

Sex and the...

...single girl

When is it OK to bring up the 'boyfriend' question, wonders **Laura Jane MacBeth**

So, if you read last month's column about The Bubble – the kissing/gin/bed-filled utopia I've been sharing with PhD guy – you'll know it's not a place I like leaving. But every now and again Real Life intervenes and I'm forced to swap the world of loved-up super-fun (yay!) for that of work, deadlines and leaving the house (boo!).

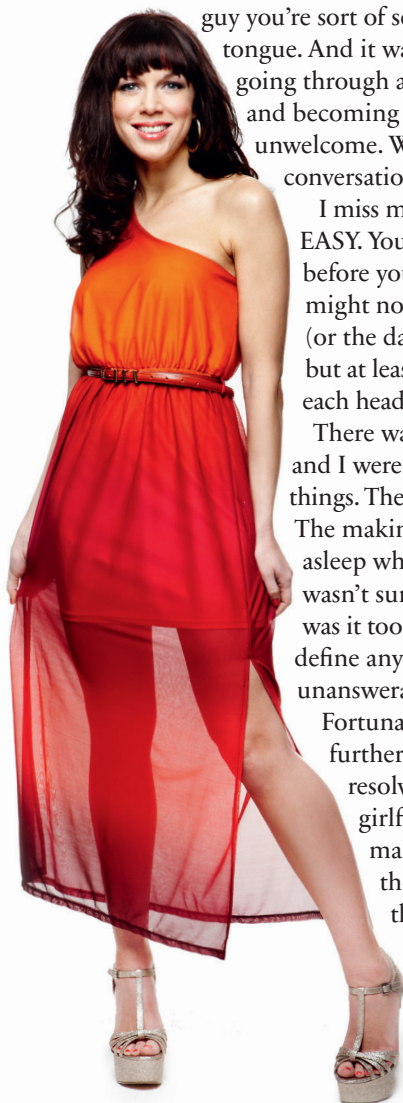
It was during one of these un-fun interludes at work that my ace colleague Lucy asked me, "How's your boyfriend?" To which I quickly replied, "He's not my boyfriend. We're just sort of seeing each other..."

She didn't mean anything by it. It's just that, "How's that guy you're sort of seeing?" doesn't really trip off the tongue. And it wasn't that the idea of PhD guy going through a metamorphosis (PhD word!) and becoming my boyfriend was in any way unwelcome. We just hadn't had *that* conversation yet.

I miss my teenage days, when it was all SO EASY. You'd be boyfriend and girlfriend before you so much as went on a date. You might not make it to the end of the week (or the date itself) before being dumped, but at least you knew where you stood for each heady second.

There was a lot to suggest that PhD guy and I were on the relationshipy side of things. The barely spending a night apart. The making plans for summer. The falling asleep while kissing (yes, really). But I wasn't sure who should moot the topic. Plus, was it too soon? And why did we have to define anything anyway? And other unanswerable questions.

Fortunately, before I could confuse myself further, the situation was unexpectedly resolved. He referred to me as his girlfriend, apologised for making assumptions, then we agreed that that would be fine, actually. So for now, it's definitely LJM 4 PhDG. I'll let you know if we make it through the week...



PHOTOGRAPHS ANTONIO PETRONZIO. HAIR AND MAKEUP VICTORIA BARNES. *NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED

...not so single girl

Jo Usmar certainly doesn't love, honour or obey wedding etiquette

My friend Dan* was fuming. "I haven't got a plus-one!" Soon to be the best man at our mutual friend's wedding, he was flabbergasted that his sparkly invite had been addressed just to him. "Um, you don't have a girlfriend..." I reminded him. "But I *might* have by October!" Dan pouted. "And have you seen who else is coming?" He had a point. We'd stumbled on the invite list and there were 200 names on it, including someone referred to only as 'Gary's step-kid.' "My future girlfriend might have got on like a house on fire with Gary's step-kid," Dan moaned.

Still, I thought he was being a bit OTT. I'd never understood what it is about weddings that turns reasonable folk into shouty lunatics. Until, that is, Ben received a wedding invite with no plus-one. I'd never even heard of the person getting hitched, but still – WTF?

We'd been together longer than the happy couple (I checked), so why didn't I deserve an invite? Was it because we're not married? Did my non-wife status relegate me to the reception-only group? Er, nope, because *I wasn't even invited to the evening do.*

Surely if you've been together for a year or more you qualify for the chance to buy a new hat, sip champers and scowl at anyone who slurs, "So will you two be next up the aisle?"

"You don't even know these people," Ben said, reasonably. "And I don't WANT to," I huffed. In the end, Ben neatly avoided the, 'I can't *believe* you're going without me!' row by having to work on the day – but I was still livid.

"That happened to me once," my mate Emma* said as we pondered the plus-one grey area girlfriends inhabit. "We got an email from them a week later saying someone had dropped out, so I could come. I told them *exactly* where they could stick their sloppy-seconds invite."

We high-fived, and decided to chill out and remember what weddings are *really* about – love, commitment and free alcohol.



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