



FIRM FOUNDATIONS

KNIGHT HOOSON FINDS THAT ROMANTIC NOTIONS OF THE PERFECT PARTNER RARELY MATCH THE REALITY OF LONG-TERM LOVE...

Much to the BF's chagrin, I am addicted to property porn. Over the years, I have spent many an evening with Phil & Kirstie and/or Sarah Beeny (we have a very flexible relationship). That said, there is now a new love in my life – Ruth Watson Jones of *Country House Rescue*. She is it. If women are allowed to have their “Gay Best Friend,” then I am allowed to have my “Tough-Talking Straight Woman” to worship.

Ms. Jones is a no-nonsense businesswoman who tackles the problems plaguing the owners of some of Britain's most spectacular stately homes. For ‘stately home’ read spectacular money pit. If you have ever felt green with envy at the thought of living in a stately home, only one episode of this show will cure you. You might as well flush fistfuls of pounds down the toilet every hour – it would have the roughly same effect on your net worth.

Recently, Ruth met Caroline and Adrian Goodall of Black Clauchie in the Scottish Lowlands. Caroline and Adrian, a perfectly nice couple, bought this Arts and Crafts-style mansion hoping to take life easy and enjoy themselves more only to find that fixing up a crumbling old house is a more expensive and time consuming than they had previously realised.

At the point we met them, they were living in the tiny servants' quarters while trying to rent out the main house to paying guests (with nylon sheets on the bed... who are they kidding?). At the same time, Adrian was working all hours as a contract farmer on neighbouring estates. When they weren't working, they fought like cat and dog.

Things came to a head when Adrian suggested that perhaps they needed to separate. Cue my Ruth wading knee-deep into the mire of their personal relationship, advising them that what they were going through was so normal for couples as to be totally boring. And that they simply had to scream, shout and fight their way through it until they come out the other end and found love for each other again.

As in all things, my girl Ruthie hit the nail right on the head. *All couples* – whether gay or straight – if together for any length of time, fall out of synch with one another. We are constantly evolving organisms and our needs, desires, and aspirations are in a state of perpetual flux.

We have created a mythology about “finding the one” – some fabled individual with whom we click and

everything will be forever perfect. Bullshit. Relationships are about 10% passion/love and about 90% gritting your teeth/compromising. Anyone who tells you otherwise is probably a “life coach” and charging you £100/hour for sugar-spun advice.

Living and working in the big city is stressful, especially at the moment. Stress and tiredness must be the biggest passion killers around. It is hard to

feel amorous towards your better half when you are worried about mortgages, jobs and paying bills.

In the initial months, and even years, of a relationship you find time for the other person. Sex is a high priority activity. Romance, in the form of flowers and dinners, is worth budgeting time and money towards. However, after awhile you start to forget about these things.

Like the middle age spread that slips beneath the radar, complacency creeps in inch by inch. It comes in so slowly that you don't notice it until you find yourself preferring a coffee and the newspaper to a Sunday morning quickie.

When I was a single person, I abhorred the idea of a “comfortable” relationship.

I wanted (and was determined to settle for nothing less than) fireworks every night, bucket-loads of sweaty sex, and love poetry taped to the mirror in the morning. I imagined nothing worse than singing “you don't bring me flowers, you don't sing me love songs, anymore.”

And then I received it. I had relationships that existed mostly between the sheets, and after a few months I got bored with them. I had boyfriends who wrote me poetry, and it made my toes curl in embarrassment.

Maybe it's not sexy, and it certainly doesn't fit any of the gay stereotypes, but give me a cup of hot chocolate, someone that I actually enjoying having a laugh with, an episode of *Country House Rescue*, and a nice pair of slippers and I'm happy.

I think Ruth would back me up that a little bit of stability in life can't be such a bad thing. She would also know that fireworks sometimes appear when you least expect them. And they are even more spectacular when you aren't waiting for them to happen.



WHEN I WAS A SINGLE PERSON, I ABHORRED THE IDEA OF A “COMFORTABLE” RELATIONSHIP