

Fifty Shades Darker

By E. L. James

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Daunted by the singular tastes and dark secrets of the beautiful, tormented young entrepreneur Christian Grey, Anastasia Steele has broken off their relationship to start a new career with a Seattle publishing house.

But desire for Christian still dominates her every waking thought, and when he proposes a new arrangement, Anastasia cannot resist. They rekindle their searing sensual affair, and Anastasia learns more about the harrowing past of her damaged, driven and demanding Fifty Shades.

While Christian wrestles with his inner demons, Anastasia must confront the anger and envy of the women who came before her, and make the most important decision of her life.

This book is intended for mature audiences.

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Editorial Review

Review
THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING FIFTY SHADES Trilogy

"In a class by itself."
—*Entertainment Weekly*

About the Author
E L James is a former TV executive, wife and mother of two based in West London. Since early childhood she dreamed of writing stories that readers would fall in love with, but put those dreams on hold to focus on her family and her career. She finally plucked up the courage to put pen to paper with her first novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

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PROLOGUE

He's come back. Mommy's asleep or she's sick again.

I hide and curl up small under the table in the kitchen. Through my fingers I can see Mommy. She is asleep on the couch. Her hand is on the sticky green rug, and he's wearing his big boots with the shiny buckle and standing over Mommy shouting.

He hits Mommy with a belt. *Get up! Get up! You are one fucked-up bitch. You are one fucked-up bitch. You are one fucked-up bitch. You are one fucked-up bitch. You are one fucked-up bitch. You are one fucked-up bitch.*

Mommy makes a sobbing noise. *Stop. Please stop.* Mommy doesn't scream. Mommy curls up small.

I have my fingers in my ears, and I close my eyes. The sound stops.

He turns and I can see his boots as he stomps into the kitchen. He still has the belt. He is trying to find me.

He stoops down and grins. He smells nasty. Of cigarettes and drink. *There you are, you little shit.*

A chilling wail wakes him. *Christ!* He's drenched in sweat and his heart is pounding. *What the fuck?* He sits bolt upright in bed and puts his head in hands. *Fuck. They're back. The noise was me.* He takes a deep steadying breath, trying to rid his mind and nostrils of the smell of cheap bourbon and stale Camel cigarettes.

CHAPTER ONE

I have survived Day Three Post-Christian, and my first day at work. It has been a welcome distraction. The time has flown by in a haze of new faces, work to do, and Mr. Jack Hyde. Mr. Jack Hyde . . . he smiles down at me, his blue eyes twinkling, as he leans against my desk.

“Excellent work, Ana. I think we’re going to make a great team.”

Somehow, I manage to curl my lips upward in a semblance of a smile.

“I’ll be off, if that’s okay with you,” I murmur.

“Of course, it’s five thirty. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Good night, Jack.”

“Good night, Ana.”

Collecting my bag, I shrug on my jacket and head for the door.
Out in the early evening air of Seattle, I take a deep breath. It doesn’t begin to fill the void in my chest, a void that’s been present since Saturday morning, a painful hollow reminder of my loss. I walk toward the bus stop with my head down, staring at my feet and contemplating being without my beloved Wanda, my old Beetle . . . or the Audi.

I shut the door on that thought immediately. No. Don’t think about him. Of course, I can afford a car—a nice, new car. I suspect he has been overgenerous in his payment, and the thought leaves a bitter taste in my mouth, but I dismiss it and try to keep my mind as numb and as blank as possible. I can’t think about him. I don’t want to start crying again—not out on the street.

The apartment is empty. I miss Kate, and I imagine her lying on a beach in Barbados sipping a cool cocktail. I turn on the flat-screen television so there’s noise to fill the vacuum and provide some semblance of company, but I don’t listen or watch. I sit and stare blankly at the brick wall. I am numb. I feel nothing but the pain. How long must I endure this?

The door buzzer startles me from my anguish, and my heart skips a beat. Who could that be? I press the intercom.

“Delivery for Ms. Steele.” A bored, disembodied voice answers, and disappointment crashes through me. I listlessly make my way downstairs and find a young man noisily chewing gum, holding a large cardboard box, and leaning against the front door. I sign for the package and take it upstairs. The box is huge and surprisingly light. Inside are two dozen long-stemmed, white roses and a card.

Congratulations on your first day at work.
I hope it went well.
And thank you for the glider. That was very thoughtful.
It has pride of place on my desk.
Christian

I stare at the typed card, the hollow in my chest expanding. No doubt, his assistant sent this. Christian probably had very little to do with it. It’s too painful to think about. I examine the roses—they are beautiful, and I can’t bring myself to throw them in the trash. Dutifully, I make my way into the kitchen to hunt down a vase.

And so a pattern develops: wake, work, cry, sleep. Well, try to sleep. I can't even escape him in my dreams. Gray burning eyes, his lost look, his hair burnished and bright all haunt me. And the music . . . so much music—I cannot bear to hear any music. I am careful to avoid it at all costs. Even the jingles in commercials make me shudder.

I have spoken to no one, not even my mother or Ray. I don't have the capacity for idle talk now. No, I want none of it. I have become my own island state. A ravaged, war-torn land where nothing grows and the horizons are bleak. Yes, that's me. I can interact impersonally at work, but that's it. If I talk to Mom, I know I will break even further—and I have nothing left to break.

I am finding it difficult to eat. By lunchtime on Wednesday, I manage a cup of yogurt, and it's the first thing I've eaten since Friday. I am surviving on a newfound tolerance for lattes and Diet Coke. It's the caffeine that keeps me going, but it's making me anxious.

Jack has started to hover over me, irritating me, asking me personal questions. What does he want? I'm polite, but I need to keep him at arm's length.

I sit and begin trawling through a pile of correspondence addressed to him, and I'm pleased with the distraction of menial work. My e-mail pings, and I quickly check to see who it's from.

Holy shit. An e-mail from Christian. *Oh no, not here . . . not at work.*

From: Christian Grey
Subject: Tomorrow
Date: June 8 2011 14:05
To: Anastasia Steele

Dear Anastasia

Forgive this intrusion at work. I hope that it's going well. Did you get my flowers?

I note that tomorrow is the gallery opening for your friend's show, and I'm sure you've not had time to purchase a car, and it's a long drive. I would be more than happy to take you—should you wish.

Let me know.

Christian Grey
CEO, Grey Enterprises Holdings, Inc.

Tears swim in my eyes. I hastily leave my desk and bolt to the restroom to escape into one of the stalls. José's show. I'd forgotten all about it, and I promised him I'd go. Shit, Christian is right; how am I going to get there?

I clutch my forehead. Why hasn't José phoned? Come to think of it—why hasn't anyone phoned? I've been

so absentminded I haven't noticed that my cell phone has been silent.

Shit! I am such an idiot! I still have it set to forward calls to the BlackBerry. Holy hell. Christian's been getting my calls—unless he's just thrown the BlackBerry away. How did he get my e-mail address?

He knows my shoe size; an e-mail address is hardly going to present him with many problems.

Can I see him again? Could I bear it? Do I want to see him? I close my eyes and tilt my head back as grief and longing lance through me. Of course I do.

Perhaps—perhaps I can tell him I've changed my mind . . . No, no, no. I cannot be with someone who takes pleasure in inflicting pain on me, someone who can't love me.

Torturous memories flash through my mind—the gliding, holding hands, kissing, the bathtub, his gentleness, his humor, and his dark, brooding, sexy stare. I miss him. It's been five days, five days of agony that has felt like an eternity. I cry myself to sleep at night, wishing I hadn't walked out, wishing that he could be different, wishing that we were together. How long will this hideous overwhelming feeling last? I am in purgatory.

I wrap my arms around my body, hugging myself tightly, holding myself together. I miss him. I really miss him . . . I love him. Simple.

Anastasia Steele, you are at work! I must be strong, but I want to go to José's show, and deep down, the masochist in me wants to see Christian. Taking a deep breath, I head back to my desk.

From: Anastasia Steele
Subject: Tomorrow
Date: June 8 2011 14:25
To: Christian Grey

Hi Christian

Thank you for the flowers; they are lovely.

Yes, I would appreciate a lift.

Thank you.

Anastasia Steele
Assistant to Jack Hyde, Editor, SIP

Checking my phone, I find that it is still set to forward calls to the BlackBerry. Jack is in a meeting, so I quickly call José.

"Hi, José. It's Ana."

"Hello, stranger." His tone is so warm and welcoming it's almost enough to push me over the edge again.

“I can’t talk long. What time should I be there tomorrow for your show?”

“You’re still coming?” He sounds excited.

“Yes, of course.” I smile my first genuine smile in five days as I picture his broad grin.

“Seven thirty.”

“See you then. Good-bye, José.”

“Bye, Ana.”

From: Christian Grey
Subject: Tomorrow
Date: June 8 2011 14:27
To: Anastasia Steele

Dear Anastasia

What time shall I pick you up?

Christian Grey
CEO, Grey Enterprises Holdings, Inc.

From: Anastasia Steele
Subject: Tomorrow
Date: June 8 2011 14:32
To: Christian Grey

José’s show starts at 7:30. What time would you suggest?

Anastasia Steele
Assistant to Jack Hyde, Editor, SIP

From: Christian Grey
Subject: Tomorrow
Date: June 8 2011 14:34
To: Anastasia Steele

Dear Anastasia

Portland is some distance away. I shall pick you up at 5:45.

I look forward to seeing you.

Christian Grey
CEO, Grey Enterprises Holdings, Inc.

From: Anastasia Steele
Subject: Tomorrow
Date: June 8 2011 14:38
To: Christian Grey

See you then.

Anastasia Steele
Assistant to Jack Hyde, Editor, SIP

Oh my. I'm going to see Christian, and for the first time in five days, my spirits lift a fraction and I allow myself to wonder how he's been.

Has he missed me? Probably not like I've missed him. Has he found a new submissive? The thought is so painful that I dismiss it immediately. I look at the pile of correspondence I need to sort for Jack and tackle it as I try to push Christian out of my mind once more.

That night in bed, I toss and turn, trying to sleep and it's the first time in a while I haven't cried myself to sleep.

In my mind's eye, I visualize Christian's face the last time I saw him as when I left. His tortured expression haunts me. I remember he didn't want me to go, which was odd. Why would I stay when things had reached such an impasse? We were each skirting around our own issues—my fear of punishment, his fear of . . . what? Love?

Turning on my side, I hug my pillow, filled with an overwhelming sadness. He thinks he doesn't deserve to be loved. Why does he feel that way? Does it have to do with his upbringing? His birth mom, the crack whore? My thoughts plague me into the early hours until eventually I fall into a fitful, exhausted sleep.

The day drags and drags and Jack is unusually attentive. I suspect it's due to Kate's plum dress and the black high-heeled boots I've stolen from her closet, but I don't dwell on the thought. I resolve to go clothes shopping with my first paycheck. The dress is looser on me than it was, but I pretend not to notice.

Finally it's five thirty, and I collect my jacket and purse, trying to quell my nerves. *I'm going to see him!*

"Do you have a date tonight?" Jack asks as he strolls past my desk on his way out.

"Yes. No. Not really."

He raises an eyebrow, his interest clearly piqued. "Boyfriend?"

I flush. "No, a friend. An ex-boyfriend."

“Maybe tomorrow you’d like to come for a drink after work. You’ve had a stellar first week, Ana. We should celebrate.” He smiles and an unknown, unsettling emotion flits across his face, making me uneasy.

Putting his hands in his pockets, he saunters through the double doors. I frown at his retreating back. Drinks with the boss, is that a good idea?

I shake my head. I have an evening of Christian Grey to get through first. How am I going to do this? I hurry into the restroom to make last-minute adjustments.

In the large mirror on the wall, I take a long, hard look at my face. I’m my usual pale self, dark circles around my too-large eyes. I look gaunt, haunted. I wish I knew how to use makeup. I apply some mascara and eyeliner and pinch my cheeks, hoping for some color. Tidying my hair so that it hangs artfully down my back, I take a deep breath. This will have to do.

Nervously I walk through the foyer with a smile and a wave to Claire at Reception. I think she and I could become friends. Jack is talking to Elizabeth as I head for the doors. Smiling broadly, he hurries over to open them for me.

“After you, Ana,” he murmurs.

“Thank you.” I smile, embarrassed.

Outside on the curb, Taylor is waiting. He opens the rear door of the car. I glance hesitantly at Jack, who has followed me out. He’s looking toward the Audi SUV in dismay.

I turn and climb into the back, and there he sits—Christian Grey—wearing his gray suit, no tie, white shirt open at the collar. His gray eyes are glowing.

My mouth dries. He looks glorious except he’s scowling at me. Why?

“When did you last eat?” he snaps as Taylor closes the door behind me.

Crap. “Hello, Christian. Yes, it’s nice to see you, too.”

“I don’t want your smart mouth now. Answer me.” His eyes blaze.

Holy shit. “Um . . . I had a yogurt at lunchtime. Oh—and a banana.”

“When did you last have a real meal?” he asks acidly.

Taylor slips into the driver’s seat, starts the car, and pulls out into the traffic.

I glance up and Jack is waving at me, though how he can see me through the dark glass, I don’t know. I wave back.

“Who’s that?” Christian snaps.

“My boss.” I peek up at the beautiful man beside me, and his mouth is pressed into a hard line.

“Well? Your last meal?”

“Christian, that really is none of your concern,” I murmur, feeling extraordinarily brave.

“Whatever you do concerns me. Tell me.”

No, it doesn’t. I groan in frustration, rolling my eyes heavenward, and Christian narrows his eyes. And for the first time in a long time, I want to laugh. I try hard to stifle the giggle that threatens to bubble up. Christian’s face softens as I struggle to keep a straight face, and a trace of a smile kisses his lovely sculptured lips.

“Well?” he asks, his voice softer.

“Pasta *alla vongole*, last Friday,” I whisper.

He closes his eyes as fury, and possibly regret, sweeps across his face. “I see,” he says, his voice expressionless. “You look like you’ve lost at least five pounds, possibly more since then. Please eat, Anastasia,” he scolds.

I stare down at the knotted fingers in my lap. Why does he always make me feel like an errant child?

He shifts and turns toward me. “How are you?” he asks, his voice still soft.

Well, I’m shit, really . . . I swallow. “If I told you I was fine, I’d be lying.”

He inhales sharply. “Me, too,” he murmurs and reaches over and clasps my hand. “I miss you,” he adds.

Oh no. Skin against skin.

“Christian, I—”

“Ana, please. We need to talk.”

I’m going to cry. No. “Christian, I . . . please . . . I’ve cried so much,” I whisper, trying to keep my emotions in check.

“Oh, baby, no.” He tugs my hand, and before I know it I’m on his lap. He has his arms around me, and his nose is in my hair.

“I’ve missed you so much, Anastasia,” he breathes.

I want to struggle out of his hold, to maintain some distance, but his arms are wrapped around me. He’s pressing me to his chest. I melt. Oh, this is where I want to be.

I rest my head against him, and he kisses my hair repeatedly. This is home. He smells of linen, fabric softener, body wash, and my favorite smell—Christian. For a moment, I allow myself the illusion that all will be well, and it soothes my ravaged soul.

A few minutes later Taylor pulls to a stop at the curb, even though we’re still in the city.

“Come”—Christian shifts me off his lap—“we’re here.”

What?

“Helipad—on the top of this building.” Christian glances toward the building by way of explanation.

Of course. *Charlie Tango.* Taylor opens the door and I slide out. He gives me a warm, avuncular smile that makes me feel safe. I smile back.

“I should give you back your handkerchief.”

“Keep it, Miss Steele, with my best wishes.”

I blush as Christian comes around the car and takes my hand. He looks quizzically at Taylor, who stares impassively back at him, revealing nothing.

“Nine?” Christian says to him.

“Yes, sir.”

Christian nods as he turns and leads me through the double doors into the grandiose foyer. I revel in the feel of his hand and his long, skilled fingers curled around mine. The familiar pull is there—I’m drawn, Icarus to his sun. I’ve been burned already, and yet here I am again.

Reaching the elevators, he presses the “call” button. I peek up at him, and he’s wearing his enigmatic half smile. As the doors open, he releases my hand and ushers me in.

The doors close and I risk a second peek. He glances down at me, and it’s there in the air between us, that electricity. It’s palpable. I can almost taste it, pulsing between us, drawing us together.

“Oh my,” I gasp as I bask briefly in the intensity of this visceral, primal attraction.

“I feel it, too,” he says, his eyes clouded and intense.

Desire pools dark and deadly in my groin. He clasps my hand and grazes my knuckles with his thumb, and all my muscles clench tightly, deliciously, deep inside me.

How can he still do this to me?

“Please don’t bite your lip, Anastasia,” he whispers.

I gaze up at him, releasing my lip. I want him. Here, now, in the elevator. How could I not?

“You know what it does to me,” he murmurs.

Oh, I still affect him. My inner goddess stirs from her five-day sulk.

Abruptly the doors open, breaking the spell, and we’re on the roof. It’s windy, and despite my black jacket,

I'm cold. Christian puts his arm around me, pulling me into his side, and we hurry across to where *Charlie Tango* stands in the center of the helipad, with its rotor blades slowly spinning.

A tall, blond, square-jawed man in a dark suit leaps out and, ducking low, runs toward us. Shaking hands with Christian, he shouts above the noise of the rotors.

"Ready to go, sir. She's all yours!"

"All checks done?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll collect her around eight thirty?"

"Yes, sir."

"Taylor's waiting for you out front."

"Thank you, Mr. Grey. Safe flight to Portland. Ma'am." He salutes me. Without releasing me, Christian nods, ducks down, and leads me to the helicopter door.

Once inside he buckles me firmly into my harness, cinching the straps tight. He gives me a knowing look and his secret smile.

"This should keep you in your place," he murmurs. "I must say I like this harness on you. Don't touch anything."

I flush a deep crimson, and he runs his index finger down my cheek before handing me the headphones. *I'd like to touch you, too, but you won't let me.* I scowl. Besides, he's pulled the straps so tight I can barely move.

He sits in his seat and buckles himself in, then starts running through all his preflight checks. He's just so competent. It's very alluring. He puts on his headphones and flips a switch and the rotors speed up, deafening me.

Turning, he gazes at me. "Ready, baby?" His voice echoes through the headphones.

"Yes."

He grins his boyish grin. Wow—I've not seen it for so long.

"Sea-Tac tower, this is *Charlie Tango* Golf—Golf Echo Hotel, cleared for takeoff to Portland via PDX. Please confirm, over."

The disembodied voice of the air traffic controller answers, issuing instructions.

"Roger, tower, *Charlie Tango* set, over and out." Christian flips two switches, grasps the stick, and the helicopter rises slowly and smoothly into the evening sky.

Seattle and my stomach drop away from us, and there's so much to see.

"We've chased the dawn, Anastasia, now the dusk," his voice comes through on the headphones. I turn and gape at him in surprise.

What does this mean? How is it that he can say the most romantic things? He smiles, and I can't help my shy smile.

"As well as the evening sun, there's more to see this time," he says.

The last time we flew to Seattle it was dark, but this evening the view is spectacular, literally out of this world. We're up among the tallest buildings, going higher and higher.

"Escala's over there." He points toward the building. "Boeing there, and you can just see the Space Needle."

I crane my head. "I've never been."

"I'll take you—we can eat there."

"Christian, we broke up."

"I know. I can still take you there and feed you." He glares at me.

I shake my head and decide not to antagonize him. "It's very beautiful up here, thank you."

"Impressive, isn't it?"

"Impressive that you can do this."

"Flattery from you, Miss Steele? But I'm a man of many talents."

"I'm fully aware of that, Mr. Grey."

He turns and smirks at me, and for the first time in five days, I relax a little. Perhaps this won't be so bad.

"How's the new job?"

"Good, thank you. Interesting."

"What's your boss like?"

"Oh, he's okay." How can I tell Christian that Jack makes me uncomfortable? Christian glances at me.

"What's wrong?" he asks.

"Aside from the obvious, nothing."

"The obvious?"

“Oh, Christian, you really are very obtuse sometimes.”

“Obtuse? Me? I’m not sure I appreciate your tone, Miss Steele.”

“Well, don’t, then.”

His lips twitch into a smile. “I have missed your smart mouth, Anastasia.”

I gasp and I want to shout, *I’ve missed you—all of you—not just your mouth!* But I keep quiet and gaze out the glass fishbowl that is *Charlie Tango’s* windshield as we continue south. The dusk is to our right, the sun low on the horizon—large, blazing fiery orange—and I am Icarus again, flying far too close.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Derek Morton:

Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite e-book and reading a book. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the book entitled Fifty Shades Darker. Try to make the book Fifty Shades Darker as your friend. It means that it can to be your friend when you really feel alone and beside associated with course make you smarter than ever before. Yeah, it is very fortuned in your case. The book makes you much more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let me make new experience in addition to knowledge with this book.

Leslie Woodson:

Now a day those who Living in the era exactly where everything reachable by interact with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not need people to be aware of each information they get. How individuals to be smart in getting any information nowadays? Of course the answer is reading a book. Looking at a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information particularly this Fifty Shades Darker book because book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred per cent guarantees there is no doubt in it everbody knows.

Trina Durham:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the water world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you could have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not sensation tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you have been ride on and with addition of knowledge. Even you love Fifty Shades Darker, you may enjoy both. It is good combination right, you still need to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout people. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

Lisa Gregory:

You could spend your free time to see this book this guide. This Fifty Shades Darker is simple to bring you can read it in the playground, in the beach, train and also soon. If you did not possess much space to bring typically the printed book, you can buy typically the e-book. It is make you much easier to read it. You can save the book in your smart phone. Consequently there are a lot of benefits that you will get when you buy this book.

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