



FIFTY SHADES OF ...CRIMSON

Popular books have unleashed a torrent of embarrassing conversations!

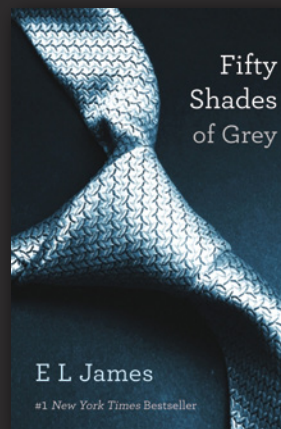
By Elisa Roland

As much as I love the convenience of e-readers, I missed being able to casually check out what people were reading this summer while lounging poolside or on the beach. If I wanted to know why your head was stuck up your Kindle, iPad, or Nook I had to ask. By the end of July I knew the answer before my lips had formed the question. Whether it was the first, second or third in the trilogy, *Fifty Shades of Grey* was hotter than the scorching sun beating down on my head. And it's sure to continue to heat up marriages even as the air turns colder. If you don't know what I'm talking about, ask any female between the ages of twenty and oh let's say eighty, who is looking for a bit of fantasy beyond the *Twilight* variety.

Books, articles, and television shows on how to spice things up in the bedroom are nothing new. In the 70's we had *The Joy of Sex* and *The Sensuous Woman*, in the 80's we had Dr. Ruth, and the 90's brought us the Internet with sexual information "at our fingertips". Now we can download almost anything, anytime. We could be playing Words with Friends or reading *Fifty Shades* on our iPhone while standing in line at the supermarket. That's all good with me. It's when you tell me that the turkey twine in your basket isn't for trussing a bird that my cheeks start burning. Or that not only is this your second reading of the series—but it's your husband's third. Since *Fifty Shades* has gone mainstream it seems like sharing intimate details from the boudoir has gone mainstream too.

I love to read and will usually inhale anything from the back of the cereal box to the latest thriller, but I'm not used to chatting about it while perusing the book table at Costco. Recently I found myself accosted by a woman who looked strangely like Dr. Ruth. With a canapé from the obligatory tasting table in one hand and a *Fifty Shades* book in the other, she proceeded to ask me, between bites, if I'd read it and enjoyed it as much as she did. Of course that's not as bad as seeing a friend's husband in Victoria's Secret and having him ask you if you think your friend prefers crotchless or thongs. Blech.

Over hot dogs at the family BBQ I made the mistake of asking my sixty-year-old aunt what she was reading only to discover that it was *Fifty Shades*. When she added that my uncle just finished the third book in the series, and he's the one who'd recommended the book to her in the first place, it was major TMI!



Even out with the girls where such topics are far from taboo I was blindsided.

My friend asked me to watch her phone while she went to the ladies room instructing me to respond to her husband if he texted. What I thought would be an innocuous question about his kids ended up actually being a text offering himself up as dessert when she got home—and that's the nice way of putting it. **Now when I see him I'm fifty shades of crimson.**

It seems the tell-all-athon is inescapable. Hotels are unabashedly marketing to the *Fifty Shades* demographic. In addition to the regular romance package at some leading hotels, you can purchase the *Fifty Shades* weekend. One hotel offers roses and a helicopter ride, while another comes with an intimacy kit—perhaps a grey tie and some rope? A British hotel, the Damson Dene, has gone one step further and replaced the *Gideon Bible* with *Fifty Shades*. In an email exchange with *Mercurynews.com* the owner said "he'd been pondering a scriptures change for some time. Besides the matter of low readership, the Bible "gives out the image of an old-fashioned stuffy place." I guess I really am old fashioned.

For some reason *Fifty Shades* has struck a chord with the public and given permission for this type of fantasy and role playing to become more acceptable, coveted even. Sex toy sales are on the rise. Pole dancing is a popular exercise workout. Magazines like *Cosmopolitan* are publishing articles on how to bring more *Fifty Shades* intimacy into your relationship. I think I need to accept that when it comes to 'shades' some of us don't mind the world peering into our living room, dining room or our bedroom, but I'm still more of a shut the blinds kind of girl.



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lives in Mountainside with her husband, 3 children, cat, fish, and ladybugs (they've taken over!). She worked for 12 years in advertising and is now pursuing her dream to publish a young adult novel.

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