

'HE IS VERY BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT!'

SEAININ BRENNAN TALKS ABOUT QUITTING POLITICS FOR ACTING WITH THE LUSH JAMIE DORNAN!

Theatre's leading lady one minute and a TV murder victim the next, there's no denying that Séainín Brennan is a versatile actress. Her scene-stealing debut in BBC drama *Hidden* last year marked her card as a future star and now she is back with a leading role in the prime-time BBC drama *The Fall*.

The psychological thriller, which also stars Keira Knightley's former flame Jamie Dornan, sees Séainín, 35, playing a vulnerable woman who is grieving the loss of her only son. Appearing in her second major TV role in the space of a year, it seems Belfast-born Séainín is becoming renowned for her on-screen realism. She says: 'As an actress you want the parts that have real meat on the bones and something that's truthful, because real life is amazing.'

And it's not only the world of acting that responds to her Midas touch. Before treading the boards, Séainín, who speaks French and Spanish fluently, was a high-flying career woman, working at the European Commission in Brussels. But after a while, a deep-rooted passion for drama got the better of her and turning her back on Brussels, she enrolled at the Guildford School of Acting.

Here she talks to *OK!* about working with the swoonsome Jamie Dornan, her career turnaround and why beauty is a mixed blessing...

Tell us what you like about *The Fall*...

I think it's more interesting to play less glamorous parts. As a female it's easy to go into hair and >

Séainín, who speaks several languages, left a high-flying job in Belgium to pursue her longtime dream of acting



Left: The articulate star (above with Jamie Dornan in *The Fall*) says she knows people like her character Liz Tyler, who have lost their children and are in unhappy marriages

make-up and look lovely and get these parts and there's not very much substance to them. Real life is amazing, yet there are many harsh realities in life and that's what I look for. I personally I know people that have lost children and I know people in unhappy marriages.

Tell us about your character...

Well she's a mother and a wife, she's lost her only child. The series starts and her son has died just three weeks before. So for my character it starts when the funeral is over and everyone has stopped calling and she's dealing with the grief on her own. She's just totally isolated, she gets very little comfort from her husband and she just doesn't have any support and she turns to Paul Spector [Jamie Dornan], her grief counsellor. Obviously she doesn't know that he's a serial killer. But he's a sympathetic ear for her and she falls into his lair that way.

Did you have to transform yourself for the part in any way?

In the storyline, the serial killer targets women in their thirties with dark hair. I have dark hair naturally so the producers decided to give me an extensive hair dye so that I wouldn't look like his typical victim and to keep the audience guessing. It wasn't that great having to dye my hair lighter but if there's a part that I like I'll do anything for it! I would happily shave my head if the part was good enough.

What was it like working with the gorgeous Jamie Dornan?

It's strange because Jamie and I come from a very small place so you would think that we would know each other. We even went to the same school, but I didn't know him! But he was a pleasure to work with, just so generous and so down to earth, he was just one of the lads really. All of my scenes are

with him, he was just really easy to work with. He's beautiful to look at, but not at all showy or flashy, just understated and lovely and good fun on set. He likes to sing a lot too!

Tell us about your previous career as a high-flier in Belgium...

I did my Master's in European Political Administration at the College of Europe in Bruges, and then I got a job at a private company called the European Strategy, it's a political office. I loved it but I had a childhood passion for acting and wanted to pursue it. Life is so short, you have to follow your dreams and so with the support of my parents I enrolled in drama school.

'I HAD TO DYE MY HAIR – BUT I'D HAPPILY SHAVE MY HEAD FOR A PART'

In an industry obsessed with youth, do you ever worry that you started too late?

I did worry that perhaps I had started as an actress too late. But for me fame and that Hollywood dream is not why I am an actor. I love the theatre and it's my passion. It's art and it's pure and I have a very credible theatre CV. I've worked with some of the big stalwarts.

Good looks can be a blessing as an actor, but can they also be curse?

I am lucky in that I think my look is quite versatile. I've been cast in everything from a scullery maid to someone in high society. One minute I'm being cast as someone from the streets who is quite rough and

hard and the next minute it's New York glamour and high society. I do think it's actually harder if you are one of those stunningly beautiful actresses. There just aren't many parts for those types of people because they don't really exist and they're not representative of the public. They don't tend to be written as interesting characters.

Have you felt any pressure to diet?

Not really, but I did employ a personal trainer last year. I was a healthy size 10 but when I got my first TV job on *Hidden*, I realised that I actually really wanted to do more TV. So I looked at other people in TV and a lot of them do keep fit so I decided maybe it would be good idea to tone up to make sure that I can run and maybe do some kind of a fight sequence. So I employed a personal trainer and I did lots of running up and down stairs, lots of stop-start running, which I did it for six weeks. I cut out white rice and swapped white bread for brown and cut out pastries. Because it was a muscle-building programme I got really good arms and I lost a stone going down a dress size from a 10 to an 8. I got a better body not through dieting but exercise.

Do you have any ambitions to get married and have children?

Never say never, but it's not something I sit and think about. It's not top of my agenda, to be honest. The only thing on the list at the moment is my career. I just love my life and I love my family and I love my boyfriend and I have a great life. I do a lot of charity work, I've got a lot going on in my life. I feel like my career is in a good place at the moment and having kids is definitely not my plan in 2013! **OK!**

THE FALL' IS ON BBC TWO, MONDAYS AT 9PM.

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