

Read an extract from **Fifty Shades of Grey**, the first in the trilogy by **E L James** that took the world by storm

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“Do you have a philosophy? If so, what is it?”

“I don’t have a philosophy as such. Maybe a guiding principle— Carnegie’s: ‘A man who acquires the ability to take full possession of his own mind may take possession of anything

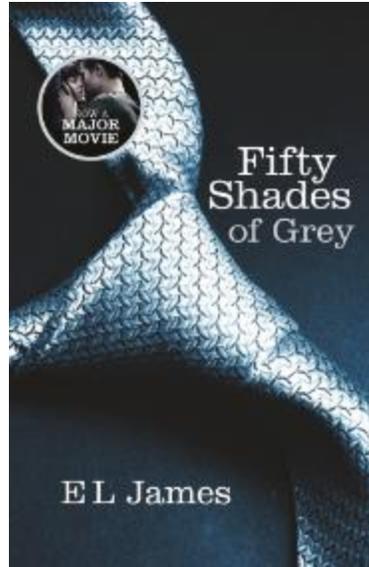
else to which he is justly entitled.’ I’m very singular, driven. I like control— of myself and those around me.”

“So you want to possess things?” You are a control freak.

“I want to deserve to possess them, but yes, bottom line, I do.”

“You sound like the ultimate consumer.”

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“I am.” He smiles, but the smile doesn’t touch his eyes. Again, this is at odds with someone who wants to feed the world, so I can’t help thinking that we’re talking about something else, but I’m mystified as to what it is. I swallow hard. The temperature in the room is rising, or maybe it’s just me. I just want this interview to be over. Surely Kate has enough material now. I glance at the next question.

“You were adopted. How much do you think that’s shaped the way you are?” Oh, this is personal. I stare at him, hoping he’s not offended. His brow furrows.

“I have no way of knowing.”

My interest is piqued. “How old were you when you were adopted?”

“That’s a matter of public record, Miss Steele.” His tone is stern. Crap. Yes, of course— if I’d known I was doing this interview, I would have done some research. Flustered, I move on quickly.

“You’ve had to sacrifice family life for your work.”

“That’s not a question.” He’s terse.

“Sorry.” I squirm; he’s made me feel like an errant child. I try again. “Have you had to sacrifice family life for your work?”

“I have a family. I have a brother and a sister and two loving parents. I’m not interested in extending my family beyond that.”

“Are you gay, Mr. Grey?”

He inhales sharply, and I cringe, mortified. Crap. Why didn’t I employ some kind of filter before I read this straight out? How can I tell him I’m just reading the questions? Damn Kate and her curiosity!

“No, Anastasia, I’m not.” He raises his eyebrows, a cool gleam in his eyes. He does not look pleased.

“I apologize. It’s, um . . . written here.” It’s the first time he’s said my name. My heartbeat has accelerated, and my cheeks are heating up again. Nervously, I tuck my loosened hair behind my ear.

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Hang on, who’s supposed to be interviewing whom? His eyes burn into me, and I’m compelled to answer with the truth

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He cocks his head to one side.

“These aren’t your own questions?”

The blood drains from my head.

“Er . . . no. Kate— Miss Kavanagh— she compiled the questions.”

“Are you colleagues on the student paper?” Oh no. I have nothing to do with the student paper. It’s her extracurricular activity, not mine. My face is aflame.

"No. She's my roommate."

He rubs his chin in quiet deliberation, his gray eyes appraising me.

"Did you volunteer to do this interview?" he asks, his voice deadly quiet.

Hang on, who's supposed to be interviewing whom? His eyes burn into me, and I'm compelled to answer with the truth.

"I was drafted. She's not well." My voice is weak and apologetic.

"That explains a great deal."

There's a knock at the door, and Blonde Number Two enters.

"Mr. Grey, forgive me for interrupting, but your next meeting is in two minutes."

"We're not finished here, Andrea. Please cancel my next meeting."

Andrea hesitates, gaping at him. She appears lost. He turns his head slowly to face her and raises his eyebrows. She flushes bright pink. Oh, good. It's not just me.

"Very well, Mr. Grey," she mutters, then exits. He frowns, and turns his attention back to me.

"Where were we, Miss Steele?"

Oh, we're back to "Miss Steele" now.

"Please, don't let me keep you from anything."

"I want to know about you. I think that's only fair." His eyes are alight with curiosity. Double crap. Where's he going with this? He places his elbows on the arms of the chair and steeple his fingers in front of his mouth. His mouth is very . . . distracting. I swallow.

"There's not much to know."

"What are your plans after you graduate?"

I shrug, thrown by his interest. Move to Seattle with Kate, find a job. I haven't really thought beyond my finals.

"I haven't made any plans, Mr. Grey. I just need to get through my final exams." Which I should be studying for right now, rather than sitting in your palatial, swanky, sterile office, feeling uncomfortable under your penetrating gaze.

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Grey places his hands for a moment on my shoulders. I gasp at the contact. If he notices my reaction, he gives nothing away

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“We run an excellent internship program here,” he says quietly.

I raise my eyebrows in surprise. Is he offering me a job?

“Oh. I’ll bear that in mind,” I murmur, confounded. “Though I’m not sure I’d fit in here.” Oh no. I’m musing out loud again.

“Why do you say that?” He tilts his head to one side, intrigued, a hint of a smile playing on his lips.

“It’s obvious, isn’t it?” I’m uncoordinated, scruffy, and I’m not blonde.

“Not to me.” His gaze is intense, all humor gone, and strange muscles deep in my belly clench suddenly. I tear my eyes away from his scrutiny and stare blindly down at my knotted fingers.

What’s going on? I have to go— now. I lean forward to retrieve the recorder.

“Would you like me to show you around?” he asks.

"I'm sure you're far too busy, Mr. Grey, and I do have a long drive."

"You're driving back to Vancouver?" He sounds surprised, anxious even. He glances out of the window. It's begun to rain. "Well, you'd better drive carefully." His tone is stern, authoritative.

Why should he care? "Did you get everything you need?" he adds.

"Yes, sir," I reply, packing the recorder into my backpack. His eyes narrow, speculatively.

"Thank you for the interview, Mr. Grey."

"The pleasure's been all mine," he says, polite as ever.

As I rise, he stands and holds out his hand.

"Until we meet again, Miss Steele." And it sounds like a challenge, or a threat, I'm not sure which. I frown. When will we ever meet again? I shake his hand once more, astounded that that odd current between us is still there. It must be my nerves.

"Mr. Grey." I nod at him. Moving with lithe athletic grace to the door, he opens it wide.

"Just ensuring you make it through the door, Miss Steele." He gives me a small smile.

Obviously, he's referring to my earlier less-than-elegant entry into his office. I blush.

"That's very considerate, Mr. Grey," I snap, and his smile widens. I'm glad you find me entertaining, I glower inwardly, walking into the foyer. I'm surprised when he follows me out. Andrea and Olivia both look up, equally surprised.

"Did you have a coat?" Grey asks.

"A jacket."

Olivia leaps up and retrieves my jacket, which Grey takes from her before she can hand it to me. He holds it up and, feeling ridiculously self-conscious, I shrug it on. Grey places his hands for a moment on my shoulders. I gasp at the contact. If he notices my reaction, he gives nothing away. His long index finger presses the button summoning the elevator, and we stand waiting—awkwardly on my part, coolly self-possessed on his. The doors open, and I hurry in, desperate to escape. I really need to get out of here. When I turn to look at him, he's gazing at me and leaning against the doorway beside the elevator with one hand on the wall. He really is very, very good-looking. It's unnerving.

"Anastasia," he says as a farewell.

"Christian," I reply. And mercifully, the doors close.

Read more at <https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/find-your-next-read/extracts/2016/jan/fifty-shades-of-grey-by-e-l-james/#xKmmIfWHmXORDcXk.99>