

Imogen's shelf life

Taking into account that her father is one of the richest men in the UK, you would expect the glamorous Imogen Lloyd Webber to be permanently in demand by the world's most eligible bachelors. But, she says, there is no man in her life, and she's only been out with one in recent months — although, it has to be said, the lucky man was the American actor Christian Slater, which indicates she's not exactly on the shelf.

'I remain single,' she tells me. 'Am I supposed to be unhappy just because I don't have a man?' Now 30, she has written *The Single Girl's Guide*, which is crammed with advice on how to live a full, man-free life, and not be disappointed if the phone doesn't ring and the social diary remains defiantly blank.

'I've been single quite a lot. It's post-Bridget Jones and *Sex And The City*. In the end, Bridget went off with Mr Darcy and Carrie got Mr Big.' What happens if her own knight in shining Armani doesn't turn up? 'I'm not ruling him out for ever. I love men. But it's important to be happy and not to be pining.'

Gorgeous, clever and funny, she is no indolent trustafarian, filling in time between finishing school and marriage. The daughter of Lloyd Webber's first marriage to Sarah Hugill, she has written two novels, so far unpublished, developed film screenplays and set up a theatre company — one project is a play based on Madonna, called *Touched For The Very First Time*.

This week she'll be using her writing skills on *Deadlines*, a new TV reality show in which ten celebrities, including Ingrid Tarrant, Dom Joly and Abi Titmuss, have to produce a weekly glossy magazine under the editorship of Janet Street-Porter. 'I'm looking forward to working with — and most of all learning from — Janet,' says Imogen. 'I think she's a great writer, and I admire her as a strong, independent woman. Of course, it's scary that I'm soon going to find out what she makes of me, but I just couldn't turn down the opportunity.'

What's interesting about Imogen's single girl's guide is that it's not one of those clichéd how-to-hunt-a-man-down handbag books — it's about how to survive without one. 'So many women think they aren't fulfilled unless they have a man, but I think it's dangerous to

IMOGEN LLOYD WEBBER has a rich and famous father who's been married three times. So, asks CHRISSEY ILEY, is that why she's written a girl's guide to staying single?



Imogen, above, with her father, Andrew; mother, Sarah, and, brother, Nicholas, in 2002 and, top right, with Christian Slater

rely on someone to make you feel complete. I talked to more than 50 women of all ages for the book, so, in many ways, it's *not* about me and my life.'

In the book she mentions that she is aware of the horrors of divorce. I wondered if that was because her parents split up when she was six. 'Actually, as Daddy has said, my parents had a

happy divorce.' Lloyd Webber had just written *Cats* and the musical was poised to purr its way into becoming a huge feline box-office phenomenon. 'As a child, I think you adapt; you get on with it. It didn't feel traumatic. Both my parents remarried. Daddy was off doing crazy things, and my brother and I would do some amazing stuff with him, such as going to the

Oscars. Then we would be back home with Mummy and it would be beans on toast for tea.

Yet you know there have been times when things were not quite so hunky-dory. In her early 20s she was diagnosed with anorexia, when in fact she had a thyroid gland disorder. It seems to have been a singularly traumatic experience, in which everyone was telling her that

she had an illness that comes from being psychologically unsound, while she knew she had a physical condition. 'I was a size ten, a normal size,' she says. 'And, because of my thyroid problem, they started feeding me drugs and my body went haywire. Eventually I managed to find someone who realised what was wrong and gave me lots of herbs. It's important to take



care of yourself. There are advantages to being single: you've got more time and money to spend on pampering yourself.'

It seems that Imogen has worked through the advantages and disadvantages of being single many times over. She believes that work is a reason to get up in the morning. She could have relied on privilege, but instead she's almost gone the other way. In her book, she tells you how to deal with male and female bosses. She advises that you must never 'have a more functional love life than your female boss'.

She also dissects the etiquette of dating, and warns that all her platonic men friends dislike it if a woman calls them first. And she says that every girl needs other women: 'a best friend with whom you can share dark secrets, and playmates who you need for fun.'

Does she have a boyfriend checklist? 'I like men who are bigger than me, which shouldn't be that hard. I also like them dark and older. I've gone out with younger men and that hasn't worked. They have to be quite confident to be able to cope with me. I'm quite scary to date.' She explains, 'I don't know that it's easy for a man to date Andrew Lloyd Webber's daughter. One guy I went out with, who is actually very well known, was scared to meet my father.'

Doting daddy apparently encourages her independence, but has wisely never spoiled her with the benefits of his £450 million fortune. Asked once what presents he had ever given her, she remembered receiving a kitten called Kruger when she was two, and a silver necklace decorated with a miniature key. The musical *Cats* paid for the school fees.

'My father is amazing,' she says. 'He is extraordinary, and men usually measure themselves against him.' So is Imogen looking for a man who is in some way a genius? 'No, I want somebody who is sharp and who banter back with me, and who can tell me I'm talking rubbish if I suddenly say George Bush is great. I'm quite strong and I need a man to be strong back. Like my father, I am a huge romantic. I'm not interested in going out with someone if I don't feel something special for them.'

The Single Girl's Guide is published by Summersdale, £7.99. *Deadlines* is on ITV2 on Wednesdays and Thursdays at 10pm.