

The License

Fred Sahner





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ArtAge Publications

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by Fred Sahrner

CAST

JOAN BELLA: Direct and likable, she is a woman that would attract most men. But now, caught up in a rush to the altar, Joan's usual good judgment is being overwhelmed at the worst possible time.

ROBERT FOGENBIPER: Joan's fiancée. He is sure of himself, flippant and large of ego. Robert doesn't realize how self-centered he really is. He has an answer for every question. And by the law of averages he's even right – five or ten percent of the time.

MRS. HATCH: A long time county clerk. She may not be as sharp as she once was, but she's still direct to the nth degree, plain spoken and insightful. Mrs. Hatch doesn't bore.

OSCAR HATCH: Mrs. Hatch's son. In the short time we see him, he proves to be a gentle soul, considerate and easygoing. With those traits, he's no way like his Mom.

Place

The office of the County Clerk.

Time

The present.

Setting: The office of the County Clerk; spartan and functional in décor: There is a table which serves as a desk, with a chair behind it. Across the table are two chairs. A small flag is on the table, with another, larger flag behind the table. File folders lay in a pile on a nearby table. An official notice or two of some kind can be seen.

At Rise: Joan Bella and Robert Fogenbiper are sitting in the chairs near the table. They are waiting for the County Clerk, Mrs. Hatch to arrive. An annoyed Robert taps his watch and shows the time to Joan, she shrugs and continues to work on her appearance.

ROBERT: (*smiling*) Are you ready to take this big step?

JOAN: Of course, but still, I am worried that we might be rushing things a bit. After all we haven't been dating for all that long.

ROBERT: All I know is, I love you, and you love me...And that's all that matters.

The County Clerk, MRS. HATCH, carrying a folder hurries into the room. She takes the seat behind the table and smiles broadly.

MRS. HATCH: Good morning...I'm Mrs. Hatch, the County Clerk. (*while checking folder*) Applying for a marriage license, I see...Now, which of you is Joan? (*to Joan*) Of course I know it's you. Just a little County Clerk humor, we're famous for that. So if you're Joan, then you must be Robert.

ROBERT: That's me.

MRS. HATCH: I have a few questions and you'll be on your way. First let me tell you today's specials. For instance: a marriage license costs twenty-five dollars. But, if you tie it in with a fishing or dog license, I can give you a ten percent discount...You interested?

ROBERT: Just the marriage license, please.

MRS. HATCH: (*determined*) Hmm...Okay, how about this. Everything I told you plus, I'll throw in a hunting license. Now, that's an eighty-five dollar value...Yours for only forty-nine, ninety-five! You can't beat that deal anywhere.

ROBERT: It sounds terrific, but it's not for us because...

JOAN: (*jumping in*) We don't have a dog and we don't fish or hunt.

MRS. HATCH: What do you people do for fun?...Hold it. If it's obscene with lots of weird-stuff, I don't want to hear about it. I'm the County Clerk for heaven sake!

JOAN: (*handing over a paper*) We've filled out your form.

MRS. HATCH: (*her pen is out of ink. She hands it to Joan*) This doesn't work anymore but it looks nice. Now it's yours.

JOAN: Well, thank you, I guess.

MRS. HATCH: I never could throw away a pen or a pencil...Paper clips I can get rid of, no problem. I must have a personality quirk or something.

ROBERT: (*an aside to Joan while MRS. HATCH searches her folder*) She's a wacko!

JOAN: We'll just get the license and make a run for the door.

MRS. HATCH: (*holding up another pen*) A pen I got from Leo's Tire and Muffler Shop. Leo does terrible work but gives out a darn good pen. Okay, here we go...Joan Bella, Oh, what a pretty name, very lyrical. And Robert Fogenbiper...Is that your real name?

ROBERT: Yes. (*trying to add dignity to the sound*) Robert Fogenbiper.

MRS. HATCH: (*to Joan*) Are you really giving up your beautiful name to become Mrs. Fogenbiper?

JOAN: It's only a name and it could be worse.

MRS. HATCH: (*looking over form*) Okay, address is filled in, fine. Date of birth...good, good. Now my first question is for Joan. If Robert and your cat were trapped in a burning building and you could only save one, who would it be?

JOAN: I'd save Robert.

MRS. HATCH: Are you sure?

JOAN: Yes, I'm sure...I don't have a cat.

MRS. HATCH: Ah! That explains it...Okay, next question. Robert, will you help with the housework or just watch while this sweet thing busts her butt?

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