

THE CIVIL WEDDING

By Stella Baker

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Introduction

The Civil Wedding is a short comedy which parodies austerity politics. It's set in a town hall and is a newly privatized registered marriage service. There's just three roles, civil servant, man and woman.

THE SCENE

The scene is that of an office with a sign 'DEPARTMENT OF MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS'. There are three characters CIVIL SERVANT, MAN and WOMAN. The MAN and WOMAN are seated in the audience (or they may enter later to give the audience a feeling of participation of being present at the ceremony).

ENTER CIVIL SERVANT who sits down at the desk which is centre stage with three chairs.

CIVIL SERVANT: Can I have ticket number five eight four?

ENTER MAN who sits down at the desk.

CIVIL SERVANT: Do you have ticket number five eight four?

MAN: Yes I do.

CIVIL SERVANT: How can I help you?

MAN: I'm getting married.

CIVIL SERVANT: Are you?

MAN: Yes.

CIVIL SERVANT: And who do you want to get married to?

MAN: My girlfriend.. er.. fiancée.

CIVIL SERVANT: I see. And your fiancée is a woman?

MAN: Yes she is.

CIVIL SERVANT: And you're a man I take it?

MAN: Yes I am.

CIVIL SERVANT: Then you will be looking for a marriage, yes?

MAN: Yes, that is correct.

CIVIL SERVANT: Together?

MAN: Yes.

CIVIL SERVANT: But where is she? We cannot do any wedding with just one person. That is against the rules. Besides it is against the law to marry yourself.

MAN: But the security man said one person one ticket.

CIVIL SERVANT: Oh right. Now I see. (calls out) Ticket five eight five. Can I have ticket five eight five?

Enter WOMAN

CIVIL SERVANT: And do you have ticket five eight five?

WOMAN: Yes I do.

CIVIL SERVANT: And do you know this man?

WOMAN: Yes I do.

CIVIL SERVANT: Okay please take a seat.

WOMAN sits down.

CIVIL SERVANT: Have you see him before?

WOMAN: Yes I have.

CIVIL SERVANT: And do you have a relationship with him?

WOMAN: Yes I have.

CIVIL SERVANT; And what sort of relationship is it?

WOMAN: A sexual relationship.

CIVIL SERVANT: No what I mean is what type of relationship is it? What is the purpose of your relationship?

There is a pause, MAN and WOMAN look at each other.

MAN: Well, we want to be together.

CIVIL SERVANT: I understand this. But why? Is there a specific reason?

WOMAN: Because we love each other..

CIVIL SERVANT: But that isn't a proper relationship. Where's the proof?

MAN: Proof?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes proof. You two could be anybody just walking in off the street. Marriage is a serious business you know.

WOMAN: Well we're engaged to be married..

CIVIL SERVANT: And have you both filled out and completed form RU 12?

MAN: Yes we have..

MAN and WOMAN produces forms hands them to the CIVIL SERVANT.

CIVIL SERVANT: And you both have declaration BS 342?

WOMAN: Yes we have.

MAN and WOMAN produce both declarations and hand them to CIVIL SERVANT.

CIVIL SERVANT: And the filled out and completed commitment declaration RU 121?

MAN: Yes we have.

MAN and WOMAN both produce declarations and hand them to CIVIL SERVANT.

CIVIL SERVANT: Do you want a red or blue marriage certificate?

MAN: Red or blue?

WOMAN: Why the different colours?

CIVIL SERVANT: A red marriage certificate is the EU marriage certificate, and the blue is the standard Brexit certificate.

WOMAN: What's the difference?

CIVIL SERVANT: About £5,000. Oh and there's no sex allowed in an EU marriage.

MAN: No sex?

CIVIL SERVANT: The Government has had enough of Remoaners and has decided that they are not allowed to have kids.

MAN: Oh.

CIVIL SERVANT: Now have you paid your £10,000 fee?

WOMAN: Yes we have.

MAN: We took out a bank loan to pay for it.

CIVIL SERVANT: Excellent. All helps the growing economy. And do you have any money with you at the moment?

MAN: We'll just check..

MAN and WOMAN search handbag and find some money.

WOMAN: Yes we have.

CIVIL SERVANT: Oh great..

MAN: How much do we have to pay?

CIVIL SERVANT: All of it. It goes towards our budget. We have expenses.

MAN and WOMAN pay money to CIVIL SERVANT who puts the money into a bucket.

CIVIL SERVANT: Do you both have a CRB check completed?

MAN: Yes we do.

Both MAN and WOMAN produce CRB checks.

CIVIL SERVANT: Birth certificates?

WOMAN: Yes, I have them here.

WOMAN produces birth certificates and hands them to CIVIL SERVANT.

CIVIL SERVANT: Passports?

WOMAN: I have those too.

WOMAN produces passports and hands them to CIVIL SERVANT.

CIVIL SERVANT: Proof of address?

MAN: Er, excuse me.

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes?

MAN: Why don't you just ask us for our documents?

CIVIL SERVANT: Are you telling me how to do my job?

MAN: No I'm not, I'm just making a suggestion.

CIVIL SERVANT: Well there's a box down there by the security guard for making suggestions.

MAN: I see.

WOMAN: Here, I have them here.

WOMAN produces proofs of address.

CIVIL SERVANT: And have you both got proof of sexual orientation?

WOMAN: I'm sorry?

MAN: Pardon?

CIVIL SERVANT: Proof of sexual orientation..

MAN: What do you mean proof of sexual orientation?

CIVIL SERVANT: I mean just that. Proof of sexual orientation.

WOMAN: But he's a man and I'm a woman.

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes I can see that.

MAN: And the law clearly states a marriage is between a man and a woman.

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, I agree. But according to our rules you must be a heterosexual man and a heterosexual woman to get married.

WOMAN: But we are heterosexual?

CIVIL SERVANT: But can you prove it?

MAN: What do you mean can we prove it? Of course we can prove it.

CIVIL SERVANT: Well then, where is the proof that you are both heterosexual?

There is a pause.

WOMAN: What? You mean to say you need to see proof?

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course. For all I know you could be gay and she could be a lesbian.

MAN: But what's that got to do with it?

CIVIL SERVANT: The rules clearly state that marriage is only between a heterosexual man and a heterosexual woman.

WOMAN: But we are a heterosexual man and a heterosexual woman.

CIVIL SERVANT: But saying you're a heterosexual man and woman isn't enough. We need proof of this.

MAN: Proof?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes proof.

WOMAN: But what if we don't have proof?

CIVIL SERVANT: Then it's clear that you cannot get married.

MAN: But what about our £10,000 fee?

CIVIL SERVANT: Ah, that's not refundable I'm afraid.

MAN: Not refundable? That's daylight robbery.

CIVIL SERVANT: No it's not. We're the Government. It's like taxes. Designed to make money out of the people.

WOMAN: But what about the money we just gave you? Don't we get that back either?

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course not. It goes towards our expenses.

MAN: Your expenses?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes. Forgotten about the deficit have you? And austerity?.

MAN: That's outrageous.

CIVIL SERVANT: No, it's the Government.

MAN: One moment.

MAN whispers into WOMAN'S ear.

WOMAN: What here?

MAN: What other choice have we got?

WOMAN: But surely not in front of all these guests?

MAN: But the man needs to see proof..

WOMAN: But we're not married yet!

MAN: And we're not going to get married just sitting here.

WOMAN: Oh alright then.,.

MAN and WOMAN get up. They start taking off their clothes.

CIVIL SERVANT: Er excuse me. What are you doing?

MAN: We're going to show you we're heterosexual.

CIVIL SERVANT: But you can't engage in sexual intercourse in this office..

MAN: Why not?

CIVIL SERVANT: It's against the rules.

WOMAN: But you need proof that we're heterosexual.

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes of course. But there are other ways.

MAN: Such as?

MAN and WOMAN get dressed again and sit back down.

CIVIL SERVANT: Well if she were pregnant..

MAN: Pregnant?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, pregnant. Expecting a baby.

MAN: I know what being pregnant means.

CIVIL SERVANT: Quite a few couples come in with the woman pregnant.

WOMAN: But I'm not pregnant.

CIVIL SERVANT: But if you were to become pregnant.. ?

MAN: Okay so how do I make her pregnant without having sex with her?
She isn't the bloody Virgin Mary you know.

CIVIL SERVANT: No need to swear.

MAN: I'm sorry.

CIVIL SERVANT: I only pointed out that you cannot engage in acts of a sexual nature in this office.

MAN: But if we come back another time, would we still have our fee?

CIVIL SERVANT: I'm afraid you would have to pay another £10,000.

WOMAN: That's ridiculous.

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course, it's the coalition Government who now make the rules, not us.

MAN: But if we visited the toilets?

WOMAN looks at MAN

WOMAN: Are you sure?

MAN: Babe, ten grand is at stake here..

WOMAN: But I'm not getting fucked in no Government office..

CIVIL SERVANT: Why not? Almost everyone else does...

MAN: Please keep out of this.

MAN pleads to WOMAN

MAN: But babe...This is really important.. I really love you..

There is a long pause... the WOMAN thinks it over..

WOMAN: Well I guess we'd planned on having children anyway..

Both MAN and WOMAN get up...

MAN: We'll be right back.

CIVIL SERVANT: There's just two things..

WOMAN: Yes.. ?

CIVIL SERVANT: If it's a pregnancy, we will need proof that it's a planned pregnancy.

WOMAN: Oh..

CIVIL SERVANT: And we'll also need proof that he's the father.

MAN: What do you mean? It stands to reason, doesn't it? She's not pregnant now, we go off, she comes back pregnant.. I've got to be the father.

CIVIL SERVANT: Not necessarily..

WOMAN: What do you mean?

CIVIL SERVANT: Well for one thing we would still need proof that he's the father.

MAN: But...

CIVIL SERVANT: And secondly, between you and me the security guard is pretty prolific.

WOMAN: But... what's that got to do with it?

MAN: But why would we need proof that I'm the father?

CIVIL SERVANT: It's the rules.

WOMAN: It's ridiculous.

CIVIL SERVANT: The Government makes the rules.

MAN: You're not making it any easier for us.

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course not. I'm a civil servant.

MAN and WOMAN sit back down.

MAN: But why would you need proof if we go off and well you know..?

CIVIL SERVANT: It's all got to do with a new initiative by the Government.

MAN: Which is..?

CIVIL SERVANT: If you ever get divorced and a child is involved then the Child Support Agency will take you for every penny you've got.

MAN: But that...

CIVIL SERVANT: It's designed to keep the number of divorces down.

MAN: But what about maintenance?

CIVIL SERVANT: Exactly.. You'd be maintaining the Government via the Child Support Agency. That's why we set it up in the first place.

WOMAN: But we came here to get married.. All our guests are here..

We've made so many arrangements.. (bursts into tears) My mother spent three entire days shopping for my wedding dress.

MAN puts arm around WOMAN.

MAN: There there.. You see?

CIVIL SERVANT: But there's nothing we can do unless we have proof of your sexual orientation. You can only have a marriage if you are heterosexual.

WOMAN: But isn't that clear? I'm a woman, he's a man. What more do you want?

CIVIL SERVANT: But you might both be homosexual.

WOMAN: But what's that got to do with it? We love each other..

CIVIL SERVANT: It's against the rules. Our rules clearly state that marriage is for heterosexuals only.

MAN: So what about if she gives you a blow job?

WOMAN: Do what?

CIVIL SERVANT: I'm sorry. I was at the hairdresser's the day before yesterday.

MAN: What?

CIVIL SERVANT: I was at the hairdresser's the day before yesterday. They gave me a blow job.

MAN: Really?

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course. I'm subject to rules here too. Every two weeks I have to attend the hairdressers for a cut and blow job.

MAN: And which hairdresser is this?

CIVIL SERVANT: Chope's, just down the High Street.

Pause.

MAN: So what if we're not heterosexual?

CIVIL SERVANT: You would need a pink marriage.

WOMAN: Is there any difference?

CIVIL SERVANT: Not to me there isn't.

WOMAN: But for us?

CIVIL SERVANT: You would have to be both homosexual.

WOMAN: But if we were..?

CIVIL SERVANT: If you were what?

WOMAN: Homosexual?

CIVIL SERVANT: A civil partnership can only be between two men or two women.

WOMAN: But what if we were bisexual?

CIVIL SERVANT: If who was bisexual?

MAN: Both of us.

CIVIL SERVANT: Erm.. I'm not too sure. The rules only state that heterosexuals can be married, and homosexuals can have a civil partnership.

MAN: But what about bisexuals?

CIVIL SERVANT: I'm not too sure.. I think you would need some sort of proof, but I can check.

CIVIL SERVANT picks up phone, dials number.

CIVIL SERVANT: I'll need to phone a Decision Maker.

WOMAN: I see.

CIVIL SERVANT: One moment.. (on phone) Hello.. I've got a couple here wanting to get married... Yes one is a woman and the other is a man.. But they've got no proof of sexual orientation... I see... But what if they're bisexual? ... I see.. Thank you... No that's okay.. Thank you.

CIVIL SERVANT puts phone down.

MAN: Well?

CIVIL SERVANT: You would need proof that you are bisexual..

MAN: But how do we get proof?

CIVIL SERVANT: How should I know? I only work here.

WOMAN: But that's ridiculous. That means there's no way we can get married.

CIVIL SERVANT: I've spoken to the Decision Maker..

MAN: And..?

CIVIL SERVANT: He's made a decision.

WOMAN: Which is?

CIVIL SERVANT: There is a way you can get married without proof of sexual orientation.

WOMAN: Which is..?

CIVIL SERVANT: If you both agree to training..

MAN: Training?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes training.

WOMAN: Training? In what?

CIVIL SERVANT: You will have to take special training to learn how to be married.

MAN: Do what?

CIVIL SERVANT: You will have to attend a special course with training on how to be in a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Marriage training.

WOMAN: But we're already in a relationship with each other. He's a man and I'm a woman.

CIVIL SERVANT: But neither of you have any proof that you are heterosexual.

WOMAN: But we both know we are heterosexual.

CIVIL SERVANT: But we don't. There's no proof. You could be anybody..

MAN: What do you mean we could be anybody?

CIVIL SERVANT: But there's no proof.

MAN: But what proof do we need?

CIVIL SERVANT: Oh come on, it's perfectly clear by now.

MAN: Is it?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, you are a couple of closet heterosexuals.

WOMAN: Do what?

CIVIL SERVANT: You are a couple of closet heterosexuals. You keep your heterosexuality hidden. For all we know here you might be pretending to be heterosexual. This might be a fake marriage. There could be consequences.. serious consequences.

MAN: Such as?

CIVIL SERVANT: A BBC Panorama documentary. We wouldn't want that now, would we?

WOMAN: But...

CIVIL SERVANT: This is a very serious matter. The Government takes this very seriously. Out there there's millions of heterosexuals living openly, meeting each other, many even get married and some of them have families. There's a lot of legislation out there and laws on anti-social behaviour. We wouldn't want to make a decision which would put thousands of heterosexuals at risk.

WOMAN: But we are heterosexual.

CIVIL SERVANT: No you're not.

MAN: What are you talking about? Of course we're heterosexual. Why else would we be here?

WOMAN: Why else would we be here together wanting to get married?

CIVIL SERVANT: That's intention. Intention means nothing. We need proof.

WOMAN:(shakes head) I don't believe this is happening.

MAN: This is ridiculous. We've got all our guests here.

WOMAN: Some of them have come a long way to be here.

MAN: Some of them have come from miles away. Some have even come down from Barnsley.

CIVIL SERVANT: But all the same there's no proof. You might be pretending to be heterosexual. The Government takes this matter very serious. And besides it's for her benefit.

WOMAN: My benefit?

MAN: How so?

CIVIL SERVANT: To prevent her becoming a single mother.

MAN: What?

CIVIL SERVANT: The Government have done a series of studies on single mothers. The Government maintains that there are too many single mothers in our society. Single mothers are who are ruining our Universal Credit system and our economy. They are not taking the shitty minimum wage jobs corporations put a lot of effort into creating a fortune. They get too picky over hours and they are costing the Government a fortune in childcare costs. So the government has taken measures to use marriage as a tool to create taxpayers.

MAN: Why?

CIVIL SERVANT: It needs the money.

WOMAN: But surely if a woman has a baby it's proof that she's heterosexual.

CIVIL SERVANT: Not necessarily. It's just proof that she can have children.

MAN: But hold on, just wait on there a minute..

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes?

MAN: What was that you were talking about some ten minutes ago?

CIVIL SERVANT: What do you mean?

MAN: Well when you were demanding proof that we were heterosexual, and you yourself suggested that I get her pregnant. Now you're saying it's not proof. How so?

CIVIL SERVANT: The rules changed when I spoke to the Decision Maker. Like any Government department, we change our rules constantly without warning.

WOMAN: But...

CIVIL SERVANT: That is the job of the Decision Maker, to change the rules, constantly.

MAN: Why?

CIVIL SERVANT: So we can keep members of the public confused and catch them out. Just like any other Government department.

WOMAN: But you mentioned training..

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes I did. But there's a requirement.

MAN: Which is..?

CIVIL SERVANT: You will be required to come out as heterosexual..

WOMAN: Come out as heterosexual?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, of course. You will both need to make a public declaration that you are both heterosexual and intend to live together in a marriage.

MAN: Who to?

CIVIL SERVANT: To everyone.. to your family, your friends, your employer, everyone.

WOMAN: But this is ridiculous.

CIVIL SERVANT: You won't be able to get married unless you both come out as heterosexual.

MAN: But this is crazy.. they all know we're together.. It stands to reason we're heterosexual.

CIVIL SERVANT: Really?

MAN: Look (points to audience) We got all our family and friends here. Why are they here? To attend our wedding of course.

WOMAN: If I'd have known it was going to be such a song and dance to get married here I would have got married in a church. At least we wouldn't have to go through no training.

CIVIL SERVANT: Have you been to the Catholic Church recently?

MAN: You're starting to piss me right off.

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course. That's my job.

WOMAN: Darling, this is upsetting as it is.

MAN: So what now?

CIVIL SERVANT: You both have to come out as heterosexuals.

MAN: What here? now?

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course.

WOMAN: Okay.

MAN and WOMAN stand and turn to the audience.

MAN: But this is crazy. I feel such an idiot.

CIVIL SERVANT: Don't worry. So does everyone else in this country.

WOMAN: Oh come on John, let's get on with it. My name's Kathleen, I'm a woman, my boyfriend John here isn't a woman, we sleep together and we want to be married together. We're both heterosexual.

MAN: Well erm I'm John.. I'm not a woman..

WOMAN: Come on John, get out with it. The sandwiches will be soggy at the reception and my mother will go nuts.

MAN: I'm John, I'm a man and Kathleen's my fiancée, we're here to get married, we're both heterosexual and sleep together.

MAN and WOMAN sit down.

The CIVIL SERVANT hands them both a form and a pen each.

CIVIL SERVANT: Now you both need to sign in the two places where I've marked with a cross.

WOMAN: Okay.

MAN: Okay. What are we signing for?

CIVIL SERVANT: The first is a declaration of heterosexuality.

WOMAN: Do what?

CIVIL SERVANT: It's replaces the requirement for proof that you're both heterosexual.

MAN: I see.

CIVIL SERVANT: And gives us more paperwork to process, which justifies our existence. Keeps me in work you see.

WOMAN: Oh right.

MAN: And what's the second signature for?

CIVIL SERVANT: Oh that's to do with your training and the course.

WOMAN: What course?

CIVIL SERVANT: The marriage training course.

MAN: I see.

CIVIL SERVANT: The Government would like to help you become a better couple.

MAN: Yes?

CIVIL SERVANT: And you will be given help and support to be heterosexual.

WOMAN: What do you mean to be heterosexual? We're already heterosexual..

CIVIL SERVANT: Ah but you haven't been married heterosexuals. There is a difference. The Government understands that it's been difficult for you to become married heterosexuals and the Government would like to help you become married heterosexuals through training and education.

MAN: Training and education?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes. The Government would like to help you become a husband and wife.

WOMAN: But won't we become husband and wife after we've got through all this rigmarole?

CIVIL SERVANT: Well yes, but only on paper.

MAN: Only on paper? But isn't that enough?

CIVIL SERVANT: Not now, not according to the new rules. You also need confirmation.

MAN: Confirmation?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes. Once you have your certificate and are married on paper your files will be sent to our offices in Huddersfield where a decision will be made whether to confirm your marriage or not.

WOMAN: Who makes the decision?

CIVIL SERVANT: A Decision Maker of course.

MAN: But what if someone decides not to confirm our marriage?

CIVIL SERVANT: You have the right of appeal.

WOMAN: Yes?

CIVIL SERVANT: What happens is that you can appeal to the Home Office, who will put your case in with many others in a special office where it will gather dust for up to four years until an independent panel decides it's got nothing better to do on that day and looks at your case and the Decision Maker's decision.

MAN: But they will confirm the decision won't they?

CIVIL SERVANT: Usually yes, unless you stop attending the training course.

WOMAN: Stop attending the training course?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, you're required to attend a training course every evening and on Saturdays for the first six months.

WOMAN: Every evening?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, every evening.

WOMAN: But i watch Coronation Street twice a week

CIVIL SERVANT: We will appoint you a Serials Worker.

MAN: A Serials Worker?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes a worker who will videotape all the episodes of your favourite serials and soap operas so you can watch them on Sunday evenings like most people do who haven't got much time.

MAN: So what happens on the training course? What's involved?

CIVIL SERVANT: Everything you need to be a married heterosexual and a husband and wife. The Government has developed a special program, in fact it's been developed by several Ministers themselves, everything from kissing, cuddling, intimacy, to different forms of sexual intercourse.

MAN: But we already know about that.

CIVIL SERVANT: Oh no you don't.

MAN: Yes we do.

CIVIL SERVANT: No you don't.. trust me., This is a special training course put together by Ministers past and present who have all put their ideas together in a special committee.

WOMAN: Oh really?

CIVIL SERVANT: Yes, and there's also instruction in how to get things like porn films and many different other things from expenses.

WOMAN: Oh my God..

MAN: But what if we're not into all this..?

CIVIL SERVANT: Tough.. You both signed up for it.

WOMAN: Oh Lord no.

CIVIL SERVANT: The Government is also concerned about things which could ruin a marriage such as impotence, and having a small penis.

MAN: Do what?

CIVIL SERVANT: Which is why you will have to sign up for special aids to help you increase the size of your penis and increase your staying power..

MAN: You what?

CIVIL SERVANT: It's a Government initiative to promote a healthy sexual lifestyle.. every day the Government sends out millions of e-mails to different people about things like penis size, Viagra, and so on.. It's a

secret project developed by MI5 and the CIA which is why the e-mails get sent from individual agents..

MAN: Really? Why is that?

CIVIL SERVANT: So the tabloid media don't get to find out what's going on. But it's very popular. We give all those involved on the project a white flag with red cross on it which they have to display to qualify for free condoms, sex aids and Viagra tablets. Surely you must have seen them.

WOMAN: This is ridiculous.

CIVIL SERVANT: Then there's the section on kinky sex.

MAN: I don't believe this this happen to me, to us...

Pause.

CIVIL SERVANT: You better believe it. The Department of Marriages and Civil Partnerships now pronounce you man and wife. Congratulations. Subject to confirmation by our Decision Maker.

MAN: May we kiss each other?

CIVIL SERVANT: Of course you can..

MAN and WOMAN kiss each other.

CIVIL SERVANT: But you are forbidden to have sexual intercourse until you receive confirmation as a married couple.

WOMAN: Eh?

MAN: Do what?

CIVIL SERVANT: You are forbidden to have sexual intercourse until you are a confirmed married couple.

MAN: But I don't believe it! This can't be happening.

CIVIL SERVANT: It's just happened. Thank you for using the Department of marriages and Civil Partnerships. You may leave..

Pause.

CIVIL SERVANT: Can I have ticket number five nine six?

THE END