COMPATIBILITIES

[From 1.04]

**Celia:** Yeah, and I met Pete at work … um … yeah, I don’t know, I think ... um … yeah, I suppose it was— it was really his sense of humour cos he was … um … very sort of charming and funny and … um … yeah.

**Karen:** Interests?

**C:** Um, he seems quite curious about the world so— and interested in— and I think it’s always really— I think blokes probably know this anyway, that as long as they show some kind of interest in you, it’s quite good, isn’t it? He did show interest [*Yeah.*] and was interested in getting to know me and stuff so ...

**K:** I think it’s important that that continues actually in a relationship. [*Yeah.*] If that dwindles I think, you know, things don’t go well.

**C:** Yeah, and always at the beginning you— you kind of make a real effort. Um, oh, Pete— I— I always pull him up on this – so he wr— he wr— he showed me a poem that he’d written when we first started going out and so this was in the first couple of months, and so I thought he wr— he wrote a lot of poetry. He’s not— he doesn’t! So that was just like the charm offensive. [*Hasn’t done it since?*] Yes. So that was quite naughty of him.

**K:** You’re sure he actually wrote it?

**C:** He did, he wrote it, and it rhymed and everything. It was very clever. He’s quite creative, I admire that in him, he’s very creative and he’s very good at music and— … um … very musical. Um, he’s able to, like, listen— if we’re listening to— if we’re watching TV and there’s a piece of music on the TV … um … he can almost listen pl— and start to play it— [*Wow.*] pretend play— air, you know. He plays the guitar, I think he could probably play the piano, he can play the drums, I think he could play a number of… [*So he’s naturally musical.*] Yeah, so amazing. [*That’s interesting.*] So yeah. Yeah, he’s very creative and I admire that in him because he’s just recently gone freelance and … um … my worry was that sometimes I think he’s, in business, a little bit too nice – not ruthless enough. But I— on the— on the plus side I think his creativity around marketing himself and marketing—he — for example, he’s written— self-published, written a book, and that’s really worked for him and really got him in— got his foot in the door in lots of places.

**K:** And that’s something that you’ve found attractive in him?

**C:** Yes, yeah, that’s…

**K:** His proactivity [*Yeah.*] and his creativity.

**C:** Yeah. And so what about you and Andy?

**K:** Yeah, it’s interesting cos I think at the outset of a relationship you think you know the things that are gonna be important to you for compatibility and as you say, a sense of humour is— I think it is important for women. Men like to be laughed too, so it’s high on their list. Interests— it’s nice to have similar interests. Um, but you know, I think with time those things … uh … change, your interests change, your sense of humour changes [*Mmm.*] and there’s got to be other things, I think. An underlying compatibility of values, [*That’s true, yes.*] goals. You’ve got to— yeah, I think you’ve basically got to have the same ethical and moral value system, maybe spiritual system, I don’t know if that’s important to you, but I think that’s got to be there as well. And those things generally don’t change with time.

**C:** No. [*Um.*] And finance can often— [*Yes, yes. Gosh, yes.*] can make things difficult, just— just whether you have the same kind of— [*Approach.*] yeah, approach.

**K:** And are you two quite compatible on money?

**C:** Reasonably compatible, both— we’re both quite cautious, but he’s more generous than I am and we talk—

**K:** Ah, we’re the other way round.

**C:** You’re more generous than Andy?

**K:** Yeah, we’re fairly similar but he’s much more cautious than me, I would spend and worry later. [*Mmm. Yeah.*] He’s a Scot so he, you know, would rather not spend at all! [*Yeah.*] The stereotype.

**C:** So yeah, we’re— we’re generally similar. I suppose another thing, you know, speaking about compatibility— another thing that I have noticed and that has become more important is, you know, whether you’re pretty good as a team. [*Yes, definitely.*] Because there’s just so many things that you have to do on a daily basis, that—you know-

**K:** Just supporting each other [*Exactly.*] and relying on each other.

**C:** Yeah, and I think … um … I think invariably there are different times in the relationship when one of you— one of you is more tired or more stressed or needs more support than the other person. [*Than the other one, yeah.*] So as long as the other person reciprocates [*Yeah.*] and that— that you— you share some of that out, you know, when people going through— parents— my— my dad died— [*Bereavement, yeah.*] bereavement, things like that, and Pete was very supportive on that. [*Mmm.*] Quite early on in our relationship … um … I had a slipped disk so I was in a lot of pain for about nine, ten months and Pete washed up every single day— every single night he washed up. We didn’t have a dishwasher at that point. So, you know, I really appreciate that.

**K:** Him taking the lion’s share domestically.

**C:** I won’t— you know, I never f— I’ll never forget that. I even mentioned it in my— I— I made a speech at my wedding and I said it in my speech that he’s not a fair-weather friend, he was—he was a [*Mmm. Through thick and thin, yeah.*]— he’s willing to support. Yeah. I suppose that’s part of the wedding vows that you say, isn’t it?

**K:** Yeah, I think it is. Support each other equally. Yeah, I think there are certain areas where you— it’s really important to be equal and I think teamwork is really critical actually.

**C:** Mmm. It must be even more so if you’ve got children.

**K:** Absolutely. You can’t be … um … you— you can’t be doing it as a favour for the other person, you’ve got to be working together [*Mmm.*] and supporting each other equally, like, I don’t know, two horses harnessed into the same plough, so you’re not pulling off in a different direction. [*Mmm.*] Pulling together equally in the same direction on a good straight course, [*Mmm.*] I think that’s really important. Um...

**C:** And so how long have you been married?

**K:** Twenty two years we’ve been married, twenty— … uh … yeah, married twenty two, been together twenty five. So it is a long time and I do— I— I think a lot of things have changed [*Mmm.*] but those fundamental value system issues I think are— were there at the beginning and they’ve stayed the same. [*Mmm.*] And certainly when you have kids those things are tested. Um, you know, friends of mine - I see the tension in a relationship just over the parenting. [*Yes.*] Um, just cos they have different goals and ideals for the children [*Yeah, it’s tough isn’t it.*] And that can be really tough, really tough. Um, and I guess at the end when they’ve left you’ve still got to have enough in common with each other at the end [*Mmm.*] that you still want to be together, and the relationship wasn’t only built around the children. That’s another danger. [*Mmm.*] So we’ve got that coming up with an eighteen year old who’s going to be off to university so, yeah.

**C:** There are lots of different stages aren’t there.

**K:** There are. I think the ability to challenge everything as well is really important. And at times when things aren’t great to be able to say well, you know, ‘I need this to change’ and ‘what do you need me to change?’ in order for us to keep pulling together and moving forwards, not just stagnating. [*Yes.*] I think another area for me is just being balanced in terms of— I’m not quite sure how to describe this but— in terms of your independence. I don’t want a relationship where I’m … um … unable to see my friends [*Mmm.*] or unable to follow my own interests. And I have friends who are like that, they’re not able to do their own thing cos their husband’s constantly texting them or phoning them like ‘where are you? What time are you coming home?’ [*Mmm.*] Or they resent the fact that she’s out having fun with her friends— hav— having a meal or pursuing a hobby … um … and I couldn’t stand that sort of a relationship, so I think we’re quite compatible that way. [*Yeah, same.*] You know, I might get a text or a phonecall in the day, ‘how’s your day going?’, and that’s it. I don’t get bugged constantly with, you know—

**C:**  Someone feeling— you might feel [*Exactly.*] that someone’s a bit needy otherwise.

**K:** Yeah, I can’t do needy— needy blokes.

**C:** No, that’s— that’s [*So, yeah.*] fair enough.

**K:** Yes, so I think we’re quite independent.

**C:** I think … um … when I first moved in with Pete he did sometimes ask me ‘where are you going?’ when I was going upstairs and sometimes I just thought ‘god, can’t I just go upstairs?’ [*‘You really want to know that I’m going to the bathroom?’*] Exactly! Um, I think it took a while for us to find our groove.

**K:** Yeah, it does take a while.

**C:** Yeah. Um, and to work out, you know, how best to live together [*Mmm.*] and how to get on and stuff. But yeah, I— I value my independence as well. I think we’re probably both independent women so [*Mmm.*] I’m the same as you, I like to be able to go out and do stuff and— yeah, not have somebody— [*Mmm.*] I found … um … yeah, the only time I suppose was right at the beginning of the relat— relationship and I think possibly— you know, it was— when I— when we first moved in it was difficult. We found— both found it quite stressful, and I think Pete hadn’t ever— … um … he’d never lived with anyone apart from people who were tenants in his [*Yeah.*] home— in his flat. So yeah.

**K:** So did he treat you like a tenant?

**C:** No, but I think he was— he was just worried I think that I would take over too much and take over his— and maybe he— maybe possibly he might admit that he’s a— might be a little bit controlling and he didn’t want that, [*Yeah.*] so it took— it took some time.

**K:** You’ve got to carve out your roles, don’t you.

**C:** Mmm, yeah. So that took some time and I al— I also think looking back on that— cos that was the first three months and even though it was really difficult and I found it really stressful I knew that it would get better, I knew there was light at the end of the tunnel, [*Mmm.*] so I think during that period it was quite tough but ...

**K:** If you know that the fundamentals of a relationship are good [*And you still love that person.*] and you’re compatible in all the right ways, [*Even if they’re driving you up the wall.*] you’ve got to get through the— the rocky stuff. [*Mmm.*] Yeah.

**C:** it’s difficult. Sometimes— sometimes you don’t actually— you’re annoyed with the person or you perhaps— perhaps during that day you don’t like that person cos they’ve annoyed you but you still love them and you wouldn’t want the relationship to end [*Mmm.*] but you’re just annoyed with them.

**K:** And then you have to decide whether you do what I tend to do, too much of probably, which is talk through everything, you, let’s have this out now, or just walk away from it and let it simmer and then go— you know, fizzle out. Which is what Andy tends to prefer, just leave it alone, you know, let’s come back to it tomorrow and I just want to [*Thrash it out.*] thrash it out now.

**C:** Me too. Just get it over and done with.

**K:** Maybe that’s a female thing, I don’t know.

**C:** I don’t know. I prefer to just get it over and done with and move on. And then, often we— we have started to say, you know, ‘let’s just agree to disagree, I think you were like this, you think I was like this’ and we just— just disagree. [*Yeah.*] Yeah and it’s— yeah, we just— I think— I think when you have that—you have— the first time you have one of those arguments where you actually does— it doesn’t get resolved, no one apologises but you just agree that both of you perhaps did something which wasn’t great then— I— that was quite refreshing to me because I just thought, ‘oh well, we can still carry on’ and it doesn’t all crumble [*No. Exactly.*] but you just… Anyway, it’s starting to sound a bit like Relate or something isn’t it, marriage counselling. But yeah, that was refreshing because I think up until then one or the other of us had always said ‘I’m sorry’, you know, ‘I’m sorry about what happened’, but— I think— or maybe— maybe as a female, I might have been the one to say I’m sorry all the time but I think when I— the first time I stood my ground and just said ‘look, you might say that but I think this and that’s just how it was and we just disagree don’t we? A misunderstanding and we disagree.’

**K:** Yeah, I think communication is a big issue and you know, it’s always startling to me when — not just between men and women but between humans— our ability to miscommunicate is— is huge actually. Yeah, we speak the same language but [Yes.] I can speak one thing to you and you can hear something completely different. [*Mmm.*] And that certainly happens in a relationship. [*Mmm.*] And … uh … that’s a toughie, because sometimes you need to—

**C:** It is tough and I can’t imagine if, you know, Pete and I are both English – okay, I’m half-Austrian, but I’m essentially English. [*Native English speaker, mmm.*] Yes. But if you don’t have that common language and you don’t have the common culture it must be even more difficult.

**K:** Yeah, you’ve got to be very forgiving and very patient. And I’m not!

**C:** Well— well, for me I think it was the— the original thing of when we moved in together. He’d— he— I think he was worried that I would just fill the house full of what he calls ‘tat’ and, you know— I call sort of ‘feminine touches’ and he just was worried I would take over and it would all be too— sort of— too— too— Pete really does not like clutter.

**K:** Yeah, Andy’s like that, he hates clutter.

**C:** Oh we’ve discussed this haven’t we, before?

**K:** He really hates clutter.

**C:** in fact, we’ve discussed it within the office because there are quite a few, I think— quite a few [*Quite a few minimalist men.*] minimalist men with— married to or— or with women who— I don’t think I like clutter.

**K:** No, I don’t think I do.

**C:** I mean, he just says I’m going to— to go into competition for that, you know, compulsive hoarder person and I just— we are so minimalist in our house but at the same time I don’t want it to be like a museum [*No, no.*] so I do get— I get frustrated that he wants to throw things out and I want to sort of have things around a bit longer or have more sort of— [*Sentimental items.*] sentimental, yeah.

**K:** I think especially if you— if you, as we both have, lost a parent, you know, you inherit things that were precious to your parents and even if you’re careful not to let them fill the house and you put them in a special cupboard or something, [*Yes.*] when they get … uh … called ‘clutter’ it can be a trigger point for a very, very big row! [*Mmm.*] So yeah, don’t go there, I promised to marry you, I didn’t promise that I would, you know, let you have complete say over everything I own in my life! [*Exactly, yeah.*] So yeah, I think probably … um … for us, one of the things I find hardest— I— when I make decisions about whatever it is, big or small, I tend to just then move on – decision’s made, and if it was the wrong one, it was the wrong one, never mind – I just move on, I get quick closure on it. And … um … Andy doesn’t do that. He will go back over and over and over something. [*Mmm.*] And even months or years later he’ll be looking for— for signs that he made the right decision about, I don’t know, what mortgage we took out in 1989 or whatever it was, [*Right.*] was that the right decision, like, it doesn’t matter, it’s 2000 and whatever, we’ve moved on. [*Mmm.*] Um, so that drives me a bit crazy cos he wants to analyse it and go over it and review it and I— and I just don’t see the point. So often I just walk away from that and say, ‘well you— you sit and chew that one over, I’ve got other things to do’ and I think he gets frustrated with that. So that’s probably an annoying habit from me, [*Mmm.*] that I won’t do that, sort of, post-mortem on everything we decide. Um, but it also annoys me hugely that he just won’t move on and let things go [*Mmm.*] cos I think that’s destructive and negative and backward-looking. [*Yeah.*] So … um … that’s quite an issue for us sometimes. [*Mmm.*] What else? Driving. We have our biggest rows in the car!

**C:** Oh, really?

**K:** Navigating! Trying to get from A to B.

**C:** So you’re navigating or you’re driving?

**K:** Um, if he’s driving— we went on holiday to LA and he did most of the driving cos h— his eyesight’s better than mine and I can’t see long distances. I couldn’t read the road signs. So he did the driving. But then, you know, I was trying to navigate but I couldn’t see properly so we ended up sort of swerving all over these eight line motorways with the children in the back, having major rows. So we often argue in the car, and the kids just sit and laugh at us now. But … uh …

**C:** Maybe— maybe I’m lucky because I— Pete does all the driving, I don’t and I’m not a confident driver.

**K:** Oh, I’d much rather drive so I— I tend to—

**C:** I imagine that if I ever drove, then I’d have the worst backseat-driver next to me. He’s a very good— he’s a very good driver, very confident, he’s driven for years. So I— I can just imagine he’d get so annoyed with me cos I would be quite sort of…

**K:** Oh Andy’s quite good, he’s not— he’s not too much of a backseat driver, but— I don’t know, if he’s driving he doesn’t seem to feel the need to read any road sign whatsoever, that becomes my job.

**C:** Oh, really, as well as driving?

**K:** And he’s— he’s completely incapable of following the sat nav. I don’t know whether that’s a sort of spatial awareness problem. He can’t look at a screen and follow it when he’s driving. I don’t know what that’s all about, there’s some little gene in there somewhere. That’s— that’s kind of annoying!