

Ana and Christian are finally ready to spend their lives together as man and wife, but the path of true love never runs smooth...

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“Can we marry tomorrow?” Christian murmurs softly in my ear. I am sprawled on his chest in the flowery bower in the boathouse, sated from our passionate lovemaking.

“Hmm.”

“Is that a yes?” I hear his hopeful surprise.

“Hmm.”

“A no?”

“Hmm.”

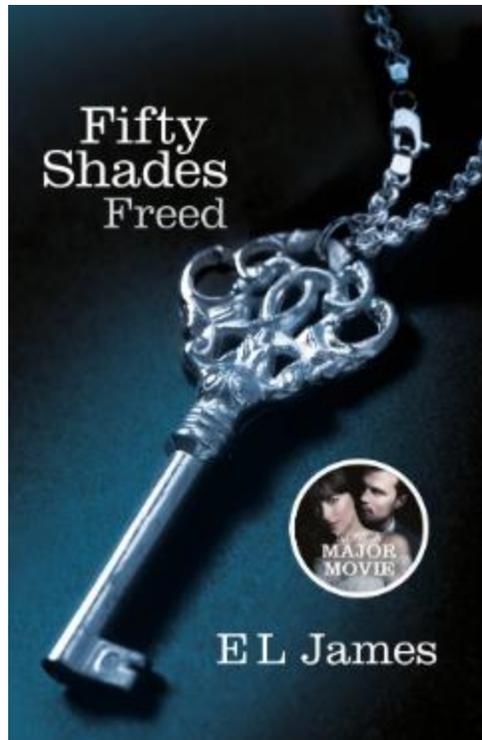
I sense his grin. “Miss Steele, are you incoherent?”

I grin. “Hmm.”

He laughs and hugs me tightly, kissing the top of my head.

“Vegas, tomorrow, it is then.”

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Sleepily I raise my head. “I don’t think my parents would be very happy with that.”

He thrums his fingertips up and down my naked back, caressing me gently.

“What do you want, Anastasia? Vegas? A big wedding with all the trimmings? Tell me.”

“Not big . . . Just friends and family.” I gaze up at him, moved by the quiet entreaty in his glowing gray eyes. What does he want?

“Okay.” He nods. “Where?” I shrug.

“Could we do it here?” he asks tentatively.

“Your folks’ place? Would they mind?”

He snorts. “My mother would be in seventh heaven.”

“Okay, here. I’m sure my mom and dad would prefer that.”

He strokes my hair. Could I be any happier?

“So, we’ve established where, now the when.”

“Surely you should ask your mother.”

“Hmm.” Christian’s smile dips. “She can have a month, that’s

it. I want you too much to wait any longer.”

“Christian, you have me. You’ve had me for a while. But okay— a month it is.” I kiss his chest, a soft chaste kiss, and smile up at him.

“You’ll burn,” Christian whispers in my ear, startling me from my doze.

“Only for you.” I give him my sweetest smile. The late afternoon sun has shifted, and I am under its full glare. He smirks and in one swift move pulls my sun lounge into the shade of the parasol.

“Out of the Mediterranean sun, Mrs. Grey.”

“Thank you for your altruism, Mr. Grey.

“My pleasure, Mrs. Grey, and I’m not being altruistic at all. If you burn, I won’t be able to touch you.” He raises an eyebrow, his eyes shining with mirth, and my heart expands. “But I suspect you know that and you’re laughing at me.”

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“I’m not very happy about you wearing so little right now.” He leans down and whispers in my ear. “Don’t push your luck.”

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"Would I?" I gasp, feigning innocence.

"Yes, you would and you do. Often. It's one of the many things I love about you." He leans down and kisses me, playfully biting my lower lip.

"I was hoping you'd rub me down with more sunscreen." I pout against his lips.

"Mrs. Grey, it's a dirty job . . . but that's an offer I can't refuse.

"Sit up," he orders, his voice husky. I do as I'm told, and with slow meticulous strokes from strong and supple fingers, he coats me in sunscreen.

"You really are very lovely. I'm a lucky man," he murmurs as his fingers skim over my breasts, spreading the lotion.

"Yes, you are, Mr. Grey." I gaze coyly up at him through my lashes.

"Modesty becomes you, Mrs. Grey. Turn over. I want to do your back."

Smiling, I roll over, and he undoes the back strap of my hideously expensive bikini.

"How would you feel if I went topless, like the other women on the beach?" I ask.

"Displeased," he says without hesitation. "I'm not very happy about you wearing so little right now." He leans down and whispers in my ear. "Don't push your luck."

"Is that a challenge, Mr. Grey?"

"No. It's a statement of fact, Mrs. Grey."

I sigh and shake my head. Oh, Christian . . . my possessive, jealous, control freak Christian.

When he's finished, he slaps my behind.

"You'll do, wench."

His ever-present, ever-active BlackBerry buzzes. I frown and he smirks.

"My eyes only, Mrs. Grey." He raises his eyebrow in playful warning, slaps my backside once more, and sits back down on his lounge to take the call.

My inner goddess purrs. Maybe tonight we could do some kind of floor show for his eyes only. She smirks knowingly, arching a brow. I grin at the thought and drift back into my afternoon siesta.

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"Mam'selle? Un Perrier pour moi, un Coca- Cola light pour ma femme, s'il vous plait. Et quelque chose a manger . . . laissezmoi voir la carte."

Hmm . . . Christian speaking fluent French wakes me. My eyelashes flutter in the glare of the sun, and I find Christian watching me while a liveried young woman walks away, her tray held aloft, her high blonde ponytail swinging provocatively.

"Thirsty?" he asks.

"Yes," I mutter sleepily.

"I could watch you all day. Tired?"

I flush. "I didn't get much sleep last night."

"Me neither." He grins, puts down his BlackBerry, and stands.

His shorts fall a little and hang . . . in that way so his swim trunks are visible beneath. Christian takes his shorts off, stepping out of his flip- flops. I lose my train of thought.

“Come for a swim with me.” He holds out his hand while I look up at him, dazed. “Swim?” he says again, cocking his head to one side, an amused expression on his face. When I don’t respond, he shakes his head slowly.

“I think you need a wake- up call.” Suddenly he pounces and lifts me into his arms while I shriek, more from surprise than alarm.

“Christian! Put me down!” I squeal.
He chuckles. “Only in the sea, baby.”

Several sunbathers on the beach watch with that bemused disinterest so typical, I now realize, of the French, as Christian carries me to the sea, laughing, and wades in. I clasp my arms around his neck. “You wouldn’t,” I say breathlessly, trying to stifle my giggling.

He grins. “Oh, Ana, baby, have you learned nothing in the short time we’ve known each other?” He kisses me, and I seize my opportunity, running my fingers through his hair, grasping two handfuls and kissing him back while invading his mouth with my

tongue. He inhales sharply and leans back, eyes smoky but wary.

“I know your game,” he whispers and slowly sinks into the cool, clear water, taking me with him as his lips find mine once more. The chill of the Mediterranean is soon forgotten as I wrap myself around my husband.

“I thought you wanted to swim,” I murmur against his mouth.

“You’re very distracting.” Christian grazes his teeth along my lower lip. “But I’m not sure I want the good people of Monte Carlo to see my wife in the throes of passion.”

I run my teeth along his jaw, his stubble tickly against my tongue, not caring a dime for the good people of Monte Carlo.

“Ana,” he groans. He wraps my ponytail around his wrist and tugs gently, tilting my head back, exposing my throat. He trails kisses from my ear down my neck.

“Shall I take you in the sea?” he breathes.

“Yes,” I whisper.

Christian pulls away and gazes down at me, his eyes warm, wanting, and amused. “Mrs. Grey, you’re insatiable and so brazen. What sort of monster have I created?”

“A monster fit for you. Would you have me any other way?”

“I’ll take you any way I can get you, you know that. But not right now. Not with an audience.” He jerks his head toward the shore.

What?

Sure enough, several sunbathers on the beach have abandoned their indifference and now regard us with interest. Suddenly, Christian grabs me around my waist and launches me into the air, letting me fall into the water and sink beneath the waves to the soft sand below. I surface, coughing, spluttering, and giggling.

“Christian!” I scold, glaring at him. I thought we were going to make love in the sea . . . and chalk up yet another first. He bites his lower lip to stifle his amusement. I splash him, and he splashes me right back.

“We have all night,” he says, grinning like a fool. “Later, baby.” He dives beneath the sea and surfaces three feet away from me, then in a fluid, graceful crawl, swims away from the shore, away from me.

Gah! Playful, tantalizing Fifty! I shield my eyes from the sun as I watch him go. He’s such a tease . . . what can I do to get him back? While I swim to the shore, I contemplate my options. At the lounges our drinks have arrived, and I take a quick sip of Diet Coke. Christian is a faint speck in the distance.

Hmm . . . I lie down on my front and, fumbling with the straps, take my bikini top off and toss it casually onto Christian’s sun lounge. There . . . see how brazen I can be, Mr. Grey. Put this in your pipe and smoke it. I shut my eyes and let the sun warm my skin . . . warm my bones, and I drift away under its heat, my thoughts turning to my wedding day.

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