



Shades of Jamie Dornan: The Star of the Major Motion Picture Fifty Shades of Grey

By Jo Berry

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From film and TV critic Jo Berry comes the unauthorized biography of model-turned-actor Jamie Dornan, starring as Christian Grey in the wildly popular *Fifty Shades of Grey* film!

Jamie Dornan is quickly becoming a megastar. The announcement of his lead role in the upcoming movie adaptation of *Fifty Shades of Grey* caused a media frenzy and he has been hitting the headlines ever since. After English actor Charlie Hunnam stepped away from the role, Dornan was catapulted into the international spotlight. Previously a model for Calvin Klein alongside Kate Moss, he has appeared in Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette*, has dated Keira Knightley, was cast as the sheriff in the hit fantasy TV drama *Once Upon A Time*, and followed it up with an acclaimed leading performance in the TV thriller *The Fall*. With details compiled from in-depth research into both his personal and professional life, this insightful book will reveal fifty shades of Jamie Dornan—a no-holds-barred biography of the man who everyone wants to know intimately.

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Shades of Jamie Dornan: The Star of the Major Motion Picture Fifty Shades of Grey By Jo Berry Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #353319 in Books
- Published on: 2015-02-03
- Released on: 2015-02-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .70" w x 5.31" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 224 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Author and film/TV critic Jo Berry got her start reviewing entertainment for *Empire* magazine. She has also written for *Maxim*, *Radio Times*, *The Guardian*, *Eve*, *The Sunday Express*, and *The Daily Express*, among others. She has written and cowritten multiple unauthorized biographies, including *The Lindsay Lohan Story* as Ally Croft, and *Katy Perry: California Girl*.

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Shades of Jamie Dornan

Belfast Boy

All actors crave that one role. The role that will kickstart their career. The role that will make headlines. The role that could take them from jobbing actor to Hollywood movie star. For some, it comes at the start of their career, while for others, it can take years of auditions, bit parts and disappointments before—thanks to luck, talent, being in the right place at the right time—they get that one part they will forever be associated with; the one that launches their career into the stratosphere.

Would we know who Sean Connery was if he hadn't been James Bond? Or Harrison Ford if he hadn't played Han Solo? And would Ryan Gosling be on a million posters and desktop screensavers if he hadn't won the hearts of women everywhere as Noah in *The Notebook*? All of them had that one role that brought them to our attention, made us realize what talents they were . . . and made us wonder why we hadn't noticed them before.

For Irish actor Jamie Dornan, “that role” would be one of the most sought after of the decade: the role of Christian Grey, the wealthy entrepreneur, handsome bachelor and S&M aficionado who is at the heart of the 100-million-selling series of novels *Fifty Shades of Grey*. At the age of 32, the six-foot tall, auburn-haired actor from Belfast has moved from giving superb performances in series like *The Fall* and *New Worlds* and—slightly reluctantly, while guarding his private life fiercely—stepped into the very bright spotlight that comes with winning the role of a character millions of women have fantasized about.

The man destined to be the pin-up of 2015 was born, not in Hollywood, California, but in Holywood, County Down, in Northern Ireland. A town on the shore of Belfast Lough, it is situated between Belfast and Bangor, not far from Belfast City Airport and just 5 miles from Belfast itself. Baby James Dornan was born there on May 1, 1982, to mother, Lorna, and father, James, the first son for the couple, following two daughters, Liesa and Jessica. His grandparents, on both sides, were Methodist lay preachers, while Jamie's dad had dreams of becoming an actor before deciding to become a doctor and training as an obstetrician.

In an interview with the *Scotsman*, Jamie remembered that his dad had explored a career in acting far enough that he had auditioned, and been offered a place, at RADA after he left school. Instead, he decided to embark on a more stable career, training to be a doctor, but perhaps his brief experience of the acting world led to him being excited for his son when he chose to go in that direction.

Hollywood, the town where Jamie's parents chose to raise him, sprung up around a monastery founded in the seventh century—the present Hollywood Priory stands on the original monastery site. It grew into a thriving town due to its port and the introduction of a railway line to Belfast in 1848. By the time Jamie was born, the town had become known for its mixture of old and new buildings (there are some local ruins that date back to the 13th century), boutique shops and a growing residential area that's popular with families.

Of course, Jamie grew up with the Troubles—the conflict in Northern Ireland that raged between Unionists and Loyalists from the 1960s until the end of the 20th century—playing out around him. Belfast saw some of the worst of the Troubles, mainly in the 1970s before Jamie was born. “You have an awareness of it because you know how much grief it's caused,” he told the *Telegraph Magazine*. “It's a tiny percentage who have ruined it for that country, that pisses everyone else off.”

While Jamie's dad chose to become a doctor in Belfast, rather than pursue a career in acting, it turned out that Jamie was born into a theatrical family nonetheless. His great-aunt was an actress by the name of Greer Garson, a hugely popular actress during the Second World War.

Garson's link to Ireland was through her grandfather, David Greer, who lived in Castlewellan, County Down. While Greer—actually born Eileen Evelyn Greer Garson—was born in London, she grew up in Castlewellan before leaving to study at King's College, London and the University of Grenoble in France.

She began her career in acting in the theater, and was discovered by legendary Hollywood producer Louis B. Mayer when he was in London looking for new talent. He signed her to a contract with MGM in 1937, and she began work on her first film, *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, the following year. It won her an Oscar nomination (she lost out to Vivien Leigh for her role in *Gone With the Wind*) and led to other acclaimed roles in *Pride and Prejudice*, *Madame Curie* and the lead role in the film she was most famous for, *Mrs. Miniver*.

It was her role as the 1940s British housewife in *Mrs. Miniver* that won Greer Garson the Best Actress Oscar—and got her into the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest ever Oscar acceptance speech. Garson's eloquent speech lasted 5 minutes and 30 seconds—and her record won't ever be broken, as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences who award the Oscars has since introduced a speech time limit (and, Jamie should probably take note for the future, if you run over the allotted speech time, the orchestra starts to play to drown you out!)

Garson was Jamie's grandmother's first cousin. While her most famous roles were in movies in the 1940s and 1950s, she continued to work well into old age, appearing in the TV series *The Virginian* in 1970, and *Little Women* in 1978, while her final role was in the show *The Love Boat* in 1982, when Greer was 78 years old. She died in 1996, but Jamie did try to contact her when he was a child, writing her a letter when she was living in Texas. “I wrote her this letter saying I was playing *Widow Twanky* in our primary school production—which, may I add, I won the drama prize for,” Jamie told the *Scotsman*.

Unfortunately, Greer never got to read the letter, for as Jamie told the *Scotsman*, his family heard on the news the week before they sent the letter off that Greer Garson had died.

Jamie's dad, Jim, confirmed in a phone interview with NWP Radio in Seattle in 2014 that all the family love drama. “Nearly all the members of the family do amateur drama—amateur drama is big in Ireland. Well, what else do you do on a wet winter's or summer's night in Ireland?”

Having shown his talent for acting at primary school, Jamie continued to study drama when he went to Methodist College in Belfast, locally known as *Methody*. A grammar school nestled at the foot of Malone

Road in south Belfast, it's well known for the academic achievements of its students, many of whom have gone on to prestigious universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. It's certainly one of the most highly regarded schools in Ireland, boasting an award-winning choir who have performed at Westminster Abbey and, more appealing for a school-age Jamie, an impressive rugby team—the school's team has won the Ulster Schools' Cup a record 35 times.

Founded in 1868 by the Methodist Church, the school was originally an all-boys institution for both day and boarding pupils, with girls introduced only later and segregated from the boys until rules changed in the 20th century. Boasting a language block, music department, indoor pool, science labs and a large gym, as well as a dedicated block for the sixth form, it's an impressive place to study, and while Jamie was there, it was led by headteacher Thomas Mulryne OBE, himself a former student of the school.

Jamie isn't the only theatrically minded student to have attended Methodist College. Poets John Hewitt and Robert Greacen were students there, as were actors James Ellis (television's Z-Cars), Gerald Horne (best known as Mr. Muscle from the television ads), Chris Barrie of Red Dwarf fame, Emmerdale actor Paul Loughran, and Mark Ryder (best-known for his part in Borgia), broadcaster Alan Green and television presenter Caron Keating.

Jamie, who was quite slim as a teen (“I was a skinny guy growing up, and I still feel like that same skinny kid now”), certainly enjoyed school and joined in the many sporting activities, including rugby and golf, which he started playing at the age of 11. Life was great, and he was popular with his fellow students—and he scored his first kiss behind the bike sheds, of course (“I was 12 or 13 years old, with a girl whose name I can't remember.”)

Sadly, when he was 16, Jamie had to face something no child should have to bear—the death of his lovely mum, from pancreatic cancer. Lorna, who had been a nurse, fell ill following a weekend away in Madrid with Jamie's dad. Initially, she was diagnosed with jaundice, but soon after, cancer was detected. “It was a bizarre and huge, awful turning point in my life,” he remembered. “The comfort was knowing that it was inoperable, knowing what the outcome was going to be rather than clinging on to some kind of hope that she was going to be with us. We had a year and a half [together].”

Jamie's dad, however, was frustrated that, as a doctor, he couldn't help his wife, as he explained in a 2004 interview with the Belfast Telegraph. He and his devastated family knew there was nothing that could be done, and while they all hoped for a miracle, they were all aware that realistically her diagnosis was terminal. While it was good to have hope, they knew the end was coming. “It was important the kids had hope so that whatever time left was positive,” he remembered in the interview. “She was amazing throughout her illness and remained a wonderful mother to the end.”

“There's no easy time to lose a parent,” Jamie has since said. “But it's a very transitional time being that age, and a very impressionable one. It was a horrific period in my life.”

If that wasn't horrendous enough, he suffered another tragedy the following year—the death of four of his friends, who were killed in a car crash in Belfast. “I had a terrible time when I was 16, 17,” he told the Evening Standard in an interview, one of very few he has given in which he talks about the awful period of his young life.

He went on to speak about having therapy to cope, not just with the sudden loss of his mother, but also the loss of his four close friends in such a shocking way. It was a lot for a teenager to deal with, especially at a time when he was facing tough decisions in his life about what to do next in terms of his future career.

Jamie also coped by losing himself in his studies, and particularly by reading books, including classics such as *Swallows and Amazons* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. A voracious reader, he still loves trying any type of book, from Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* to a classic like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, one of his favorites. Once he became an established actor, Jamie went for the role of Gray in the Oliver Parker movie adaptation, *Dorian Gray*, but didn't win the part. "I don't understand people who don't read. It's like, what else are they doing?"

His friends helped him through the tough times, too, and throughout his school years Jamie kept a close group of pals who are still with him today. "When I go out with my mates, we're a big group of Belfast boys," he told the *Evening Standard*. "We can get a little, you know, hyperactive. But I tend to get my sensible head on and can be quite strict with them, like 'Calm down, lads' which is why they call me 'Daddy Dornan.'?"

He also spent a lot of his time practicing his two loves: sport and drama, and decided as a teenager, with the support of his dad, that acting was what he really wanted to do. Part of the appeal, of course, was that acting didn't involve set working hours, getting up in the morning, commuting to work, and sitting at a desk all day, as he told the *Scotsman*. In fact, acting had been weighing on his mind for quite a while—not just since he had won the role of *Widow Twanky* in the school play—and he had become involved in local youth theater.

Throughout his life, Jamie has had the love of his dad, Professor Jim Dornan. A colorful, caring and talkative character who is an accomplished obstetrician and gynecologist, he encouraged Jamie to pursue his career. "We as a family are justly very proud of Jamie—he's talented and grounded and a credit to his school (Methody), his amazing friends, his family and himself," he told the *Irish Times*.

Clearly proud of his son, Jim said in the interview how aware he was that the death of Jamie's mother and his friends had affected his son, but had also made him a thoughtful person, one who wants to enjoy his time on earth, support his friends and family, and live life to the full.

Jamie also supported his dad when he found love again. A year after Jamie's mother, Lorna, died, Jim was giving a lecture in Dublin. An obstetrician friend of his played Cupid by suggesting a lady named Samina should attend Jim's lecture—knowing the pair would hit it off.

The pair now live in the house that Jamie's parents once shared, in Cultra, County Down. The relationship is a very happy one, with Samina accepting that Jim will sometimes talk about his first wife, and Jim's kids—including Jamie—learning to become a family with their father's new love.

In fact, it was Samina who encouraged Jamie to follow an unexpected career—one that would indirectly lead the young Irish student to becoming *Christian Grey*. . . .

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