

Sex and the...

... single girl

Could a younger guy be the key to baggage-free bliss? No, says **Laura Jane MacBeth**

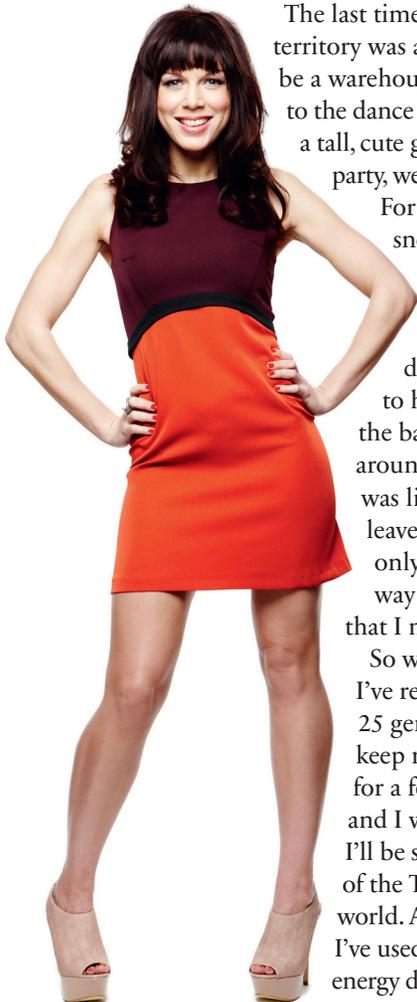
My friend Dee and I are at a boot camp when she tells me, "Tom fancies you." I collapse on the ground (not in excitement or shock – I've just done 27 burpees). "What?!" I manage, once I've recovered. "The trainer? He's, like, 12 years old." Well, 20, but *still*. "Yeah. He fancies you," Dee says, doing a perfect press-up. "He called Kate 'Laura' today. And I've caught him looking at you when you're exercising."

While I digest the horror of someone checking me out mid-squat, I consider the idea of pulling a ridiculously fit 20-year-old. It's not an entirely unwelcome image. And I have plenty in common with the younger end of the man spectrum. I live in jeans and hi-tops. I'm more, "Oh, it's only 5am," than, "Oh, god, the sun's coming up." So I'm not *overly* mature. Which might be why guys like Tom stare at me (if he even *was* staring).

The last time I ventured into Bieber territory was at a party that turned out to be a warehouse rave. Undeterred, I took to the dance floor, where I was joined by a tall, cute guy. After hitting another party, we headed home together.

For a while it was all 'awesome' snogs with someone blissfully (and possibly intellectually) simple. Everything I did – from living alone to drinking gin – was 'amazing' to him. And there was none of the baggage that older guys lug around like emotional hobos. It was like he didn't ever want to leave. And so he *didn't*. It was only after I journey-planned his way home the next evening that I managed to get rid of him.

So while it might be flattering, I've realised that hot men under 25 generally only keep my attention for a few weeks, and I want more. So I'll be steering clear of the Toms of this world. And anyway, I've used up all my energy doing burpees.



PHOTOGRAPHS ANTONIO PETRONZIO. HAIR AND MAKEUP VICTORIA BARNES. STYLING JARED GREEN

... not so single girl

Jo Usmar is ushering in 2013 with a resolution – to become a grown-up (well, almost)

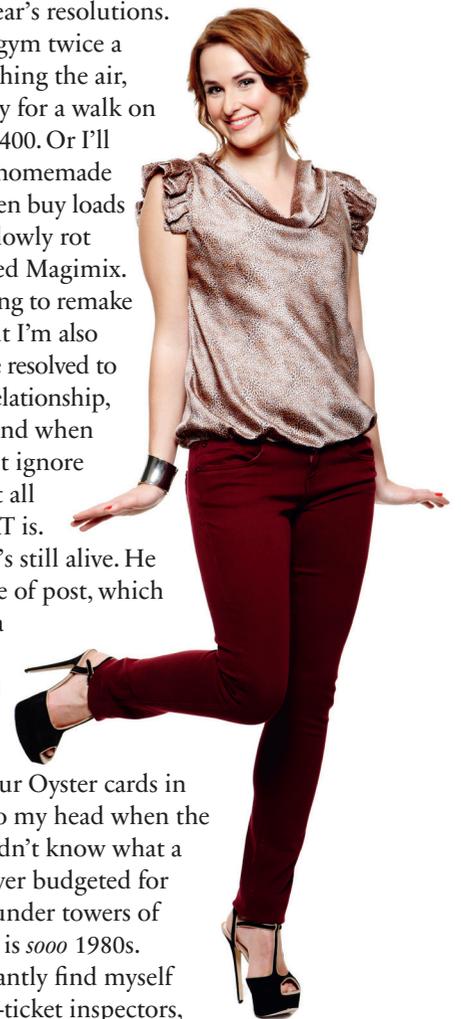
Normally I hate New Year's resolutions. "I'm gonna go to the gym twice a week," I'll shout, punching the air, finally trudging along in May for a walk on the treadmill that's cost me £400. Or I'll declare, "I'm going to have a homemade smoothie every morning!" then buy loads of exotic fruit and watch it slowly rot next to my ancient, never-used Magimix.

This year I'm obviously going to remake both of those resolutions, but I'm also going to add one more: I have resolved to become a grown-up. In our relationship, Ben is decidedly the adult. And when I say 'adult,' I mean he doesn't ignore the boring stuff. He sorts out all our bills. He knows what VAT is. He has a chilli plant – and it's still alive. He once warned me that my pile of post, which I insisted was positioned in a perfectly stable pyramid on the shelf over the bin, would one day fall in. And it did.

I, on the other hand, kill every plant I see, have lost four Oyster cards in the past year, taped a torch to my head when the power went out because I didn't know what a trip switch was, and have never budgeted for *anything*. My desk is buried under towers of papers because I think filing is *sooo* 1980s.

But it's exhausting. I constantly find myself negotiating with angry train-ticket inspectors, having to wipe last night's dinner off bin letters and staggering around the kitchen in the dark trying not to squash any decaying fruit.

Come 2013, I'm going to resolve to match Ben's adulthood and not leave a trail of devastation wherever I go. I'll find out why my gym is still charging me when I quit six months ago. I'll put all my post in one folder and read it. And I'll remember which day the binmen come so I don't sprint outside in my pants waving overflowing bin bags whenever I hear their big truck. I'll probably still kill plants, though. Some things are out of my control.



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