

A silver key with an ornate, scrollwork handle and a chain, set against a dark teal background. The key is positioned diagonally, with the handle at the top right and the bit at the bottom left. The chain is attached to the handle and extends towards the top right corner. The background is a dark teal color with a subtle texture.

Fifty
Shades
Freed

E L James

Contents

About the Book
About the Author
Also by E L James
Praise for the Fifty Shades Trilogy
Title Page
Dedication
Acknowledgments
Prologue

Chapter One
Chapter Two
Chapter Three
Chapter Four
Chapter Five
Chapter Six
Chapter Seven
Chapter Eight
Chapter Nine
Chapter Ten
Chapter Eleven
Chapter Twelve
Chapter Thirteen
Chapter Fourteen
Chapter Fifteen
Chapter Sixteen
Chapter Seventeen
Chapter Eighteen
Chapter Nineteen
Chapter Twenty
Chapter Twenty-One

Chapter Twenty-Two
Chapter Twenty-Three
Chapter Twenty-Four
Chapter Twenty-Five

Epilogue
Shades of Christian
 Fifty's First Christmas
 Meet Fifty Shades
Copyright

About the Book

Romantic, liberating and totally addictive, the Fifty Shades trilogy will obsess you, possess you and stay with you for ever.

When **Ana Steele** first encountered the driven, damaged entrepreneur **Christian Grey**, it sparked a sensual affair that changed both their lives irrevocably.

Ana always knew that loving her Fifty Shades would not be easy, and being together poses challenges neither of them had anticipated. Ana must learn to share Grey's opulent lifestyle without sacrificing her own integrity or independence; and Grey must overcome his compulsion to control and lay to rest the horrors that still haunt him.

Now, finally together, they have love, passion, intimacy, wealth, and a world of infinite possibilities.

But just when it seems that they really do have it all, tragedy and fate combine to make Ana's worst nightmares come true ...

About the Author

After twenty-five years working in TV, E L James decided to pursue her childhood dream, and set out to write stories that readers would fall in love with. The result was the sensuous romance *Fifty Shades of Grey* and its two sequels, *Fifty Shades Darker* and *Fifty Shades Freed*, a trilogy that went on to sell more than 150 million copies worldwide in 52 languages. In 2015 she published the bestseller *Grey*, the story of *Fifty Shades of Grey* from the perspective of Christian Grey.

In 2012, E L James was named one of *Time* magazine's "Most Influential People in the World," one of Barbara Walters's "Ten Most Fascinating People of the Year," and Publishers Weekly's "Person of the Year." She went on to work as a producer on the film adaptations of her trilogy for Universal.

E L James lives with her husband, the novelist and screenwriter Niall Leonard, their two sons and their two dogs in West London.

Also by E L James

Fifty Shades of Grey

Fifty Shades Darker

Fifty Shades Freed

Grey

Darker

Praise for the Fifty Shades Trilogy

‘A phenomenon.’
The Telegraph

‘Women who’ve read it talk about it with reverence and
awe.’
Fabulous Magazine

‘Not only reviving the book market, but also readers’
marriages.’
Daily Mail

‘Revolutionised the genre.’
Observer

‘One of the publishing sensations of the year.’
Stylist

‘The shocking bestseller we can’t stop talking about.’
Entertainment Weekly

‘The biggest selling novel of the moment.’
Daily Express

‘Women will undoubtedly be discussing it for years to
come.’
The Telegraph

‘The breakout novel of the digital download revolution.’
Guardian

‘A runaway hit.’
Fabulous Magazine

‘The market-leader.’
London Evening Standard

‘A literary sensation.’
Independent

‘A word of mouth blockbuster.’
Daily Mail

‘It’s the book everyone’s talking about.’
Heat

‘The book that made women want to have sex again.’
Mail on Sunday

‘The fastest selling book of the year.’
Guardian

‘The book marks the biggest advancement of the women’s
sexual revolution in decades.’
Fabulous Magazine

‘The world’s bestselling paperback.’
The Sun

‘One of the year’s most talked about books.’
Mail Online

‘The cream of the crop.’
Independent

‘A social-media literary phenomenon.’
Observer

E L James

Fifty Shades
Freed



arrow books

Para mi Mamá con todo mi amory gratitud
And for my beloved Father
Daddy, I miss you every day

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to Niall, my rock.

To Kathleen for just being a great sounding board, friend, confidante, and a technical wiz.

To Bee for endless moral support.

To Taylor (also a technical wiz), Susi, Pam, and Nora for showing a girl a good time.

And for their advice and tact I'd really like to thank:

Dr. Raina Sluder for help with all matters medical; Anne Forlines for the financial advice; Elizabeth de Vos for her kind counsel regarding the American adoption system.

Thanks to Maddie Blandino for her exquisite, inspirational art.

And to Pam and Gillian for Saturday morning coffee and hauling me back to real life.

Also thanks to my editing team, Andrea, Shay, and the ever lovely and only occasionally frothing Janine, who tolerates my frothing with patience, fortitude, and a great sense of humor.

Lastly a huge thank-you to everyone at Vintage.

PROLOGUE

Mommy! Mommy! Mommy is asleep on the floor. She has been asleep for a long time. I brush her hair because she likes that. She doesn't wake up. I shake her. Mommy! My tummy hurts. It is hungry. He isn't here. I am thirsty. In the kitchen I pull a chair to the sink, and I have a drink. The water splashes over my blue sweater. Mommy is still asleep. Mommy wake up! She lies still. She is cold. I fetch my blankie, and I cover Mommy, and I lie down on the sticky green rug beside her. Mommy is still asleep. I have two toy cars. They race by the floor where Mommy is sleeping. I think Mommy is sick. I search for something to eat. In the freezer I find peas. They are cold. I eat them slowly. They make my tummy hurt. I sleep beside Mommy. The peas are gone. In the freezer is something. It smells funny. I lick it and my tongue is stuck to it. I eat it slowly. It tastes nasty. I drink some water. I play with my cars, and I sleep beside Mommy. Mommy is so cold, and she won't wake up. The door crashes open. I cover Mommy with my blankie. He's here. *Fuck. What the fuck happened here? Oh, the crazy fucked-up bitch. Shit. Fuck. Get out of my way, you little shit.* He kicks me, and I hit my head on the floor. My head hurts. He calls somebody and he goes. He locks the door. I lay down beside Mommy. My head hurts. The lady policeman is here. No. No. No. Don't touch me. Don't touch me. Don't touch me. I stay by Mommy. No. Stay away from me. The lady policeman has my blankie, and she grabs me. I scream. Mommy! Mommy! I want my mommy.

The words are gone. I can't say the words. Mommy can't hear me. I have no words.

"Christian! Christian!" Her voice is urgent, pulling him from the depths of his nightmare, the depths of his despair. "I'm here. I'm here."

He wakes and she's leaning over him, grasping his shoulders, shaking him, her face etched with anguish, blue eyes wide and brimming with tears.

"Ana." His voice is a breathless whisper, the taste of fear tarnishing his mouth. "You're here."

"Of course I'm here."

"I had a dream ..."

"I know. I'm here, I'm here."

"Ana." He breathes her name, and it's a talisman against the black choking panic coursing through his body.

"Hush, I'm here." She curls around him, her limbs cocooning him, her warmth leeching into his body, forcing back the shadows, forcing back the fear. She is sunshine, she is light ... she is his.

"Please let's not fight." His voice is hoarse as he wraps his arms around her.

"Okay."

"The vows. No obeying. I can do that. We'll find a way." The words rush out of his mouth in a tumble of emotion and confusion and anxiety.

"Yes. We will. We'll always find a way," she whispers, and her lips are on his, silencing him, bringing him back to the now.

CHAPTER ONE

I STARE UP through gaps in the sea-grass parasol at the bluest of skies, summer blue, Mediterranean blue, with a contented sigh. Christian is beside me, stretched out on a sun lounge. My husband—my hot, beautiful husband, shirtless and in cut-off jeans—is reading a book predicting the collapse of the Western banking system. By all accounts, it’s a page-turner. I haven’t seen him sit this still, ever. He looks more like a student than the hotshot CEO of one of the top privately owned companies in the United States.

On the final leg of our honeymoon, we laze in the afternoon sun on the beach of the aptly named Beach Plaza Monte Carlo in Monaco, although we’re not actually staying in this hotel. I open my eyes and gaze out at the *Fair Lady* anchored in the harbor. We are staying, of course, on board a luxury motor yacht. Built in 1928, she floats majestically on the water, queen of all the yachts in the harbor. She looks like a child’s wind-up toy. Christian loves her—I suspect he’s tempted to buy her. Honestly, boys and their toys.

Sitting back, I listen to the Christian Grey mix on my new iPod and doze in the late afternoon sun, idly remembering his proposal. Oh, his dreamy proposal in the boathouse ... I can almost smell the scent of the meadow flowers ...

“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.”

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.”

“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.

“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.

“You may kiss the bride,” Reverend Walsh announces.

I beam at my husband.

“Finally, you’re mine,” he whispers and pulls me into his arms and kisses me chastely on the lips.

I am married. I am Mrs. Christian Grey. I am giddy with joy.

“You look beautiful, Ana,” he murmurs and smiles, his eyes glowing with love ... and something darker, something hot. “Don’t let anyone take that dress off but me, understand?” His smile heats a hundred degrees as his fingertips trail down my cheek, igniting my blood.

Holy crap ... How does he do this, even here with all these people staring at us?

I nod mutely. Jeez, I hope no one can hear us. Luckily Reverend Walsh has discreetly stepped back. I glance at the throng gathered in their wedding finery ... My mom, Ray, Bob, and the Greys are all applauding—even Kate, my maid of honor, who looks stunning in pale pink as she stands beside Christian’s best man, his brother Elliot. Who knew that even Elliot could scrub up so well? All wear huge, beaming smiles—except Grace, who weeps graciously into a dainty white handkerchief.

“Ready to party, Mrs. Grey?” Christian murmurs, giving me his shy smile. I melt. He looks divine in a simple black tux with silver waistcoat and tie. He’s so ... *dashing*.

“Ready as I’ll ever be.” I grin, a totally goofy smile on my face.

Later the wedding party is in full swing ... Carrick and Grace have gone to town. They have the tent set up again and beautifully decorated in pale pink, silver, and ivory with its sides open, facing the bay. We have been blessed with fine weather, and the late afternoon sun shines over the

water. There's a dance floor at one end of the tent, a lavish buffet at the other.

Ray and my mother are dancing and laughing with each other. I feel bittersweet watching them together. I hope Christian and I last longer. I don't know what I'd do if he left me. *Marry in haste, repent at leisure.* The saying haunts me.

Kate is beside me, looking so beautiful in her long silk gown. She glances at me and frowns. "Hey, this is supposed to be the happiest day of your life," she scolds.

"It is," I whisper.

"Oh, Ana, what's wrong? Are you watching your mom and Ray?"

I nod sadly.

"They're happy."

"Happier apart."

"You're having doubts?" Kate asks, alarmed.

"No, not at all. It's just ... I love him so much." I freeze, unable or unwilling to articulate my fears.

"Ana, it's obvious he adores you. I know you had an unconventional start to your relationship, but I can see how happy you've both been over the past month." She grasps my hands, squeezing them. "Besides, it's too late now," she adds with a grin.

I giggle. Trust Kate to point out the obvious. She pulls me into a Katherine Kavanagh Special Hug. "Ana, you'll be fine. And if he hurts one hair on your head, he'll have me to answer to." Releasing me, she grins at whoever is behind me.

"Hi, baby." Christian puts his arms around me, surprising me, and kisses my temple. "Kate," he acknowledges. He's still cool toward her even after six weeks.

"Hello again, Christian. I'm off to find your best man, who happens to be my best man, too." With a smile to us

both, she heads over to Elliot, who is drinking with her brother, Ethan, and our friend José.

“Time to go,” Christian murmurs.

“Already? This is the first party I’ve been to where I don’t mind being the center of attention.” I turn in his arms to face him.

“You deserve to be. You look stunning, Anastasia.”

“So do you.”

He smiles, his expression heating. “This beautiful dress becomes you.”

“This old thing?” I blush shyly and pull at the fine lace trim of the simple, fitted wedding dress designed for me by Kate’s mother. I love that the lace is just off the shoulder—demure, yet alluring, I hope.

He bends and kisses me. “Let’s go. I don’t want to share you with all these people anymore.”

“Can we leave our own wedding?”

“Baby, it’s our party, and we can do whatever we want. We’ve cut the cake. And right now, I’d like to whisk you away and have you all to myself.”

I giggle. “You have me for a lifetime, Mr. Grey.”

“I’m very glad to hear that, Mrs. Grey.”

“Oh, there you two are! Such lovebirds.”

I groan inwardly ... Grace’s mother has found us.

“Christian, darling—one more dance with your grandma?”

Christian purses his lips. “Of course, Grandmother.”

“And you, beautiful Anastasia, go and make an old man happy—dance with Theo.”

“Theo, Mrs. Trevelyan?”

“Grandpa Trevelyan. And I think you can call me Grandma. Now, you two seriously need to get working on my great-grandkids. I won’t last too much longer.” She gives us both a simpering smile.

Christian blinks at her in horror. “Come, Grandmother,” he says, hurriedly taking her hand and leading her to the

dance floor. He glances back at me, practically pouting, and rolls his eyes. "Later, baby."

As I walk toward Grandpa Trevelyan, José accosts me.

"I won't ask you for another dance. I think I monopolized too much of your time on the dance floor as it is ... I'm happy to see you happy, but I'm serious, Ana. I'll be here ... If you need me."

"José, thank you. You're a good friend."

"I mean it." His dark eyes shine with sincerity.

"I know you do. Thank you, José. Now if you'll please excuse me—I have a date with an old man."

He furrows his brow in confusion.

"Christian's grandfather," I clarify.

He grins. "Good luck with that, Annie. Good luck with everything."

"Thanks, José."

After my dance with Christian's ever-charming grandfather, I stand by the French doors, watching the sun sink slowly over Seattle, casting bright orange and aquamarine shadows across the bay.

"Let's go," Christian urges.

"I have to change." I grasp his hand, meaning to pull him through the French windows and upstairs with me. He frowns, not understanding, and tugs gently on my hand, halting me.

"I thought you wanted to be the one to take this dress off," I explain. His eyes light up.

"Correct." He gives me a lascivious grin. "But I'm not undressing you here. We wouldn't leave until ... I don't know ..." He waves his long-fingered hand, leaving his sentence unfinished but his meaning quite clear.

I flush and let go of his hand.

"And don't take your hair down either," he murmurs darkly.

"But—"

“No buts, Anastasia. You look beautiful. And I want to be the one to undress you.”

Oh. I frown.

“Pack your going-away clothes,” he orders. “You’ll need them. Taylor has your main suitcase.”

“Okay.” What has he got planned? He hasn’t told me where we’re going. In fact, I don’t think anyone knows where we’re going. Neither Mia nor Kate has managed to inveigle the information out of him. I turn to where my mother and Kate are hovering nearby.

“I’m not changing.”

“What?” my mother says.

“Christian doesn’t want me to.” I shrug as if this should explain everything. Her brow furrows briefly.

“You didn’t promise to obey,” she reminds me tactfully. Kate tries to disguise her snort as a cough. I narrow my eyes at her. Neither she nor my mother have any idea of the fight Christian and I had about that. I don’t want to rehash that argument. *Jeez, can my Fifty Shades sulk ... and have nightmares.* The memory is sobering.

“I know, Mom, but he likes this dress, and I want to please him.”

Her expression softens. Kate rolls her eyes and tactfully moves away to leave us alone.

“You look so lovely, darling.” Carla gently tugs at a loose tendril of my hair and strokes my chin. “I am so proud of you, honey. You’re going to make Christian a very happy man.” She pulls me into a hug.

Oh, Mom!

“I can’t believe how grown-up you look right now. Beginning a new life ... Just remember that men are from a different planet, and you’ll be fine.”

I giggle. Christian is from a different universe, if only she knew.

“Thanks, Mom.”

Ray joins us, smiling sweetly at both Mom and me.

“You made a beautiful baby girl, Carla,” he says, his eyes glowing with pride. He looks so dapper in his black tux and pale pink waistcoat. Tears prick the backs of my eyes. Oh no ... so far I have managed not to cry.

“And you watched her and helped her grow up, Ray.” Carla’s voice is wistful.

“And I loved every single minute. You make one hell of a bride, Annie.” Ray tucks the same loose strand of hair behind my ear.

“Oh, Dad ...” I stifle a sob, and he hugs me in his brief, awkward way.

“You’ll make one hell of a wife, too,” he whispers, his voice hoarse.

When he releases me, Christian is back at my side.

Ray shakes his hand warmly. “Look after my girl, Christian.”

“I fully intend to, Ray. Carla.” He nods at my stepdad and kisses my mom.

The rest of the wedding guests have formed a long human arch for us to travel through, leading around to the front of the house.

“Ready?” Christian says.

“Yes.”

Taking my hand, he leads me under their outstretched arms while our guests shout good luck and congratulations and shower us with rice. Waiting with smiles and hugs at the end of the arch are Grace and Carrick. They hug and kiss us both in turn. Grace is emotional again as we bid them hasty good-byes.

Taylor is waiting to whisk us away in the Audi SUV. As Christian holds the car door open for me, I turn and toss my bouquet of white and pink roses into the crowd of young women that has gathered. Mia triumphantly holds it aloft, grinning from ear to ear.

As I slide into the SUV, laughing at Mia’s audacious catch, Christian bends to gather the hem of my dress. Once

I'm safely in, he bids the waiting crowd farewell.

Taylor holds the car door open for him.
"Congratulations, sir."

"Thank you, Taylor," Christian replies as he seats himself beside me.

As Taylor pulls away, our wedding guests shower the vehicle with rice. Christian grasps my hand and kisses my knuckles.

"So far so good, Mrs. Grey?"

"So far so wonderful, Mr. Grey. Where are we going?"

"Sea-Tac," he says simply and smiles a sphinxlike smile.

Hmm ... what is he planning?

Taylor does not head for the departure terminal as I expect but through a security gate and directly onto the tarmac. What? And then I see her—Christian's jet ... *Grey Enterprises Holdings, Inc.* in large blue lettering across her fuselage.

"Don't tell me you're misusing company property again!"

"Oh, I hope so, Anastasia." Christian grins.

Taylor halts the Audi at the foot of the steps leading up to the plane and leaps out to open Christian's door. They have a brief discussion, then Christian opens my door—and rather than stepping back to give me room to climb out, he leans in and lifts me.

Whoa! "What are you doing?" I squeak.

"Carrying you over the threshold," he says.

"Oh." *Isn't that supposed to be at home?*

He carries me effortlessly up the steps, and Taylor follows with my small suitcase. He leaves it on the threshold of the plane before returning to the Audi. Inside the cabin, I recognize Stephan, Christian's pilot, in his uniform.

"Welcome aboard, sir. Mrs. Grey." He grins.

Christian puts me down and shakes Stephan's hand. Beside Stephan stands a dark-haired woman in her—what?

Early thirties? She's also in uniform.

"Congratulations to you both," Stephan continues.

"Thank you, Stephan. Anastasia, you know Stephan. He's our captain today, and this is First Officer Beighley."

She blushes as Christian introduces her and blinks rapidly. I want to roll my eyes. Another female completely captivated by my too-handsome-for-his-own-good husband.

"Delighted to meet you," gushes Beighley. I smile kindly at her. After all—he is mine.

"All preparations complete?" Christian asks them both as I glance around the cabin. The interior is all pale maple and pale cream leather. It's lovely. Another young woman in uniform stands at the other end of the cabin—a very *pretty* brunette.

"We have the all clear. Weather is good from here to Boston."

Boston?

"Turbulence?"

"Not before Boston. There's a weather front over Shannon that might give us a rough ride."

Shannon? Ireland?

"I see. Well, I hope to sleep through it all," says Christian matter-of-factly.

Sleep?

"We'll get underway, sir," Stephan says. "We'll leave you in the capable care of Natalia, your flight attendant." Christian glances in her direction and frowns, but turns to Stephan with a smile.

"Excellent," he says. Taking my hand, he leads me to one of the sumptuous leather seats. There must be about twelve of them in total.

"Sit," he says as he removes his jacket and undoes his fine sliver brocade vest. We sit in two single seats facing each other with a small, highly polished table between us.

"Welcome aboard, sir, ma'am, and congratulations." Natalia is at our side, offering us each a glass of pink

champagne.

"Thank you," Christian says, and she smiles politely at us and retreats to the galley.

"Here's to a happy married life, Anastasia." Christian raises his glass to mine, and we clink. The champagne is delicious.

"Bollinger?" I ask.

"The same."

"The first time I drank this it was out of teacups." I grin.

"I remember that day well. Your graduation."

"Where are we going?" I'm unable to contain my curiosity any longer.

"Shannon," Christian says, his eyes alight with excitement. He looks like a small boy.

"In Ireland?" We're going to Ireland!

"To refuel," he adds, teasing.

"Then?" I prompt.

His grin broadens and he shakes his head.

"Christian!"

"London," he says, gazing intently at me, trying to gauge my reaction.

I gasp. *Holy cow*. I thought maybe we'd be going to New York or Aspen or maybe the Caribbean. I can hardly believe it. My lifetime ambition has been to visit England. I'm lit up from within, incandescent with happiness.

"Then Paris."

What?

"Then the South of France."

Whoa!

"I know you've always dreamed of going to Europe," he says softly. "I want to make your dreams come true, Anastasia."

"You are my dreams come true, Christian."

"Back at you, Mrs. Grey," he whispers.

Oh my ...

"Buckle up."

I grin and do as I'm told.

As the plane taxis out onto the runway, we sip our champagne, grinning inanely at each other. I can't believe it. At twenty-two years old, I'm finally leaving the United States and going to Europe—to *London* of all places.

Once we're airborne, Natalia serves us yet more champagne and prepares our wedding feast. And what a feast it is—smoked salmon, followed by roast partridge with a green bean salad and *dauphinoise* potatoes, all cooked and served by the ever-efficient Natalia.

"Dessert, Mr. Grey?" she asks.

He shakes his head and runs his finger across his bottom lip as he looks questioningly at me, his expression dark and unreadable.

"No, thank you," I murmur, unable to break eye contact with him. His lips curl up in a small, secret smile, and Natalia retreats.

"Good," he murmurs. "I'd rather planned on having you for dessert."

Oh ... here?

"Come," he says, rising from the table and offering me his hand. He leads me to the back of the cabin.

"There's a bathroom here." He points to a small door, then leads me on down a short corridor and through a door at the end.

Jeez ... a bedroom. The cabin is cream and maple and the small double bed is covered in gold and taupe cushions. It looks very comfortable.

Christian turns and pulls me into his arms, gazing down at me.

"I thought we'd spend our wedding night at thirty-five thousand feet. It's something I've never done before."

Another first. I gape at him, my heart pounding ... the mile high club. I've heard about this.

"But first I have to get you out of this fabulous dress." His eyes glow with love and something darker, something I

love ... something that calls to my inner goddess. He takes my breath away.

“Turn around.” His voice is low, authoritative, and sexy as hell. How can he infuse so much promise into those two words? Willingly I comply and his hands move to my hair. Gently he pulls out each hairpin one at a time, his expert fingers making short work of the task. My hair falls in swaths over my shoulders, one lock at a time, covering my back and down to my breasts. I try to stand still and not squirm, but I’m aching for his touch. After our long, tiring but exciting day, I want him—all of him.

“You have such beautiful hair, Ana.” His mouth is close to my ear and I feel his breath, though his lips don’t touch me. When my hair is free of pins, he runs his fingers through it, gently massaging my scalp ... *oh my* ... I close my eyes and savor the sensation. His fingers travel on down, and he tugs, tilting my head back to expose my throat.

“You’re mine,” he breathes, and his teeth tug my ear lobe.

I groan.

“Hush now,” he admonishes. He sweeps my hair over my shoulder and trails a finger across the top of my back from shoulder to shoulder, following the lace edge of my dress. I shiver in anticipation. He plants a tender kiss on my back above the first button on my dress.

“So beautiful,” he says as he deftly undoes the first button. “You have made me the happiest man alive today.” With infinite slowness, he unfastens each button, all the way down my back. “I love you so much.” Trailing kisses from the nape of my neck to the edge of my shoulder. Between each kiss he murmurs, “I. Want. You. So. Much. I. Want. To. Be. Inside. You. You. Are. Mine.”

Each word is intoxicating. I close my eyes and tilt my head, giving him easier access to my neck, and I fall further under the spell that is Christian Grey, my husband.