

# MONEYWEEK

## Blowing it

### Mastering the art of celebrity divorce

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As William Langley noted in *The Sunday Telegraph*, sunset nuptials in Italy didn't seem to do Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes much good. But then, Hollywood and marriage have never been well matched. "Get married in the morning," goes the old studio joke. "Then, if it all goes wrong, you haven't wasted the whole day."

At least Tom Cruise has proved adept at getting divorced. Having agreed out-of-court settlements with two previous wives – Mimi Rogers and Nicole Kidman – he's now done the same with Katie Holmes, with Holmes's lawyers even thanking Cruise's for "their professionalism and diligence" in bringing about a "speedy resolution".

You don't hear that very often; the wrangling between celebrity lawyers can be very bitter. One celebrity lawyer, Lynn Soodik, who represented Meg Ryan in her divorce from Dennis Quaid, recalls: "I was involved in a case where the couple spent something like \$200,000 contesting the issue of, 'what is the value of the use of the private jet?' The wife said, 'I need to be able to use it', and the judge thought he was being very smart and said, 'OK, any time you want to travel, your husband will have to buy out all of first class so that you feel you're in a private jet.' She looked at him and said, 'But, your honour, it's not the same. Commercial airlines

don't leave when I want to leave.”

Clearly, Cruise has learnt to be accommodating; he's conscious of the damage public mud-slinging can do. Mel Gibson lost half of his estimated \$850m fortune to his ex-wife, Robyn, last year, but even greater harm was done to his reputation, says Langley, “by the stories that raced round Hollywood of his rages, bigotry, drunkenness and infidelity”.

Alec Baldwin said he wanted to kill Kim Basinger's lawyer “with a baseball bat” after divorcing her, Michael Douglas was portrayed by his ex-wife Diandra's side as a chronic “sex addict”, and Robin Williams came out of court saying: “I believe the word divorce comes from the Latin for a man having his genitals ripped out by way of his wallet.”

## The simple life of the world's most successful sex writer

“As the writer of the most successful erotic novel in history,” says Zoe Brennan in *The Daily Telegraph*, “one would imagine EL James lounges around in a kittenish silk negligee, perhaps dangling a leather bondage whip from her perfectly manicured fingers.” In fact, the author of *Fifty Shades of Grey* is middle-aged, married and lives in a semi in an unfashionable part of west London.

It is all a million miles away “from her hero's ‘red room of pain’ hidden in his luxury penthouse”, says Brennan. On Twitter, Erika Mitchell (EL James's real name) has revealed that she drives a Mini and enjoys Oyster Bay sauvignon blanc – around £8 a bottle – and eating Nutella with a spoon.

Is all this about to change? Probably. Universal Pictures has bought the film rights to *Fifty Shades* for \$5m, with Scarlett Johansson or Angelina Jolie tipped for the leading role, while the book is being translated into 40 languages and is expected to lead to a baby boom because of its apparent power to awaken women's interest in sex.

## Tabloid money... the dog with a £350,000 book deal

- “Veteran Hollywood star Ernest Borgnine, who has died aged 95, had no time for the Method school of acting, favoured by colleagues such as Marlon Brando and Robert de Niro,” says Ephraim Hardcastle in the *Daily Mail*. “The Oscar winner (for *Marty*, in 1955) explained: “No, Stanislavski. I work with my heart and my head and naturally emotions follow. If none of that works I think to myself of the money I'm making.”

- “It is with deep shock I have to tell you that I have failed in my attempt to become director-general of the BBC,” says Rod Liddle in *The Sun*. “In my application I suggested sacking 2,000 middle-managers, commissioning a TV drama series with some white people in it and running subtitles when *Newsnight's* Kirsty Wark is speaking.”

I also suggested whoever was in overall charge of Auntie's awful Jubilee coverage should be sacked or “given a job where he can no longer make the corporation a laughing stock. That person was George Entwistle. I don't think they took much notice of me. The new director-general is, er... George Entwistle.”

- “Incredulity met the news that *Britain's Got Talent* winner, dog Pudsey, has a £350,000 book deal,” says Amanda Platell in the *Mail*. “But why the surprise? Katie Price has pocketed £5m for her autobiographies and I bet Pudsey will have more creative input into his book than the Page 3 bimbo did with hers.”

- “When Craig Finlayson saw a teenage lad smash a glass in the street, he grabbed his shoulder and frogmarched him back to clean it up,” says Jane Moore in *The Sun*. “Magistrates imposed a fine of £525 and court costs of £620... on Craig. Silly you. You didn't think the little thug would get punished, did you?”

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