



getting dumped: we've all been there, some more than others. Me? I'm the Queen of the Dumped. I have been canned in a restaurant, ditched in a stairwell and even cast aside in a graveyard. But rather than feel ashamed of my status, it's now become a badge of honour and I wear my break-up war-wounds with pride. Besides, being single no longer has the same bad reputation as it did when Bridget Jones and Ally McBeal were the poster girls for singledom (God help us). These days there are endless socialising

opportunities via networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook that mean getting dumped needn't be a cruel blow to your social life. Then there are the self-help books and inspiring celebrity break-up veterans who prove

there *is* life after relationship-death (stand up Jennifer Aniston, Drew Barrymore and Cameron Diaz). I won't pretend that each time I got dumped it didn't hurt like hell, but I realised when I was writing my book that it's taught me to be stronger, tougher and to seize control of my life. Yep, if there's one war I know how to win with my lip gloss (and pride) still intact, it's the one versus heartache – and I've got all the tips you need to soldier on successfully...

**A NEW HAIRDO,  
HIGHHEELS AND  
SEXY LINGERIE  
ARE THE DUMPEES  
MOST POWERFUL  
WEAPONS**

**CAST OFF THE CAMOUFLAGE**

In the immediate aftermath of being dumped, you might feel like snuggling into mismatched comfortwear and discarding your hairbrush and beauty products, but you're not allowed to surrender style and grooming entirely. Pyjamas as daywear are *not* acceptable ➤

# survive the break-up blues

Alex Heminsley has been dumped so many times she's written a book about it! We asked her to tell us how to get over the moment we all dread

PHOTOGRAPH CHRIS CRAYMER

# ellerelationships

after the one-week break-up anniversary curfew has passed. Why do you think armies have uniforms? To keep spirits high, engender a sense of pride and show whose side they're on. You need to demonstrate that you are not defeated. The two easiest steps here are hair and

## 'YOU HAVE TO DELETE HIS E-MAIL ADDRESS, "DE-FRIEND" HIM ON MYSPACE AND FACEBOOK, AND GIVE FRIENDS REUNITED A MISS'

heels. Let's face it, no one has been known to feel worse after a blow-dry or less powerful after slipping into a pair of killer heels. Britney took the war analogy a teensy bit too far when she shaved her head *GI Jane*-style; the key here is subtlety. Underwear is also crucial. It's not for potential new men, mind – it's for you. Treat yourself to some gorgeous lingerie and you'll feel sexy, look better in whatever you're wearing on top and you'll experience that first independent thrill of the single girl: dressing to please yourself.

### GATHER YOUR ALLIES

There's nothing more likely to get you through this battle than the mates who'll drop everything to help cheer you up. Just look at how Courteney Cox has been Jennifer Aniston's rock over the past few years. And Sadie Frost has maintained a discreet loyalty to Kate Moss throughout her turbulent love life. These are the kind of girls you want – not the ones who'll try to pair you off with the first man you meet, just to prove you're over your ex. Platonic male friends are invaluable, too. With their no-nonsense opinions and pragmatism, they will help to stop you from wallowing.

### DON'T VENTURE BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES

This is a toughie because it's not just a case of stopping yourself from drunk-dialling him anymore. Removing his name from your phone is no longer enough. You have to delete his e-mail address (and all those gooey exchanges), 'de-friend' him on MySpace and Facebook and give Friends Reunited and the rest a miss. Excuses about needing

to get hold of him 'in an emergency' won't wash – you'll have shared friends who can get in touch with him if the need is genuine. The last thing you need is a constant stream of online banter detailing what he's been up to – you'll never move on. And don't be tempted to

use these websites to show him just how *fine* you are – far better to leave him wondering how you are than trying to maintain the world's coolest

Facebook wall for weeks on end.

### LEARN LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Every army needs to bear in mind the fortunes of its predecessors. You can draw enormous solace from knowing that you weren't the first to get dumped, and you certainly won't be the last. It's been happening for centuries, from the days of Greek gods and goddesses, to kings and queens throughout history. If you think Spice Girl Mel B had it bad with super-cad Eddie Murphy, spare a thought for mythical goddess Ariadne: her boyfriend Theseus (a prince whose life she'd saved) couldn't find the words to dump her, so he sailed off and abandoned her on an island. Makes your dumping via text seem trivial now, doesn't it?

### STOCK UP ON RATIONS

Think 'survival of the fittest'. You might want to eschew the supermarket for your local off-licence for the foreseeable, but falling out of a pub every night is not a sensible long-term getting-over-him tactic. Granted, you might not feel like a three-course meal every night, but some sustenance is essential. In my experience, break-ups

generally involve a heavy reliance on one single food group. After a particularly nasty split, I survived on nothing but cheese for a couple of months. While researching my book I discovered why. Eating dairy-based and fatty foods creates digestive hormones that boost oxytocin levels, thus flooding your body with the feel-good hormones your man has stolen. So that tub of ice cream isn't a cliché, it's science! Now you know how it can help, feel free to indulge a little. But keep up the fruit and veg, too. Post-break-up scurvy is not a good comeback look.

### USE DIVERSIONARY TACTICS

Heartache is the enemy, and boredom is its ally. A bout of inconsolable sadness is far more likely to attack the girl who is not otherwise occupied. So no matter how much you don't feel like it, you have to force yourself to get up, get dressed and go to work. You might feel wobbly, but everyone's been dumped at one point or another, so if you're honest and show

you're doing your best, you'll be surprised by the new friends you make. There's nothing like female solidarity, after all. At home, be aware of those staring-into-space-crying-as-you-stir-a-bowl-of-soup moments. Keep in touch with your friends so you have lots of support to boost you whenever you need it. This is also the time that the DVD box set comes into its own – no more sitting through TV you don't care about, the remote is all yours! So gorge yourself on *Brothers & Sisters* and *Grey's Anatomy*. And keep going out, too. Turning up at a party alone and looking

## dumping clichés to avoid

### THE BOYFRIEND BONFIRE

Don't burn or delete all your photos of him. Your future kids may want to see all the losers Mummy kissed before she met Daddy. In the meantime, ask a friend to look after them to stop you wallowing.

### THE SINGLE SONG

By all means adopt a 'single song', but under no circumstances should you perform it in public. *Wailing I Will Survive* at your local karaoke just makes you look sad.

### DUVET DAYS

Pulling a sickie will hinder, not help, your post-dump recovery. Aside from all those daytime TV couples reminding you of what you haven't got, being at work stops you feeling like a useless chump whose only date is with *Deal or No Deal*.

sensational makes you the coolest girl in the room, will inspire a flood of positive feedback and – best of all – no one will notice your battle scars. ■

*Ex and the City* (Pan Macmillan, £7.99) by Alexandra Heminsley is out now