

"THE MARVELOUS MRS. MAISEL"

Written by

Amy Sherman-Palladino

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THE SCREEN IS BLACK

The sound of a large room of people rustling in their seats.
A little clinking of forks on china.

MIDGE (O.S.)
Who gives a toast at her own
wedding?

FADE IN:

INT. PLAZA HOTEL BALLROOM -1955

We come up on the beaming face of MIRIAM "MIDGE" MAISEL.
20's, adorable, her eyes sparkle with satisfaction. Framed
by a cloud of tulle, her face is full of perk, spunk, and
complete ignorance that bad things could ever happen.
Because today she has triumphed. Today is her wedding day.

MIDGE
I mean, who does that? Who stands
in the middle of a ballroom after
drinking three glasses of champagne
on a completely empty stomach, and
I mean completely empty because
fitting into this dress required no
solid food for three straight
weeks. Who does that? I do!

WE CUT WIDE:

The room breaks into applause. The packed ballroom is
stuffed with guests dressed to the nines. Flowers, candles,
and glittery snowflakes suspended from the ceiling like it's
a magical fairyland. Midge stands in the middle of this
fairyland holding a microphone, wearing a perfect satin dress
with cap sleeves and crinolines, crinolines, crinolines.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
This day is perfect. It's like a
dream. Or a nightmare if you're my
father.
(in an annoyed Jewish
father voice)
How much for flowers? Who eats
mushroom caps? How much if we cook
the meat ourselves? Does the
caterer have any idea what the Jews
just went through a few years ago?

ANGLE ON: THE WEDDING TABLE

ABE WEISSMAN, fifties, tall, lanky, with long elegant pianist
fingers and a vague look of disappointment constantly on his
face, sits next to his wife ROSE WEISSMAN, forties, petite,
lovely, elegantly dressed, dramatic. Abe shrugs.

ABE
Well, it worked.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

MIDGE
But this day has been long in the planning. Anyone who knows me knows - I plan. I think long-game. At six, I decided Russian literature would be my major. At twelve, I found my signature haircut. At 13, I announced I was going to Bryn Mawr University.

ANGLE ON THE WEDDING TABLE

ROSE
(to the lady next to her)
Based on nothing, she moves to Pennsylvania.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

MIDGE
From day one I knew - that decision was a charmed one.

FLASHBACK

INT. BRYN MAWR DINING ROOM - 1951

Girls pour in, nervously looking for their place cards at the tables. FRESHMAN MIDGE walks in and takes in the room.

MIDGE (V.O.)
First of all, my roommate, Petra, was friendly and fat which was perfect. I'll have someone to eat with but she won't steal my boyfriend.

A CHUBBY, SWEET FACED GIRL joins Miriam's side.

PETRA
Smells so good.

The two girls make their way over to a table and search for their name cards. They sit and Petra grabs the bread basket.

MIDGE (V.O.)
The campus was old and elegant. With ivy covered buildings, stained glass windows, and...

Midge glances down at the table and sees a butter pat on a tiny butter china dish, with the initials "BM" carved elaborately in the center.

MIRIAM
 (in awe)
 Monogrammed butter pats.

PETRA
 What?
 (sees)
 Ooh.

Petra stabs the butter pat and smears it on her roll.

BACK TO WEDDING

MIDGE
 And we got them every single day.
 At every single meal. This was a
 magical place. A place where
 butter was beautiful and I would
 learn everything. Where I would
 solve the mysteries of the universe
 and meet brilliant women, kindred
 spirits who would explore these
 brave new worlds with me.

FLASHBACK

INT. DORM ROOM 1953 - NIGHT

Three girls, including Midge, sit on lawn chairs wearing only their bras, with white foamy peroxide on their heads and a foamy peroxide triangle on their vaginas. Three other girls stand over them with Japanese paper fans fanning their heads and hoo-ha's furiously.

MIDGE
 Oh my god! Why is it burning?

FAN GIRL ONE
 It's supposed to. It's bleach.

MIDGE
 It's awful! I hate you for this!

FAN GIRL ONE
 It was your idea.

MIDGE
 Never listen to me. I'm nuts.
 (to the girl next to her)
 Why aren't you in pain?

PEROXIDE GIRL
 (shrugs)
 I'm from Kansas.

MIDGE
 I don't know what that means.
 (to Fan Girl One)
 How much longer?

FAN GIRL ONE
 Ten minutes.

MIDGE
 Jiminy Crickets!

Midge jumps up and runs out of the room.

PEROXIDE GIRL TWO
 Where are you going?

The girls rush over to the window and push it open.

FAN GIRL ONE
 Midge!

Through the window they see Midge run out on the lawn.

MIDGE
 (calling out)
 How long?

FAN GIRL TWO
 (calls back)
 Eight minutes!

MIDGE
 Oh, holy fuzzy Christ balls!

Midge runs in circles outside the window. Her friends laugh.

BACK TO WEDDING

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 But all these marvelous adventures
 were simply the preamble to my
 ultimate destiny. I was going to
 meet a man. A perfect man. He
 would be 6'4, blonde, and his name
 would be Dashiell or Stafford or...

FLASHBACK TO 1954

A mid-sized, dark haired, Judaically handsome boy smiles.

JOEL
 Joel. Joel Maisel.

BACK TO WEDDING TABLE

The room applauds and laughs. JOEL, sitting in the middle of the wedding table, stands and takes a bow to the room.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Best build up since "Iceman
 Cometh!"

ANGLE ON MIDGE

MIDGE
 Joel Maisel was my knight in
 shining armor. A gift from God.
 And he thought I was brilliant.

FLASHBACK TO 1955

EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

The marquee reads "Best Burlesque on the East Coast".

MIDGE (V.O.)
 He took me to galleries, poetry
 readings, Greek dramas...

INT. STRIP CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Joel and Midge sit at a sticky table watching a stripper gyrate on stage. She hits a twirling crescendo that sends one fringed tassel flying into the audience. The room APPLAUDS AND WHISTLES. She heads offstage. Midge rushes over, picks the pastie off the floor, runs up to the stage and waves it at the retreating stripper.

MIDGE
 Excuse me! Miss? Miss?

The stripper turns and comes back.

STRIPPER
 Thanks, Toots.

Midge takes her seat and turns to Joel.

MIDGE
 She's gonna need that.

A RAGGED LOOKING MC comes out on stage.

STRIPPER MC
 Misty Dreams, ladies and gentlemen.
 Eighteen years old. In dog years.

RIMSHOT.

STRIPPER MC (CONT'D)
 Okay. I'm going to leave the jokes
 to this next young man.
 (MORE)

STRIPPER MC (CONT'D)
 Just out of the merchant marines or
 some patriotic shit like that,
 please welcome - Lenny Bruce.

ANGLE ON MIDGE AND JOEL

JOEL
 This is the guy I wanted you to
 see.

MIDGE
 No way he's funnier than Misty.

LENNY BRUCE, young, healthy, beginning of his career, comes
 onstage.

LENNY BRUCE
 Thank you. Nice to be back in
 Wichita. Oh, this isn't Wichita?
 Well, wherever I am... So, I'm
 reading the papers today and I see
 a story - there were kids, eight
 and nine year old, that were
 sniffing airplane glue to get high
 on, these kids are responsible for
 turning musicians onto a lot of
 things they never knew about,
 actually. So, I had a fantasy how
 it happened. Kid is alone in his
 room - it's Saturday. Kid is
 played by George MacCready.
 (a la George MacCready)
 Well, lets see now, I'm all alone
 in the room and it's Saturday.
 I'll make an airplane! That's what
 I'll do - I'll make a Lancaster -
 good structural design. I'll get
 the balsawood here, cut it out,
 sand it off, now a little airplane
 glue, I'll rub it on the rag and
 (sniffs,)
 ...heeeey now, ha ha ha... oh I'm
 getting loaded!

Joel glances at Midge, who's clearly now a fan. He smiles.

MIDGE (V.O.)
 Oh, the things Joel taught me.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Joel is screwing Midge up against a tree.

JOEL
 (mid screw)
 You know what I want?

MIDGE

Please don't say a virgin.

JOEL

I want to make you laugh every day
of your life.

MIDGE

Okay, but you realize you said that
while you're still in me.

JOEL

Right. We'll talk later.

As he pumps away Midge lifts up her hand and admires a brand
new engagement ring sparkling on her finger.

MIDGE AT THE WEDDING

MIDGE

I have been very lucky. I have
wonderful parents. I have lived a
comfortable life. And though I
knew that love would be great, I
had no idea it would be anything
that could justify what I paid for
this dress.

ANGLE ON THE WEDDING TABLE

ABE

What I paid for that dress.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

MIDGE

And because it's better than
anything I could've imagined, I
thought I should get up here and
tell all of you that I love this
man, and yes, there is shrimp in
the eggrolls.

A loud roar of laughter and outrage fill the room.

ROSE

(exasperated)

Miriam....

(running off calling)

Rabbi! Wait! Don't leave!

The room is chaos. Abe is arguing with the ancient man.

ABE

(to irate old man)

You show me in the Bible where God
says you can't have shrimp!

IRATE OLD MAN
Leviticus! "Whatever does not have
fins or scales you shall not eat."

ABE
But did he say "shrimp"?!

The madness continues as Midge and Joel smile at each other.
We PAN UP taking in the chaos of the whole room.

DISSOLVE TO:

FOUR YEARS LATER

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE - DAY

Anthony Newley's "ON A WONDERFUL DAY LIKE TODAY" plays as we
catch Midge walking purposefully down the street. Stylish,
great hair, a woman on a mission.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Midge bounces in. The place is crowded.

MIDGE
(to butcher)
Lutzi! We got the Rabbi!

Midge shoves her way to the counter.

LUTZI NEIDERMAN, the butcher, is at the other end helping a
lady. He rushes over at Midge.

LUTZI
What? How? When?

MIDGE
We heard today. My mother fainted.
Then called four people, then
fainted again. This year on Yom
Kippur, the rabbi will be breaking
fast at our house.

LUTZI
You're going to need some lamb.
The Rabbi loves his lamb.

The customer Lutzi was waiting on calls out.

CUSTOMER
Excuse me, I was in the middle of
an order here.

MIDGE
 (to customer)
 I'm so sorry. What were you getting?

CUSTOMER
 Pork chops.

MIDGE
 (to Lutzi)
 Put her pork chops on my tab. I still can't believe it. The Rabbi's been mad at us since the wedding. It took four years of apologies and six hundred dollars worth of new yamukas but we finally got the bastard.

CUSTOMER
 (horrified at Midge)
 Disgraceful!

MIDGE
 (to Customer)
 You like your free pork chops? Zip it then.
 (to Lutzi)
 I have to go. Delivery Thursday? After ten.
 (grabs cookies off the counter)
 I grabbed a couple of black and whites.

Midge heads out.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 (to the world)
 We got the Rabbi!

EXT. ELEGANT MANHATTAN WESTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - EARLY EVENING

Midge marches in.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The doorman, ROBERTO, 60's, dashing in his uniform, greets her warmly.

MIDGE
 Roberto! I got you a black and white.

ROBERTO
 Well, thank you, Mrs. Maisel.

The elevator opens. An ancient operator sits on a stool.
Midge sweeps into it.

MIDGE
(to the elevator operator)
Jerry! Nice tie. I got you a
black and white.

The elevator closes.

INT. MIDGE'S HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The elevator doors open. Midge parades over to her
apartment, 9C, and goes in.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A spacious, stylish, flower filled living room. Clearly
there's some money here. Midge heads into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Midge goes to the oven takes out a brisket and tests it.

MIDGE
Perfect. You are perfect.

The phone rings. Midge answers it.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Hello?

INT. AMERICAN PLASTICS INC. - SAME TIME

Joel sits at his desk in his gleaming corner office. (WE
WILL INTERCUT FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE PHONE CALL)

JOEL
(into phone)
You tell everyone about the rabbi?

MIDGE
What am I, a braggart? Please.
How's work?

JOEL
I believe something got sold today.
How's the brisket?

MIDGE
I'm buying it a sash and a crown.

JOEL
 Good. We'll need it. I got a
 terrible stage time for tonight.
 1:45.

MIDGE
 Yikes.

JOEL
 I bowed out of my lunch meeting and
 got downtown as quickly as I could
 but that guy who runs the
 Gaslight...

MIDGE
 Baz. You must learn his name.

JOEL
 Fine, Baz, still gave me the
 crappiest time. He hates me.

MIDGE
 Don't worry. We'll fix that.

JOEL
 He doesn't see me as a real
 comedian. I mean, I'm not a real
 comedian, yet. But, if he'd just
 give me a better time...

MIDGE
 We will fix it.

JOEL
 1:45. No one is there at 1:45.

MIDGE
 (mock surprise)
 They're not? Oh, then we'll fix
 it.

JOEL
 I don't know what I'd do without
 you.

MIDGE
 You'd go on at 1:45.

JOEL
 Bye-bye.

Midge hangs up and puts the brisket back in the oven.

EXT. MIDTOWN OFFICE BUILDING - EARLY EVENING

JOEL (O.C.)
 ... So the waiter says fine.

INT. JOEL'S OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Joel walks MITCHELL FUNT, a portly, red-faced businessman, over to the door while finishing a joke.

JOEL

... I'll try it. He looks at the bowl and says "where the hell is the spoon" and the customer says "aha"!

MITCHELL

So, he didn't bring him a spoon.

Mitchell busts up.

MITCHELL (CONT'D)

And that's why he didn't eat the soup!

JOEL

No spoon!

MITCHELL

You can't eat a soup with no spoon!
(catching his breath)
Oh boy, that's a good joke there.

Joel opens the door. PENNY, blonde, young, with a pleasant slightly vacant face, sits at the desk outside.

JOEL

Penny, can you walk Mitchell down to Al's office?
(to Mitchell)
Al can take you through the specs.

MITCHELL

(chuckling to himself)
Okay. Boy, I'll be laughing about that spoon for a week.

Joel waves him off and closes the door. He takes a deep, relieved breath and goes to his desk, opens a drawer and pulls out a black turtleneck. He goes to his coat closet, opens it up and looks at himself in a mirror inside the door. He takes off his coat and tie and shirt and pulls on the sweater and then runs his fingers through his hair to loosen it up a bit. ARCHIE HARRIMAN, late twenties, with the same corporate look that Joel is trying to shed, comes in.

ARCHIE

I saw Funt heading down the hall.

JOEL

I sent him over to Al. He's fine.

ARCHIE
You going down to the Village
tonight?

JOEL
Midge will be here any minute.

ARCHIE
Joel Maisel, king of comedy.

JOEL
Alright, alright...

ARCHIE
Imogene is dying to see your act.
I tell her I don't know why. I see
you acting ridiculous all day long.

JOEL
Very amusing. Can I use that?

ARCHIE
Seriously. When can we come?

A small knock at the door. Midge, now dressed in her downtown outfit - black pedal pushers, sleeveless black sweater, ballet flats, and a scarf tied through her hair - pops in holding a Pyrex of brisket in her hands.

MIDGE
I have a cab waiting downstairs.
Hey Archie.

JOEL
Why did you have him wait? We
could've gotten another cab.

MIDGE
I know, but the driver's having
trouble with his marriage and I
hated to send him off like that.

Joel grabs his coat and they all head out.

ARCHIE
We'll come next week?

JOEL
Next week. Why not?

INT. MAIN AREA - CONTINUOUS

Joel and Midge come out of his office.

JOEL
Good-night, Penny.

Joel heads off. Midge glances at Penny who is slowly putting pencils into an electric pencil sharpener, though not quite far enough to get the job done. She shakes her head, "Sad thing". She follows Joel.

EXT. MIDTOWN OFFICE BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Barbra Streisand's "IN OLD PEKING" plays. Midge and Joel rush into the waiting cab.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

The night life of bohemian Greenwich Village is out in full force. Sidewalk kiosks selling anything you can think of. Young hip people in jeans hang out with old timers in fedoras, communist cards in their wallets. People fight, smoke, laugh, there's music coming from somewhere. The smell of pot and unwashed men fill the air.

We find our cab turning onto Macdougall. Midge's face is plastered to the window taking in everything she can. The cab pulls over in front of "THE GASLIGHT CAFE". Midge gets out with the brisket. Joel hands the cabbie money. They head down the stairs into the Gaslight.

INT. GASLIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A dark and smoky basement turned basket house, The Gaslight Cafe is a performing space for singers, poets, performance artists, comedians... If you have a monkey who does a great Brando impression, bring him down. A flight of narrow stairs descend from the street and dump you out in the middle of a room crowded with tables and chairs. Along the wall to your left is a long beat up wood bar where people can sit and order coffee. Directly opposite the stairs, across the room, is a stage with a microphone and stool. To the left is the wall where the performers tend to hang out. Currently onstage, a trio sings a version of "GOOD-NIGHT IRENE". Midge and Joel come down the stairs.

MIDGE

Packed house.

JOEL

It won't be at 1:45.

MIDGE

Oy my god, with the one track mind.
Go. Sit. Let the master work.

Joel heads off to find a table. Midge goes over to the bar. She finds an empty stool at the very end of the bar. She sets the brisket down, sits, and looks around. A PHONE on the wall right behind the bar rings. It rings again. And again. And again. And --

SUSIE (O.C.)
 Fuuuuuuuuuck!!!!!!!

A TINY STOUT WOMAN with badly cropped hair and a stained "Gaslight Cafe" tee shirt angrily pushes past Midge and grabs the phone.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 What?! Gaslight - what? Yes, we're open. Don't know. When everyone's gone.

SUSIE MYERSON, 30's, slams the phone down.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
 Dr. Salk should find a vaccine for morons.

She turns around and notices Midge staring at her.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
 Yes?

MIDGE
 I'm looking for Baz.

SUSIE
 Shitter. Back to the right.

MIDGE
 I can wait till he's done.

SUSIE
 (eyeing the Pyrex)
 Is that the brisket?

MIDGE
 It's for Baz.

BAZ O'NEIL, 40's, a bear of a man and the owner of the place ambles over holding a beat up ledger.

BAZ
 Did we pay the coffee guy?

SUSIE
 Yes.

BAZ
 (tossing the ledger on the bar in front of her)
 Where in here does it say that?

SUSIE
 (pulls the ledger to her)
 Jesus, Baz...

BAZ
Just find it.

SUSIE
(re: Midge)
That's looking for you, by the way.

Susie opens the ledger. Baz looks at Midge and smiles.

BAZ
Hello Midge. Is that--?

MIDGE
I made my brisket.

BAZ
(looking at the brisket)
So, I'm guessing your husband
doesn't like his time slot tonight.

MIDGE
No. He loves his time slot. He
loves any time slot. But see,
there's a tiny problem. Our
daughter is sick. Earache. And
1:45 is just so late I didn't know
what to do, so I thought maybe you
could move him earlier?

SUSIE
(looks up at Midge)
Didn't your son get the measles
last week?

MIDGE
What? Uh... Yes. He did.

SUSIE
And the week before that, your
mother had rickets.

MIDGE
She did. So painful.

SUSIE
Last month your sister-in-law broke
her toe - your brother threw out
his back... That's a lot of health
issues. Your family might want to
eat some fruit or something.

MIDGE
I'll take that into consideration.

BAZ
Okay. 10:30.

MIDGE
Really?

BAZ
Next time, I'd like some latkes.

MIDGE
I make great latkes. Genius
latkes. You won't be sorry!

Midge heads off triumphantly.

SUSIE
(to Baz; without looking
up)
Pussy.

ANGLE ON: Joel sitting at a table anxiously smoking and
drinking coffee. Midge drops down in the chair next to him.

MIDGE
(casually)
10:30.

JOEL
You're kidding.

MIDGE
(points to her cheek)
Where's my kiss?

JOEL
I should be kissing the brisket.

Joel kisses her cheek and then happily takes his notes out.

INT. GASLIGHT CAFE - LATER

We PAN over the audience. The place is even more crowded
now. We land on the M.C. onstage.

M.C.
The next act up is a nice, clean-
cut young man, your mother would
love him. He's a comedian. Give a
nice hand for Joel Maisel.

A nice round of applause. Joel takes the stage.

JOEL
Thanks a lot. So, many of you may
have read the book "The Hidden
Persuaders" about Madison Avenue's
marketing men and how they create
the public personas we all learn to
know and trust and vote for. Well,
what if, during the Civil War,
there was no Lincoln? What if they
had to create him?

(MORE)

JOEL (CONT'D)
 This is a telephone conversation
 between Abe Lincoln and his press
 agent just before Gettysburg.

Midge takes a small worn notebook and pen out of her purse.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 (mimes talking on a phone)
 Hi, Abe sweetheart, how are ya,
 kid? How's Gettysburg? Sort of a
 drag, huh?

Audience laughs. Midge writes it down in the book.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Well, Abe, you know them small
 Pennsylvania towns - you've see one
 you've seen them all.

A good laugh. Midge writes it down.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 What's the problem?... You're
 thinking of shaving it off? Uh,
 Abe don't you see that's part of
 the image?... Right, with the shawl
 and the stovepipe hat and the
 string tie?... You don't have the
 shawl.

Another laugh. Midge happily writes it down. He's doing well tonight. Midge happily scans the room to watch the audience reacting to him. Suddenly she stops scanning.

ANGLE ON SUSIE

Susie leans against the performers' hang-out wall watching Joel. She's not smiling.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

The smile slowly fades from her face as she watches Susie watching Joel.

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Where's the shawl, Abe?... You left
 it in Washington. What are you
 wearing Abe?... A sort of cardigan.

ANGLE ON SUSIE

The audience laughs. Susie shakes her head disgusted.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

She frowns. What the hell did the head shake mean?

JOEL (CONT'D)
 Abe, don't you see that doesn't fit
 with the string tie and beard?
 Abe, would you leave the beard on
 and get the shawl, huh?

The audience laughs again. Susie walks off disgusted. Midge tries to shake it off and refocus on her book.

EXT. GASLIGHT CAFE - LATER

Midge and Joel come up the stairs. Joel is in great spirits counting some money in his hand.

JOEL
 (re: money)
 ... Three dollars, thirty cents and
 one subway token.

MIDGE
 Ooh, I'll take the token.

JOEL
 Tonight was great. I kill in a
 good time slot. Kill! I need an
 audience. I feed off an audience.
 I finished, people started to
 leave. Did you see that?

MIDGE
 I almost left myself.

JOEL
 10:30. Perfect slot. Get me that
 slot again next time.

SUSIE (O.C.)
 Hey!

Midge turns startled. Susie comes up holding the Pyrex.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
 (hands it to Midge)
 Here.
 (to Joel)
 Saw your act.

She stares at him for a long uncomfortable beat, then turns back to Midge.

SUSIE (CONT'D)
 Don't forget the latkes.

Susie leaves.

JOEL
 Who's that guy?

MIDGE
She works there.

JOEL
Only in the village.

Joel steps out to hail a cab.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Joel is drifting off to sleep on Midge's shoulder. She's going over his act in the notebook.

MIDGE
You got three more laughs tonight than you did last time. And a couple of extra-like laughlets. I don't know what she was shaking her head for.

JOEL
(sleepily)
Hmmm?

MIDGE
Nothing. You were great.

JOEL
(sleepily)
I was great.

Beat.

MIDGE
You know, you don't really say hello to the audience. Maybe you should write a beginning. Something that says who you are or something. What do you think?

Joel is asleep. Midge sits there a beat. Then she starts to write in the notebook.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
(softly to herself)
"Good evening. Thank you for the nice..."
(scribbles it out)
"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. What a nice..."
(scribbles it out)
Nice is a bad bad word.
(writes)
"All that applause for me? What am I, putting out after?" "One standing ovation everyone goes home pregnant."

Midge smiles at her own little joke.

INT. MIDGE AND JOEL'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Joel and Midge are getting into bed. Midge's hair and make-up are still night-out perfect.

MIDGE
 Maybe you could do impressions to start. You do a great one of my Aunt Bertha ordering dinner, you know --
 (a la Bertha)
 "a garnish can be festive, but deadly."

Joel smiles at her and gives her a kiss.

JOEL
 Good-night, Gracie.

MIDGE
 Good night, Gracie.

Joel turns over and closes his eyes. Midge lays there a beat. Joel starts to snore. Midge glances over, makes sure he's asleep, and quietly slips out of bed.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Midge snaps the light on, goes to the sink and takes off her eyelashes off.

Midge washes her face.

Midge pin curls her hair.

Midge wraps her pin-curled hair in toilet paper.

Midge cold creams her face.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Midge carefully slips back into bed. She glances at Joel. He's dead asleep. She settles in and closes her eyes.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE - DAWN

The almost empty streets are starting to stir.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Midge finishes washing the Pyrex. She dries it lovingly and puts it back on it's proper shelf above the stove.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Midge sweeps through the room and exits.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Midge goes over to the elevator and pushes the button. Beat. The door opens. The ancient Jerry is on his stool.

MIDGE
Morning Jerry.

The doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

JERRY
Yesterday? That was a good cookie.

MIDGE
I'm so glad.

Midge glances up at the elevator numbers.

ANGLE ON THE NUMBERS

10 lights up. 11 lights up. 12 lights up. Ding.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
See you later, Jerry.

The doors open. Midge walks out.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Midge walks over to apartment 12C and walks on in.

INT. WEISSMAN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Midge walks in.

MIDGE
(calling out)
Hello! It's me.

ZELDA, the Weissman's crisply uniformed maid comes out.

ZELDA

Morning, Ms. Miriam. Can I get you some coffee?

MIDGE

Oh, yes Zelda, please.

Midge walks over to the den. This is Abe's domain. Big leather chair and his baby grand piano. The door is open. Abe sits reading the paper. ETHAN, Midge's three year old son, lays on the floor also "reading" the paper.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Morning, Papa.

Abe nods but keeps reading.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Morning, Ethan.

Ethan just keeps reading his paper.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Morning Ethan.

(nothing)

Ethan?

(nothing)

Ethan?

(nothing)

Ethan?

(nothing)

Etha-- Oh, never mind.

Midge starts off. Rose walks up in a feather trimmed satin dressing gown like something out of an MGM musical.

ROSE

Did you get coffee?

MIDGE

And a great welcome from my son.

ROSE

(shrugs)

Men.

MIDGE

Thanks for taking the kids last night. Were they okay?

ROSE

We need to talk about the baby.

MIDGE

Why? What's the matter with her?

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Very pink, very feminine, very Rose. Rose and Midge enter and walk over to a bassinet.

ROSE
(pointing to the baby)
That forehead is not improving.

Rose lifts ESTHER, 1, out and lays her down on the bed.

MIDGE
What? Are you sure?

ROSE
It's getting bigger. The whole face will be out of proportion.

MIDGE
But look at her nose. It's elongating now, see?

ROSE
The nose is not the problem. The nose you can fix. But this gigantic forehead...

MIDGE
Well, there's always bangs.

ROSE
I'm just afraid she's not a very pretty girl.

MIDGE
Mama, she's a baby.

ROSE
I just want her to be happy. It's easier to be happy when you're pretty.
(looks at Esther and sighs)
You're right. Bangs will help.

Midge picks up the baby. They start out of the room.

ROSE (CONT'D)
How did Joel's little show go?

MIDGE
It went very well.

ROSE
I still don't understand this whole thing. Who is he performing for?

MIDGE
Anyone who shows up.

ROSE
And they pay you?

MIDGE
They pass a basket around at the end of your set and whatever's in it you get to take home.

ROSE
If you need money, we can give you money.

MIDGE
We don't need money. Joel is funny and he likes to do his comedy.

ROSE
But how long are you going to be doing this? Running around at night, taking money from strangers like a Schnorrer?

MIDGE
As long it's fun.

ROSE
Hmm.
(she taps Midge's biceps)
Six to nine more months left on those arms.

MIDGE
Really? I've been doing those exercises with the soup cans.

ROSE
Forget the cans. Buy a bolero.

They exit.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Midge and Rose walk in.

MIDGE
(calling out)
Ethan! Let's go!

ROSE
Is everything ordered for next week?

MIDGE
Yes. All done.

ROSE
I thought we'd do dinner at your
place. Your dining room is bigger
than ours.

ABE (O.C.)
Our dining room is fine.

ROSE
If you don't entertain, it's fine.

Ethan comes out. Midge puts Esther in a stroller.

MIDGE
I'll call you later. Bye, Papa.
(to Ethan)
Say good-bye, Ethan.
(nothing)
Ethan?
(nothing)
Ethan?
(nothing)
Eth-- oh never mind.

Midge pushes the stroller and Ethan out the door.

INT. MIDGE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Midge stands in the middle of the room wearing a black leotard and black tights measuring her ankles with a tape-measure. Her friend IMOGENE is sprawled out on the couch, a pitcher of daiquiri's and a couple of glasses sit on the coffee table. The television is on. Imogene is a round-faced, slightly dizzy lady, mid-twenties, who is probably never going to lose that last bit of baby weight. She has a pen and a thick black leather binder on her lap.

IMOGENE
So, she's going on and on about
this miracle treatment she had done
in Mexico. It involved goat's milk
and avocados.

MIDGE
Right ankle 6. Left ankle 6.

IMOGENE
(writes in the binder)
They smear it on your face, wrap a
hot towel around your head and put
you in a boat...

MIDGE
Right calf 13. Left calf 12 and
three quarters.

IMOGENE
 (writes in binder)
 ... then they row you out to sea...

MIDGE
 Right thigh 15 and a half.

IMOGENE
 (writes in binder)
 ... drop the anchor and you sit
 there for four hours. Then...

MIDGE
 Left thigh 16.

IMOGENE
 (writes in binder)
 ... They row you back in and...

MIDGE
 Hips. 35.

IMOGENE
 (writes in binder)
 ... they scrape you down...

MIDGE
 Waist 28.

IMOGENE
 (writes in binder)
 ... slap you in the face with old
 banana skins...

MIDGE
 Bust 36.

IMOGENE
 (writes in binder)
 ... charge you 75 dollars and send
 you home. She thinks she looks 20.
 I think she looks the same.
 (glances at the binder)
 God, you're so tiny. How long have
 you been measuring yourself like
 this?

MIDGE
 Everyday for ten years.

IMOGENE
 Even when you were pregnant?
 (flipping through)
 God, there's not enough daiquiri's
 in the world....

The door opens. Joel rushes in.

MIDGE

There you are. Are you hungry? I made curry and ordered Chinese in case it's awful.

JOEL

I'm sure it's fine. Did we have children?

MIDGE

They're upstairs.

JOEL

Hi Imogene.

IMOGENE

Hey Joel. Did you hear we're coming downtown to see you tomorrow night? We're very excited.

JOEL

Don't expect too much.

Joel heads into the kitchen.

IMOGENE

Oh, you'd better be great. I'm going to wear a beret.

(to Midge)

See you tomorrow.

Imogene gets up, grabs her purse and coat.

IMOGENE (CONT'D)

(calls off)

Good-bye Joel.

Imogene exits.

JOEL (O.C.)

The curry's terrible. We'll have the take-out.

Midge sips her drink. She hears something and glances over at the television.

ANGLE ON TV

It's The Ed Sullivan show. The comedian BOB NEWHART is on. He's performing one of his routines.

BOB NEWHART

(talking into a phone)

Listen Abe, what's the problem?... You're thinking of shaving it off. Uh, Abe don't you see that's part of the image?... Right, with shawl and stovepipe hat and string tie.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

She sits up.

BOB NEWHART (CONT'D)
 You don't have the shawl. Where's
 the shawl, Abe?... You left it in
 Washington. What are you wearing,
 Abe? A sort of cardigan?

ANGLE ON MIDGE

She frowns.

MIDGE
 Joel?

She gets up and heads into the kitchen.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 Joel?!

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Joel is eating Chinese take-out from the container. Midge
 comes in furious.

MIDGE
 You're not going to believe this.
 Bob Newhart is doing your act.

JOEL
 What?

MIDGE
 Bob Newhart. He's on Ed Sullivan
 doing your act. He must've come to
 the club one night and seen you
 perform.

Joel goes to a cupboard and starts looking for something.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 And now he's on television doing it
 just like you do. Well, it's a
 little different because he does it
 faster, which is better actually,
 but that's beside the point.

Joel pulls out a bowl and dumps a container of rice into it.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 I'm mad! Aren't you mad?

JOEL
 (starts opening all the
 take out containers)
 Midge, relax.

MIDGE
 You're not mad.

JOEL
 No.

MIDGE
 Or stunned.

Joel grabs a fork from a drawer.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 Not even mildly bemused?

JOEL
 It's his act.

Beat.

MIDGE
 I don't...
 (beat)
 ... what?

JOEL
 (re: take out)
 Are you going to put the rest of
 this on a platter?

MIDGE
 How is it his act? How did you
 know his act?

Joel goes back to the cupboard and looks for a platter.

JOEL
 (casually)
 I've got his record.

MIDGE
 So you... stole Bob Newhart's act?

JOEL
 (finds a platter)
 It's fine, everybody does it.

MIDGE
 Everybody steals his act?

JOEL
 (puts the food on platter)
 Yes. No. Not steals. Borrows.
 It's no big deal.

MIDGE

It's not? When I found out June Friedman used my meatloaf recipe I almost stabbed her in the eye with a fork.

JOEL

Everybody in comedy steals --

MIDGE

Borrows --

JOEL

Borrows everybody else's jokes. Especially at the beginning. Bob Newhart probably used Henny Youngman's stuff when he started. That's how it's done.

MIDGE

Oh. Well, if that's how it's done.

JOEL

It is.

Beat.

MIDGE

I thought you'd written it. That act. I feel a little silly now.

JOEL

Well, I did put my spin on it.

MIDGE

Yes. You slowed it down.

JOEL

And my inflection is different.

MIDGE

Right. Well, I'm new to this, so...

JOEL

You'll learn.

MIDGE

Yeah. I guess so.

Joel gathers up the food and forks and knives.

JOEL

You want a drink?

He heads out.

MIDGE

Sure.

(to herself)

I guess I should go apologize to
June Friedman now.

Midge stands there feeling slightly disappointed.

EXT. UPPER WEST SIDE - AFTERNOON

The streets are bustling. The leaves are turning. A breeze
blows orange and gold leaves through the air.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Midge is wrapping the measuring tape around Esther's
forehead. The PHONE RINGS. Midge answers it.

MIDGE

Hello?

JOEL (O.C)

(panicked)

How's the brisket? Is it okay?

MIDGE

Do you know something I don't?

INT. JOEL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Joel paces, clearly agitated. We will INTERCUT for the
remainder of the phone call.

JOEL

Just answer the question Midge!

MIDGE

Yes, it's fine. What's the matter?

JOEL

I had to work straight through
lunch so I couldn't get downtown to
get a time for tonight. Tonight!
Understand?

MIDGE

Tonight. Yes, I understand.

JOEL

Archie and Imogene are coming,
remember?

MIDGE

Of course I remember.

JOEL

They're coming tonight and I don't have a time. You know what? Cancel them. Tell them I'm sick.

MIDGE

But they've got a babysitter. It's all arranged.

JOEL

I should've changed that lunch. Damn it.

MIDGE

Joel. Come on. I promise, you'll get on. I'll bring the brisket, I'll do my thing... Everything will be fine. Okay?

JOEL

(calming down)
Okay.

MIDGE

Hey, remember, this whole comedy thing, it's supposed to be fun. That's why we do it, right?

JOEL

(deep breath)
You'll have to bring me my show sweater. I left it at home.

MIDGE

I can do that.

JOEL

And you have to be here right at six.

MIDGE

I will be on time.

JOEL

Okay. I should go.

Midge hangs up and turns back to Esther.

MIDGE

Your daddy's crazy. Now let's measure that forehead.

INT. CAB - EVENING

Midge, dressed in her downtown clothes except for the addition of a short jacket, pulls up in a cab.

MIDGE
 (to driver)
 I'll just be a minute --

The door flies open and Joel gets in and slams the door.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 (startled)
 Geez!

JOEL
 Where the hell have you been? It's
 six-thirty!

MIDGE
 I'm sorry, I...

JOEL
 Do you have my sweater?

MIDGE
 (hands it to him)
 You didn't have to stand out there.
 I would've come up.

JOEL
 (starts to put it on)
 If you get here at six you come up.
 (notices something)
 Are you kidding me?

MIDGE
 What?

JOEL
 (holds out the sweater)
 Holes! Holes everywhere!

MIDGE
 What?

Midge grabs the sweater and examines it.

JOEL
 I can't believe you didn't look at
 it before you left the house.

MIDGE
 I was in a hurry to meet you.
 (off sweater)
 You can hardly see them.

JOEL
 Hardly see --?
 (grabs the sweater back)
 Look! A hole here, a hole here,
 two holes here... I mean, how does
 this happen?

MIDGE
It was probably a moth.

JOEL
A moth.

MIDGE
Yes.

JOEL
What moth?

MIDGE
(getting testy)
Ted. It was Ted the moth. Dime
sized holes. That's his signature.

JOEL
You think this is funny?

MIDGE
I think it doesn't matter.

JOEL
I'm going on stage with holes in my
shirt like a bum.

MIDGE
It's downtown. If you have
underwear on, you're overdressed.

Joel shoots her a look.

EXT. GASLIGHT CAFE - NIGHT

The cab pulls up. Midge and Joel, now in his hole-y sweater,
get out and hurry into the club.

INT. GASLIGHT CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

Joel and Midge come down to the usual smoky packed room.

MIDGE
(let's turn this around)
Hey, why don't you talk about it?

JOEL
About what?

MIDGE
About your sweater. You know, joke
about it in your act. It would be
fun. Personal. Yours.

JOEL
 I don't know...
 (spots something, sighs)
 Great. They're here.

MIDGE
 Okay, Joel, why don't you go join
 them? Get some coffee, calm down,
 and I'll go deal with this, okay?

JOEL
 Fine. Hurry.

Joel walks off. Midge and the brisket make their way over to
 the bar. There's no Baz in sight, but Susie sits there
 working the books. Midge walks up to her.

MIDGE
 Excuse me... Is Baz around?

SUSIE
 Nope.

Midge looks around helplessly.

MIDGE
 Uh... do you know where he is? The
 shitter perhaps?

SUSIE
 He's out.

MIDGE
 Do you know when he'll be back?

SUSIE
 Nope.

MIDGE
 Nope.
 (well it's worth a try)
 Excuse me, see my husband, Joel
 Maisel, over there?
 (Susie doesn't look)
 ... Okay. He couldn't get away
 from work to come down here earlier
 for a time.
 (Susie looks at Midge)
 To perform? He's a comedian.
 (blank stare from Susie)
 Anyhow, it was a crazy day at his
 work and see, tonight our best
 friends came, the Gershes...

SUSIE
 (perks up)
 The Gershes are here? You're
 kidding, where?

MIDGE
Over there.

SUSIE
(looks)
Well, I'll be damned. That is
exciting. The Gershes. Wow.

MIDGE
(gets the dig, bites her
tongue)
Anyhow, I was wondering if you
could find a way to give my husband
a time? Preferably before 11:30.

SUSIE
Why isn't he over here?

MIDGE
What?

SUSIE
Mr. Saturday Night. Why isn't he
asking for the time? Why are you
asking for the time?

MIDGE
Well... I have the brisket.

SUSIE
Huh.

Susie goes back to her work.

MIDGE
So... Anything you could do would
be great. So...
(puts the brisket down)
Thanks.

Midge hesitates a beat then gives up and heads off.

ANGLE ON JOEL, ARCHIE AND IMOGENE'S TABLE

ARCHIE
(pointing)
That looks like Allen Ginsberg.
Imogene, doesn't that look like
Allen Ginsberg?

JOEL
(grumpy)
Everyone here looks like Allen
Ginsberg.

Midge walks up.

ARCHIE
Hey there, kitten.

Midge kisses them and sits.

 IMOGENE
 (gleefully)
This place is perfectly filthy.

 MIDGE
You should see the bathroom.

 JOEL
 (grumpy)
Don't go in the bathroom.

 IMOGENE
Well, now I'm definitely going in
the bathroom.

A waitress puts down four cappacinos. Joel digs in his pocket.

 ARCHIE
Oh no, I got this. A starving
artist never pays.

 JOEL
I'm not a starving artist.

 ARCHIE
Your sweater tells another story.
 (tosses a bill on the
 waitress tray)
Here you go.

 JOEL
 (sotto to Midge)
So, what did he say?

 MIDGE
Uh... he wasn't here but the lady
said she'd work it out.

A folksy trio takes the stage.

 JOEL
I want a real drink. There's a bar
next door.
 (to Archie)
You want to get a drink?

 ARCHIE
Right behind you. I swear that's
Allen Ginsberg.

The men exit.

 IMOGENE
He's tense.

MIDGE
Yes, well... Show-biz.

The ladies laugh.

IMOGENE
That is the cutest bolero.

MIDGE
Thanks. My mother got it for me.

INT. GASLIGHT CAFE - MUCH MUCH LATER

Midge, Joel and Imogene sit, many cigarettes crushed out in their ashtray. Joel's mood is getting darker by the moment. Midge nervously checks her watch. Archie rejoins them.

ARCHIE
It's not Allen Ginsberg.

JOEL
(to Midge)
When the hell am I going on?

MIDGE
I don't know. Soon.

ANGLE ON THE STAGE: The MC gets behind the mic.

MC
Next up - a lady fresh off some
boat from somewhere. Janet Shaw.

A scrawny girl whose hair, skin and dress are remarkably all the same color, takes the stage.

JANET
This poem is about Spokane.
(beat)
"Spokane, Spokane, Spokane, man."

ANGLE ON TABLE:

Joel shoots Midge a look.

MIDGE
I'll be right back.

Midge rushes off.

ANGLE ON THE BAR:

Midge walks up to a waitress making coffee.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
Where is she?

WAITRESS

Who?

MIDGE

The one who looks like she lives
under a bridge.

WAITRESS

Oh Susie. She went out.

MIDGE

Do you know where?

WAITRESS

God no. Who would ask?

ANGLE ON THE TABLE:

Archie and Imogene are standing putting their coats on.

MIDGE

Any minute now.

ARCHIE

Kitten, we're going to have to take
a rain check.

IMOGENE

It was a blast though.

MIDGE

Please. Wait just a few...

JOEL

We're going, too.

MIDGE

What? We can't go.

JOEL

I have an early morning meeting.

MIDGE

Joel...

ARCHIE

I say we just tell everyone it was
Allen Ginsberg.

Susie walks by.

SUSIE

(to Joel)
You're up.

She's off.

JOEL
What? What did she say?

MIDGE
I think she said you're up.

IMOGENE
(quickly sits back down)
Oh goody.

ANGLE ON STAGE

M.C
Thank you, Janet Shaw. Don't need
to go to Spokane now.
(looks at his paper)
Okay... next up, a comedian.

ANGLE ON OUR FOURSOME

Archie sits down.

IMOGENE
That's you.
(adjusts her beret)
Go be funny.

M.C
Joel Maisel.

Archie and Imogene whoop it up. Seeing no way out, Joel
heads up onstage. Midge gets out her notebook.

ANGLE ON STAGE:

Joel gets behind the microphone. He's clearly a bit rattled.

JOEL
Thank you. Thanks. Uh...

Joel looks nervously at Midge. She smiles encouragingly.

IMOGENE
(squeezing Midge's arm)
So exciting.

JOEL
(weakly)
So, my sweater, it's a new sweater,
but I asked my wife to bring it to
me because I work during the day,
so she does and I put it on.
(pulls at his sweater)
Holes. Holes in my sweater.

No laughs. Imogene and Archie glance at each.

JOEL (CONT'D)

So, I ask how did this happen and she says moths. And I'm like, moths? What moths? And she says Ted.

(Crickets)

Ted the moth.

Silence. A cough. More silence.

IMOGENE

(smiling to Midge)

He's very avant garde.

Midge smiles weakly then looks back at Joel panicked, mortified, and heartbroken all at once.

JOEL

That was just something that... happened. Okay, uh so...

(hurrying past that last bit as fast as he can)

Anyhow, this is a press agent talking to Abe Lincoln.

(starts phone bit)

Hey Abe, sweetheart, how's...

(backtracks, awkwardly)

Oh, uh, did anyone read "The Hidden Persuaders"? It's about marketing agents and they had to create Abe Lincoln. I mean, if they had to create Abe Lincoln. The book's not about that. This bit... anyhow.

(as if talking to a phone)

Hey Abe, sweetheart, how's Gettysburg? Kind of a drag, huh?

Archie slumps in his seat. Imogene tugs at her beret. Midge watches miserably as Joel continues to go down in flames.

INT. CAB - LATER THAT NIGHT

Midge and Joel sit in silence for a beat.

JOEL

(seething)

You told me to talk about my sweater.

MIDGE

I know.

(beat)

I just thought you'd put it in some sort of joke form or something.

(off his look)

Sorry.

They drive on in silence. Midge takes out the notebook.

JOEL

Don't.

She puts the notebook away. No more talking tonight.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joel pulls the turtle neck sweater off and throws it in the corner. He sits on the edge of the bed. Midge walks in.

MIDGE

Can I get you anything?

Joel doesn't answer. Midge heads into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Midge sinks down onto her vanity stool. She kicks off her shoes and sits there miserable. After a beat she takes a deep breath, gets up, and starts undressing.

INT. BEDROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Midge, now in her nightgown, hair and make-up still evening perfect, comes out of the bathroom. She sees something and stops in her tracks.

MIDGE

What are you doing?

Joel is stuffing clothes into a suitcase on the bed. He looks at her and stops.

JOEL

I have to go.

Midge stares at him confused.

JOEL (CONT'D)

I have to leave.

Midge stares at him still confused.

JOEL (CONT'D)

You. I have to leave you.

Beat.

MIDGE

That's my suitcase.

JOEL

It is?

MIDGE

You're leaving me with my suitcase?

Joel looks at the floor.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

But... tomorrow's Yom Kippur.

(he doesn't answer)

Joel?

JOEL

I'm... I'm not happy.

MIDGE

No one's happy. It's Yom Kippur.

JOEL

I don't know how to do this. I'm not good at things like this.

MIDGE

Things like what? Like leaving me?

JOEL

Yes.

MIDGE

Well, then don't. Practice a little. Do it later when you're more confident about the moves.

JOEL

Midge...

MIDGE

(pleading)

Joel... the rabbi's coming.

JOEL

I know he is.

MIDGE

Five years we've been trying to get the Rabbi. This year, we got him. We got the Rabbi!

JOEL

I should go.

MIDGE

No. Please. I don't understand.

JOEL

I thought my life was going to be something different. I thought I was going to be someone different. But tonight was just so terrible... I mean, a room full of people just watching me bomb...

MIDGE

It was one stupid night...

JOEL

And I'm up there dying and I'm thinking about last week. We're in Temple and the Rabbi tells that stupid Sodom and Gomorrah joke and suddenly the whole synagogue goes nuts.

MIDGE

So?

JOEL

He got more laughs in five minutes than I did in five months.

MIDGE

You're jealous of the Rabbi? He was in Buchenwald! Throw him a bone!

JOEL

Did you ever think you were supposed to be something and then you suddenly realized you're not?

MIDGE

Yes. Married.

JOEL

Good. That's good. You're good.

MIDGE

Joel, please...

JOEL

I'm never going to be a professional comedian, Midge. Never.

MIDGE

Well... of course not.

JOEL

What do you mean "of course not"?

MIDGE

What do you mean what do I mean?

JOEL

What did you think all those nights at the club were?

MIDGE

I thought they were fun. They were our fun couples thing.

(MORE)

MIDGE (CONT'D)

You know, like how the Morgensterns play golf, or how the Myers ballroom dance, or how the Levins pretend they're from Warsaw once a week to get ten percent off at that Polish restaurant that has "Kielbasa" nights...

JOEL

I can't believe this.

MIDGE

I never knew you were serious about it.

JOEL

Of course I was serious, Miriam! What the hell ever made you think I wasn't serious?

MIDGE

Well, for starters, you were doing someone else's act.

JOEL

I told you everybody does that when they start!

MIDGE

If you really wanted to be a comedian you should've written a joke.

JOEL

I tried with the "Ted" thing!

MIDGE

I wrote the "Ted" thing!

JOEL

And it bombed!

MIDGE

Because you killed it!

JOEL

Forget it.

MIDGE

Joel, come on. You have a job.

JOEL

But comedy was a dream. Do you know what a dream is? A dream is what keeps you going in a job you hate.

MIDGE

Since when do you hate your job?

JOEL

Do you know what I do, Midge?

MIDGE

You're the vice president in charge of...

JOEL

No. I mean, do you know what I do every day? Day in and day out? What the actual physical machinations of my job are?

MIDGE

No.

JOEL

Neither do I! I take meetings and make phone calls, I shuffle paper around and I have no idea what the hell I actually do.

MIDGE

Well, maybe if you did, you'd like it more.

JOEL

I just thought with the brisket and the notebook, I thought that you understood.

MIDGE

I'm sorry...

JOEL

Yeah. Me too...

MIDGE

But Joel, you can't just leave. I love you. We have a home. We have children. They're gonna notice.

JOEL

I have to go.

MIDGE

No! Wait, please, I'll be better. I'll do better. I'll pay more attention. You can quit your job. You can go to the club every night. I'll buy more notebooks and...

JOEL

I've been having an affair.

The wind is knocked right out of her.

JOEL (CONT'D)

It's been going on for months and I thought it was a phase but now...

MIDGE

Who?

JOEL

Penny.

MIDGE

(looks up at him)

Your secretary? You're leaving me for the girl who can't figure out how to sharpen a pencil?

JOEL

It's not about her. And it was a new sharpener...

MIDGE

It was electric! All she had to do was push!

JOEL

Don't you understand? I need to start over.

MIDGE

With her. She wins.

JOEL

This isn't a contest.

(deep breath)

I just don't want this life. This whole Upper West Side, classic six, best seats in Temple...

MIDGE

Wife, two kids...

JOEL

(beat)

I just don't... want it.

Joel stands there a beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)

So, you'll tell your parents for me?

Midge starts to laugh through her tears.

MIDGE

That might be the funniest thing you've ever said.

JOEL

Honey, I'm...

MIDGE

Tomorrow is Yom Kippur, I have thirty people and a Rabbi coming for dinner and this is the moment you pick to tell me you're going to march off into the sunset with your short-bus secretary.

(beat)

Can I just say, that you have... the worst timing ever?!!!

JOEL

(sincerely)

I'm sorry.

MIDGE

Go. Leave. Buy some pens on the way home. You'll need them.

Joel looks at her sadly a beat. He closes up the suitcase.

JOEL

I'm not proud of myself.

MIDGE

Oh, well as long as you're not proud...

Joel walks out of the bedroom. Midge trails after him.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Without slowing down or looking back Joel walks out the front door. Midge reaches the door and grabs it before it closes. She sees Joel walk down the hallway to the elevator and press the button. Midge can't watch the rest. She closes the door. Out in the hallway we hear the ding of the elevator.

JERRY (O.C.)

Evening, Mr. Maisel. Going on a trip?

Midge numbly walks into the dining room. The table is already set for the Yom Kippur Rabbi dinner the following night. China, silver, beautiful crisp linens, flowers, and the Rabbi's chair of honor at the head of the table. Midge grabs a bottle of wine off the table and heads into the...

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

... Where she grabs a bottle opener off the sink and opens the wine. She pours some wine into a glass and knocks it back. She pours again, and knocks it back. Suddenly something catches her eye. An empty shelf. The shelf where the Pyrex usually is. She looks around. She doesn't see it. She frowns. She thinks. She remembers.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

It's raining and miserable out. Roberto stands by the entrance doors having a smoke. Midge, a coat thrown over her nightgown and the wine bottle still in her hand, walks out. Roberto spots her and rushes over.

ROBERTO
Mrs. Maisel? Are you alright? Do you need a cab?

MIDGE
(reaches into her pocket and pulls out the subway token)
Nope. Gonna take the subway.

ROBERTO
It's miserable out here.

MIDGE
(indicating apartment)
It's miserable in there, too.

Midge heads off to the subway.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Midge drinking straight from the bottle. We WIDEN to reveal other riders watching her nervously. Even the scary ones are slowly moving away from her.

INT. GASLIGHT CAFE - NIGHT

The crowd has thinned out a bit from earlier. A very soggy and slightly tipsy Midge makes her way down the stairs. She walks over to a bored waitress sitting at the bar.

MIDGE
I left my Pyrex here and I'd like it back.

WAITRESS
Your what?

MIDGE
Pyrex. My Pyrex.

WAITRESS
(no idea what you're talking about)
Nope.

MIDGE
(exasperated)
It's a Pyrex.

WAITRESS

You keep saying that but...

MIDGE

Pyrex! A glass baking dish. Very durable, can go from hot to cold without cracking.

WAITRESS

We don't serve food here.

MIDGE

I know. It's not yours. It's mine. I brought it here.

WAITRESS

Why?

MIDGE

I made a brisket for... is that really important right now? My dish is here. I'd like it back. Can you make that happen?

WAITRESS

Where is it?

MIDGE

I don't know. I had hoped you'd have a clue.

WAITRESS

I don't.

MIDGE

(beat)

Hey, have you ever thought about being a secretary?

The waitress looks at her a beat.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

(deep breath)

Where do you wash the coffee cups?

WAITRESS

In the back.

Midge smiles at her. "Well?"

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

This place gets so weird late.

The waitress pulls herself off the stool and begrudgingly ambles off. Midge sits exhausted. The young fragile sad poet finishes and the room applauds half-heartedly. Midge takes the last swig from her bottle. It's empty. She sighs and puts it on the bar. The M.C. takes the stage again.

M.C
 That was deep, Christian. I think.
 Who knows? Okay, next up...
 (rummages in his pocket)
 ... Huh... hang on folks. I'll be
 right back.

He gets off the stage.

M.C (CONT'D)
 (calling off)
 Dottie! Where is my set list?

The audience starts talking amongst themselves. Midge, eyes fixed on the stage, slowly gets up and steps up on it, almost as if in a trance. She walks around, taking it in. She stops, facing away from the audience.

MIDGE
 (talking to herself)
 So, this is it, huh?

The audience starts to notice her.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 This is the dream. Standing up here on this filthy sticky stage all alone... if you couldn't have that, you didn't want me. Was that it, Joel?

Beat.

BLONDE IN FRONT ROW
 Who's Joel?

Midge turns around startled, not realizing she was being watched. There's a bright spotlight on her. She blinks, partially blinded.

MIDGE
 Oh! What?

BLONDE IN FRONT ROW
 Who's Joel?

MIDGE
 My husband.

A MAN WITH THE BLONDE WOMAN calls out.

MAN WITH BLONDE WOMAN
 We can't hear you!

MIDGE
 Oh sorry.
 (she takes the mic)
 Joel is my husband. Of five years.
 And tonight, he left.

An asshole in the audience "WHOO'S".

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Thank you. Thank you very much.

(starts to pace)

Yep. He left. Joel left. He packed up my suitcase and left. I had to tell the Rabbi he got Lyme disease and was at the hospital for a shot. He made me lie to the Rabbi on Yom Kippur. Couldn't get a clean slate for one fucking day.

BLONDE IN FRONT ROW

I don't understand what's going on.

MIDGE

Me either, sister. Me either.

ANGLE ON BAR

Susie ambles in from the back. She freezes, stunned to see Midge onstage.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

MIDGE (CONT'D)

So many questions spinning in my head. Why did he leave? Why wasn't I enough? Why didn't they put the stage over there on that wall instead of here by the bathroom so you wouldn't have to listen to every giant bowel movement that takes place in there?

(to horrified audience)

Oh yeah. Clear as a bell.

ANGLE ON SUSIE

She's fascinated now.

ANGLE ON MIDGE

MIDGE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm a little drunk and my brain is spinning. Everything I had counted on is gone.

A guy comes out of the bathroom.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

(to the guy)

You feeling better now?

BATHROOM GUY

(confused)

I...

The audience laughs. They think it's a performance now.

MIDGE

(continues pacing)

So, my life completely fell apart today. Did I mention that my husband left me?

(same guy "whoos")

Okay, fine. But, did I tell you he left me for his secretary? She's 21 and dumb as a bag of salt. And I'm not naive. I know men like stupid girls.

(suddenly to guy with the blonde in the front row)

Right?

GUY WITH BLONDE

(caught)

Uhhh...

MIDGE

(continues on)

... But, I thought Joel wanted more than stupid. I thought he wanted spontaneity. And wit. I thought he wanted to be challenged.

(to the Blonde)

You know what I mean?

WOMAN

Uhhh...

MIDGE

(indicating Blonde and the guy with her)

You two will be together forever. And I'll tell you this much, I was a great wife. I was fun.

(a little more heightened)

I planned theme nights. I dressed in costumes. I gave him kids! A boy and a girl and yes, our little girl is looking more and more like Winston Churchill every day, you know, with that big old Yalta-head? But that's not a reason to leave, right?

A guy crosses the stage and heads to the bathroom.

MIDGE (CONT'D)

(to the guy)

Really? After what I just said about the bathroom?

The audience laughs. The guy turns and sits back down.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 (back to her monologue)
 I loved him.

The women in the audience are with her.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 And I showed him I loved him.

The men of the audience are with her.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 All that shit they say about Jewish
 girls in the bedroom? Not true.
 There's French whores standing
 around the Marais district saying
 "did you hear what Midge did to
 Joel's balls the other night?"

More HOOTS. More LAUGHS.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 I can't do accents. Sorry. Joel
 did accents. Joel did great
 accents. Oh God.
 (tearing up)
 I can't believe this is happening.
 I can't believe I'm losing him to
 Penny Pann.
 (pissed off again)
 That's her name. Terrible, right?
 Penny Pann - Penny Pann - Penny
 Pann - I'm officially losing my
 mind. Which is perfect. Now, I'll
 be alone and crazy. The famous mad
 divorcee of the Upper West Side.

A couple applauds.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 Upper West side? Really? Where?

AUDIENCE MEMBER
 72nd and Amsterdam.

MIDGE
 The place on the corner with the
 courtyard?

AUDIENCE MEMBER
 That's the one.

MIDGE
 Oh, that's nice. We looked there.
 But the closets were so small and I
 wanted a powder room.
 (she sits on the stool,
 back to her rant)
 (MORE)

MIDGE (CONT'D)

You know, I've seen her twice wearing her shirt inside out? Penny? Twice. Once, fine, you were rushed in the morning. Twice - you can only be trusted to butter people's corn at the county fair. And here's the worst thing, and I know it's shallow and petty and small but, she's not even that pretty. Her ankles and calves are the same width.

BLONDE IN FRONT ROW

Eww.

The audience laughs.

MIDGE

(getting more wound up)

Yes! And her hips are extremely wide and pointy, and then everything gets progressively smaller on the way up. Like a reverse triangle. Medium waist, girl scout boobs, stumpy neck, pinhead right on top. It's like she was made by a three year old girl from shit she found on in a toy box. She's Mrs. Potato-Slut! And I'm sorry, but look at me!

(stands up)

I am the same size now that I was at my wedding! Don't you doubt! I've documented this. Every day for ten years I have measured every part of my body! And, come on --

(throws her coat off, she's only in her nightgown)

Who wouldn't want to come home to this every night?

(realizing)

Okay, maybe today is not the best day to judge. I've been crying, my face is all puffy, just...

(grabs the blonde's purse and covers her face)

... ignore my head and now...

(indicating neck)

... from here down, who wouldn't want to come home to this?

Actually, I'm a little bloated right now, I drank a lot of wine so my stomach's sort of...

(to a passing waitress)

Can I borrow your...?

(grabs her serving tray)

Thanks. Okay. So, ignore this --

(covers face with purse)

And this --

(covers stomach with tray)

(MORE)

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 But imagine coming home to these
 every night.

The room applauds. They're completely with her now.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 (getting swept up in her
 own madness)
 They're good right? Plus, they're
 standing up on their own! Wait...

Midge pulls down her straps and shows her boobs.

We hear gasps, cheers, a couple of boos, glasses crashing to
 the ground... it's complete pandemonium. Susie's riveted.

SUSIE
 Oh, shit!

MIDGE
 Now, seriously...
 (she covers her face and
 stomach again leaving the
 boobs exposed)
 ... there's no fucking way Penny
 Pann can compete with these tits!

TWO POLICEMEN walk past Susie toward the stage.

SUSIE
 Oh shit!!!

Susie takes off after them. Midge continues, oblivious to
 all this.

MIDGE
 So what if you're never going to be
 a comedian? Look at what greets
 you at the door!

POLICEMAN ONE
 Get down from there right now.

MIDGE
 (ignores him)
 You think Bob Newhart's got a set
 of these at home?

Policeman One yanks Midge off the stage.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 Ow! Hey...

The Policemen pull her off.

GUY NEXT TO BLONDE
 (to Blonde)
 That was the best thing ever.

The Policemen walks Midge out. Susie catches up with them.

SUSIE
It's not what you think.
She's a housewife. She doesn't
know the rules.

POLICEMAN TWO
We can discuss it at the station.

MIDGE
Station? What station?

The Policemen pull her up the stairs as the room gives her a standing ovation.

EXT. GASLIGHT CAFE - SAME TIME

The policemen walk Midge to their car.

MIDGE
I don't understand what's going on.

POLICEMAN ONE
You're under arrest.

MIDGE
What? Why?

POLICEMAN ONE
Public indecency and performing
without a cabaret license.

MIDGE
(beat)
You need a license to do that?
Seriously?

POLICEMAN ONE
Yeah, yeah, you can bitch all about
it to your friend in the back seat
there.

They open the door of the police car and shove her in.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

The door slams in Midge's face. She pounds on the window.

MIDGE
Hey! Hey! Hey!

Midge sighs and gives up. She glances to her left. We PAN OVER. Lenny Bruce sits on the seat next to her.

LENNY BRUCE

Hey.

MIDGE

(stunned, beat)

Hey.

INT. JAIL CELL - LATER

Midge stands stiffly at the bars. Behind her, TWO ROUGH LOOKING WOMEN sit on a cot smoking and talking. Midge glances at them

WOMAN ONE

So, he says "the money now". And I grab his knife and...

(notices Midge looking at them, then to Midge)

Do I owe you money?

MIDGE

(turns around quickly)

Sorry.

WOMAN ONE

(to the other rough woman)

Anyhow, I grab his knife and...

(motions stabbing all over the place then shrugs)

...I thought he'd move.

WOMAN TWO

Hey, everyone dies.

WOMAN ONE

The worst part was the blood. It was everywhere. On the walls, on the floors, I mean look at this.

(re: her shirt)

I mean he was like a fire hydrant. And I love this top.

MIDGE

(without turning around)

Salt it.

WOMAN ONE

What?

MIDGE

The stain. You salt it then pour boiling water over until the water runs clear. Stain should be gone.

A GUARD comes over to the cell.

GUARD

Miriam Maisel. You're out.

The guard opens the cell and Miriam walks out.

WOMAN ONE
Hey thanks!

MIDGE
You're welcome.

Midge follows the guard off.

WOMAN ONE
(to woman two)
That's a great tip.

INT. POLICE STATION FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER

Susie sits on a a bench. The Policewoman leads Midge out.

POLICEWOMAN
Here you go.

SUSIE
Thanks, Judy.

The Policewoman walks off.

MIDGE
You bailed me out?

SUSIE
(leads Midge out)
My good deed for the year. You get
chick raped?

MIDGE
I don't think so.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Susie and Midge emerge from the police station onto the still
bustling streets of the village.

MIDGE
It's still night out.

SUSIE
Come on.

They start walking down the street.

MIDGE
I feel different.

SUSIE
You were in there twenty minutes.

MIDGE
Twenty minutes can change you.

SUSIE
Not really.

MIDGE
I'm a con now.

SUSIE
Not quite.

MIDGE
I've got a rap sheet.

SUSIE
No, you don't.

MIDGE
I'm hard. I'm a hard, used woman.
Is my hair grey?

SUSIE
No, it's not.

MIDGE
It feel grey.

SUSIE
Jesus Christ...

MIDGE
I had it all. Everything I had
always wanted. And now...
(starts to cry)
It's all falling apart.

SUSIE
Okay. Come on...

Susie pulls Midge past a bright neon "BAR" sign and into THE
KETTLE OF FISH bar.

INT. KETTLE OF FISH - CONTINUOUS

A dark village bar catering to both locals and the likes of
DeKooning, Ginsberg, Kerouac, Corso, and soon, Dylan. Susie
pulls Midge over to a table and sits her down.

SUSIE
(motions to the bartender)
Jimmy!

MIDGE
(glancing around the room)
Look at all the people. And they
look so happy. Are they high?

SUSIE
Yes, they are.

MIDGE
That must be nice. God, I'm so tired. I don't think I've ever been this tired.

SUSIE
(grabs a basket off a nearby table)
Have some nuts.

MIDGE
(shoves a handful of peanuts in her mouth)
Did you notice that I'm not wearing my own shoes? I'm not. Don't know when that happened either. Now I'm just a single grey haired ex-con drinking hooch and eating old nuts in someone else's shoes.

A waitress puts a couple of drinks down on the table.

SUSIE
(hands her a glass)
Drink that.

Midge takes a slug of whiskey. A long haired young girl, TRACEY, comes bounding over to the table.

TRACY
Susie, great. Big hootenanny in Woodstock tomorrow. Feed my dog?

SUSIE
No.

TRACY
Use the fire escape window. I owe some rent.

SUSIE
No.

TRACY
Walk him twice a day. If he doesn't want to walk, just carry him around the block like a baby.

SUSIE
Fuck no.

TRACY
I'll see you in a week.

Tracey runs off.

SUSIE
 (yelling after her)
 I'm not going to feed your dog!

MIDGE
 I always wanted a dog. Joel
 thought there would be fleas.

SUSIE
 Yeah? Well, you can have hers.

MIDGE
 Please, what kind of life can I
 give a dog now, huh?
 (re: her glass)
 This is empty.

SUSIE
 (waves the empty glass at
 the bartender)
 Look, if you're still upset about
 you're husband you shouldn't be. He
 was a loser and a fraud.

MIDGE
 You don't know him.

SUSIE
 I know he was doing Bob Newhart's
 act.

MIDGE
 (bitterly)
 Well, everyone steals, right?

SUSIE
You didn't.

A YOUNG GUY IN A CAP goes from table to table handing out
 pamphlets to people.

MIDGE
 I didn't what?

YOUNG GUY IN CAP
 (hands pamphlet to Midge)
 House party. Tomorrow night?

Midge takes the pamphlet and The Young Guy moves off.

SUSIE
 Steal. You didn't steal. Your
 shit was totally original. Don't
 get me wrong, it was rough. But,
 there's definitely something there.

A waitress puts a new drink down on the table.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

I'm thinking we can meet somewhere,
maybe the club if I can just get
Baz to die...

MIDGE

What are you talking about?

SUSIE

I'm talking about your act.

MIDGE

I don't have an act.

SUSIE

You will once we're done.

MIDGE

I don't understand.

SUSIE

You should do stand-up. And I can
help you.

MIDGE

Oh, come on.

SUSIE

I'm serious.

MIDGE

But... I'm a mother.

SUSIE

Great. We'll use that. Does one
of your kids do something weird?

MIDGE

Last night was an isolated
incident. There are medications I
can take to make sure that never
happens again.

SUSIE

Look, nine years I've been working
in clubs, okay? Nice years of
watching every kind of loser get up
there thinking he's Jack Benny.
Twice, I've seen someone who really
had the goods. The first time - a
guy comes in, west coast suntanned
arrogant pain in the ass. Three
words into his set - I fucking
knew. I said to Baz "that guy's
gonna be famous".

MIDGE

Who was he?

SUSIE

Mort Sahl.

MIDGE

Oh, he's good. We saw him at Grossingers last year.

SUSIE

And the second time was last night.

MIDGE

Stop it.

SUSIE

I know I'm right about this. Just like I know that unless I somehow get rich enough to hire some Haitian broad to walk me around Central Park twice a day in my old age, I'm gonna spend my entire life alone.

MIDGE

That's not true.

SUSIE

It's fine. I don't mind being alone. I just don't want to be... insignificant. Do you?

Midge doesn't answer.

SUSIE (CONT'D)

Don't you want to do something no one else can do? Be remembered as something other than a wife and mother and a member of the communist party?

MIDGE

When did I become a member of the communist part?

SUSIE

The minute you took that flier.

MIDGE

What?
(looks at the flier)
Shit.

SUSIE

Your name's already in Hoover's files. Now, let's put it up on a marquee as well.

MIDGE

I...
(realizing)
(MORE)

MIDGE (CONT'D)

Oh no!!!

(drops the peanuts)

It's Yom Kippur! I'm supposed to be fasting - atoning for my sins in the eyes of God.

SUSIE

So?

MIDGE

I'm eating peanuts!

SUSIE

You showed your tits to half of Greenwich Village. You think the peanuts are what's gonna piss Him off?

MIDGE

I have to go.

SUSIE

But...

MIDGE

I'm sorry. I can't be your Mort Sahl.

Midge hightails it out of the bar.

INT. ROSE AND ABE'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Rose and Abe stand there. Abe is pacing and flipping through a bible.

ROSE

Abe, please.

ABE

I'm just curious, that's all.

There's a light knock on the door. Midge comes in.

ROSE

(sees Midge)

Your father's a crazy. Come in.

ABE

No where in this bible does it say you have to fast on Yom Kippur, a whole city's starving, and I'm crazy.

MIDGE

Mama, Papa...?

ROSE
 (to Midge)
 What are you wearing? It's not
 thinning.

MIDGE
 I have something to tell you. You
 should both sit.

Rose and Abe stay standing. Midge drops into a chair.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 Last night Joel packed my suitcase
 and left. He's gone.

ROSE
 Joel left you?

MIDGE
 Yes.

Beat.

ROSE
 Why? What did you do?

MIDGE
 Nothing. I didn't do anything.

Abe storms out and slams the door.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 He's in love with his secretary.

ROSE
 Did you know this? Did you know he
 was having an affair?

MIDGE
 No! Of course I didn't know!

A loud "BANG!" is heard offstage. Midge jumps startled.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 God!

ROSE
 This girl, is she, oh my God, is
 she pregnant?

Another large "CRASH!"

MIDGE
 (jumps)
 Shit!

ROSE
Did you talk like that around him?
Did you use sailor talk?

MIDGE
No, I didn't use sailor talk.

Another "BANG!" is heard from the other room.

ROSE
She must be pregnant. A man
doesn't leave unless the girlfriend
is pregnant.

"CRASH!"

MIDGE
What the hell is he doing?

ROSE
He's mad.

MIDGE
At who? At me?!

ROSE
Shhh! They'll hear.

MIDGE
Who'll hear?

ROSE
(gesturing everywhere)
Them, them.

MIDGE
Who's them?

Rose collapses on the bed sobbing.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
Mom...

A loud angry version of Rachmoninoff's concerto No. 2 in C minor bellows through the apartment. Midge knocks on the study door.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
Dad!

INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Abe is at his piano playing like he's mad at the keys. Midge storms over to him.

MIDGE

What is it? Why are you mad? I didn't do anything wrong!

Abe slams the piano shut and whirls around on her.

ABE

(furious)

When I agreed to send you to that fancy goyim college, what was the one thing I told you?

MIDGE

They'll have terrible deli?

ABE

The other thing I told you! The important thing I told you!

MIDGE

(meekly)

Don't pick a weak man.

Abe points his finger at her "exactly". He slams his sheet music down storms out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Abe is at the bookshelf. Midge enters marching after him. Rose's sobs are still heard loud and clear.

MIDGE

This isn't my fault!

ABE

Of course it's your fault. Everything we bring on ourselves is our own fault.

MIDGE

He was a good husband. A good provider.

(marches over to the
bedroom door)

Ma! Please! Stop crying!

ABE

What are you going to do now? What are your children going to do?

MIDGE

(bangs on the door again)

For the love of god stop crying in that bedroom!

(back to Abe)

This isn't fair.

The bedroom door opens. Rose marches out goes into the guest room and slams the door. The crying resumes.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
(calling to Rose)
Much better. Thanks.

ABE
Life isn't fair. It's hard and cruel. You have to pick your friends as if there's a war going on. You want a husband who will dodge bullets for you. Not one who points to the bookcase and says "up there."

MIDGE
How can you say that about Joel?
You liked him!

ABE
I knew what he was.

MIDGE
Why didn't you tell me then? Huh?

ABE
I did tell you!

MIDGE
When? When did you tell me?

ABE
When you came home with him. That night I looked at you and asked "is this the choice?" And you said yes.

MIDGE
That was telling me?

ABE
What, do I have to spell it out for you?

The bedroom door opens. Rose emerges now perfectly pulled together and completely composed.

ROSE
(gets her coat)
Joel is sick. Everything's fine.
Not a word of this to the Rabbi.
I'm going to take a bath.

Rose marches off to the bedroom.

ABE
Listen to me Miriam, you are a child. You cannot survive this.
(MORE)

ABE (CONT'D)

Now, I am no fan of Joel's but you need a husband. And those children need a father.

MIDGE

What am I supposed to do? Go buy one at Zabar's?

ABE

You fix your face, put on his favorite dress, then you go out, find him, and make him come back home.

Abe heads to the kitchen. Midge stands there deflated.

INT. MIDGE'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Midge walks in, still reeling from her father's words. She looks around at her very empty apartment. Beat. Then -

MIDGE

(determined)

Fine.

Midge marches over to a desk and furiously rips through the drawers looking for something. She pulls out a flip-top address book. Midge flips through it, stops and reads.

ANGLE ON ADDRESS BOOK "Penny Pann - 255 West 72nd, 3B".

A look of confusion comes over Midge's face.

EXT. VERY SIMILAR UPPER WEST SIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A cab pulls up. Midge, perfect face and hair, wearing Joel's favorite dress, gets out. She looks up at the building.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Midge walks up to 3B. She stops, looks around the hallway a beat, then knocks. Penny opens the door. Her eyes widen.

PENNY

(terrified)

Joel! Joel!

The door opens wider. Joel steps up.

JOEL

What are you doing here?

Midge brushes past him and goes inside.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A spacious, stylish, flower filled living room.

JOEL
Are the kids alright?

Midge looks around the room.

MIDGE
(turns to Joel)
Is this where you live now?

JOEL
Well...

MIDGE
It's nice. Really nice.
(to Joel)
In fact it's an awful lot like our
place.

JOEL
What?

MIDGE
The building, the hallway, this
room - all very similar to ours.
That's the couch I wanted to buy
but you felt was too deep.

JOEL
I don't remember what couch you
wanted to...

MIDGE
I thought I'd find you squatting in
some downtown smoke filled loft.
Not two blocks away living the
Methodist version of our life.
With the methodist version of me.

A ding is heard from the kitchen. Midge looks at Penny.

PENNY
(wilting)
Dinner.

MIDGE
Brisket?

PENNY
Pot roast.

Penny rushes off.

MIDGE
The methodist version of brisket.

JOEL
Midge...

MIDGE
So, is that what you were missing,
Joel? Pot roast and Santa Claus?

JOEL
Of course not.

MIDGE
You said you didn't want our life.
But this is our life. You didn't
go somewhere exotic and different
you went across the street.

JOEL
I had to.

MIDGE
Why? Tell me why?

JOEL
Because... after the other night,
at the club, after I failed like
that, I just knew - you'd never
look at me the same again.

MIDGE
(look around once more,
shakes her head)
Okay. I'll have your things packed
up and delivered here.

She starts out.

JOEL
Midge, wait -- is that what you
came here to say?

She stops. Beat.

MIDGE
No.

Midge smiles at him sadly and walks out the door.

MONTAGE - PEGGY LEE'S "PASS ME BY" PLAYS

PEGGY LEE
(sings)
"I GOT ME TEN FINE TOES TO WIGGLE
IN THE SAND / LOTS OF IDLE FINGERS
SNAP TO MY COMMAND..."

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

As Midge walks defiantly down the street.

PEGGY LEE
 "A LOVERLY PAIR OF HEELS THAT KICK
 TO BEAT THE BAND / CONTEMPLATING,
 NATURE CAN BE FASCINATING..."

INT. SUBWAY CAR - NIGHT

As Midge stands holding a strap in the crowded car.

PEGGY LEE
 "ADD TO THESE A NOSE THAT I CAN
 THUMB / AND A MOUTH BY GUM HAVE
 I..."

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

As Midge emerges from the subway at Christopher Street -

PEGGY LEE
 "TO TELL THE WHOLE DARN WORLD IF
 YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO LIKE IT / DEAL
 ME OUT / THANK YOU PASS ME BY."

INT. SUSIE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A dumpy basement apartment, basically a dark square with one narrow window through which you can see people's feet walking on the sidewalk outside. The only furniture in the place consists of a sad couch opposite the front door and a beat-up coffee table in front of the couch. Piles of newspapers, magazines, and record albums are stacked everywhere. Susie stands in her "kitchen" (a hotplate on the radiator) eating beans out of the pan she heated them in. She finishes, tosses the pan, goes to the couch and shoves it over to the window wall. She then shoves the coffee table in front of the couch. From the wall behind the couch she pulls down a Murphy bed which takes up every available inch of space in the room. She turns off the light and gets into bed. Beat. A KNOCK on the door. Susie climbs out of bed and maneuvers over to the door. She opens it, at least as far as it will go before it hits the bed, which is about six inches. Midge's face appears in the door crack.

MIDGE
 (confident, energized)
 I went by the Gaslight and they
 told me to come here.
 (beat)
 Is this your apartment?

SUSIE
 Yeah.

MIDGE
 (beat)
 I'll be by tomorrow at ten. Here.

Midge shoves some money through the door crack.

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 For the bail.
 (beat)
 You don't have a very long lease,
 do you? Because you should move.

Midge's face disappears. Susie strains to call after her.

SUSIE
 Did you say "ten"? In the morning?
 Hey!!!

PEGGY LEE
 (sings)
 "PASS ME BY / PASS ME BY / IF YOU
 DON'T HAPPEN TO LIKE IT PASS ME
 BY."

INT. BASKET HOUSE - NIGHT

The room watches A CHUBBY YOUNG MAN on stage doing some familiar sounding stand-up.

CHUBBY YOUNG MAN
 (talking into a phone)
 Abe, what's the problem? You're
 thinking of shaving it off. Uh,
 Abe don't you see that's part of
 the image?

ANGLE ON:

Midge in back of the club. She shakes her head in disbelief.

INT. PAMPHLET PARTY - NIGHT

The Young Guy In The Cap and his commie friends debate furiously as Midge sits on a couch, eating chip and dip, enjoying the scene immensely.

PEGGY LEE
 "IF YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO LIKE IT /
 PASS ME BY."

END OF MONTAGE

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

The door to the holding cell area opens and A WEARY POLICEMAN leads Lenny Bruce out.

LENNY BRUCE

You guys ever gonna to take a broom to this place? They've already got penicillin. You don't have to grow it.

WEARY POLICEMAN

(tosses him an envelope)
Take your things and leave, Bruce.

LENNY BRUCE

(looks in the envelope)
I had three joints in my wallet and I expect them all to be there.
(finds them)
Hey, if guys have some coke back there we could have a hell of a party.

Lenny Bruce turns. Midge is standing there.

LENNY BRUCE (CONT'D)

You're not my wife.

MIDGE

No.

LENNY BRUCE

I thought my wife bailed me out.

MIDGE

No. I did.

LENNY BRUCE

Uh huh. Well, thanks.

Lenny Bruce heads toward the exit. Midge runs after him.

MIDGE

Can I ask you a question?

LENNY BRUCE

Uh... sure.

MIDGE

Do you love it?

LENNY BRUCE

Do I love what?

MIDGE

Comedy. Stand-up. Do you love it?

LENNY BRUCE

(stops)
Seriously?
(Midge nods)
Well... I've been doing it a while.
(MORE)

LENNY BRUCE (CONT'D)
 Okay, let's put it like this - if there was anything else in the entire world that I could possibly do to earn a living - I would. Anything. I'm talking dry cleaners to the Klan, crippled-kid portrait painter, slaughterhouse attendant... If someone said to me, Leonard - you can either eat a guy's head or do two weeks at the Copa, I'd say pass the fucking salt. It's a terrible, terrible job. It should not exist. Like cancer and God.

HONEY BRUCE, a busty blonde comes clacking in.

HONEY
 Sorry. I went to the Varick station instead.

LENNY BRUCE
 Why the hell would you do that?

HONEY
 'Cause, you like Varick better.

LENNY BRUCE
 Jesus, Honey, you don't get to pick.

Midge watches them go a beat. Then --

MIDGE
 (calling after him)
 But do you love it?

Lenny Bruce stops, turns around and looks at her. He laughs, shakes his head and walks off hands in the air "I surrender".

MIDGE (CONT'D)
 (to herself)
 Yeah. He loves it.

Midge smiles slyly. Dave Edmunds "GIRL'S TALK" plays us out.

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW