

Sex and the...

...single girl

After a year as Cosmo's SATSG columnist, **Laura Jane MacBeth** is ready for a love-life audit...

Time flies when you're failing to find a boyfriend and, incredibly, it's been a whole year since I started (over) sharing my life as a single girl on the pages of *Cosmo*. While I might not have changed my relationship status, I've definitely learnt some lessons along the way:

1) You can't make a boyfriend happen. Sadly, there's no way to guarantee that you'll meet Mr Smart, Attractive, Fun, Sweet or Amazing Kisser (annoying) or, if you do, that he'll like you back (more annoying). You just have to forget about it, while getting on with your life. After all, the best things often happen when you least expect them to – so I'm told.

2) 'On paper' doesn't always work. Yes, you might have met Mr As Above and he might like you back, but you also need

that unquantifiable component that makes you feel like you've been hit over the head with a blunt object (in a welcome way).

3) You'll work out where you're going wrong (eventually). Whether it's falling too fast, picking unavailables or ignoring your instincts, you won't *keep* smashing your head against a man-shaped brick wall. Which is good, because your head doesn't deserve it. It's a very nice head.

4) You'll become a dating ninja. After all those nights spent bowling into bars to meet new men, I've realised I've developed nerves of steel and can spill out amusing anecdote after amusing anecdote to fill even the most uncomfortable silences.

5) You don't just want a boyfriend. Yes, it seems like that when you're the only single person in the cluster of couples at a party...

But you don't want *any* boyfriend; you want *the*

boyfriend – one worth waiting for, rather than filling the gap with someone not good enough (and possibly missing The One as a result). This is doubly ratified when one of the coupled-up men at said party tries to ask you out.

So, I'm pretty sure that now I've worked all this out, Mr As Above *will* show up. I'll tell you how we get on next month. *confident face*

PHOTOGRAPHS ANTONIO PETRONZIO.
HAIR AND MAKEUP VICTORIA BARNES



...not so single girl

Jo Usmar discovers love starts in the bedroom. Well, in the sick bed to be exact

I think it's safe to say that when you start dating someone, you try to look your best. When Ben and I first got together, I bought a loofah, dental floss, dry shampoo and a couple of sets of matching undies. I was determined to be the Bear Grylls of dating: ready for anything. It was a big fat lie, but I figured by the time he uncovered the truth it would be too late. Mwahahaha!

It was all going well... until I got mumps.

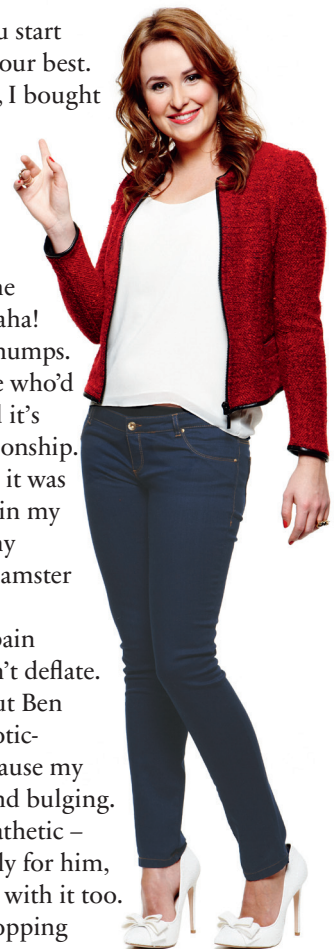
Yes, mumps. I didn't know anyone who'd had mumps over the age of six. And it's not *ideal* when you're in a new relationship. My entire face and neck exploded – it was as if someone had inserted a pump in my ear and inflated everything above my shoulders. I looked like a shocked hamster with elephantiasis. Mmm... *sexy*.

And it lasted for *weeks*. After the pain stopped, my face and neck still didn't deflate. I tried to style it out with scarves, but Ben wasn't seduced by my makeshift exotic-Arabian-princess guise. Perhaps because my come-hither eyes were bloodshot and bulging.

To Ben's credit, he was very sympathetic – between the snorts of mirth – luckily for him, because a week later he came down with it too. As new-couple tests go, it was a whopping one. Because we were contagious we'd been quarantined (I'd emailed a photo to my friend at work and she'd dutifully forwarded it around the whole office), but as my face slowly returned to normal, Ben's just got bigger.

I'm usually a rubbish nurse. I find discarding soggy tissues, applying Vicks and making soothing noises boring and, well, disgusting. But this new supersize version of Ben demanded reciprocal compassion. And – once we'd confirmed it wasn't life-threatening – mockery: 'LOOK AT YOUR MASSIVE FACE!'

There's no greater leveller in a relationship than illness, matching undies be damned. You realise there's more to it than just lust. And when Ben didn't retch while mopping my massive mumpy brow, I realised he was a keeper. Now, who said romance was dead?



Check out our columnists' blogs at Cosmopolitan.co.uk/blogs
Follow Laura on Twitter
[@LauraJaneCosmo](https://twitter.com/LauraJaneCosmo)
and Jo
[@jousmar](https://twitter.com/jousmar)