

Maybe Baby It's You (11 min.)

Joe Roy B.

Lisette Paulette L-P

Narr. Lynn G.

*plays in*  
the background. JOE and LIZETTE are in two pools of light. He wears a fedora and trench coat. She's dressed every inch the '40s dame, holds an unlit cigarette. They often speak directly to the audience.

JOE. The story of our marriage starts like many others. A fella, a dame, and a slippery little fish called Passion. I'd seen her in the saloon before. Flaming red hair, a pair of gams that'd make a monk reevaluate, and lips as pouty as a teenager on a family vacation. Oh sure, I'd had my share of flames before, but this dame was pure heat. I knew once I threw myself into her fire, all the dropping and rolling in the world wouldn't save my hide. No, this skirt wasn't for trying on; this skirt was for wearing. And was just my size. (*Double take.*) You know what I mean.

LIZETTE. The big lug just stood there at the end of the bar night after night. I looked, but I didn't touch. This joe was an illegal firecracker and I'd seen too many dames get their fingers blown off playing with cherry bombs like him without adult supervision. I didn't want a Fourth of July sparkler relationship; you know, the kind that sizzles and sparks and throws off its heat for an instant before it burns down to a dead, dry, ashy stick you can't even roast weenies on.

JOE. She stood there with a Pall Mall in her mouth. But it turned out to be my lucky strike. (*He approaches and speaks directly to LIZETTE.*) Say, need a light?

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LIZETTE. I can see just fine, thanks. (*He turns away.*

*LIZETTE holds out cigarette.*) But I could use a match.

JOE. Sure, sure, I got plenty of matches: black and blue, Abbott and Costello, coffee and cream. Take your pick.

LIZETTE. Very funny, but when I want a crack, I'll look down at the sidewalk. (*She starts to walk away. He grabs her arm.*)

JOE. Hold on, Junior. I got one more match for ya: you and me. But you'd better be careful; when struck properly, flames will ignite. (*She slaps him, hard. They both like it.*)

LIZETTE. Say, you're right. I'm warming up already.

JOE. Versa-visa. (*Pulls her close.*) Say, I got a hunch there's something about you that'd go awfully swell with something about me.

LIZETTE. Yeah? And what do you do when you get a hunch?

JOE. I lay down a bet.

LIZETTE. Even if the odds are long?

JOE. That's how I like 'em. See, I'm a go-the-distance kind of guy.

LIZETTE. And who says I'm a go-all-the-way kind of girl?

You're barking up the wrong tree, Fido. (*She pulls away, starts off. He grabs her again. This time he's serious.*)

JOE. You got me wrong, Kitten. This dog stopped barking a long time ago. I'm whimpering and looking for a good home to take me in.

LIZETTE. Sure, sure you are. I've got your license number, Rover. You're tired of catting around and now you're ready to settle down and stud, but I'm the one who gets stuck at home with a pack of puppies, see?

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JOE (*wry smile*). You know what your problem is?  
LIZETTE. What?

JOE. You use your mouth for talking. (*He grabs her and dips her back in a long passionate kiss. They come up for air, both panting a bit.*) Pass me the butter, baby, I just got a third-degree burn on my heart.

LIZETTE (*protesting faintly*). Who do I look like, Florence Nightingale? Fetch your own oleo. (*She puts the CIGARETTE in her mouth. JOE grabs the cigarette, throws it to the ground, and dips her back in a longer passionate kiss. They come back up for air, swooning.*)

JOE. Sorry, baby, but smoking's bad for you anyway.  
LIZETTE (*dreamily*). I know. But women live longer than

men. I figure if I play my fags right, we'll drop dead at the exact same time. (*She dips him back in an incredibly long passionate kiss. They come up for air. He's weak-kneed. She walks offstage, smiling. He turns to the audience.*)

JOE. So we kept kissing. We smooched like starving beggars whose favorite meal is lips. We kissed all the way to Sausalito to meet her parents, take a few minutes of Reverend Wilson's time, and honeymoon in a bed and breakfast—where we never got to the breakfast. We were so close our shadows got confused. We were so moony we threw off the earth's tidal system. We were so hot for each other they could have used us to weld. We were ready for a lifetime of verbal gymnastics and conjugal bliss. And then— (*Jazzy MUSIC cuts out.*)  
—we started living together.

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(*MUSIC hits ominous chord. LIZETTE reenters wearing a housecoat with curlers in her hair. He tosses off his trench coat to reveal a dirty white tank.*)

LIZETTE. And the honeymoon glow lasted about as long as an albino's day at the beach.

(*They retreat to their corners. A FIGHT BELL rings. They come out ready for battle.*)

JOE. Say, I'm home, weaker half!  
LIZETTE. Well, look who's here! My breadwinner. With a

paycheck big enough to buy two bagels and a pita pocket.

JOE. Save it for the funny papers, Red. Oh, and by the way, did you murder someone in the sink last night or do you want to 'fess up to your real hair color?

(*FIGHT BELL rings. They go to their corners. She speaks to the audience.*)

LIZETTE. Reality slapped us harder than a sadistic obstetrician.

(*FIGHT BELL. They come back in, verbally swinging.*)

JOE. Say, haven't you got dinner ready yet?

LIZETTE. Oh, sure, sure. In between washing walls and scrubbing floors I whipped up a casserole surprise. Surprise! There's no casserole!

(*FIGHT BELL. Back to their corners.*)

JOE. It became apparent that we had...issues.  
LIZETTE. Gesundheit.

(*FIGHT BELL.*)

JOE. Well, it's poker night. Adios, muchacha!

LIZETTE. Hang on there, Señor Selfish! Before you ante up, how's about hanging up that new lilac wallpaper I bought for the den?

JOE. Lilacs in the den? Why don't you put a bowl of fruit on my head, wrap a tablecloth around my waist and invite the neighbors over to watch me meringue on the coffee table? (*To audience.*) Well, after the neighbors left and we cleaned the grapes off the floor, we were forced to ask that eternal question.  
LIZETTE. Had we ever really clicked or was that just the sound of two libidos slamming together?

JOE. Oh, sure, we had heat between us. But so did Mrs. O'Leary's cow and the city of Chicago, and we all know how that turned out.

(*Many FIGHT BELLS. They retreat, exhausted. He puts back on his trench coat, she removes housecoat and curls.*)

LIZETTE. We were ready to pack our bags and run home to Mama.

JOE. Only one thing stood in our way.

LIZETTE. We weren't the pack-our-bags-and-run-home-to-Mama-type.

JOE. Besides, we still had cake in the fridge, dizzy spells from the blood test...and that little piece of paper stating that we were committed.

LIZETTE. And *commitment* is more than being checked into a special home wearing a straightjacket.

JOE. *Patience* ain't just sick guys in hospital gowns eatin' Jello.

LIZETTE. *Trust* ain't just men wearing girdles after a hernia.

JOE. *Communication*'s more than just an easy college major until you figure out what you really wanna study.

LIZETTE. Good one.

JOE. I know.

LIZETTE. We'd made a discovery, Columbus and I. All that heat had steamed up our spiritual glasses.

JOE. And we decided to tissue them off and see if we had anything worth seeing.

LIZETTE. So we made a pact.

JOE. No more getting to home base until we had something more to base our home on.

LIZETTE. And no more sexual innuendo or provocative banter that turned us on and made us feel like we were communicating, but in actuality allowed us to hide from one another.

JOE. Huh?

LIZETTE. No more metaphors.

JOE. Why, that's nuttier than a squirrel's breakfast.

LIZETTE. No more metaphors! (*To audience.*) I knew that if we were gonna get beyond the surface, we were going to have to stand here until we could really talk.

JOE. Well, if we're gonna really talk, stop addressing the audience!

LIZETTE. I can't walk over grates in the sidewalk because I'm afraid I'll fall in.  
 JOE. I'm afraid to hang my feet over the side of the bed because a monster might grab them. *(She reacts. Takes it up a level.)*  
 LIZETTE. I'm afraid of children because they always know when you're lying.  
 JOE. I'm afraid of wanting things because I might get them. *(They are quiet for a moment.)* What's your greatest fear?  
 LIZETTE. Being lonelier when I'm with someone than when I'm alone. *(He nods.)* What's yours?  
 JOE. Silence. *(She nods. Pause.)* Hey, kid, I—  
 LIZETTE *(puts her finger to his lips)*. Sssh.

*(He touches her face. They stare into each other's eyes.)*  
 LIGHTS FADE.)

LIZETTE. Huh?  
 JOE. Look at me! Your eyes are darting around like a mosquito on a nude beach!  
 LIZETTE *(to audience)*. I told him no more metaphors!  
 JOE. And I'm telling you, no more breaking the fourth wall!  
 LIZETTE. Okay, okay! *(Beat.)* Here we go. *(They look at each other. They wait. They try to begin a conversation, but don't know how. Finally, he speaks.)*  
 JOE. What's your favorite color?  
 LIZETTE. Red.  
 JOE. Ah.  
 LIZETTE. You?

JOE. Blue.  
 LIZETTE. Mmm. *(Beat.)* What's your middle name?  
 JOE. Larry. Yours?  
 LIZETTE. Sue.  
 JOE. Ah. *(Beat.)* Do you believe in evolution or creationism?  
 LIZETTE *(thinks)*. The second one. You like Superman or Batman?  
 JOE. Super. Do you like Ginger or Maryanne?  
 LIZETTE. Maryanne. I've always been a sucker for the underdog. *(This intrigues him.)*  
 JOE. Well, I like Pepsi better than Coke.  
 LIZETTE. I like Tab. *(He raises his eyebrows, nods. They wait.)*  
 JOE. I was in chorus in high school.  
 LIZETTE. I was in band. *(Embarrassed.)* I played oboe.  
 JOE. Oooh.  
 LIZETTE. Yeah. *(Pause.)* I didn't go to the prom.  
 JOE. I didn't go to college. *(They're getting excited now.)*