



# This is what incurable looks like!

Three months ago, LAURA PRICE was told that her breast cancer had returned. She reveals how, despite her diagnosis, she is squeezing every drop of joy out of life

**T**he first time I was diagnosed with breast cancer, in the summer of 2012, I was 29. I went through surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy while friends settled down and had their first babies. Shortly before my 30th birthday, I was declared cancer-free.

This summer, weeks before my 40th, I found out it was back, had spread to my bones and was incurable: stage 4, secondary breast cancer. I was back on the cancer train, with endless hospital trips and several drugs to shut down my ovaries and starve the tumour of oestrogen.

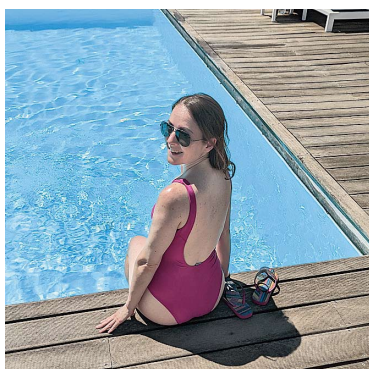
Life with incurable cancer is different, but it's not all bad. I'm relatively pain-free and can do the things I love, from swimming and running to working as a writer. I'll never ask for my prognosis, and I'll be in treatment for the rest of my time, but my doctors are confident I'll live a good life for as long as possible. Here's what I want you to know:

## MY BODY IS AWESOME

Last week, I found myself crying happy tears in a spinning class. Just months ago I was suffering from debilitating pain in my sternum; now, thanks to drugs, I'm able to keep up with the fittest gym bunnies. My body has been through a lot, but I'm so proud of what it's got me through. I'll never take it for granted.

## BIN THE BUCKET LIST

Cancer can act as a catalyst for change, and I spent my 30s doing the things I'd always dreamed of – I wrote my first novel, travelled to Colombia, Hong Kong, Australia and the Philippines. I quit my job to go freelance and I ended



Clockwise from top left: Laura with fiancé Mark in June; undergoing a biopsy in July; holidaying in France and celebrating her 40th in Portugal in August. Right: rocking fancy dress earlier this month

relationships that weren't making me happy. I have no regrets. I have cancer to thank for that.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT THE 'FIRSTS'

I celebrated my 40th in Portugal. All I wanted was a holiday and a nice meal out with my partner, Mark. On our last day in Lisbon, I was overcome with emotion that I might never return to the country I'd visited for so many years. I hate the idea of 'lasts' – my last time in Portugal, the last Christmas. I'm confident there are many more 'firsts' to come, too.

## CRYING IS OK

Lately, I find myself apologising for bursting into tears. They come spontaneously, often while watching the news or missing a



train just as the doors are closing. But I'm trying to teach myself it's OK – we cry and we grieve because we love so deeply; we *feel* so deeply. I want my loved ones to know it's OK for them to cry, too.

## APPEARANCES DECEIVE

You wouldn't know looking at me I have cancer. My drugs are less aggressive, so I won't go bald this time. But I wince when I'm told, 'You look so well!' I may look the same as I did, but my body and mind are going through turmoil.

## LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY

Cancer destroyed my chances of motherhood,

but I decided in my 30s to create a legacy. My debut novel *Single Bald Female* is fiction, but there's so much of me in there, too. I love the idea of my name living on through the pages of a book.

## REFRAME THE FUTURE

Recently, I bought a new coat. It was expensive and I didn't need it but I told myself it would last for ever. The concept of 'for ever' means something different now – I can't visualise growing old and grey in a retirement home, but I know I'll have a brilliant life, no matter how long or short.

## LOOK SEXY, FEEL GREAT

Going through perimenopause and putting on weight from the drugs have knocked my confidence. The late Dame Deborah James set an example of looking stunning until her last. I'm not going to relinquish comforts such as make-up and a slinky new dress.

## LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL NOW

Our late Queen was right when she said 'grief is the price we pay for love'. I'm getting married next year, and although our wedding will be tinged with sadness, we'll squeeze every last drop out of our life together. I wish everyone could experience the sheer joy and love I'm feeling now, without the knowledge they'll die sooner.



Laura's book *Single Bald Female* is out now\*