something more than just a series of happy coincidences). It showed that he'd been thinking about it for a while, too, and that made her happier than she already was.

They managed a whole two days keeping it as their secret, reveling in the change in their relationship (though nothing fundamentally changed) with smiles and looks, and at night,

with touches and sighs and kisses more unrestrained than they were in daylight. It was tempting to keep things under wraps for a while longer but Midge caved, knowing that her parents would start to suspect the worst if she didn't call them like she usually did.

Of course, it was the first thing that Mama mentioned when she answered the phone, substituting '*hello*' and '*how are you all?*' for '*thank God, Leonard finally asked you.*' Midge could hear the joy in her voice, which filled her with warmth, but after the initial rush she became calm. Strangely so, considering that Midge was fully expecting to be bombarded with ideas for dates and venues, color schemes and table settings, menus and music suggestions. Maybe it had been so long in coming that Mama's personality had changed in the waiting, or a second wedding simply didn't require the same level of meticulous and slightly obsessive planning.

She didn't complain, as it gave them the freedom to make their own choices. Lenny had, half-teasingly, brought up the idea of a courthouse wedding, and while that had its romantic charms, Midge was set on something that was small and intimate but which involved their friends and family. The kids would be a big part of it, and there wouldn't be too much of a reception afterwards; something that finished early so that they could head off for a more adult get-together at The Gaslight in the nighttime. She also knew when she wanted it to happen, and before too long they'd set a date and were ready to send out invitations to let everyone know.

March 11th. It was when winter was moving into spring, and there was something about that shift that she liked; it felt fitting for what their relationship meant in so many ways, representing fresh starts and new perspectives, and how things were only going to get better.

A couple of weeks after the date became official, she noticed her mother starting to get a little antsy. She talked about an engagement dinner, something to mark the occasion, and despite there really being no need Midge thought it best to appease her before she got any other ideas. Just something informal, for family. Mama and Papa, the kids, Noah, Astrid and their kids, and Sally. Then Mama invited a couple of other people along, and then a few more, until it was becoming a definite party - or *gathering*, as Mama termed it - rather than a dinner.

It was fine. Just one evening that they could go along with. It might also be kind of fun, and nice to get everyone together for something other than the high holidays.

Before then they had another reason to celebrate, one which Midge considered to be far more important. She baked a lemon pound cake - Lenny's favorite - as well as a chocolate babka. The kids had made work of most of the babka, but the pound cake remained intact by the time they'd gone to bed, and she adorned it with four candles, one to represent each year that he had been sober.

"I'm sorry there's no song," she said as she presented the cake before him.

"Yeah, I don't think there is one for continuing to stay off drugs. Maybe I should give Shy a call and we could work on something."

Midge smiled, her hands resting on his shoulders as he blew out the candles. He cut into the cake, slicing up pieces for both of them, giving her a more generous portion than she would

cut for herself. She was already thinking a little bit about dress shopping, but pushed away the more intrusive thoughts quickly, picking up her fork as she seated herself on Lenny's lap.

"I know we don't usually go to such lengths," she said after making it halfway through her slice, "but it felt important this year. I'm proud of everything you've done, and I wanted you to know that. As your fiancée."

"I don't think I'll ever get tired of hearing that," he returned, his arms circling a little more firmly against her waist. "And far be it from me to toot the shofar, but you're right."

"Well, that always helps."

"It *is* important," he continued, "because you were, along with Kit, my motivation to get help and get clean. I knew that if I ever wanted a real shot with you that I couldn't be involved in that, and given time, it would have consumed me. I have a duty to my daughter, and to myself, but I have one to you too. And now that we're going to be in it for the long haul, I need to remind myself how important it is. We're going to have a life together, Midge, and I want it to be the best life you could possibly imagine. And then some."

"Nope, I'm not gonna cry," she exclaimed, sniffing a little as she did so and tightening her grasp around his shoulders, "not when it's such a happy day."

"If you want to cry, then I'm not going to stop you," Lenny replied, a teasing note in his voice.

"I'm good," she affirmed, straightening herself up a little. "The celebrating doesn't end with pound cake, you know."

"Really?" he enquired, right eyebrow shooting upwards.

"I have plans for you, mister," she said, shimmying from his lap, smiling at the way he reached his arms out to keep contact with her. "Plans that involve the bedroom."

"I'm a big fan of those kind of plans. Is there any chance I could get a little preview?"

"I think that could be possible, *Mr. Bruce*," she replied, lowering her voice as she leaned over him, his hands having pulled her back.

"Oh, *Mr. Bruce*," Lenny smirked, palms fitting to her hips, "I like being *Mr. Bruce*."

Their lips were teasingly close when the phone rang, making Midge jump and Lenny sigh.

"Whoever it is, it can't possibly be as important as your plans," he called out, causing her to shake her head and smile as she moved to answer.

"Mama!" she said, a little too enthusiastically on hearing her mother's voice. "It's kind of late for you to be calling, is everything okay? Wait, slow down. Okay, right, six more people for the gathering, and possibly a couple of people that the Cohens know, and the Goodmans' daughter and son-in-law too. Okay, that should be fine, but we ought to put a cap on it at some point."

Across from her, Lenny got up from his seat, making a swiping action with his hand and mouthing the words, *'that's it, we gotta leave the country. First thing in the morning!'*

She stifled her laughter as he mimed packing a suitcase and scarpering, somehow managing to stay composed enough to remain talking to her mother.

*This is the man I've chosen*, she thought to herself, only half taking in what Mama was saying.

She couldn't be happier about it, or about the fact that he'd chosen her too.

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"So, I have big news to share, and I wanted you wonderful people to be the first to hear it out in the open. I'm getting married again."

Whoops and cheers came from the audience to meet her, along with applause that echoed around the auditorium.

"Wow, thank you. That makes me feel really good, because, honestly, it is nothing short of a miracle. Dating was *rough*. You kind of forget what an ordeal it is until you have to do it again. Everyone was telling me, 'it's just like riding a bicycle; you just get on again and go'. This was around the time my son was learning to do the very same thing, and, I swear to God, he couldn't go more than a couple of pedals before he fell off. Crying, wailing, saying he hated it and never wanted to look at it, let alone ride it again. And I got it. Who needs bicycles anyway? So overrated.

"The thing is, it's hard enough to date when you're -" she cupped a hand over her mouth, almost just mouthing the word, "- *divorced*. But when you do what I do for a living, it just adds so much more complication into the mix. And paranoia. Men get so weird about it, and particularly the men I dated. Every little thing was perfect, and you know, that's nice at first. But then they start spending longer in the bathroom than you do, and that's really saying something."

A ripple of laughter went up from the female contingent.

"They say you can smell fear, and even with all that extra hair gel and cologne, there was no mistaking it. *'You're not gonna tell jokes about this, right?'* *'No, what do you take me for?'* *'Okay, okay.'* Then, literally a couple of seconds later, *'You promise?'* *'I promise.'* Great, we're all good. And then, *'because, you know, I can do it differently,'* and at that point, poof, any desire you had is out of there. *I wanted you to do it any which way, but now it's not happening, fine.* It's really the least funny thing you can come up with, ironically.

"But then, I just so happened to start dating a comic." She paused to give credit to the hoots and whistles that raised up to the ceiling; no matter how long he'd been away from performing, the crowds still loved Lenny. "And, my god, it was a revelation. The difference! He actually goes out of his way to do things that could turn up in my set. He says to me, *'sweetheart, you can say anything you want about me, so long as it's funny.'* Which really goes without saying, but it does make me feel good, reassured. Though I did have to tell him,

*'honey, you're aware that giving me three orgasms in the space of a half hour is no laughing matter?'"*

There was even louder applause, again, from the women in the audience.

"I know, I'm a very lucky girl, and very happy, too. Though not as happy as my mother. She was all ready to take out advertisements, auction me off to the highest bidder. I never knew that she could do backflips rivaling that of a champion gymnast, and I can only hope that I'm that supple when I make it to her age. And my father. If I hadn't said *yes* then he would have had no problem whatsoever doing so instead, and I'm not even talking on my behalf. Which was a little disconcerting, until he said that my fiance is, and I quote, *like the son he never had*. My father is big on equality, and he practices what he preaches, screwing both me and my brother up in equal measure.

"I'm feeling very relieved, because I was a little worried how it would go down tonight. Because there have been some people who have asked me why I would want to get married again. And I get it, I do. *Once bitten*, and all that. Though I will say, biting is not really our thing, even though we're far from conventional. Well, I guess, firstly I'd say, "is there anyone out there who wouldn't marry Lenny Bruce if he asked them?" And if you're thinking, *I wouldn't*, then, respectfully, you can get out, right now."

The audience applauded wildly.

"You know how old I was the first time I got married? Twenty. *Twenty years old*. I mean, that's crazy, right? They ought to make it illegal. Nobody knows anything when they're twenty. I thought I did, but boy, was I wrong. You expect to get married and that's it, done; you never need to think about anything ever again. If you're of the same faith as I am, it's even written right there in a contract. But the truth is, and no one tells you this, you have a lot of learning to do. For some people, that learning isn't easy, but it's fun, it's mutually satisfying. For others, you get to learn, in great detail, that your husband has a thing about fucking his secretary. Really, it's swings and roundabouts."

The crowd laughed as she put her hands out and shrugged her shoulders.

"I know, you've heard it before, but it never gets old. I thought my world was over back then, but it was only just getting started. That's another thing you learn as you go; that it's never the end. If I could go back in time and tell my twenty year old self something - well, I'd tell her a lot of things, but that would be top of the list. One thing that I have always done is not to give up on something just because it doesn't work out the first time around. If I subscribed to that way of thinking then I wouldn't be standing here right now. And sure, there are some things that you can only try so much with before you just have to resign yourself and move on. But we've already confirmed that isn't a problem this time around. Absolutely, definitely not. For those of you who have come here expecting some dirty joke about how Lenny Bruce's vocabulary isn't the only thing that's lengthy and impressive - you know, you can have that one on me. A little starter pack moment for you all, use it how you will."

She took the microphone off the stand, the spotlight following her as she moved across the stage.

"I've realized something in the last couple of years, and it's kind of embarrassing that it's taken so long, but better late than never, right? Now, if you're one of the many fantastic ladies that make up this audience, you might want to hold onto your hats, because this could come as a shock. Ready to hear it? I discovered - wait for it - that I can do things because I *want* to."

She brought one hand to her chest and the other to her forehead, miming swooning, to rapturous laughter.

"I know, I know, it took the wind out of my sails too. Ladies, check on those in the seats next to you and just yell if anyone needs medical assistance. I, as a thirty two year old woman, can do exactly what I want. Not because it's what society expects or because I'm in competition with anyone or because I have to check any boxes. I can do what I want, and fuck what anyone else thinks."

More cheers and applause rose up, making her smile.

"Let's face it, whoever gets to have the say about these things would have written me off a long time ago. *'She can't even make it to thirty without getting divorced? Make sure that she never has any happiness for the rest of her days!'* Longevity runs in my family, and if I'm going to live a good fifty or so years yet, then I want to be able to share that time with a man who makes me laugh, who supports the shit out of everything I do, and who loves me."

More than a few 'aww's and coos came from the audience.

"Because, while I'm generous, I'm also more than a little bit selfish too. And you know what? I deserve it. So, there you have it; that's why I'm getting married again. Also because it's a well-known fact wedding cake contains zero calories, so really, why wouldn't I take advantage of that?"

She bounced off stage that night, buoyed by the audience's reaction. Did it have more than a little to do with getting the news out there? She was always honest in her sets, but it really gave her a different edge tonight.

Also, she was just really happy.

"You were on fire," Susie exclaimed, at her most animated after a show that went well. "I guess I don't gotta arrange another interview with the *New York Times* either, given you just came right out with it."

"Nope," Midge affirmed, "it's out there now. Maybe it'll make its way into the review."

"The headlines too. If L. Roy Dunham or her proteges have anything to do with it."

"Fuck her. She can write what she wants, I don't care about that anymore."

"Wow," Susie said, looking genuinely shocked.

"What?"



"Nothing," Susie replied, "just that being with Bruce has really mellowed you. You were always so obsessed about that kind of shit."

"He has a good effect on me," Midge agreed, smirking a little. "And it's not just because of the -"

"Hold it right there," Susie interrupted, her face in a grimace, "I promise you this, Midge, I will never want to hear about your sex life. Not even when it involves Lenny Bruce. *Especially* when it involves Lenny Bruce. I know too much already, I'm surprised I can still look the guy in the face."

"He's made of stern stuff," Midge smiled, "but I promise, I won't say anymore. You have to admit though, I'm much easier to handle when I'm calm and not stressing about something, or several things all at once."

"I don't know if you're ever *easy* to handle," Susie said, earning a look of faux indignation from Midge. "But yeah, things are definitely plainer sailing when you're happy and not complaining about shit."

"Good. I'll tell Lenny to keep it up, then." She couldn't stop herself from snickering. "Although, that's really just a given."

"Fuck," Susie exhaled, putting her hands over her ears. "I wish someone would invent brain bleach. I'll fucking pay them to work on it."

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Over the course of their relationship, the only matter that Lenny had taken up any kind of crusade against was the lengths at which she went to when it came to maintaining her appearance. Her nighttime routine, ingrained in habit as it was, was at first a source of fascination and confusion in equal parts to him. Midge recalled the first few times he'd watched her as she meticulously put the curlers in her hair and applied the cream to her face, waiting the necessary amount of time for it to take effect before removing it. She'd felt a little self-conscious but also weirdly pleased that he'd taken such an interest. It was something that she'd shielded from Joel - for his own good, she'd always told herself, but deep down she knew it was because he'd have something that he thought was smart to say about it.

Lenny joked with her, but never in a way that was mean. One night, when she went about the rigmarole as usual, she had noticed him behind her in the mirror, his face seriously set.

"*Do you really believe you need to do all of this?*" he'd said, waving a hand over his face.

"*I don't know,*" she'd answered honestly, "*I just always have. If I want to keep looking good, I have to stay on top of things. And,*" she'd admitted, feeling a little shy all of a sudden, "*I want to look good for you.*"

She had seen his expression shift before he moved towards her, his chin resting on her shoulder. She smiled and shuddered a little, feeling the warmth of his breath against her face.

"*Sweetheart, you will always look good to me. No matter what time or tide may do.*"

She couldn't stop herself from rolling her eyes a little, even though she knew he was being sincere. *"Don't tell me that 'it's what's inside that counts'."*

*"That almighty schmuck Joel Maisel. He really did a number on you."* His hand upon the nape of neck made her let out a breath. *"I will not deny that you are a very beautiful woman. The most beautiful woman I have the privilege to know, and ever will. But beauty is more than skin deep. Remember what you made me promise before that first night?"*

She nodded her head, a small sigh escaping her.

*"Being the funniest person on the planet makes you beautiful. Your big heart makes you stunning. The way you look after everyone, even if you've known them for a total of five minutes, makes you absolutely gorgeous."*

She looked at his reflection in the mirror, smiling as she relented to his way of thinking.

*"I mean, whatever makes you happy makes me happy too. And if doing all of this is a good use of your time, then I have no complaints. Or at least I will keep them to myself."*

*"It does get kind of monotonous,"* she'd admitted. *"As long as you promise you won't leave when I start to look like the creature of the swamp."*

*"I'll have you know I have a thing for said creature, so that's going to be a treat for me."* He'd swiped a fingertip along her cheek, causing her to giggle. *"Now, might I take this goop off your flawless face so that I may kiss you properly?"*

*"With pleasure."*

*"I'm hoping so."* She'd laughed as he nudged his nose against her, taking her hand to lead her into the bathroom. *"And Midge?"*

*"Yeah?"*

*"First thing tomorrow, I'm throwing that fucking measuring tape in the trash."*

She did much prefer spending the time with Lenny, reassured by his promises to love her however she was, whether she changed or stayed the same. As the wedding got closer she did step things up a little, but it fell in with Lenny's writing routines, so by the time she was ready to head to bed he was putting his typewriter away for the night. It was only something small but it made her happy that they were so in sync.

It wasn't an addition to the routine that kept her up tonight, more the bunch of returned RSVPs that had turned up earlier that day.

And one in particular, which she was having trouble believing wasn't a figment of her imagination.

She started a little when she felt Lenny's hand touch her shoulder, turning her head to the side.

"Bed's cold without you," he said, his gentle way of telling her to give up on obsessing.

"You're the one who keeps me warm," she countered, leaning into his touch and lowering her head so that he could nuzzle a kiss into her neck before she moved to slip off her robe. "I just can't believe that it's there in black and white. My ex-husband's going to be at our wedding. This isn't going to be a disaster at all."

"It isn't," Lenny tugged lightly at her waist, pulling her against him as they moved to lay down. "He's just going to fade into the background."

"Not Joel's style," she murmured, hand clasping at his shoulder.

"Or not," Lenny returned. No matter what crazy state her head was in, he was always the voice of reason. "Either way, he's not going to spoil the day."

"You have plans."

"I might have," he said, and she could hear the smirk in his tone. "I have made quite a few valuable acquaintances in my time in and out of most of the jail cells in this state."

She gave him a look that said *no, but if it was any other time...* "I shouldn't have sent one out in the first place. I could have said that it got lost in the post."

"Then he would have come over here and thrown a fit. And found a way to hold me personally responsible."

"It's probably for the kids. He's going to smuggle them both out when we're not looking, so now one of us has to have eyes on him at all times, which is really inconvenient."

She smiled despite herself when Lenny held onto her tighter. Honestly, she should have blacklisted Joel right after the kids had told her what he'd said to them about it being better all round if they went to live with him and Mei full-time.

*"Your Mama's away a lot of the time, and I know you love Bubbe Rose and Zayde Abe, but it's pretty hard on them to be looking after you so much."*

*"We have Lenny," Ethan said, not too afraid to stand up to his father now that he'd turned eleven. "He doesn't go on tours anymore."*

*"Yeah, well...Lenny's not...your mama can say it all she wants, but he's not a good guy."*

*"Lenny's the best!" Esther exclaimed, not entirely oblivious to the exasperation she was causing in her father. "He's funny, and he tells great stories, and he does my hair just as good as Mama does. And he lets me and Kitty paint our nails sometimes, and makes us pancakes. And he takes us to the zoo! You said you were going to take us to the zoo, but you never did."*

*"Because your brother got the chickenpox, then my work got really busy. I was going to take you to the zoo."*

*"Lenny took us, and he got us animal balloons," Esther continued. "I got a tiger."*

*"So he does a lot of nice stuff," Joel interrupted, "but he does a lot of bad stuff, too. Stuff you're too young to know about yet, but trust me, it's bad."*

*"If you mean drugs, then he's been clean for four years," Ethan stated matter-of-fact.*

*"Jesus! Your mama shouldn't be talking like that to you."*

*"Why not? We're not babies. Mama says we're old enough and responsible enough to know the truth." Ethan stopped, smiling a little.*

*"What's that look for?"*

*"Mama said you used to like Lenny. That you were one of his biggest fans."*

*"Yeah, well, things change," Joel huffed, pinching the bridge of his nose. "People change."*

*"So that means that Lenny can change too, right?" Ethan enquired.*

*"I don't want anything about Lenny to change," Esther supplied.*

*Joel remained quiet for a long time, looking at his daughter beaming a smile and his son wearing the same expression that Midge always did when she was being smug and self-righteous about something.*

*"Don't tell your mama I said any of this to you."*

*"Can we get cookies?" Esther asked. "Lenny buys us cookies."*

*"Sure, fine," Joel muttered, scrabbling to get the coats. "Cookies. However many you want, until you throw them up."*

She was still so mad about it. That he'd go behind her back, she expected. That he was still trying everything to turn the kids against Lenny, badmouthing him at every turn was unforgivable. Luckily the Maisel genes they'd inherited had all come courtesy of Shirley and Moishe. The generation gap was a real thing, and it was one of the things she was most thankful for.

"Or Mei gave him a lecture. If he didn't agree, she was going to cut his balls off and give them to us as a wedding present."

"While I'd respectfully have to turn that particular gift down, I would have certainly volunteered to sharpen the implement of her choosing." She felt Lenny press a kiss to her hair, his hand on her thigh. "I promise you, Joel is not going to fuck things up, not for us anyway. Non-existent hell would have to freeze over several times before I let that happen."

"I love you," Midge said, the words half muffled against his chest.

"I love you too," he returned, kissing her temple and then her cheek. "And, if I may suggest it, the option of the courthouse is still there."

"Not gonna happen. There's the initiation you need to go through."

She pursed her lips at his scrunched brow and confused frown.

"*Initiation?*" Lenny repeated. "Didn't I pass over all those hurdles already?"

"There's more," Midge replied, keeping her tone deadpan, "so much more."

"Ah, well," she felt his shrug as he exhaled, "I have faced much worse. Like the Catskills, for one."

"Don't pretend you don't love it."

"The only thing I love about that godforsaken place is getting to see you in a bikini. Everything else is barely tolerable." His eyes met hers as she looked up at him. "But for you, my darling, I will persist."

"I knew there was a reason I was marrying you," she said brightly. "I promise that it will grow on you."

"Like mold," he bounced back, and she couldn't stop herself from smiling wryly. "Honestly, I'm looking forward to it, the occasion of it all."

"You never fail to surprise me," Midge said.

"It does help that your mother is the one keeping an eye on things. If it was mine at the helm it would be an actual circus, complete with acrobats and lion-tamers."

"The kids would love it. Though Esther might try getting a little too close to the lion," she mused, thinking about how their last family trip to the zoo had nearly ended in tears, and thankfully not a trip to the hospital.

"It's been a long time coming," Lenny mused, his hand stroking her arm, "so there ought to be some fanfare. It's only fitting, for the day I get to become a Weissman."

Midge sat up a little, looking down with a smile at where he was staring up at her lovingly. The whole thing would be a little too progressive, and even though Papa would have been glad about the honoring of the family name, she was also very much looking forward to taking Lenny's.

"You'd do that for me?"

"Like a shot," he answered, taking her hand into his, "if you're okay with me riding on your coat-tails. It's not like being a Bruce has brought me a ton of luck."

"Oh, I don't know about that," she replied, tugging lightly on his fingers.

"You're the exception to the rule," he said, sitting the same as she was, his free hand reaching to her cheek.

"These constant compliments better not stop once we're married." She smiled against his lips, sorely tempted to just shut up and take things further after the first kiss.

"Unless you plan on stopping being wonderful."

"I don't think that'd be very fair." She sunk a hand into his hair, smirking at the groan escaping his throat as she scratched lightly at his scalp.

"I fully agree."

His arm reached around her, hand cupping lightly over her hip, and she let herself think about how it might feel different, not expecting that it would in any significant way but getting a little thrill that added to the sensations caused by his lips upon hers as she fantasized about kissing him as his wife.

No doubt most people would imagine that her fantasies would involve something far more outrageous.

"Oh, I meant to tell you," she caught her breath, leaning herself back against the pillows and holding back laughter at how he looked far from amused, "Susie's been doing some rearranging, and she hit upon a window of free time. For the honeymoon."

"Okay, I do like the sound of that," he agreed.

"April's out, there's a couple of gigs that can't be moved. But May looks good. Pretty much the whole month." She smiled at how his eyes had lit up, just as excited as she was by the prospect. "I was thinking that we could have a week or so to ourselves, before we bring the kids out to wherever it is that we decide to go."

"Oh god," he lowered his head for a moment before looking at her again, "don't tell me you're thinking about the Catskills. Please, let me have some say in this."

"No," she said, with an exaggerated sigh, "it's not the right season for it there. Although, it might not be too late to rearrange the wedding..."

"Midge, you're not being serious."

"You have to ask?" she teased. "I'm either losing my touch, or getting *really* good, if I have you fooled."

It was frankly adorable that he looked a little sheepish. If anyone looked hard enough, they might have even been able to discern a faint flush in Lenny Bruce's cheeks.

"I have a couple of places in mind, around the same area," she continued on, trying hard not to give the game away. "I need to look into it a little further, but I'm pretty convinced that you'll approve."

"Sweetheart, anywhere with you is going to be paradise."

Shivers of the most pleasant kind took hold of her, his gaze belonging to her entirely and unreservedly, his hand brushing her thigh beneath the covers.

"Because, as much as I am looking forward to the wedding," he said, leaning in to her, "it's everything that's going to come after that I really can't wait for."

"Me too," Midge murmured happily, her hand grasping the back of his neck, doing her bit to close the short distance between them.

"Being all alone with you," he said the words against her neck and her throat, his mouth tracing a well-worn path, "I can't think of any place I'd rather be."

"Mmm, Lenny," she sighed, feeling like she should probably do something to stop his descent.

She got a last look at his dark eyes before his head disappeared with the rest of him beneath the covers, his hands smoothing her nightgown up past her hips. She sucked in a breath when his lips met her stomach, keening as he trailed them further down, the fingers of one hand running over the lace of her underwear.

If this was what was waiting in store, she thought she might see if there was any chance that they could move the date forward instead.

"Mama! Lenny!"

The sound of Esther's voice had him scurrying up faster than a lightning strike, Midge putting a quick hand to his hair and then hers in order to compose themselves.

"What's up, sweetie?" she enquired as her daughter climbed up onto the end of the bed.

"I had a bad dream," Esther confided, her small voice shaking. Midge could see that her lower lip was quivering, too, and reached out to her. "There was a monster and it was chasing me, and I couldn't run fast enough. Then I tripped, and it was going to get me."

"Oh, baby." Midge kissed Esther's head as she brought her closer, Lenny making space. "It's okay, it was just a dream. You want to sleep here for a little bit?"

She looked over the top of Esther's head at Lenny; he lowered his chin and nodded.

"Yeah," Esther responded, her hand reaching for Lenny's.

"Get comfy, kiddo," he said, bringing the covers up over the three of them after kissing Esther on the forehead.

"Why were you under the covers, Lenny?" Esther asked. "Were you hiding from the monster too?"

"No monster is making its way in here. I wouldn't let them. But your mama gets cold feet, so I was making sure they were warm enough."

"That's silly," Esther mumbled, and Midge let out a little laugh.

"You know me too well," Lenny replied, making to 'steal' Esther's nose. She giggled in response.

They were just getting settled when another pair of footsteps made their way into the room.

"Kit," Lenny said as he half-sat up. "What's happening?"

"I got up to go to the bathroom, and I saw that Esther wasn't in her bed," Kitty answered her father, standing with one foot placed over the other, "and I got scared."

"Well, Es is going to stay with Midge and I for a while."

"That's good," Kitty mumbled.

After a couple of minutes, whereby Kitty hadn't moved, Midge felt the bed shift as Lenny got up.

"You wanna stay, too?"

"If that's okay, Dad."

"Of course it is."

He wasn't out long, just enough to pick Kitty up with a half exaggerated grumble and settle her in the center.

"Hi, Kitty," Esther said, smiling.

"Hey, Es," Kitty replied, her hand moving to pat Esther's hair.

"Okay," Lenny said, "is everyone comfortable? Got everything they need?"

A chorus of three 'yep's chimed in response.

"I'm turning the lights out, then."

About ten minutes passed, with Esther and Kitty not so quietly whispering to one another, before a knock came on the door.

"Go away, monster," Lenny called out, "we don't have anything you want here!"

"It's not a monster," Ethan replied, earnestly.

"Ethan," Midge responded, "you're not asleep."

"Nope," Ethan said.

"Can I ask why?" she ventured.



"I got hungry, so I thought I'd get something from the kitchen. And I was seeing if Es and Kitty wanted something too, but then they weren't there, so I thought I'd check in here."

"Well, it's getting a little crowded. And it's not too late," Midge answered. "Once you're back in bed, it'll be breakfast time before you know."

"But, Mama," Ethan whined a little, "I'm hungry now."

"The kid can't help getting his appetite from his mother," Lenny said to Midge.

"Fine," she said, pulling back her side of the covers, "I guess we're having a not-quite-midnight feast."

Ethan and Kitty made enthusiastic noises of approval, along with various requests of snacks to be made.

"Can we have hot chocolate with marshmallows?" Esther asked eagerly from where she sat in the bed, resembling a little queen of her kingdom.

"That's the perfect accompaniment for a not-quite-midnight feast," Lenny said, picking her up easier than he did Kitty, by virtue of her being two and a half years younger. "Plus, I hear monsters are allergic, which makes it all the better."

As the five of them trekked down to the kitchen, Midge took a moment to herself to watch as Lenny and the kids bounded ahead, and smiled.

Life was more than a little crazy, but there was no way that she would change it for anything.

## Chapter End Notes

There's a little easter egg lurking in here, if anyone can spot it (I think there's just the one, anyway...)

In terms of dates, I'm going off information listed on [The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel Wiki](#), for Midge, Ethan and Esther's birth dates anyhow (1933, 1954 & 1958 respectively). I don't think we know exactly when Midge and Joel's wedding was (although I did a little searching) but for the purposes of everything lining up I'm going for late 1953. If anyone does know exactly, then I will give you a badge.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"What do you think?"

She asked the question because she did genuinely want to know what everyone she'd invited to the boutique thought, yet at the same time it was a question that was redundant, given that she knew, from the moment that she put it on and even before she needed to look at herself in the mirror, that this was the one.

The dress she was going to get married in.

She'd spotted it early on in the appointment, the color catching her eye as she rifled through the selections on the rails. It brought a smile to her face instantly, butterflies fluttering in her stomach that let her know without question that it was perfect. The assistant had noticed her excitement and shared in it, though she did make a comment about it not being the obvious choice of most brides. But she had smiled, too, and picked it out to save up after Midge had tried on a few more 'traditional' dresses first, knowing how important it was to warm people up before the main event.

As she came out wearing ivory dresses in several different styles she got more than a little terrified that there would be one or another that would make those who were assembled gasp, or cry (well, mostly; she would have been really surprised if Susie had started with the tears). Though generally she wasn't swayed from her own opinion, those kinds of reactions would have been difficult to argue with.

Luckily nothing had been met with more than tepid murmurs and words such as 'nice' and 'flattering', which made her breathe an inward sigh of relief.

This was the one that really mattered, and she scanned the faces before her for their wordless thoughts, encouraged by the wide smile from Imogene and bright-eyed looks from both her daughter and stepdaughter.

"Well?" she said, spinning around twice on the spot, giving the full effect by twirling, the skirt billowing lightly as she did so.

"It's blue," Mama said, a statement that was matter-of-fact.

"You're not color-blind, Mama, good to know."

Midge cast her gaze round, saying *next!* without uttering a word.

"It's gorgeous." Imogene came to the rescue, her boundless enthusiasm finding a new depth, which made Midge smile. "Really gorgeous. That lace."

"I know," Midge gasped, running her hands carefully down past her hips. "I don't think I really knew what the word *exquisite* meant until I felt this lace."

"And the bows!" Imogene squeaked, like she was just noticing them, "so cute. But classy, too. Timeless. And they're your trademark!"

"I swear, it was already here. They didn't know I was coming." She looked towards the assistant. "You didn't, right?"

"No, Mrs -" The young woman faltered a little. "Miss...?"

"Midge is just fine," she flashed a broad smile before turning back into the room. "But, yeah, it's like it was custom-made. Which is probably why I love it so much."

"You look like a princess, Mama," Esther exclaimed.

"It's really, really pretty," Kitty nodded in agreement, and then added, "and you're really, really pretty, so it goes together."

"Thank you, girls," Midge replied, doing a little curtsy as she held the skirt between her fingertips, making both of them giggle.

"It's blue," Mama repeated.

"I like the blue." Imogene's timing was as perfect as ever. "It's unique. And understated."

"It's the babiest of blues," Midge said, turning to the side to regard the dress, and herself in the dress in the mirror. "A very wedding appropriate blue."

She honestly loved the dress and would have chosen it in any circumstance, but at the same time, she couldn't help but think about Lenny. Maybe her judgment had been swayed a little thanks to him and their history with the color. The shade wasn't a million miles away from the nightgown she'd been wearing the first night she took hold of a microphone and the first night that she met Lenny.

She conjured an image of him standing behind her in the mirror, staring at her speechless for a few long moments, then making a quip about not seeing the dress before the wedding day. She'd look over her shoulder, smile, and say *I guess you'll have to come and take it off, then.*

"Susie?"

"You're asking my opinion? You know everything about dresses, I know jack shit."

"You don't have to *know* anything, I'd just like to hear what you think," Midge assured.

"Well, it's better than the hundred other ones you've tried on."

Midge rolled her eyes, knowing that was an exaggeration.

"And yeah, it's different," Susie continued. If anyone else had used that word, she would have ordered them out of the shop with no questions asked. "You look fucking great in it. It's the one."

"I think so, too," she said, smiling widely, glancing round to take another look. Taking in a deep breath. "Show's over, I guess. Until the big day, that is."

Mama got to her feet from the sofa, exhaled, and exited the room.

"Shit," Susie muttered under her breath.

"You want me to go and say something reassuring?" Imogene offered, her eyes almost double their size as she looked at Midge.

"I've got it," Midge said, shifting into another mode as she followed her mother's steps into the changing area.

She tried her best not to feel deflated, but there was a part of her that would never entirely shake the need for her mother's approval. *Save it for a set*, she told herself. *Or several*.

At least she'd never be short on material.

"Mama," she tried gently, her mother's head lifting at the sound of her voice, "it's going to be okay. The rabbi's going to have plenty of other things on his mind. And, you know, I can't exactly wear white this time around."

Truthfully, she shouldn't have worn it the first time, and Mama knew that, but there was never any need for them to have a discussion about it.

"I'm not going to change it for another one," she went on, keeping her voice soft and taking a seat next to where her mother was sitting on a velvet-covered chair. Midge settled for the footstool beside it, being careful with the dress as she sat down.

"Oh, I knew that from the second you came out of here and went out there," Mama exclaimed, pointing to the room they'd just come from.

Midge smiled, eyes staying on her mother when her gaze landed back upon her.

"I realize that we are very different," Mama said, the words stinging her a little bit. "It's something I've been aware of for a while."

"You're not going to tell me that I'm adopted, are you?" She deflected back to humor whenever things were starting to feel on the wrong side of awkward. "Because, other than stealing my thunder, it's really going to mess with the seating arrangements."

Mama had long given up on acting horrified when she came out with those kind of quips, but she hadn't abandoned the pointed glares that held the power to go directly to the soul, taking every shortcut that was on offer.

"I worried about you for such a long time," Mama broke the silence that had settled. Midge automatically sat up straighter; it wasn't what she had been expecting to hear. "Worried about you being on your own with the children. Even though you have your father and I, and we would never see you out."

"Mama -" Midge began, until she was silenced by a careful look.

"Your father insisted that you were fine, that you could handle things. I could never understand it."

She saw her mother looking down at her hands, regarding the rings on her own finger.

"But then, over the years, I came to see that it was true. When I understood that you were serious about the -" Mama lowered her voice, though there was nobody around to hear. Even if there was, it wouldn't have come as a shock. "- *career in comedy*. You could be on your own, and you could thrive. You could do something that I never could, and I suppose that frightened me. But it made me proud too. Immensely so. That I could raise a daughter who was capable of that. Capable of so many things."

Midge reached a hand out to her, feeling herself getting choked up. Having a heart-to-heart in the dressing room of the bridal boutique with her mother was pretty much the last thing she had expected to happen today.

She took Midge's fingers into her own. "I haven't said it enough, but I want you to know that I am proud of you. And I would have been proud whatever you had decided to do."

"Thank you," Midge replied, echoing the sincerity that her mother had shown to her. "That means a lot to me. And I want you to know that it's my decision to do this. I love Lenny so much. More than I ever loved Joel, and for a long time I didn't think that was possible. Thinking about that, and all the time that I wasted being angry and vengeful and upset, I got so down about it. Sometimes - a *lot* of the time - I don't know how I would have got through, if it hadn't been for you and Papa."

Warmth spread out in her chest as she took in her mother's smile.

"But you know, it was all worth the wait. Every bit of it. It's like with how things have turned out, and the success I've had; if it all would have landed in my lap, I don't know if I would have appreciated it the same way. I like to think that I would, given the example I've had -" she broke off to smile that bit wider, "- but really, I don't know. I'm lucky, in that I don't have to imagine. And sure, I could have been happy on my own. But knowing how happy I am with Lenny, getting to have that every day...nothing else could compare."

She gave her mother's hand a squeeze before getting to her feet.

"In the same way that no other dress could compare to this one," she said brightly, whirling round until she was at risk of getting dizzy. "Come on, you have to like one thing about it."

"Imogene is right," Mama offered after appraising it from all angles once more, "the attention-to-detail is very impressive. And the lacework is wonderful."

"There," Midge smiled, "I knew you had it in you."

"It's not what I would have chosen, but it suits you very well." She stepped back, bringing a hand up to her face, before coming forward again, meeting Midge's eyes with her own. "It is a beautiful dress, and you look beautiful in it. And that I'll see you get married in it...well, that's all that matters."

"Mama," Midge uttered, holding her hands over her chest. "The dress has something in common with the groom," she said, relaxing her shoulders and stifling her laughter.

"Miriam, that's very unfair. You know that I became very fond of Leonard once I got to know him better."

"I know, Mama," she said, "it's just a joke. I'm getting them out now, ahead of time."

"I could never find fault with the man that makes you so happy," Mama continued, and though she didn't need to say so, it made Midge smile to hear it.

Having six definite yeses, including her own, she changed out of the dress and said goodbye to it, at least until her final fitting. Imogene cheered when they were at the counter, which led Esther and Kitty to do the same, and the wild fluttering started up in the pit of her stomach again. She noticed that it was getting just that bit stronger with every step closer they were getting to the wedding.

"Okay," Susie clapped her hands together once Midge managed to tear herself away from the zipped up bag, "now we've got that out of the way, time to move onto the serious business. The cake tasting."

Esther and Kitty's cheering became more enthusiastic, to the point where it was little wonder that all of the dogs in the neighborhood hadn't come running to bark outside of the door.

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In the space of just over a week, her fiance had become nearly unrecognizable. If it wasn't for those eyes, and the unmistakable, absolutely distinctive way they looked at her, she would have had to bring in the cops, which given his past record would have been regrettable for everyone involved.

She wasn't used to facial hair. There had been one time when Joel had misguidedly thought it would be a good idea to grow a mustache, perhaps to get on side with her father. Aside from the downright weird logic, he just wasn't very good at it. Lenny had far fewer problems in that area, and though it took her a couple of days to get accustomed, she had to admit to rather liking the scruff. Not that he needed any help when it came to looking handsome, but it gave him a rugged edge which she did not complain about. It turned out not just to be an aesthetic thing either; the feel of his longer, rougher stubble against the inside of her thighs had sent all kinds of thrills sparking throughout her body, happily accompanying the usual kind he coaxed easily from her.

Maybe in part spurred on by her enthusiastic reactions in their bedroom, he decided not to trouble his razor. Which was fine, for a few days, at least. But his beard grew fast. *Really* fast,

like there were pixies involved in the process. By now, it was less *bohemian artist* and getting increasingly closer to *man stranded on desert island for several months*.

Midge figured that he'd do something in time. Spend a morning in the bathroom, which she would happily surrender to allow him to take care of the situation. As the days went by, and March got ever closer, the low level of panic that hummed within her steadily built until it became a force field that had the ability to power several electric appliances at once.

She had to take a stand, before she did serious damage to her nervous system.

"You can't turn up to the wedding looking like that."

"Like what?" he said nonchalantly, glancing up at her from the book he was reading. "I was planning on getting changed out of this robe, if that's what you're referring to."

"The beard," she answered with a sharpness to her tone, not in the mind for joking at that moment in time. "It's too much."

"Really?" He raised a hand to his chin. "I was working on cultivating it. Figured it'd be a good talking point."

"Oh, it'll be that, alright. I can just hear people now; '*I thought that Midge was marrying Lenny Bruce, not a guy who stumbled out of the jungle.*'"

He snickered. "I like that air of mystery. It might come in useful in future."

"Lenny, I'm being serious. There's nothing I want more in this or any other universe than to marry you -"

She found herself pausing when, underneath the bushy hair that covered the lower part of his face, she made out a slightly goofy and incredibly heart-melting smile turned fully towards her.

*Don't fall for it, Midge*, she told herself, *you know all of his sneaky tactics to get you to relent.*

"- but I'm not gonna do it until you bear more than a passing resemblance to the man I developed a stupidly huge crush on many years ago. Afterwards, I promise that you can go all out."

"I might need to get that in writing," he teased, tapping a finger against the now closed book, lying on top of the kitchen table.

"Well, give it a year, or two," she thought on it aloud, "and the kids have to still be able to recognize you."

In saying that, she found herself wondering about something she'd given an increasing amount of thought to lately; the idea that, just maybe, they might try for a baby of their own, before things got too out of control with her career, and now Ethan, Kitty and Esther were all older and not quite as demanding in terms of attention. Before it was too late for her, too,

even though she was still young and she knew women who were several years older than her who'd given birth to healthy babies.

It was still just an idea for the time being. *One thing at a time*, she reminded herself; they needed to take care of the wedding first before thinking about anything else that would turn their world upside down, even in the best of ways.

"Okay," Lenny gave in, raising both hands in the air as he got to his feet, "it's going to go."

"Oh, thank God," Midge sighed in relief. It would save her mother from having a certain heart attack, which was something she wanted to avoid in all circumstances.

"On one condition," he continued, moving closer until she was in easy touching distance.

"Okay," she said, ever so slightly hesitant, waiting to hear what it would be.

He smiled, and she felt her heart catapult back and forth.

"That you're the one who shaves it off."

"No," she said, certain that he had to be kidding. Except it looked as though he was being pretty serious. "Lenny, no. I can't do that."

"Sure you can," he replied. His hand brushed against her arm, feather-light. His eyes were fixed fast upon her.

"Nope. It's impossible."

She made to walk away into the living room, her heart turning over in a renewed panic. Well, that was it. She ought to call Mama and make her profuse apologies, to Papa as well for the fact that he'd have to look after Mama as she recuperated.

Lenny had followed her in, the clumping of his slippers calling out his presence.

"You shave your legs, right? And underneath your arms?"

She was a long time past being embarrassed about either of those necessary actions; nothing about her anatomy and the things she had to do to it fazed him. "That's different."

He half covered his amused grin with a curved hand. "I fail to see how that's the case, from a point of simple physics."

"It's your face," Midge huffed, a little exasperated that he was missing the point. "That's a lot of responsibility to place on me."

"Midge," he began. She could see that he was holding back on collapsing into a heap with laughter, and maybe she was taking it a little too far, but she couldn't help it.

"I'm a lot clumsier than I'd have you believe," she went on, "I don't want to hurt you."



He took hold of both of her hands, his touch having an instantly calming effect.

"I've inflicted the worst possible damage on myself over the years than anything else could come close to." She didn't like being reminded of what might have been, and he quickly appeased her with further soothing touches. "You'd never hurt me. It'll be fine, I promise."

A smile came upon his face, increasing in intensity the longer he looked at her.

"What's say we do a practice run?" he ventured. "There's enough time that I could grow it back and you can do it again before the wedding. That should boost your confidence."

"Or give me enough time to call around all of the barber shops in a five-mile radius."

"Come on," he tugged on the hand that he was still holding, walking her in the direction of the bathroom, "no time like the present."

"Didn't I tell you?" she said, trying to pull him back, "I have to go see Susie about this thing. A residency in Vegas."

"This is the first I'm hearing about it," he replied, raising his eyebrows. "You have to go right now?"

"Yep," she said, sounding entirely unconvincing. "Well, not right now. I just made that up, so not at all. Unless I've caught Alfie's ability to see into the future by osmosis."

"You're acting like this is the worst thing that could ever happen," Lenny chuckled. "The quicker we do it, the easier it'll be."

She stood frozen to the spot in the bathroom, watching as he got everything ready, staying in place and staring at the safety razor balanced on the edge of the sink while he brought through a chair from the kitchen to sit on, the difference in their heights making things trickier otherwise.

Her heart began to beat harder in her chest as he softened the hair on his face with water, lathering on the shaving foam seconds afterwards. It struck her that she'd find the whole scenario a lot sexier if she was permitted to be an observer.

Suitably prepared, Lenny sat facing her. He offered her the safety razor in his hand and she took it with some reluctance.

"Midge," he said, his voice even and deeply sincere, his eyes looking up at her, "I trust you. I'd trust you with my life if it came to it."

"Well, we're not going that far," she murmured, "at least, I really hope we don't end up there."

It took her a minute, though it felt like much longer, to touch the blade of the razor to his cheek. She winced as she made the first slight sweeping movement, and she must have moved it barely a millimeter before she retracted back, being extremely careful and extra cautious of her movements as she did so.

"Nope," she said, jumping back on her heels, "I can't do it. I tried, but I can't."

Lenny smiled, reaching out an arm towards her. "Come here," he uttered, twining their fingers before he took the razor back from her tight grasp, "let me get you started. We'll do it together until you feel comfortable. How does that sound?"

"That sounds...okay," she replied, some of her nerves relaxing somewhat. "You're really determined about this."

"What can I say? I believe in you. Always have and always will. And I also believe there's nothing you can't do."

He took her hand to cover his where he held the razor confidently, bringing it back to his face. As he was about to apply more pressure, she stopped him, stiffening her fingers over his.

"Don't you need to look in the mirror?"

"Nope," he answered, "I know my way around pretty well by now."

He carried on without any further interruption, guiding the razor and their hands over his cheek, down to his jawline. Midge held her breath, in awe rather than abject fear; he made it seem so easy, so much so that she started to wonder what she'd been so scared of. Already, a great quantity of hair had been removed with just a couple of strokes, and she took the razor out of his hand to wash it clean, before she took up the mantle on her own again.

She took it slower than he did, tensing her shoulders whenever she had to press down a little harder in order to do the job the best she could. It did get easier the more she went on. And, though she felt a little bit weird for admitting it, it was getting her hot. It was so intimate, being assured that she had his complete trust and confidence. She admired her handiwork as she went, unable to stop herself smiling at the increasing amount of smooth skin that was revealed.

All the while, Lenny had kept one hand held just above her waist, the thread of contact between them maintained throughout. She could feel his breath against her face when she leant in for a closer inspection. He made a strangled kind of groan when she made a gentle glide across the curve of his right cheek and she broke off to chide him with a stifled laugh, which took the edge off things.

"I make that noise whenever I'm shaving," he retorted, his expression largely unmoved to allow her to finish the job.

"Of course you do," Midge replied, unconvinced but turned on all the same.

She moved back to assess him, bringing a towel up to his face to wipe away the excess foam when she was happy with how he looked, trying to ignore how his hand was moving steadily from her hip down to her thigh.

"Better?" he asked her.

"You know you always look good," she said, bringing a hand to his face, caressing his now smooth skin with the tips of her fingers. "But this face is just how I like it. Uncovered and incredibly handsome."

She leant forwards, tossing the towel to the side so she could take his face into both of her hands. His arms looped around her waist, pulling her in closer to where she stood between his legs, and she smiled against his cheek as she kissed one, and then the other. He hummed in approval at the feeling of her lips upon his skin, and Midge murmured too.

"And I'm not going to get beard burn whenever we kiss, which is another bonus."

"I can't argue with that," he replied, moving his head so he could press kisses against her neck. She couldn't hold back her gasps in response; he knew exactly the spots that made her weak, and she was already pretty worked up from the whole thing. "How about we test that out a little bit more? That's if you don't have any urgent meetings to be at."

Midge shrugged, placing her hands on his shoulders. "It's too early for Susie, anyway."

"Excellent," he said, capturing her lips in a kiss that hinted at the passion to come.

He hoisted her up, over his shoulder, and she squealed happily.

"Now," he uttered, placing her down onto the bed when they made it to the bedroom, "where should I kiss you first?"

"I'll leave that to your discretion," she replied, gasping when he lifted her dress over her hips, her gasps quickly turning into moans when he pressed his mouth to her.

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Midge hadn't intended to be the hostess at her own bridal shower, but there were some things she guessed she couldn't let go of.

She was flitting about her parents' apartment, the same one that used to be hers, too busy making her way around each of the guests in turn, soaking up their misty-eyed gazes and taking in their well wishes to think about how she didn't feel nostalgic. Sure, it probably had a lot to do with how they visited the place at least once every couple of weeks. It would never completely stop feeling a little bit like home.

Among the smiles and coos, in the small silences between words that hurried in rushes of excitement, she thought about the place that was her home. The brownstone in Greenwich Village that she fell in love with the moment that they first looked around it. Lenny had made a joke about wishing that she'd fallen for him just as quick, smiling when she returned that the slow burn had really made it. Later, he'd point out that while she was the one who suggested the area, he had found the apartment. Well, it was called an *apartment*, but it was more like a house. A house that was filled with laughter and almost constant noise.

The place where she was most at peace.

She didn't mind being away for the evening, very willing to surrender up the space for him to have a few hours to spend with the boys (including her father). She'd be back there to spend the night in his arms, which meant that she was guaranteed a blissful sleep. Once they'd had sex at least twice. She was wearing a very pretty dress, even if she had foregone the painfully uncomfortable corset; she did want to eat, after all.

The thought of food brought her to the realization that she had barely spoken to, or even seen Susie since about ten minutes after she had arrived, carrying a crate of beer that Mama gracefully deposited in the kitchen, formulating a plan on how to return it unrecognizable back to Susie at the end of the night.

She took another turn around the entirety of the apartment, making her apologies when she didn't stop to chat, promising she'd come back later. She'd looked just about everywhere, checking the most impractical of places knowing they were precisely the kind of hideouts that Susie would seek escape. Midge had suggested a bar or club for a private pre-nuptial celebration, but Susie insisted that she'd *'go to your fucking fancy thing.'* Which had made her really happy.

Where she didn't expect her to be was where she found her, sitting on the sofa with Astrid to her right, passing photograph after photograph into her hands. Midge could see that her sister-in-law was the one doing all of the talking, while Susie sat with her face in a rictus grin, eyes wide and becoming frantic when she spotted her moving from the corner of the room.

"Astrid, honey," Midge placed a hand on her shoulder, a little sad to be interrupting the scene, "Mama is just about to take the apple kugel out, and she promised you the first piece."

"Oh, that's so sweet," Astrid replied, smiling up from where she was sitting, "do you think she could bring it out here? Your friend is really loving the pictures of the kids, and I still have a whole lot in my purse to go through."

"I'll catch them later!" Susie said, unclenching her jaw long enough to speak.

"There's a couple of recipes she said she promised to go through with you, and I guess she doesn't know when she'll get the chance again ahead of the wedding," Midge continued.

Astrid nodded and made to stand. "That's true. Hopefully when everything's settled we'll get to spend more time together. Selah is twice the size she was since she was last here, and Chaim, well, he's almost as tall as Noah!"

"We'll be sure to invite you over before he makes it up a beanstalk."

She sat down once Astrid made her way through to the kitchen, Susie grabbing hold of her arm.

"Thank fuck for you," she exclaimed, "I thought that's how I was gonna die, to the soundtrack of all the boring shit that kids do."

"Astrid is a darling, but she does need to be told directly to knock it off. And that requires years of careful handling."

"Yeah, well I've had several years taken off my life in the space of a half hour. I know it's your party, but Midge, you can't leave my side, okay?"

"You're safe with anyone other than Astrid," she assured. "But Cathy is chatty, which is pretty funny, considering. And get Ruth on the right subject, and she can go for days."

"You have talkers for relations and friends. Makes a lot of fucking sense."

"I'm glad I found you." She smiled as Susie gave a look that said *not as glad as I am*. "I wanted to talk to you about the wedding."

"I already told you, I am not wearing a fucking dress. Not even for you."

"And risk you stealing my thunder? Absolutely not. Even Lenny in a dress wouldn't be as much of a big deal. I'm pretty sure he's worn them more often."

"I don't want to do anything of importance either," Susie went on. "No big role, or shit to deal with. It's gonna be my day off, and I just want to sit there and eat cake. Nothing else."

"I hear you. You won't have to do a thing. I could even find someone to feed you, if you wanted. My cousin Jonah would be happy to do it, he's not a talker. We thought there was something wrong with him for years, but no, he's just quiet."

"Suits me," Susie murmured.

"I guess it's more *after* the wedding I'm talking about, but anyway," Midge waved a hand in the air beside her. "I wanted to let you know that nothing's going to change, when it comes to my career. I mean, Lenny wants more for me than I want for myself. So you don't need to worry."

"I wasn't worried, but it's good to know," Susie replied. "So long as he doesn't have any ideas about taking over. That husband and wife kind of set up, or the other way round, is fucking creepy."

"He wouldn't dream of it," Midge said. "He's actually kinda scared of you."

"What the fuck. Lenny Bruce is scared of *me*?"

"I know. It's adorable." Midge laughed as Susie screwed up her face. "Not as much as at the start, but he definitely watches his step around you."

"Huh." Susie gave herself some time to ponder this revelation. "I wasn't gonna say anything, but now you're getting married, I figure it's okay. When you started up with him, I was so worried. Like, shitting my pants levels of scared."

"Thanks for the visual."

"That first day, when you told me you were serious about dating him, all I could think was *fuck, fuck, fuck. This is how it fucking ends*. 'Cause I know what you're like, a dog with a bone who sees the mailman when said bone is in his mouth. No matter how I looked at it, and I really tried to get all the angles, I could only see disaster. I mean, I hid it from you, because I didn't need the added stress on top of everything else."

"I knew," Midge said. "You were chain-smoking for weeks. I was about to tell every vendor to let you know that there was a cigarette shortage to get you to stop."

She paused, taking in a breath as she thought back, not really giving herself credit at the time for the tumult of emotions she'd been feeling.

"I was scared too, at the start. And for a little while after that. I knew that I felt a lot for Lenny. That I *loved* him. So I knew I couldn't ignore it or walk away, but it was like taking a gamble. A huge one. There were moments, times when I just didn't know if we were going to make it. And Susie, I'd never been as terrified in my life as I was in those moments."

She'd lived on autopilot in those days. Turning up to gigs, feeling like she was physically painting on a smile to stop herself from breaking down. She had to be the strong one, strong enough to see them both through. If she was being brutally honest, she didn't know how she did it. Afterwards, even in the times when the withdrawal was so awful that it had them both in tears, he would hold her and kiss her. Tell her that he was sorry for bringing her along with him on such a terrible journey.

As she took in shaky breaths, wiping the tears from one eye while Lenny's thumb took care of the other, she could see, even then, that it would all be worth it.

"I didn't realize until then how much love is worth. That it really can get you through anything. I love him so fucking much." She stopped, and then smiled as she considered. "I'm really lucky that he loves me too. And it all worked out for the best."

"I don't need to hear you be so sappy about it," Susie maintained the facade of grumbling before she relented with a small smile of her own, "but yeah, I'm happy about it too."

"Even if you're going to be doing nothing, I'm really glad that you'll be there." Midge smiled wider as she reached to take a box out of the coffee table drawer. "Because it's going to get so hectic, I wanted to give this to you now. It's from both of us, to say thank you. For being so understanding. As well as everything else."

Susie just held it for a while, until Midge was on the verge of taking it back and opening it for her.

"You didn't...you didn't have to give me a fucking present," Susie said, unveiling the watch.

"Consider it making up for all of the birthdays when you insisted you didn't want anything," Midge replied. "I know I didn't *have* to, but I wanted to. You've done so much for me, and saved my ass more than a few times. I wouldn't be where I am now without Lenny, but I'd be nowhere if it wasn't for you. Things might have gone very differently if you hadn't bailed me out that first night. My whole life could have been unrecognizable."

"Come on," Susie said, her voice wavering a little, "you would have fucking made it."

"I don't know," Midge said, honestly. "If I stop to think for too long...it's really fucking crazy."

"Incredibly fucking crazy," Susie agreed.

"You're gonna hate me for saying this, but I gotta do it." Midge smiled, reaching a hand out towards Susie as she held back her own tears. "I love you."

"Ah, fuck," Susie exclaimed. "I'm not gonna say it back."

"That's okay," Midge replied, not needing the words to know how Susie really felt.

"Well, thanks. And this is really fucking flashy. I hope it didn't cost too much."

"Hardly anything," Midge said, "less than the dress, shoes and flowers combined."

"I think we ought to raise a toast," Susie suggested, "it's the least we could do. Besides, after listening to Blondie go on and on, I'm owed more than one fucking drink."

"That is a fantastic idea," Midge clapped her hands, springing up. "I know Mama got some really good stuff for the occasion, I'm going to take a look. Wait right there, I'll be back."

Several drinks and laps around the apartment later, Midge landed back on the sofa, bouncing slightly as she sat down and laughing at the fact.

"Susieeeee!"

"You're fucking drunk," Susie said.

"Shhh," Midge put a finger to her lips, "Mama might hear. And I prefer *tipsy*. It sounds cute and lady-like. Tip-sy. Tip-ssssy. That is a funny word. I need to write it down."

She leant forward to scabble around in search of her notebook, flopping back with a sigh when she couldn't locate it (thanks to it being back in hers and Lenny's apartment).

"Susie Susie Susie. You're so great." Midge shifted over, slumping so that her head rested on Susie's shoulder. "Did I ever tell you that? I don't know if I did, but you are grrrrreat."

"Thanks," Susie responded. "You're great, too."

"You're great, I'm great. You know who else is great?"

"Let me take a wild guess."

Midge laughed until she snorted, stopped for a moment, startled, and then laughed again.

"God, Lenny is the best. Just everything about him." She held up one hand in the air, holding her fingers out by one. "His hair, his eyes, his smile. His -" she broke off to giggle, "- ass. He's got such a good ass. Oh, and look at that."

Her fingers were fully extended, showing considerable distance between them and her thumb.

"Miriam," Susie turned to warn her, "don't even think about it."

"But you're thinking it," Midge chirruped. "I know you're not into men, but honestly, Lenny is just so good in bed. Really, really good. I want to shout how good he is from the rooftops. Just the other night, he -"

"That's it," Susie took hold of Midge's hand, and reached for a cupcake with the other, successfully diverting Midge's attention. "We are outta here. Rose," she called out, "thank you for the hospitality, it's been a blast."

"You're leaving so soon?" Rose appeared suddenly, freaking Susie out slightly.

"Midg- Miriam got a little over-excited with the alcohol," Susie explained, while Midge swung their joined hands back and forth, finding the action highly amusing. "I'm going to catch us a cab and bring her back to Lenny."

"You're a very good friend, Susie," Rose said. "Make sure Leonard gets her lots of water."

"He'd get her the moon on a string if it was possible," Midge heard Susie say, "I'm pretty sure he'll have the basics covered."

"You didn't get to see the rest of the pictures!" Astrid stepped out from behind Rose.

"Dammit, that's a shame."

"I can -"

"We really gotta go, before she keels over. But next time, definitely. Looking forward to it already!"

There must have been a cab ride, but the next thing Midge knew she was at the door of their apartment, Susie propping her up with one arm around her waist, although she could stand perfectly well on her own. She thought so, anyway.

"Hey," Lenny said on opening the door, "it's early."

"You're not hiding anything you shouldn't be, right?" Susie said, sounding slightly more threatening than she meant to.

Lenny raised both hands to swear innocence. "You're welcome to come in and check."

"You're good. I'm probably going to find something I don't want to, in any case." She pushed Midge forward a little, transferring her into Lenny's arms. Midge immediately rested her head against his chest, purring like a cat as she did so. "She's blitzed, but she'll be fine in the morning, so I thought she'd be better off with you. I'll see you around."

"Thanks, Susie. See you."



He maneuvered her gently, only leaving her long enough to close and lock the door, slipping an arm around her waist.

"Your father left like ten minutes ago. I was starting to think that he might have to bunk with Ethan for the night."

"Bunk, that's another funny word," she mused. "Bunk. Buuuuunk."

"You are pretty drunk," Lenny chuckled.

"Nooooooo, I'm not," Midge protested. "I have never been drunk. Never ever. Not when my mother is around." She stopped, holding out one hand as her brow furrowed. "There was that one time, but it was fine. I cleaned up everything afterwards, so she had to forgive me."

"Who wouldn't? As long as you had fun," he said, his voice close to her ear. "Anyway, you're a cute drunk. Now let's get you to bed."

"Oooh, yes please," Midge giggled, squeaking when he lifted her from the ground. "You're so strong. That's another thing you're really good at."

"I think that's more to do with you weighing fifty pounds rather than a testament to my physical strength."

He deposited her safely onto the bed, helping her to take her dress and shoes off, being careful as he took out her earrings, making sure they didn't get tangled in her hair.

"Lennyyyyy," she said, "I just thought of something."

"What's that?"

"We should go on a date sometime." She heard him laugh that distinctive, short laugh of his. "What? I think we'd have fun."

"Oh, sweetheart, so do I. But," he paused for a moment, taking her hand into his, "I'm already attached."

"Nooooooo," Midge whined. "I knew I should've asked you sooner."

"Let me tell you about her. I think you'd really like her, once you got to know her."

"I don't want to know," she said, pushing her free hand against his shoulder.

"Just hear me out," he insisted, his voice soft and tender. "She's very funny, and thoughtful, and sweet. And she looks a knockout in everything she wears."

"Well, good for her," Midge scoffed.

"She has dark hair, and the most gorgeous blue eyes. She barely makes five foot, which is the cutest thing. She has a ring - wow, well I don't believe that. It's exactly the same as this one." He stroked a thumb over her engagement ring, then ran it over her knuckles. "And her name

is Miriam, but she prefers to go by Midge. Or Mrs. Maisel, as everyone in the world knows her by. Except pretty soon she's going to be Mrs. Bruce, to those in the know."

"Oh," Midge gasped, and then started to giggle, "that's me."

"It certainly is." He kissed her on the cheek, holding onto her hand while he adjusted the covers so she could get into bed. "And I'd never want to be attached to anyone else. They wouldn't be half as fun, for one thing."

He smoothed her hair, kissing her on the forehead.

"Don't go," she said, face half against the pillow.

"I'm just going to get you some water," he returned.

She registered the faint thud of the glass against the bedside, and let out a groan.

"Hangover kicking in already?" he asked.

One eye opened to look at him sitting on the edge of the bed, a pout set firmly on her face. "We're not going to bone tonight."

"No, not tonight." There was laughter in his voice, the sound one of her most favorite in the world. "One night off isn't going to do any harm. It might even be a good thing."

"You don't believe that."

"Maybe not."

"We can't help being insatiable. And irresistible."

"A perfect match in every way."

"You said it," she murmured, letting go of his hand long enough to let him climb into bed next to her. "I can't wait to get married to you."

"Me neither." His arm looped light around her waist, his chest against her back as he spooned her. "A lifetime of - no, I can't use that word. It just doesn't sound nice."

"What?"

"*Bone*. It's too technical." There was silence for a couple of moments as he thought. "*Ball*. That's better. A lifetime of balling is what awaits us."

She spluttered her laughter against the pillow.

"What?" he echoed her, his hand warm upon her stomach.

"Balling is so much worse."

## Chapter End Notes

Midge's dress is inspired by Rachel Brosnahan's dress from the 2019 SAG Awards - thanks to the wonderful [lovepollution](#) for unearthing the picture for inspiration.

I also borrowed the idea of Midge and Lenny living in a Greenwich Village brownstone from their amazing fic [Missing Piece](#) - go and read right away if you need a ton more MidgeLenny fluff and domesticity in your life.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

They were used to spending time apart. Sometimes, when she was on tour, for weeks at a time, though she had a rule that she'd never let it stretch to over a month. It wasn't her favorite thing to leave, but they coped. She occupied herself with writing new material, sightseeing when she had the free time, and sleeping for most of it. Lenny would come out when he could, with the kids when it wasn't too far, and for solo trips when the distance was longer. The rest of the time Susie kept her company, and had become adept at tuning out when she moped about missing him, putting in the earplugs that had come in very useful during the times when Lenny stopped over, staying in her room. It was weird that, despite the caliber of hotels being much better now that she was a household name, the walls were as thin as ever, at least according to Susie.

This was different. While she had a couple of gigs and filming commitments, she wasn't out of town. It was the week before their wedding and she wanted to be with him more than ever, not-so-quietly freaking out while he calmed her down. She'd told Mama that it hardly mattered, the rules not being so important when you were getting married for the second time (third, technically, but that time in Vegas never should have counted). They weren't Orthodox, anyway, so they could afford to ease up without it becoming such a big deal.

Mama had replied by saying that *'it matters all the more.'* When she hadn't expanded, just fixed Midge with a look, she quickly relented. While she wasn't jumping for joy at the prospect of not seeing Lenny for a week, the meaning behind Mama's words did more than placate her.

He'd laughed as she packed three suitcases worth of clothes, kissing her on the forehead after she argued that she needed to be prepared for all eventualities. Esther had made it clear that she wanted to stay at home, and while it made complete sense to her logical brain, it was another thing that made Midge upset. She was being selfish, wanting her little girl to coddle and cling to in the moments when it got too much. Esther's sisterly bond with Kitty was too strong by now to withstand more than a few hours separation, and Midge couldn't exactly say a whole lot about dependency being a bad thing. Ethan was coming with her, and Midge hoped that he could put up with being babied for seven days.

She had taken fistfuls of Lenny's shirt into both hands, keeping him in place close to her. She couldn't say anything right then, feeling as well as hearing the clock tick behind them. He just held her, arms wrapped around her as she laid her head against his chest, the sound of his heartbeat one that she much preferred, closing her eyes to commit its rhythm to memory.

Phone calls were permitted, and they became the highlight of her day as well as a lot longer than they ought to have been. She explained to her mother that she was talking to Esther, that she had to keep in good contact with her daughter while she was away. It was kind of amazing that they never ran out of things to talk about; even the smallest and most insignificant of happenings held so much value.

She asked how the girls were doing, and how he was handling taking care of dinner night after night. *'Oh, it's easy. Ice cream just involves taking the lid off and handing out the spoons.'* He did sound a little hesitant one night, and after not a lot of coaxing let slip that both Esther and Kitty had painted his fingernails, wearing him down with endless pleading. She knew she should have acted appalled, at least on behalf of Mama, but the pretense was impossible over the phone. She gave him instructions on how to get remover all the same, biting her lip as she smiled at the thought. He told her about Noah's over-protective big brother act at his boys' night, and she reassured him that, given that he hadn't followed through when it came to Joel, there was really nothing to worry about. She asked him how Sally was settling in, having flown in to be there for the wedding. He huffed out a sigh, saying that she was driving him crazy, but he admitted that it was good to see her with Kitty again, and Midge melted a little at hearing the love that he couldn't cover up in his voice.

In turn, she filled him in about her gigs (which he hadn't turned up to in disguise, leaving her more than a little disappointed) and how it was being back with her parents. That it wasn't as bad as she expected, Mama being preoccupied with the wedding and Papa writing for most of the time. He'd stood and waited a couple of nights while she'd been on the phone, explaining that he was getting stuck on his latest article and it would be very helpful if he could speak with Lenny, if he was able to spare the time. It was nice to spend mealtimes with them, and they saved turning on the TV to watch Sophie Lennon's awful show for the times when she was out. It was also really good to see Zelda again, and she brought up the previously-dismissed idea about them hiring their own maid (it was another *no*, for all the right reasons). She did miss Zelda, not because of everything she did but because she realized she'd never fully appreciated how brilliant - and also, incredibly funny - she was as a person.

She couldn't miss anyone, aside from Esther and Kitty, anywhere near as much as she missed Lenny.

"This is so stupid," she sighed heavily, letting the wall take her weight, "I just want to walk into the next room and see you sitting there. That's not even getting onto how hard it is to sleep without you next to me."

"We've made it this far without disaster. Six whole days," he reminded her. "It's about fourteen hours until we get to see each other again."

"When everything will still be on a schedule."

The line was quiet for a moment, Midge could hear his soft breathing.

"Are you thinking we should have -" he began, questioning her gently.

"No. No, I'm glad we're doing it this way."

Sure, there were aspects of the traditional Jewish wedding she would have been quite happy to forego, but it was what she wanted. Part of her maintained that it didn't matter how they did it, and it was true that she would have married Lenny any which way; being married to him was the main thing. It was important to her that she showed how much he meant to her. People thought that she was the one to save him, even if most of the time they didn't come outright and say it. Most didn't know that he had given her another chance, just as much as

she had been that for him; that she couldn't have made it as far and as high as she had without him being there, expecting nothing from her in return. The only person who ever had. He deserved the show and ceremony, the deep affirmation of love in front of those who mattered to them.

"Doesn't stop this part being as annoying as hell," she said, causing him to chuckle.

"I figured you might be taking advantage of the situation," he mused. "Shopping trips without interruption. Watching shows without my noisy typing getting in the way."

"I like the accompaniment," she countered, "some things benefit from it."

He laughed some more before letting out a sigh. "Yeah, it's not the same without you here, either. I'd go so far to say that life is infinitely worse. I don't know how I got on for so long, it defies all belief."

"I have an idea," Midge announced after thinking for a few more moments about how she never wanted to be away from him for so long ever again after this period of prolonged absence.

"I'm listening."

"I'm going to sneak out of the apartment and come to see you. Or, if your mother's going to make it get back to mine, we can meet somewhere downtown."

"I ought to check, just to be safe, I am marrying a thirty-two year old woman and not a fifteen year-old, right? I can live with having not the best of records, but that's not a charge I want staying on my sheet."

"I guess this week has had more of an effect on me than I realized," she said. "Ethan would play along, keep my parents distracted. He's really getting into drama club."

"Ah, so we're going to be one of those showbiz families, touring the Southern states with our variety act."

"It's a mystery where Esther gets her talent for singing from. Anyhow, we're getting off subject, and wasting precious time."

The sound of his breathing on the line was having the biggest effect on her, making her feel a little light-headed. Absence didn't just make the heart grow fonder, it also transpired that it made her a whole lot hornier, too.

"I am very tempted," he replied, "and if I was certain that I could go five minutes without being followed by two amazing but very inquisitive little girls, then I'd be all in. Though I wouldn't want your reputation to go beyond all repair if we got found out."

"It went past that point a while back," she bounced back, and then, somewhat reluctantly, relented. "I guess I can wait a few more hours."

"It'll be worth it," Lenny said, sensing her deflation. "I promise. I'm going to do my very best, wait and see."

"You always do," she replied, smiling even as her heart was aching. "I took one of your shirts."

"In case you ran out of things to wear in those three suitcases."

"No," she laughed, a little half-heartedly, "I just wanted something of yours. Something that smells like you and that I can wrap around me, and pretend like you're here with me." She scoffed, suddenly realizing how ridiculous she sounded. "Isn't that the worst thing you've ever heard?"

"I think it sounds pretty wonderful, actually," he answered, the warmth of his voice reaching out to her. "And if I didn't run the risk of splitting them open, I'd be doing the same with the nightwear you've left here. Esther did say that I could sleep with Banana Bear, though."

"Wow," Midge replied, knowing how big of a deal that was; Esther didn't part with Banana Bear for anyone. *Almost* anyone, anyway.

"Yeah, I'm kind of attached now. So if you don't mind sharing our bed once we've tied that knot."

"Well," Midge lengthened the word, twisting the phone cord around the finger, seeing how an accompaniment to her engagement ring would look, "seeing as it's Banana Bear, I think I can live with that. Although, we're going to have to blindfold her at times. I'm not sure she's ready for that level of corruption just yet."

"No," Lenny agreed, "not for another ten years, at least."

She retreated to what was her old bedroom and was now part guest room, part extended walk-in closet for Mama not too long after getting off the phone. It was a little late in the timeframe to do an extensive routine but stepping things up over the last couple of months had done the trick. She lay in bed, thinking about the day that was ahead. Everything that needed to be in place was, she was pretty sure of it. Taking in a deep inhale, she closed her eyes as she breathed out, slowly.

She thought about Lenny. Obviously. A smile curved her face as she pictured him, seeing her in her dress. Slipping the ring onto her finger. His lips against hers while everyone proclaimed.

The later it got with her still thinking and not sleeping, the more frustrated she became. There was something she could do to relax, involving Lenny. It wouldn't have been the first time she'd done it here, but it felt weird, now that she was a visitor. There was also the undeniable fact that it would have hardly compared to the real thing.

Having got up, she went with quiet steps to the front room, foregoing the comfort of the sofa to sit on the floor, leaning her back against it. She stared a while at the blank screen of the television before switching it on. Gordon Ford's face met her, a re-run of one of his shows.

She let out a quiet laugh, thinking of the time he'd come onto her, not realizing that she was already with Lenny. The holiday party Gordon had thrown after that had been awkward at first, until she discovered a little too close at hand that the host was very much not choosy when it came to sexual encounters. She would have been insulted if it hadn't been for the fact that she really didn't care.

"Mim."

She smiled at the sight of her father at the doorway. "Papa."

"I was working on my article," he explained before she got the chance to ask, "I had a rush of inspiration, and I didn't want to disturb your mother so I moved -"

"To the bathroom," she guessed correctly. "You really need a study."

"It's fine. There's a good energy there. I really think it's where I do my best work."

Midge refrained from making the obvious joke. "Well, who am I to argue?"

He sat down next to her, the glare of the television lighting the room. "I think it's finished now, aside from final edits. Though, I would like for Lenny to read it through before I submit it. Do you think that he'll have time? Not tomorrow, obviously, but sometime soon."

"He always has time for you," she affirmed.

Papa nodded, knowing that it was true, and smiled. "He's a very good man."

"I wouldn't be marrying him otherwise," Midge replied.

"Yes," Papa said.

She could tell that he was holding back from voicing something of his own about her previous choices. It wasn't that Joel *wasn't* good, somewhere beneath it all, even if he was a childish asshole quite a lot of the time. He was a good father and he could be a good friend, when he wasn't complaining. They were just never the right fit for each other.

They watched the television for a little while, Midge wishing she'd had the foresight to grab a bottle and a couple of glasses from the cabinet. Papa got up instead and fetched them, and she smiled at his apparent telepathic ability as he handed one of the glasses to her.

"Just this one," she stated after she'd taken a long, slow sip. "I should have been asleep over an hour ago."

"It'll help," Papa said, patting a hand against her knee.

"And if it doesn't?"

"I can leave the bottle by your bed."

Midge laughed, shaking her head. "That's too much of a temptation."



"I know that I worry about a lot of things," Papa announced, and she turned her gaze from the screen towards him.

"You're a Weissman, it's in our nature," Midge reasoned.

He made a small sound of agreement. "But I never worried about you. Whether you would get married again or not. You're perfectly capable of doing things by yourself. You have more than proved that over the past few years." He raised a hand to point a finger at her, which made her smile in how much the action reminded her of Lenny. "Not that you should ever feel the need to prove yourself to anyone."

"Thank you, Papa," she said. "I know it hasn't always been easy, but I also know that you're always in my corner."

"Life is unpredictable," he went on, tipping his glass towards her, "but it does have a habit of working out for the best. Most of the time."

"Most of the time," Midge repeated, clinking her glass against her father's.

They took sips in synchronization, Midge quelling the urge to knock back the remaining measure in one.

"I don't know why I'm so nervous," she admitted after a few more moments had passed in silence, "I've done this before."

"Ah, see, that's where you're wrong," Papa said. She felt herself frown a little in confusion. "You haven't married Lenny before."

She smiled, thinking that was exactly why she was so nervous, in a good way.

"At least it's going to be the last time. Unless something goes disastrously wrong with my career at some point down the line, which let's be honest, has the capacity to happen, and we need to have another ceremony to get things back on track. Because who doesn't love a wedding?"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," Papa warned gently, "focus on what's right ahead."

"See, where else am I going to get this wisdom?"

"I think Lenny's very wise."

"We're not going to go down this road," Midge said, her nose scrunching. "You know, I might be hours away from becoming a Bruce, but I am always going to be a Weissman. There's no getting away from that."

"Some would say it's unfortunate," he replied.

"Well, they would be wrong." She leaned to kiss her father on the cheek before making to stand. "I'm going to head off."

"You don't want this?" He held the bottle aloft in his hand. "A very small drop with milk. It always worked when you were a baby."

"Oh, so that's where it all started, my road to ruin. Don't tell Mama."

"It was her idea," Papa returned, completely unfazed.

"I think I'm good now. I just needed to talk." She smiled, already feeling more settled. "I'll see you in the morning."

"Good night. It'll be a great day," Papa said. Against the blue-white glow of the television screen, Midge was able to trace the smile on his face. "It might be the best yet."

"You might be right. Night night, Papa."

She freezes just past the doorway when she hears her voice coming from the television, creeping back and watching for a couple of minutes while Papa faces the screen, glass in hand. He lets out a genuine laugh, not seeming to care that it's a little too loud for the time of night. She smiles to herself, feeling encouraged as she heads back to the bedroom.

Before she gets into bed, she opens the closet and roots out the white button-down nestled amongst her clothes, changing from her pyjamas into it.

It's the best substitute for Lenny's arms around her that she can think of, and with it securely fastened, she slips beneath the covers and sinks into sleep.

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The morning is both a whirlwind and goes by agonizingly slowly. It's impossible for her to relax, even for a few moments, and she doesn't even feel like eating breakfast. Too much excitement is rolling about in her stomach and if there's one thing that she doesn't want to do on the morning of her wedding day, it's spend a good part of it throwing up (not that she would want to do that on any other morning, either).

She knows she has to eat something, or risk passing out when she makes it to the chuppah, and that's the worst outcome of all. Ethan makes her a bagel with salmon and plenty of cream cheese, and they share halves of a grapefruit. It takes her so long to finish everything that Mama starts to hover around the kitchen table, informing her what she's already aware of; that she'll need to start getting ready soon, so that her hair has enough time to set.

Imogene arrives to help with her hair and make-up. She knows exactly how she wants it to look, her hands just aren't steady enough to apply it. She takes a few moments to steady her breathing, Imogene going through the steps with her. Susie arrives, a little later than they'd agreed, Mama relenting on the *family only* rule. Susie is as good as family, and helps in making her feel more relaxed, though the nerves are never too far away.

She's just in her dress when Sally comes by with Esther in tow. Midge hugs her daughter before Mama whisks Esther away, murmuring under her breath about there being a schedule for a reason. Midge is left alone with Sally for a few moments, her soon-to-be mother-in-law beaming a smile at her.

She takes the opportunity to ask about Lenny, feeling more assured when Sally replies by saying that he's more worked up than she's ever seen him, but that Kitty, and Esther before she had to leave, were doing a great job at calming him down. *"He'll be just fine when he sees you in this dress. Though you could be wearing rags and he'd still be bowled over. You're a showstopper; sweetie."* She clasps Sally's hand, thanking her for the compliment and for taking the time to bring Esther over, when Papa could have easily done it.

*"It's no trouble at all,"* Sally replied, giving Midge a wink. *"Besides, I wanted to get a little sneak preview. I'll let Lenny know that he's got a lot to look forward to."*

At the venue, she feels a little like she can't breathe. Susie takes her aside, with the permission of her mother, and tells her to treat it like a gig. She laughs and feels a little annoyed, though she knows that Susie's doing her best to put her at ease. She really does appreciate it. They exchange a whispered 'tits up' before she goes to sign the ketubah, and everything gets underway.

She's seen a lot of looks on his face over the years, but never anything like the one she's greeted with when they see each other again. It's almost too intense, and if she was able to comprehend anything else she'd feel bad for the witnesses. She holds his gaze, feeling tearful and unable to stop smiling when he stands in front of her, about to place the veil over her face.

"You're staring," she says in a quiet voice before he does so.

"Can't help it," he replies, leaning in to brush a kiss near her ear, making her shiver, "you're so beautiful." He pauses, then lowers his voice so only she can hear. "I'm the luckiest motherfucker on the planet."

She nearly chokes on her laughter, meeting the deep look in his eyes measure for measure.

"You're about to get a whole lot luckier," she tells him, letting him draw her veil down.

He squeezes her hand before he goes, Sally waiting at the door to escort him. Midge takes a couple of moments for herself as she waits, then meets Mama and Papa. She gives a smile to both of them in turn. Another breath in and out, and she's ready.

She's never been more ready for anything. Walking to the chuppah, her mother and father either side of her, it's clear to her there and then that her life has been leading her to this moment. The flowers festooned upon the canopy are gorgeous, constellations of blue and cream and white. After she had chosen her dress, Mama had redesigned the arrangements especially. Seeing them makes her catch her breath a little. Nestled within are the paper flowers that the kids made, ones that match the three in her modest bouquet.

And then her eyes are upon Lenny, standing beneath it. She didn't think he was going to go for the tux with the tails when she made the offhand suggestion, and honestly, he would have looked dreamy in anything. There's something about it, not only the fact that he has never stopped paying attention to her, that makes her feel weak in the best possible way, and also more assured than she's ever been. The pronouncements cannot come quickly enough.

He turns his head to look at her before she can get there. She'd had it in her head for so long, what it would feel like to be doing this. It's not a fresh start or a beginning. Instead, she feels a surge of so much within her, the years that have gone and those that are to come, and all of what she feels for him and the emotions she's not even aware of yet, meeting at this perfect point, promising so much.

The sacredness of the ceremony strikes her more than she expected it to. She makes the circles around Lenny and bows her head for the blessings. The feeling of the metal against her finger almost makes her cry, and she trembles a little in placing the ring upon Lenny's hand.

There are plenty of smiles, too, because it's their wedding. Just catching his eye is enough to make her grin, feeling like a child again in front of the rabbi. Towards the end, Lenny raises his hands to his face and, for the briefest of seconds, specifically puts both pinkie fingers against his lips. Midge stops herself from laughing but is delighted to find his fingernails painted her favorite shade of pink.

There's a loud crack of glass from beneath his feet, and cheers of *mazel tov!* ring around the room.

Out of everything, it's the yichud that she's been waiting for; quiet time away from all of the commotion and fuss (which she does love) to be together. She almost runs to the room down the hall with Lenny's hand in hers, sharing smiles of understanding with him as she tugs him willingly along.

It takes a couple of minutes when the door is shut for it to sink in, and they're back to staring at each other. Lenny steps forward, taking her hands into his.

"We did it," she said, almost needing to say it to believe it herself. "It wasn't just a dream."

"I had a feeling," he replied, "when I looked down and realized that I wasn't naked."

Midge smirked. "I would have liked to have been at *that* ceremony."

"You say that, but I wasn't the only one. Try every man in the room."

"Every man?" Her face quickly screwed up.

"Unfortunately so."

"Your dreams are weird," she thought aloud.

He barked a laugh. "Well, you know what they say."

"I don't, actually." She pressed her palms against his, moving in closer towards him. "I only know that I love you."

"That's a good place to start from," Lenny said, giving a little nod of his head before bringing it down to hers. "I love you too. So much that I'm not entirely sure what I'm going to do with all of the love I have for you."

"Hmm, I have a couple of suggestions," she answered, one of her hands skimming up his back to the nape of his neck, sinking it into his hair, "except I think they're going to have to wait a little longer."

"History, though," he murmured against her mouth between kisses, "this part of proceedings was originally about consummation."

"Yeah, I'm going to need longer than a few minutes," Midge replied, a little breathless. "And hurrying is not your style, Mr. Bruce."

"I don't know, there's a time and place for everything." He smiled, his hand upon her waist tugging her closer. "But I concede. Not today, Mrs. Bruce. I very much intend to take my time."

"I'm glad to hear it," she said after another deep kiss, "not least because this dress is a pain in the ass to get out of. Even with your skills."

Time slowed down with his lips on hers, the feeling one she would never take for granted. She curled her fingers into his hair, remembering to breathe again as they slowly broke apart. Midge made to pull away, so that she could take her fill of his slightly ruffled look, but instead Lenny tugged into her a hug. She let out a little laugh, on the verge of making a joke about him not needing to hold on so tight. A switch flicked within her, her chin resting against his shoulder as his arms embraced her closely.

"Hey," she murmured, her hand soothing at his back and her voice soft, "are you holding up okay?"

"Couldn't be better," he said against her ear, pulling back to look at her, though his hands were still linked firmly about her waist. "I just...these past few days, I've been thinking a lot of things. Mainly about how shitty life was before you, before we got together."

Midge felt a lump rise in her throat as she looked at him, the tears feeling like they would quickly follow. He looked pretty emotional, his face so sincere.

"We've got each other forever," she said, hugging him fiercely, brushing her lips against her cheek. "My life changed when I met you, too. In ways I could never have dreamt of."

She felt him nod, shuddering a little against her hands.

"We can stay here for a little while, if you need to," she offered gently.

"How about for the rest of the day?" he replied, loosening his grip upon her to wipe the tears from his eyes.

"That sounds nice," Midge answered with a smile, stroking her hand between his shoulder blades. "But you're going to want the attention soon enough, just like I will. It's who we are."

"A perfect match," he said, circling his hands at her waist.

"In every way," she finished, smiling up at him. "You're my husband. Who would have thought?"

"I had a hope, but honestly, I always thought it might be beyond me. Reaching for the stars." He took her hand, running his thumb over the two rings upon her finger. "Now I've got the brightest of them all."

She started to giggle, his laugh accompanying hers.

"Fuck, that was corny," he said.

"I like corny, from certain quarters."

"You're my wife, you have to say that." A grin broke upon his face, realization setting in. "You're my wife."

"A dream come true," Midge stated firmly, looping her arms around his shoulders. "Honestly, I think I might just about be done in that area."

"Don't let Susie catch you saying that."

"She's too busy making a date with several plates of cake."

"Cake," he pondered, "that sounds like a good idea."

"I guess you have to eat something in the meantime," she said, her eyebrows raising.

"I don't know who's been influencing you, but you should probably stop listening to them, right away," he teased, "you're sounding positively scandalous, Mrs. Bruce."

"And you love it," she replied, her hands pressing to his chest while he scooped her closer.

"Absolutely," he said, before kissing her deeply once more.

The reception got under way, with the wise decision to do the hora before any eating began; even afterwards, they needed a little while of just sitting to contemplate the meal. Papa said a few words, as did Sally. Ethan recited a poem about all the things that love meant, which nearly had Midge crying again. Even though she hadn't expected she would, she felt herself moved to say something, taking Lenny and everyone else by surprise. Although, he was significantly less surprised than the rest of the congregation, barely concealing a wide smile as she got to her feet from the table.

It wasn't a long speech, and it felt different to the toast she'd given the first time around. More natural and from the heart. While she had no problem improvising, she found herself occasionally getting lost for words, as overcome with emotion as she was. All she needed to do was look towards Lenny, and she soon got easily back on track.

Towards the end, she was interrupted for a brief moment by clattering coming from the back of the hall. Midge caught sight of Joel's face before he stormed out, a million different thoughts running through her head for a couple of seconds before she let them go, bringing

her attention firmly back to the present. The room erupted into applause when she finished, Lenny's hand reaching for her. She settled back into her seat with a smile as he leant over to kiss her cheek, after telling her that she was *sensational*.

They were on the dancefloor a little later, swaying with their own rhythm to the music, when Mei came over to them, her coat buttoned up.

"I take it you're not staying," Lenny said, his hand holding Midge's to his chest even while they came to a stop.

"I would love to," Mei replied, "as much as I love and adore my son, being able to not be a mom for the day has been so good."

"I hear you," Midge said, her voice lowered, though the kids seemed to be occupied on the other side of the room with her father.

"I've been sitting in the car with Joel, telling him not to be such a baby about things and to get back in here. But, well, you know how he can be."

*All too well*, Midge thought as she nodded in empathy.

"He didn't even want to come and say sorry," Mei sighed, Midge able to see exactly how the last half hour or so had worn upon her. "But I wanted to. He shouldn't have run out like that."

"It's okay," Lenny replied, "I hear he has form for that kind of thing."

Midge looked up at him, her lips pursed slightly.

"It's fine, Mei," she said when she looked back at her, "you don't need to apologize for Joel. He'll get over it."

"One day, maybe," Mei muttered, her face turned away, causing a sharp shiver to go up Midge's spine.

At the same moment, Lenny held onto her tighter. She was so grateful that she had him.

"I'm sorry," Mei said, looking straight at Midge. "It's been a beautiful day, really lovely. I wish you all the best."

"Thanks," Lenny replied, his tone softer now that he wasn't talking about Joel. "That means a lot. We're glad you had fun."

Midge nodded in agreement before she found the words. "Thank you. We're so glad you could come." She smiled, perhaps a little exaggeratedly, keen to show Mei that there was no bad feeling, even after all this time. "You'll be alright...?"

"Oh, yeah," Mei answered with a shrug, "he just needs a couple of hours to sulk and then he'll be fine. See you soon."

"Good luck," Lenny called out as Mei waved, making her way back across the floor to the exit.

Midge relaxed back into Lenny's arms, picking up where they left off. Her mind was racing a little again, though Lenny's hands on her waist and the mid-tempo music did more than a good job calming her down.

She thought about what Joel said when he first found out about her seeing Lenny. How his first reaction, which had stuck around for quite a while, was that she'd chosen to date Lenny specifically to annoy him. *To humiliate him*, were his exact words. She felt just as exasperated now as she had been then. Everything always had to be about Joel, in his own mind. How rich that was, considering how much he'd humiliated her, and that he still didn't realize the extent of what he'd done.

She tried to block it out, especially today of all days, but what Mei had said, she thought under her breath, had brought it all back. Perhaps Joel wasn't over her and never would be. There was the time when Lenny was in California in the first few months of his serious sobriety, making plans for Kitty to come and live with him over in New York. Joel called round, making out that he understood, that it must have been tough for her. She thought that maybe he'd finally got it, accepted that she was with Lenny because she loved him, and that he was making peace with that. Then he proved her absolutely wrong when he put his hand on her thigh and tried to kiss her. She'd shoved him away firmly, let him know without any uncertainty that was the last thing she wanted. She was madly in love with Lenny. Joel was crazy about Mei.

At least, he was supposed to be. She really hoped that she was wrong. She hoped that he wouldn't do to Mei everything he had done to her.

She knew that some people could change for the better. The man she had married was living proof of that. Yet, at the same time, that didn't ring true for everyone.

"Hey," Lenny said softly, and she lifted her head from where it had been resting against his chest to look at him, "everything okay?"

"Yeah. Yeah," she repeated, firmer on the second 'yeah'. "It sounds bad, but I'm kinda glad that he's gone."

"Me too," he agreed, pressing a kiss against her hairline. "Now we can really have some fun. Not that I wasn't having fun already, you understand."

"I know." Midge smiled up at him, before he took her hand and twirled her around, just as the music moved to a faster round of songs.

They weren't dancing for too long before Esther and Kitty came running onto the floor, pulling at the sleeves of Lenny's jacket.

"Hey," he said, looking down at each girl on either side of him in turn, "I'm not done dancing with your Mama."



Kitty beamed a smile at him as he did so.

"I'm sorry, Mama," Esther said earnestly, "I just really love this song."

"That's okay," Midge stepped back on her heels, "I will happily surrender for this one."

She watched as Esther and Kitty alternated dancing with Lenny for thirty seconds or so at a time, her heart feeling full enough to burst. A full minute had just about passed when Ethan tapped her on the shoulder. She was still a little astounded at how tall he'd gotten.

"Might I have this dance, Mama?" he said, holding his arms out in a way that was too formal for the poppy song that was playing.

"Of course," she replied, smiling, "there's nobody else I'd rather dance with."

She caught Lenny's eyes while Esther was standing on his feet, giggling.

They'd get so many chances to dance together from now on that she couldn't complain, this part of the picture exactly the thing she'd hoped for from today.

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Getting back to the apartment made her overwhelmed all over again, and she was sorely tempted to plead off going to The Gaslight in favor of staying there. Except she knew, despite her own disdain of parties, how hard Susie had worked on pulling everything together for them.

She changed into the Yves St Laurent suit while Lenny himself was exchanging his tux for something more familiar and less formal. He was waiting for her in the living room, a smile lighting up his face when he saw her.

"All ready to go," she said, smoothing her hands down the front of the jacket to the tops of her thighs.

"I beg to differ," he replied, appraising her with keen eyes. "Is anyone really going to notice if we're missing?"

"I think so," she laughed, her hand moving from his lapel to adjust his tie, "we are the guests of honor."

"They'd understand. Especially in this suit."

"I need to show off," she pleaded her case while her fingers trailed back down his chest, "and not just the suit."

There was minimal decoration hanging up; it looked like The Gaslight on any regular night, save for a few extra lights, and a much bigger audience in attendance. Everywhere they looked there were new faces to take in. If anyone were to walk in from off the street, they would have been astounded to find a who's who of American comedy assembled in the coffee house, along with a few musicians also along for the ride.

Midge was a little taken aback herself, returning the well wishes with a hundred different *thank yous* and smiles. Most of the time it still didn't register with her that she was as well-known as she was, after all the work, falling down and getting back up again it had taken to get there.

Neither was short of claims on their attention, and Lenny was in particular demand from old acquaintances, but they always ended up gravitating back to one another, be it through looks across the room or hands finding each other when they were able to get close enough.

After a while, something else called to Midge. *That familiar lure of the spotlight.*

She tapped on the microphone in its stand when she was on the stage, met with wild applause and cheers when everyone turned to face her, including a few specific requests.

"No, there's not going to be a show tonight," she was quick to say, "it's our wedding night, give us a break! I mean, there will be a *show*, but not one that any of you are invited to. Nope, not even you, Don. Though everything I've heard about you from very good sources has been glowing, I'm not willing to share."

"Knew I should have got there first!" Don Rickles shouted out from somewhere in the crowd.

"I just wanted to take the chance to say, on behalf of myself and my new husband, a big thank you to you all for joining us. Even if it's only because of the free bar, we don't take offense at that. You might say that we don't know the meaning of the word. Though, I have to warn everyone that it will be closing soon, as we do have three kids that have to make it to and through college, so get those last orders in now. After you've listened to what I have to say, of course."

"Consider that an order," Lenny's voice echoed around the room.

"Thank you, honey," Midge replied, taking the microphone into her hand. "Of anywhere we could have chosen, it had to be here. The place they call The Gaslight. The best little basket house in the Village, and anywhere. I don't need to tell most of you that being here changed my life, in more ways than one. Although I never would have imagined that flashing my tits right on this stage would have got me where I am now, even if they are pretty great tits. You know, it took Lenny two more years to see them? If someone had told me that he was in the audience, I would have got up here naked every goddamn night until he got the picture!

"Then again, that's one of the reasons why he's a keeper. He also reassures me that they were worth every second of waiting, and given that he *eventually* proposed I have to take his word for it. And though it's not really official, tonight is the second time ever that we've been on the same bill. The first time being -" she paused for effect, "you guessed it, right here. I came first and, what can I say, it's a tradition we've stuck to ever since. Another reason why I love you so much, sweetie."

She smiled as she was able to catch Lenny's eye out in the audience, finding him a mixture of happy, proud and just a little bashful.

"Those of you who know me well know that I can't help myself. Wedding, funeral, bar and bat mitzvah, I just have to give my piece. When it's my own, nobody is allowed to complain, so you're going to have to sit tight for a few moments.

"What can I say about Lenny Bruce that hasn't already been said?" She allowed for a pause, expecting some suggestions to come through. "A lot of you are probably thinking '*not that much!*' But that's where you'd be mistaken, at least publicly."

He was half-hiding his face behind one hand but she could feel as well as see his gaze, ever-attentive and expectant.

"At first, I think I was too starstruck to really take it in. Honestly. Even after he'd encountered me at my most bedraggled, and then stoned out of my mind, which may have been a little down to him. Me, this start-out from the Upper West Side, of all places, friends with Lenny Bruce. Comedy god. Then I started to realize that he wasn't so elusive, though at times that felt like a miracle in itself."

She saw him nodding his head in agreement.

"And I felt privileged. Privileged that I got to witness who he is away from the spotlights and camera screens and headlines. Which, unless they're praising him as they should, can go and get fucked. Except, let's be honest, they probably wouldn't know where to start."

Everyone in the audience, aside from Lenny, erupted into whoops and cheers and affirming applause, and she waited for it to peter out before she carried on.

"It's not what a lot of people would want to hear, but it's the truth. This man is the kindest, sweetest, most genuinely caring man there is. He can call you out on your shit and make you feel good about it, which really defies all logic, but that's what he does. He made me believe in myself again. And it wasn't because of that, though I guess it helped matters too, but before I really knew it, I'd fallen in love with him. It was like magic, something that took me longer to work out than it should have done.

"Every time I thought '*nope, this is it, things cannot possibly get any better than they are*', they proved me wrong and did. All by virtue of being with him. My lover, my supporter, my soulmate. He says that he's lucky to be with me, and I'm not denying I'm a catch. Just, take a look."

Wolf-whistles and hollers came from the crowd while she moved her free hand up and down in the air, next to her frame.

"But he ought to know that I struck gold. Whatever's up next, I know it's going to be so special. The best is yet to come, baby. In more ways than one." She gave an exaggerated wink before breaking into a beatific smile. "Ladies and gentlemen, please raise your glasses. To Lenny Bruce."

"To Lenny Bruce!" everyone echoed, the applause getting wilder when he got to his feet and not ceasing until he'd taken to the stage himself.

Midge smiled at the feelings of his hand upon her waist and his lips brushing her cheek. She stepped away to let him soak up the adulation that was rightfully his.

"What...is..." he gestured towards the microphone, bending a little, regarding it like an alien invention. Midge laughed at the bit, along with the majority of the audience. The others were making their appreciation known by calling out things like *'come back, Bruce'*, *'we've missed you'* and *'looks good on you, you asshole.'*

"Please, some composure. I know it's difficult, but I know you can do it, for a couple of minutes. I'd like to echo the words of my wife, and thank you all for coming out, turning down work. We will repay you, one way or another."

"You said it, not me!" Midge interjected from the side of the stage, earning herself a smile.

"For those of you calling for my return, I'm sure I'd disappoint you in that my act would be very different these days. There may be the occasional observation, the odd thinly-veiled attack on censorship. Some political sideswipes peppered in for flavor. The bulk, however, would be centered around the woman you've just been listening to. *'I love my wife so much', 'did you hear about my wife's latest set?' 'there's nothing I love more than waking up early so that I can have sex with my wife as many times as the twenty-four hours of the day will allow.'* Those ultra-conservatives might actually take my side for once! Although, I hear that sex isn't really their thing, not with their wives anyway, so probably not. But never mind, I'll get over it, somehow."

He might have said otherwise, but Midge could tell that he was relishing the laughter, and even if she did have quite a bit to do with it, she beamed to see him so happy.

"I have learnt exponentially in my time away, the most valuable lesson being that less is undoubtedly more, in most circumstances. So with that in mind, what can I say about Mrs. Maisel?"

He didn't cast a gaze towards her, kept his eyes fixed firmly to the crowd in front of him.

"She is everything."

Her stomach tightened as she held a hand to it, his eyes meeting hers during the fervent applause at the words he'd said.

"Ladies and gentleman, a toast. To the woman I love more than myself, infinitely and endlessly so. Miriam Weissman."

Midge held back from pulling him from the stage as her name reverberated from the walls up to the ceiling of The Gaslight.

Not even her stage name, her actual name.

"You..." she said when he was in front of her again, playing to an audience of one. "Talk about living up to words."

"You sure said a lot of them," he returned, resting his hands upon her hips.

"And I meant every one." She bathed in the glow that his gaze offered, better than any spotlight, draping her arms around his shoulders. "I'm gonna head to the bathroom to touch up my lipstick. It'd be kinda nice if you joined me."

"Nope," Susie's voice cut in before she arrived at their left. "Bathroom's out of action. All night."

"What if we have to pee?" Midge countered. "I have had a *lot* of champagne tonight, it's a wonder I haven't gone sooner."

"You can do it in the street."

They smiled at one another as Susie made to walk away.

"I meant peeing, nothin' else!" she turned and shouted in their direction.

"You really ought to have made that clearer sooner, because once the idea's in our heads..." Lenny said, pointing to his temple.

"If anyone asks, then you're our alibi," Midge added, "either that or you bail us both out."

"Okay, whatever. I swear, you two are the horniest fuckers that I ever met."

Midge laughed, resting her head against Lenny's chest, his arm wrapped around her waist, holding her close.

"And long may it continue," he said low, to the top of her head.

She looked up at him and smiled, her arms hugging his middle.

"Oh, there's no doubt about it."

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It had gone two in the morning when they arrived at their empty apartment for the second time that day. The kids were with her parents, who had also agreed to put Sally up in the guest-room-closet for a couple of days and nights. It was a very generous offer, but Midge could only wonder at how perturbed her mother would be at the end of it.

She'd been looking forward to everything, but *especially* to the wedding night, in its most obvious meaning. Presenting herself as a present for Lenny to unwrap, her hands taking hold of his face while they shared the first of thousands of kisses, before they quickly, and inevitably, wandered elsewhere.

Maybe Susie was right about them. She generally was right about most things.

Except now, when it came to it, she could barely keep her eyes open.

She slumped down on the bed, still in her underwear, unable to hold back yawns while she watched Lenny undress.

"Not fair," she murmured, only half coherent until she'd finished yawning again, "I wanted to do that."

He chuckled, walking over towards her when he was down to his boxer shorts.

"I'm just so exhausted," she said as he leant to kiss the top of her head.

"It's been a long day," he countered, "a lot of expectation."

"A wonderful day," she affirmed with a smile, fighting back the waves of fatigue. "It's a raw deal. You're getting me past my thirties and beyond."

"I wouldn't have it any other way," Lenny replied as they climbed into bed. "Though there's no scientific proof, it's widely believed that women reach their sexual peak during their thirties."

"No proof," she murmured.

"In this instance, I'm willing to let it go. I have all the evidence I need right here." She couldn't help but shiver as he wrapped an arm around her, brushing his lips against the nape of her neck. "I'm way past mine, so I'm the one who ought to be making it up to you. And I intend to. Once you've got a solid eight hours sleep."

"Maybe I don't need that much," she said, turning to smile at him over her shoulder.

The room was quiet, the gentle and occasional hum of cars below and airplanes above sounding every now and then. She was warm and comfortable, thanks to the pillow that they shared and her husband's arm closed around her body.

Her husband. Lenny was *her husband*.

This was everything she'd wanted for so long, and there was nothing she could imagine that was better than this.

"Thank you for today," she said to him, as she was getting closer to the verge of sleep. "I know it was kinda crazy, but it was perfect. I loved it."

"I did too." She hummed as she felt the warmth of his breath caress her skin. "I may be getting ahead of myself. No, I definitely am. But what the hell."

She smiled as she turned over to face him, curling herself against the curve of his body.

"Thank you for our life together."

He brushed his fingers against her cheek, sweeping some of her hair back from her face, his brow crinkling the longer that he looked at her.

"What?" he uttered, softly.

"Nothing," she replied, barely breaking the smile she wore. "Just that you're going to get very lucky in the morning."

His hand dropped to her shoulder, the strokes of his fingers lulling her into sleep.

"I'm pretty sure I already have."

## Chapter End Notes

I'm not Jewish (you can probably tell), but I tried to get everything as right as I could when it came to the wedding from various internet sources, so hopefully it reads okay.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

The honeymoon! As such, the rating has been bumped up and then up some more.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Midge breathed deeply as she stood on the balcony, the gentle breeze enough to be refreshing but not so much that it messed up her hair. Just the perfect kind.

Life had been non-stop the last few weeks. A little like she had been caught up in a tornado with no means of escaping. If she'd known exactly how it would have gone she would have thought about wearing a pair of ruby red heels to every gig, regardless of whether they went with her outfit or not. With the knowledge that she'd be out of action for a solid month, Susie had seen fit to squeeze in some additional bookings. *It's just a couple things*, Susie said over the phone, the day after the wedding, *little spots but great ones. Opportunities not to be missed.*

Susie's concept of 'a couple' and 'little' were vastly different from her own. Just three days ago she had flown out to Portland for a gig that ended up being no longer than forty minutes. A couple of years ago she would have had few qualms about going to the other side of the country to perform for such a short amount of time, but she didn't feel like she had the same energy anymore. It wasn't that she'd lost her hunger or ambition. Neither did she want to rest on her laurels. She might have been at the height of her fame, career-wise, but she knew how it was; to be in it for the long haul, you had to keep up the momentum.

She needed a break. The time to rest and rejuvenate, and come back stronger. She'd been excited about their honeymoon even before she made the final confirmations. It wasn't until they'd made it off the plane, getting that first hit of Floridian air, that she realized it wasn't just an indulgence but something that was completely necessary. Lenny managed to duck underneath her oversized sun-hat to kiss her, wrapping an arm around her waist and pulling her a little closer than he ought to before they made it out of the airport. He responded to her giggled warning that someone might complain by maintaining that it was perfectly natural behavior for newlyweds, as well as pointing out that they were unlikely to be recognized in their 'disguises', which, as disguises went, were hardly revolutionary.

It wasn't as though he wore his stage suits all the time at home, but Midge relished the opportunity to see her husband clad in more casual clothes; the loose-fitting linen shirt with lighter trousers, finished off with a pair of sandals. Admittedly, they weren't her favorite style of footwear but Lenny had the knack of making anything look good; a quality she'd be hugely envious of if she didn't adore him so much. She'd plumped for a long, form-fitting dress for traveling, along with a pair of wedge heels. There were pumps packed amongst her suitcases, carefully chosen to accompany her beach ensembles.



She'd managed to keep the destination a well-kept secret until after they'd got married, hoping that he would enjoy the surprise as much as she had on deciding. The smile that spread instantly across his face when she said *Miami* thrilled her all over again. She still couldn't stop herself from asking afterwards, several times, whether he really liked the idea. It was a weird hangover from being with Joel, who had to know the minute details of where they were going, if it was anywhere different from the Catskills, weeks in advance. Lenny reassured her that he *loved* the idea, not only with words and kisses, but also by sweeping her into his arms and leading her in an impromptu dance without music around their front room.

*It's only right to return to the scene of the crime*, he'd said, causing her to look up at him with a half-puzzled expression. He pressed his hand to the small of her back, gently squeezing the hand of hers that he was holding, before confirming *the place where you stole my heart*. She'd laughed, resting her forehead against his chest. Getting married really had given him the excuse to be unashamedly corny more often than was usual, but she couldn't deny that she loved it.

He went on to admit that his heart had been hers for a longer time before that, and she spent much less time lamenting that she hadn't been quite on the same track at the same time, any cares that she had flying away out of the window as he twirled her and then pulled her body flush to his.

They weren't staying at the Fontainebleau, and not even at the International Inn, as sentimental as it would have been to check whether room number three or thirteen was free. They were renting out their own beach house, Midge landing on Surfside as the ideal place to stay, being luxurious enough for the two of them to enjoy together and close to North Beach to take the kids on days out when they arrived after the first week. A lot of places were in pretty close proximity, but the beach house offered the seclusion that she had been craving, especially for their honeymoon.

Lenny had made the suggestion that they spend some time at Haulover Beach, the famous - or should it be said *infamous* nude beach. Midge countered by saying she reserved the right to be the only one who had the pleasure of seeing him naked, at least while they were honeymooning. He'd smiled and agreed that she made a good point, trailing his hands over her while she stayed clothed for a little while longer.

This time around, there would be no shows - at least not ones they were performing at. No television cameras or questions or part-intriguing, part-terrifying prospects of human sacrifice. Going against her nature, Midge hadn't made much of an itinerary at all. She wanted to enjoy being without commitment, free to see where each hour of the day would take them. Doing things entirely on their terms. It would take a little bit of getting used to, but, somewhat surprisingly, she became accustomed to the slower pace of life much quicker than expected.

She'd been out there for a few minutes when she felt Lenny's arms around her waist, and she smiled as she leant back against him, her posture relaxing. She'd kicked off her heels once they'd got inside the beach house, which was so neat, modern and well-arranged that she had felt at home immediately. It meant that their difference in height was all the more pronounced, and Midge reveled in Lenny towering above her as well as the feeling of his

arms wrapped about her. She felt so safe and protected, even if there was nothing to bother them here in this little spot of paradise.

"It's so peaceful," she commented as she looked out over the horizon, the blue skies and golden sands that stretched out as far as the eye could see, her hands covering his where they lay laced over her stomach. "So beautiful."

"Hmmm," Lenny murmured against her ear, "it certainly looks very beautiful from where I'm standing."

She hummed and laughed as he kissed her bare shoulder, moving after a few moments to nip at her neck.

"We just got here," she said, not entirely sure what she was protesting at with Lenny's mouth pressing kiss after kiss onto her skin. "We have to do some things that we can write home about. Some non-blue things."

"And we will," he replied. "We have a whole seven days to ourselves to fill."

"Don't break it down to hours, minutes and seconds," Midge mused, "I want to forget that time exists, as much as is possible."

"Sounds like a very good idea, Mrs. Bruce."

She turned in his arms, away from the scene before her to take in the wonderful sight of her husband's face. They had been there for less than twenty minutes, in Miami for less than an hour, and already he was more relaxed than she had ever seen him, aside from when he was asleep or deep in the afterglow.

"What would you like to do first?" he asked her.

"I guess we should unpack before anything else," she answered, to be met with a groan from Lenny.

"That's going to take too long," he said. "We're on vacation. Honeymoon, no less. We can afford to live out of our suitcases, for a couple days at least."

"Like savages," Midge replied, resolving to persist with her carefree attitude and bend to his way of thinking.

"Precisely."

"In that case, a couple hours just sitting on the beach would be nice," she came up with. "Doing a little light reading and watching the world go by."

"Whatever my better half wishes, I am more than happy to go along with. You think I should get changed for that?"

Midge smiled as she tipped her head to the side, her hands inching up his chest. He'd been reserved while they'd been traveling and kept his shirt fully buttoned, but now they were in

their own surroundings she felt a little adjustment was needed.

"Well, you'll probably want to put swim shorts on in case we go down to the sea. I think that a shirt is optional, but that's your call."

She felt his eyes upon her, his smirk as she unfastened it halfway, revealing the smattering of hair on his chest to her eager gaze.

"Thank you for giving me the option," he said, the look in his eyes halfway between desire and pure adoration. "And if I may ask what you'll be sporting? Just so that I can be sure we'll be fully co-ordinated."

"Something a little less comfortable," she replied, a similar flare sparking in her own eyes. "Though I'll take a cover-up to start with. I don't want to get burned right away and ruin all of our fun."

"Very sensible," Lenny replied with a nod of his head. "Although, you know, I've got a couple of options to help with that. One of which includes being your own personal cover-up. If I match what you have in mind."

She draped her arms around his shoulders, hands on his neck so that she could easily pull him down for a kiss. "Lucky for me, you go with absolutely everything."

Midge felt him smile against her mouth while his arms circled her waist.

"If that's the reason you married me, then I fully accept it."

She gave a casual shrug of her shoulders. "Well, a girl's got to be careful about planning these things."

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She did have one thing in mind, which was to make dinner. Something that didn't require a lot of effort and that wouldn't leave them incapacitated for the rest of the night, so that other things could be on the menu (which they definitely would be). Lenny threw out the idea of going out somewhere, and while she loved the thought of him wanting to save her the job, she wanted their first whole day and night to just be the two of them, without bypassers. Pretending like they were the sole inhabitants of the world for as long as they could was fun, sort of like a game.

They sat for a little while, talking and watching the flames of the lit candles flicker in the air that was balmy, even inside. Lenny held her hand across the table, before he got up and placed both of his hands on her shoulders. Midge murmured at the feel of his fingertips, gently kneading, and rolled her neck against the warmth of his palms.

"I better take care of the dishes," he said, laying a kiss in the crook of her neck by way of apology.

"It's okay," Midge replied, bringing her hand up to the side of his face to hold him in place. "They won't go anywhere."

He chuckled while her fingers sunk into the curls of his hair. "You're gonna hate it tomorrow if they're still lying here. And that might just spoil my plans for the day."

"Okay," she relented, loosening her grip on him, "but I want to hear about these plans in great detail."

"I promise," he bowed before her, kissing her hand before scooping up the plates.

Midge sat back, glad that she'd decided to change into a looser dress once they'd got back from the beach. She closed her eyes, smiling when she heard him humming and then singing to himself alongside the sound of running water.

It was kind of ridiculous how much she missed him, when he was mere steps away.

He sauntered back and at the sound of his footsteps she opened her eyes again, her head tilting to the side to really regard him. She knew that she was among the elite, blessed with so much good fortune to have such a considerate, thoughtful, funny and downright sexy man for her partner. Her perfect match. They complimented each other so well, while bringing out new unknowns.

She stared at him, the thought hitting her properly, after all of the preparations and lead-up, and then the actual wedding.

She was going to be with him for the rest of her life.

Wow, she was so incredibly fucking lucky.

"I'm going to get something," he said, the beginnings of a smirk pulling at his mouth. "Wait right here."

"These plans are starting early," Midge called out, watching him for as long as she could, admiring how great he looked from behind.

She couldn't recall feeling this insatiable when she'd first got married to Joel. She guessed she must have been, at some level, but, like everything with Lenny, she was exceeding all the heights she'd previously thought were immovable.

Wondering what was taking him so long, or maybe just being a little impatient, she went into the bedroom. The door to the bathroom wasn't completely closed, and she did think about slipping inside to jump on him, whatever state he was in. She decided not to ruin the surprise, perching herself on the end of the bed.

He walked out, smiling to see her there. In one hand he carried a bottle, the other he held out to the side, emphasizing without words the silky black robe dotted with small white spots which was tied loosely at his waist.

"I thought I'd slip into something a little sexier," he said as he moved across the room to where she now stood.

"It looks good," Midge appraised, finding it hard to keep her hands to herself the closer he got.

"See, I was rather careless and left *my* show corset at home."

"You had one job," she sighed, struggling to keep a straight face.

"But all is not lost," he continued, his fingers working with the knot, "because I decided to improvise."

The robe dropped to the floor, leaving Midge speechless for a few seconds while Lenny smiled at her.

"That is quite the look."

She was able to formulate a sentence at last, letting her gaze linger on his barely-covered body. He was wearing the waistcoat from his wedding tux, which she had no idea that he'd smuggled into his suitcase, held together by a singular closed button. Below the waist, he was completely naked.

"I hear it's all the rage in Paris," he quipped.

"Well, there's no way I'm letting my mother go back there any time soon," Midge retorted, her fingers reaching to undo the one button. She took her time raking her hands over his chest before slipping them underneath the shoulders of the waistcoat. "I like it. It's half haute couture, half Donald Duck. The style icon of our times."

"That's what I was going for," he said in reply, his eyes set firm with hers. "And not just because the alligators stole my pants."

"Okay, I know that's a punchline you've been holding onto for years," she fired back, the waistcoat having joined the robe.

"Don't worry, I'll keep you safe."

"It's not me I'm worried about if you're confronting alligators pants-less."

"I can handle myself," he assured, throwing his shoulders back. "Although, right now..." he gave a quick glance downward.

"Yeah, they're not getting anywhere near," Midge replied. She kept one hand on his chest while the other wrapped itself around him, and she bit into her smile when he let out a low groan. "Oh hello, Donald. It's a pleasure to meet you, I'm such a big fan."

"You think that'd be a turn-off, but turns out it's the opposite," Lenny said, his words shaking as Midge continued to stroke, her thumb gliding over the tip of his rapidly hardening cock. "It's you, sweetheart. You just...*fuck*."

"Why, Mr. Bruce," she purred, "I thought you'd never ask."

She took the bottle from his hand, offering him a swig and then taking one herself, restraining a laugh and escaping briefly to set it down at the foot of the bed. His arms wrapped around her and hers looped themselves at his shoulders as he pulled her into a searing kiss, making her half swallow a moan when she felt him press against her. His fingers made quick work of the zip at the side of her dress and she maneuvered so she could get it free to fall, murmuring his name as his lips plucked at her throat.

"I didn't bring any corsets either," she managed to say, shivering pleasantly at the feeling of Lenny's hands on the bare skin of her waist.

"Thank fuck for that," he said, trailing his hands upwards to unhook the clasps of her bra, "as pretty as they are. Though as it goes, I think you might still kill me."

"Not just yet - oh -" she exclaimed as he lowered his head to kiss her breasts, teasing one nipple and then the other with his teeth and tongue. "Lenny...fuck, that's so good."

After a few moments indulgence she was eager to have his mouth on hers, and they shared languid kisses which only served to heighten the passion between them. Lenny's hands caressed the curves of her sides and her ass, before he lowered her underwear to leave her as naked as he was. His hands rested on her hips, guiding Midge towards the bed until she stopped him with a hand on his chest.

"I thought of something else I want to do," she breathed out, her fingers slowly stroking his skin. "I want to have sex in every room of this house."

One of his eyebrows quirked upwards, and then he nodded his head. "I'd say that is most definitely achievable."

He dipped to kiss her, her hands threading into his hair.

"And I'm guessing you don't want to start in the bedroom?" Lenny asked.

"We've had such a nice evening in the kitchen so far," her eyes went wide as she looked up at him, "I thought it'd be nice to continue things there."

His lips brushed hers again, and then she squealed as he lifted her up.

"Your wish is my command."

Lenny carried her all the way back to the kitchen, though she looped her legs around his waist to make it easier, and they stopped several times to kiss. He set her down on the table, moving his hands slowly and steadily down the length of her body.

"Lenny," she started, her breath hitching when his fingers traced the creases at the back of her knees, "I don't think this is going to -"

"It's going to be fine," he said, lowering to his knees, caressing her legs in the palms of his hands. "This is actually very fitting for what I'm about to do. Lie back, sweetheart."

"I think you might like this more than I do," Midge stated, cautiously laying flat against the table. Any concern she had quickly dissipated when Lenny's mouth met her stomach and his fingers parted her slickened folds. Midge let out a high-pitched moan, and she felt him smile against her.

"That's highly debatable," he said, gliding his fingers up and down, "though, you know what they say. Find a job you love and you'll never work a day in your life. Fuck, Midge, you're so wet."

"Your fault," she stuttered, pressing a hand to her forehead as he kissed the insides of her thighs.

"Can't take me anywhere," he murmured with a hidden grin, flattening his tongue against her and giving a long, slow lick, which immediately made her both moan and wind her hand into his hair.

Any coherent line of thought she had faded quickly, every nerve taken over by what her husband was doing to her, for her. He was talented at everything, she'd discovered in their years together, but he had a special knack for *this*. He knew exactly what she liked and wanted, responding instinctively to each whimper that fell from her lips and the way she gripped at his hair tighter.

Just when she thought she had him pinned, though, he found ways to surprise her, and this time was no different. She clung on, pleading and panting, and reaching blindly for his hand when she swore that this would be the time it would be too much. Lenny took it, lacing his fingers with hers and letting her grasp on to him. He applied just the right amount of pressure, his tongue trailing higher and higher. When he took her clit between his lips it didn't take long for her release to claim her, leaving her trembling and almost breathless. A little wrecked in the best way possible.

Lenny doesn't let go of her hand, strokes his thumb softly as she centers herself. He's leaning over her when she touches back down, smiling rather than smirking, and Midge is overwhelmed with a mixture of heart-swelling adoration and intense desire, never mind that she's just had an orgasm that would leave most people dazed for days.

She guides her hands up his back to the nape of his neck, half-sitting as she pulls him into a kiss that deepens within seconds. She can taste herself on his tongue, as thorough and dedicated to giving her pleasure as he is, and she doesn't think she'll ever get tired of the sensation. His hands travel over her breasts, fingertips grazing her nipples. Midge murmurs his name as she holds him close, arching her back as he kisses down to her collarbone.

"Lenny," she says in a note that conveys the meaning *I need you*, and he nods his head before capturing her lips with his again. She knows that, with the best will in the world, the table isn't going to hold both of their weight, and Lenny understands that too, carrying her over to the counter. He makes sure that she's comfortable, which makes Midge smile; that they can be like this in the middle of such fervent passion is so important to her.

They kiss and her hands cup his face, until she moves one down his torso to meet his where he's palming his cock, and together they guide him inside her, both of them sighing in relief

and sheer contentment. His hands rest on her waist and he sets a slow rhythm, Midge closing her eyes for a couple of moments to fully appreciate the feeling of fullness. Her arms wrapped around his shoulders, his whispered *I love yous* causing her to moan louder.

He draws her forward with his strong, steady hands, complying with her fevered request to go harder and faster. He chokes out her name between groans as his thrusts speed up, telling her again how much he loves her, bringing a hand between her legs. She can feel herself clench around him, falling over the edge with him to hold her. He follows not far after, Midge humming happily at the feeling of him spilling into her.

"Fuck," Lenny murmured, his slightly damp forehead resting against hers, his hands stroking her hips while hers soothe down his back, "you're so amazing."

"You're not so bad yourself, Mr. Bruce," Midge replied, laughing with sheer joy as she held onto him, her body tingling from head to toe. "I love you so much. Though I think that I'm not going to be able to feel my lower half for a good few hours."

"Then my work here is done," Lenny remarked, barking out a laugh. He braced his arms around her, carrying her in an entirely appropriate bridal hold to the bedroom. "At least until tomorrow."

"I want to make you breakfast in the morning," she said as he lowered her into bed. "Wake me if I sleep too late."

"I think I can find a way of doing that," he answered, kissing her and pulling the sheets over them both. "Is *breakfast* actually breakfast or a euphemism?"

"How about both?" Midge ventured, staring up at him with love radiating in her eyes.

Lenny smiled, threading a hand into her hair. "I can go for both."

---

They find it pretty easy to stick to their itinerary of doing whatever appeals at a particular time, as well as working their way through defiling each room. A whole day spent on the beach led obviously to sex in the bathroom, where the shower served a practical purpose as well as several that were more frivolous. The linen closet was something of a tight squeeze but they managed, and the sitting room lived up to its name, something which Midge hadn't previously considered but enjoyed very much.

The balcony wasn't technically a room but it was a very romantic spot, perfect for looking out at evening sunsets. It didn't take too much time with Lenny's arms fitted around her waist and kisses to her neck for the moment to escalate. Midge was a little conscious that someone staying in a nearby house, or perhaps even on the beach below, would be able to hear her and so worked to restrain her cries of pleasure, at least until Lenny persuaded her to let go in a way that was very effective indeed.

Once they had fixed their clothing, she slumped down into his lap as he settled onto one of the chairs that was set out. The sky had darkened considerably in the time that they'd been occupied, pockets of stars visible. Midge looked up in wonder as she still felt somewhat



weightless, an arm curved around Lenny's shoulder. He held her closer with his arm nestled around her waist, kissing her cheek.

"I'm kind of tempted to stay out here indefinitely," Midge mused, looking from the stars into Lenny's eyes as he regarded her in the falling light.

"That's a pretty big diversion," he said, leisurely stroking the small of her back.

"You know I stopped planning a while back," she returned, answering his smile with one of her own. "Maybe not *indefinitely*, but I could get a residency somewhere. Do a state tour. We could rent this place out a while longer. Maybe even make an offer."

He chuckled against her shoulder as he pressed his lips there. "It sounds like you've been thinking about this for a while."

"No," she let out a little laugh, her hand reaching to play with his hair. "I'm just getting carried along with the mood. Sentimentality is a well-known side effect of having too many orgasms in a short space of time."

"*Too many*?" Lenny questioned with a raised eyebrow. "I mean, we could do something about that, if you really want."

"Absolutely not," Midge said quickly, "keep them coming. Literally."

"Are we going for some kind of record?"

She pondered for a moment. "Not that I'm keeping count, but we might have got there already. Which is pretty good going, before the kids get here."

"And we still have a couple days until that happens," he reminded her.

"Maybe we should cut back, just to get ourselves used to it. Else we're going to have to keep sneaking off."

"Eh, the kids are resourceful," Lenny reasoned with a shrug. "Get them started on a game or building sandcastles, and they won't even notice we're gone."

"We really have our priorities in order," Midge laughed, leaning her head against Lenny's.

"I never said I was a good influence," he replied, his hand smoothing up her leg from her ankle. "I've always been careful to maintain the opposite."

Midge shook her head, gazing fondly at him. "Say what you want, but I know better. Much better."

More stars seemed to take their positions in the sky and it didn't occur to her that it might have been getting colder, not with Lenny's arms around her.

"Maybe we could come back for a week or so in the winter," Midge continued on with her line of thinking, "around new year would be nice."

"Miami in the winter," Lenny leant back a little, considering, "my wife is full of novel ideas."

"Do you think it ever snows here?" she asked, being able to take a good guess at what the answer was but also genuinely curious.

"Snow on the beach?" he said. "That would be pretty weird. But also fucking beautiful."

Midge felt herself shiver from within, his words hitting home as he looked deep into her eyes. She considered he wasn't just talking about that particular seemingly mythical possibility.

"I'll always love the snow," she said, watching a knowing smile start to spark on his face. "I did anyway, but I don't know...it feels like it was made for us. Even though that's not really possible."

"Oh, I don't know," Lenny countered, "you are, and always will be more important than God, so I think you have a hand in it. If you weren't so wiped out from *too many orgasms*, I'd bet you could make it snow right here, right now." He raised one hand, clicking his fingers towards the sky. "Something else for the record books."

"I'll definitely think about it." Midge shifted so that she was straddling Lenny in the chair, her knees either side of him as she leaned closer. "There's a secret I haven't told you."

He regarded her with a half-curious, half-amused look, his face so close to hers.

"Waiting until we were married. Some may call that *entrapment*, but not me."

She held back a giggle, placing one hand at the back of his neck and the other on his cheek.

"That night, at the Mayflower. You thought I was asleep, but I heard you."

Midge found it hard to stop herself from beaming a smile as the light of recognition came upon his face.

"You said you loved me," she said, caressing his cheek with her thumb.

"I did say that," Lenny admitted, his hand closing around her wrist. "It sounds stupid now, all things considered, but I thought it might have been my only chance to say it. Even if I was a coward about it."

"You were never a coward," Midge returned, feeling a little pang of guilt when she thought back. "It made me so happy. Kind of like I was living in a dream. I'm just lucky that it got to come true."

He smiled at her, and she could see a far-off, sentimental look in his eyes. He closed his hand round hers, bringing it to his mouth and brushing his lips against her knuckles.

"Let me say it out loud. I love you. I love you so fucking much."

She shuffled forward on her knees, meeting his mouth for a deep kiss.

"Wait," he murmured as they broke apart, his hands around her waist lifting her gently and then placing her down on the chair as he stood, going over towards the balcony.

"Lenny, what..." Midge said, smiling as he looked back at her over his shoulder.

"I LOVE MIRIAM WEISSMAN!" he shouted in his loudest voice, out into the open scene before them. "ALSO KNOWN AS MRS. MAISEL! THOUGH IT'S MRS. BRUCE NOW, BUT TECHNICALITIES...ANYWAY, I LOVE HER. YOU HEAR THAT, MIAMI? I LOVE HER WITH ALL OF MY HEART."

"You're going to wake the neighbors," she said in a hushed but slightly frantic voice, looping her arms around his middle, unable to stop herself from laughing at the same time at his display.

"Sweetheart," he replied with a smirk, "I think you did that not so long ago."

A faint blush filled her cheeks as she shook her head, before Lenny took her head into his hands.

"I love you," he said, the sincerity evident in his voice, "now, then and forever."

Happy tears started to brim at her eyes and she felt her stomach tighten, like it did whenever she considered how thoroughly and deeply she loved him.

"I love you, too. Always," she uttered, speaking from the heart before he guided her lips to his once more.

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"Almost done!" Midge called from the bathroom, putting the finishing touches to her outfit.

"It's okay," Lenny replied, "the last boat doesn't leave until seven."

She smiled at her reflection in the mirror, dabbing on perfume and then taking a moment to look at herself. Satisfied, she went through to the bedroom, hairbrush in hand. She nearly dropped it on the floor as she took sight of him, reclining on the bed.

She couldn't be entirely certain without any witnesses, but she might have let out a moan just from looking at him.

The way he props himself up on his elbows, tilting his head as he looks at her suggests that she definitely did.

"I swear, I will never be over the way that you look in jeans," she said, leaning against the doorframe for some additional support.

"The lesser-spotted denim clad Leonard Schneider. Elusive, but not impossible to find." He widened his legs as he spoke, Midge was certain on purpose. Not that she needed the encouragement. "When the conditions are right, he will happily make an appearance."

"Well, I feel pretty honored," Midge purred, "and a lot of other things, too."

She felt his eyes on her as she came between his legs, her hands twisting into his hair as she kissed him. His hands went to her waist while he kissed her back and she heard him murmur against her mouth, pulling away as the heat started to rise.

"I'm going to ruin your lipstick," he said, still holding onto her, "and I've gotta get ready."

"You look ready to me," Midge replied, one of her hands trailing its way from his jaw down his torso and further south. "If not, I'm going to help with that. And my lipstick will be entirely ruined by the time I'm done."

"Midge," he protested, at least with his mouth. His lower half hadn't caught on to the same argument as she worked the button of his jeans free, dipping her hand inside.

"Think of it as a little pre-boat treat," she offered, crouching to her knees, adjusting her dress as she did so.

"Sweetheart, you don't have to." The look in his eyes, the love that always lay behind the escalating lust, made her yet more determined.

"I want to," she corrected him. If only he had any idea how frequently and fervently she wanted to, he'd never leave the bed again, never mind go anywhere else. "We are a marriage of equals, and you've done more than your share making me feel incredibly good these last few days. Fair is only fair."

Lenny raised a hand as he maneuvered, helping her to take care of his jeans and undershorts. "If I may, you are funnier than I am, and more versatile. And you look far better in a dress than I could ever wish to."

"And you're better at foreplay, even now," Midge laughed, looking up at him.

"I'm willing to call it a tie," he replied, before his hips jumped and he uttered a low "fuck. You are fast tipping the scales."

"Just bringing out a few tricks," she said, her fingers running back and forth over the underside of his cock. "Calling out the duck with a little quack here and there."

He scoffed back a laugh, which she loved to hear. "So that's a thing now? I've gotta be on the lookout when I take the kids to the park, because that will... *Christ*, Midge."

She flicks her tongue a few times over the head, which causes him to make the most delicious of sounds, before she takes him into her mouth, slackening her jaw as much as she can. His answering groan is enough of a reward, and then as she adds variety, her hands joining in with her lips and tongue, his fingers sink into her hair and he says her name repeatedly, almost like a prayer though the things she's doing to him are far from holy.

"Midge, fuck," he drawls. She can feel his cock twitch as she moans around him, and the way he gasps in response makes her tingle all over.

As much as he's enjoying himself, she knows he's holding back a little, restraining his hips from moving too much. She withdraws, kissing the tip of him and working her hand up and

down. "Let go," she says softly, her eyes meeting his in encouragement, "let it all go."

She takes him deeper when her mouth closes around him again, and a swift haze falls over them both. She's relieved and ecstatic when he comes, with her own hand dipped past her waistband, between her thighs. It's not that often when he lets himself do this, always thinking about her, but she wanted this as the outcome, and as she releases him she feels overwhelmed with happiness to see him so gone with bliss.

She strokes his hair, kissing his cheeks and then his mouth while she stands, feeling like she's got almost as much of a headrush as he has.

"Fuck," he repeats, opening his eyes to look up at her.

"Maybe later," she said, letting out a giggle while she raked her fingers through his curls. "We do have a boat trip to go on."

"I feel like it can only be a letdown now," Lenny replied, his hands caressing her hipbones through her dress.

"Don't rule it out," Midge countered, "not when there's a top and a bottom deck. Which means there's gotta be at least a couple hidden corners."

"And if we get thrown overboard for indecency?" He took her wrist into his hand and started to kiss up her arm, which made her stomach coil.

"That's a chance I'm willing to take," she smiled, fighting the temptation to push him back onto the bed. "Plus, I'm a very strong swimmer."

"Another advantage you have over me. Though really, it's to my advantage." He smiled at her in a way which definitely made her want to take her clothes off immediately, or otherwise let him do so. "I guess I'd better change. Thank you for helping me to get started."

"Any time," she said, sinking into the kiss that he pulled her into. "How does my lipstick look?"

"Surprisingly intact," he answered, applying a studious gaze to her mouth. "Nobody would be any the wiser, unless they happened to take a look inside my pants."

"If that's how this trip is going to end, I think we ought to ask for a refund."

One of his eyebrows lifted while he circled his arms around her waist. "You can, maybe..." His smirk transformed into a laugh as she playfully swatted at his chest. "I wouldn't want anyone else. There's no way they could possibly compare."

"I'm glad you think so," Midge said, trailing her hands up to his shoulders. "I guess there might be some neat fish, or something."

"Which will be the undoubted highlight," Lenny smiled. "Something I'll tell our families about for years to come."

"Better than telling them about the other stuff," Midge agreed, before she thought otherwise for a moment. "That would make for killer material. But on balance, I'd rather have my parents around for a solid twenty plus years yet."

---

Midge held on with a weak grasp to her husband, drifting slowly back from another climax, her third of the night. Lenny was still on top of her and she wanted him to stay in place, murmuring where she couldn't find words when he eased out of her. He soothed her by kissing her softly, covering her face and neck with tender kisses, one hand caressing her cheek while the other stroked her waist beneath the covers, alternating between whispering her name and *sweetheart*.

"Lenny."

She pulled his head back from where he was happily pressing his mouth against her, his eyes searching hers not in concern and neither seeking explanation. Just answering her with his warm, attentive and ever loving gaze.

She'd made up her mind for once and all, and she knew without doubt this moment was the right one to share what was on it, and what was all the bigger in her heart, with him.

"I want a baby."

The look in his eyes shifted only ever slightly, the back of his hand caressing her stomach, which felt like a good coincidence.

"Give me some time in the morning," he said, "I'll go down to the beach. There's bound to be at least one that's been misplaced."

She grinned, resting her hand on the back of his neck.

"I want to have your baby. Our baby."

She let the thought hang in the air, giving it time to settle with him. He was smiling, a good sign.

"I've been thinking about it for a while now," she went on, "since before the wedding, but that was all a lot and I wanted us to enjoy that first. And maybe I should have given us a little more time to enjoy being married before saying anything, but I can't keep it to myself. You know how I am." She paused while he gave her a knowing smile. "I'm not saying this because of all the orgasms. I want to make that clear."

He barked out a laugh. "Okay."

"It's only if you want it, too," she said. "A marriage of equals. We're in it together, or not at all. And if you don't, that's okay. I just wanted to let you know how I'm feeling."

He raised his gaze for a moment, and she could see that he was probably thinking about Kitty and the guilt he felt over the fact he'd felt like he was giving into what Honey wanted. Which is why she wanted to give him the option, to make the decision together. She knew that he

wouldn't be without Kitty for anything now, and the love he showed to Ethan and Esther bowled her over a lot of the time. He was a wonderful father, even if he spent a lot of time thinking otherwise. It was a big part of why she wanted another child, when she had thought not so long ago that it was an option that had come off the table.

But it had to be something he wanted too.

"You know, you made me think twice about a lot of things," he broke his own silence, eyes smiling down at her. "This included. I'm in."

"You are?" Midge asked, her stomach filling with butterflies.

Lenny nodded, leaning down to press a kiss to her lips. "I am. A baby, our baby sounds pretty great. Probably the best thing I could imagine."

"Hopefully we don't have to imagine for too long," she replied, her arms looping around his shoulders. "It's a little late now, but once we get home I can stop taking my pill."

"Dammit," Lenny said with mock irritation, "just when you no longer have to fabricate a story about being married."

"I think the doctor suspected anyway, but he wasn't going to argue with two famous comedians. Or the lawyer that overturned your charges."

"You're sure this is the right time?" he asked. "It's one hundred per cent your decision, but if we do strike it lucky, I'd rather not have Susie ready with a cleaver in hand to chop off my dick and balls for getting in the way of the gig of your lifetime."

"Well, the job will be done by then, so..." Midge teased, shrugging her shoulders against the pillow. "I did tell her before we got married that nothing was going to change, but it's fine. I don't have to take much time out, probably not even a full year. Maybe we're getting ahead of ourselves here, but we can see how it goes. The great thing about comedy is that it's about invention. Nothing's set in stone."

"My wife, the trailblazer," Lenny smiled. "One thing's for sure. It's going to be chaos."

"That's never stopped us before," Midge replied. "We thrive on chaos."

"The world could do with more of it," he mused. "And certainly more of you."

"And more of you, too." She felt herself getting teary thinking about the prospect, pulling him down for a kiss before she could start crying. It felt like the sweetest kiss she'd ever had. "Here's to our next adventure."

"Yep," Lenny agreed, kissing her forehead. "Are we crazy for it?"

"Oh, absolutely," Midge said, sinking her hand further into his hair.

"Good. I wouldn't have it any other way. Because I'm crazy about you."

His hands made their way down her body, making her start to moan against his mouth.

"Lenny," she began, arching her back.

"If you want me to stop, I will," he said, looking at her with so much reverence that it made her heart ache.

"No," she replied, bringing him back to her lips, even if she didn't know quite how much more pleasure her body could take.

She moaned softly, telling him she loved him for the thousandth time since they arrived as she surrendered to everything he wanted to give to her.

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They were at the airport the next morning, the timing striking Midge once more as they waited for the kids to get in. It had been an incredible week together, but she realized how much she missed them, and she knew that Lenny felt the same. He hugged her a little tighter before they left, the last time it'd be just the two of them at the beach house, and his hand was fast in hers.

Until they were there, two becoming five. Esther ran right into Midge's arms, while she clutched Banana Bear with one hand, and Kitty did the same to Lenny. Ethan hung back a little from the scene as the eldest but Midge was quick to pull him in, covering his face with kisses that made him complain at first and then relent, falling into helpless laughter.

It was two wonderful worlds brought together. They all loved the beach, the hiking, the boat trips. Midge had her girls' days with Kitty and Esther, searching for seashells and doing fashion shows at the house, while Lenny and Ethan went out fishing. They'd spend all evening together until, one by one and in quick succession, the kids fell asleep on the sofa and they carried them to their rooms. When the three of them were tucked in and settled, they took their drinks out to the balcony, watching the sunset on another day that felt like it was out of a picture book, albeit a little torn at the edges and scribbled over with crayon.

All she needed was for a few gigs to be thrown in, and she'd be set for life.

On their last day, the kids did their best to stay up as late as they could and they all went out to the beach to dance beneath the stars. Esther got overtired and started to cry, saying over and over that she didn't want to leave. Kitty tried putting fistfuls of sand into the pocket of her dress, then quickly realized it wasn't the best plan of action. Ethan stared out to the sea silently and without moving for what had to be at least a solid twenty minutes, to the point where Midge was honestly concerned that some hidden creature had bitten and paralyzed him.

Lenny draped his arm around her shoulder, and they shared a look, his eyes gleaming at hers in the moonlight. She smiled up at him, snuggling into his side as the kids got over their various tantrums and existential crises and began to run and laugh once more.

*We're really crazy to think about doing this all again,* she heard him say without words.



She closed her eyes, smiling against the fabric of his shirt as he dropped a kiss against her head, son and daughters running in circles around them.

This kind of crazy was just the perfect kind.

## Chapter End Notes

Those of you familiar with other works by Luke Kirby may recognise a reference or two here...

And that's the end of this particular instalment! Thanks so much for the views, kudos, comments, they really do mean a lot. <3 <3

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