

HERO *by* NANNIE

With a new Netflix role catapulting him to a level of fame befitting of such a moniker, Hero Fiennes Tiffin talks to *Louis Wise* about casually carving out his own unique path, reinventing fan fiction and why he'll never be too busy for a girlfriend

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE GATES
STYLED BY SOPHIE VAN DER WELLE

LOEWE shirt,
£1,350; shorts,
£895; scarf, £375
(loewe.com).
MARNI sliders,
£270 (marni.com).
UNIQLO socks,
£2.90 (uniqlo.com).
ESSIE CARPETS
carpet, POA
(020 7493 7766)





LOEWE Charles Rennie Mackintosh jeans, £725; jacket, £995, both at matchesfashion.com. ARKET T-shirt, £19 (arket.com). JIL SANDER shoes, £495 (jilsander.com). UNIQLO socks, £2.90 (uniqlo.com). ESSIE CARPETS carpet, POA (020 7493 7766)

Hero Fiennes Tiffin has a straightforward attitude to being an actor, which is refreshing. It dates back to his first professional job, an indie film he did when he was just 10. *Bigga Than Ben* was a day's work, it was £100 cash in hand and the young Hero promptly spent it on a football kit. 'It was like, "I like this," relays the 21-year-old now. 'This is just a fun thing to do. A day off school and a West Ham kit is perfect.'

This down-to-earth mindset is still very Fiennes Tiffin, more than a decade later. Dressed down in all-black sportswear, with a determinedly sarf London accent, he's a very chill, 21st-century superstar in waiting. When we meet, he surprises me with two things. Firstly he's a famous person who actually looks exactly like his pictures; feline-faced, lithe and model-tall, as seen in campaigns for Dolce & Gabbana and Ferragamo. Secondly he happily wolfs down a chocolate croissant over our breakfast in Green Park, politely apologising whenever he has to pause to eat. This doesn't feel like regulation activity from someone about to become a global sex symbol in *After*, the sweaty new teen romance that has just dropped on Netflix.

A story of curious virgins, bad boys and self-discovery set on a college campus (*Twilight* by day, basically), the book initially sprang, *Fifty Shades*-style, from fan fiction about Harry Styles. Fiennes Tiffin, as you might expect, takes the Styles-alike lead role — the mysterious Hardin Scott — though the character has evolved significantly since its origins. 'There is no actual link with him or One Direction in any way,' he says. 'You'd never know by watching the film, even if it's kind of deeply rooted down there somewhere.'

Nonetheless, *After* has almost as many millions of obsessive fans as Styles, and has catapulted its star to a new level of fame. Fiennes Tiffin's approach to the hysteria, though, is to be even more chill than usual. 'It's



JIL SANDER jumper, £550; shirt, £550; shorts, £640 (jilsander.com). UNIQLO socks, £2.90 (uniqlo.com). ESSIE CARPETS carpet, £26,000 (020 7493 7766)



A-COLD-WALL* jumper, £801 (a-cold-wall.com). JW ANDERSON X GILBERT & GEORGE shirt, £360, at matchesfashion.com. ESSIE CARPETS carpet, £18,000 (020 7493 7766)

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good,’ he says. ‘I’m just learning how to play that game as I go.’

Taking life as it comes seems to be very much Fiennes Tiffin’s modus operandi. He may be the son of director Martha Fiennes (sister of Ralph and Joseph) and George Tiffin (also a filmmaker), but being an actor, he says, ‘didn’t really cross my mind. It’s definitely more of a gradual love for it that formed, rather than I suddenly woke up one day and thought: “This is what I want to do.”’

That said, he did get quite a good taster at a young age. His biggest role, until *After*, was a decade ago in only his second-ever film, when as a 10-year-old he played young Voldemort (aka Tom Riddle) in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. He chuckles when talking about his early work, and the wry understatement is typical. ‘I’m relatively quiet in my actions,’ he explains. ‘I’d rather get the job done and let it speak for itself. Even my mum finds out most of my stuff about work through my agent.’ He also admits, though, that’s possibly because ‘I’ve been lucky to have the family and the opportunities that I’ve had, so I’m conscious of trying to get some work done without the help’. His connections do help him ‘a lot’, he nods. ‘I’m not about to say that’s not the case. I’m very grateful. I just hope I can bring to the table what is expected.’

After, then, is really the first proper glimpse of what Fiennes Tiffin can do. Among other things, it sets him up to be a sex symbol. ‘I don’t jump at the opportunity to just take off all of my clothes, but if it comes with the job...’ He got a personal trainer for a month before filming, but seems to have been pretty relaxed about it all. ‘I probably could have squeezed in a 4am shift, but I didn’t quite have it in my locker.’

Fiennes Tiffin still lives at home with his mum in London, mostly so he can help look after the family dog. He doesn’t have a girlfriend at the moment, but claims it’s not because of that standard actor excuse: being too busy. ‘Nah! I love the idea of having a girlfriend. You can make time for anything, but I don’t think it’s the kind of thing you can go looking for. It’ll just happen if it

happens. I haven’t met anyone where it’s like, this is the only person I want to see.’

To be honest he sounds well-behaved. He says he doesn’t drink too often; when talking about filming *After* in Atlanta, he doesn’t rave about the city’s strip joints, but its aquarium, which he visited twice. Mind you, he was in LA with the cast of the show, who took him out for his 21st. What did you do? ‘Just got really drunk and went to a club. I had media training the next day and, luckily, apparently I don’t need much media training. I don’t really remember.’

The Fiennes clan are close, he says, but they barely ever talk about work. He insists he had a very ‘normal’, un-showbiz childhood, with the acting only rarely interfering (he went to the prestigious Emmanuel School in Battersea). I suppose the only glaringly uncommon thing is the name: Hero Beauregard Faulkner Fiennes Tiffin. His older brother is called Titan, and his younger sister is called Mercy. ‘I think my parents used naming kids as a chance to demonstrate their creativity,’ he deadpans.

Typically, he refuses to make too big a deal of it. Even when mates followed him around at school singing ‘I need a Hero’, or ‘then a Hero comes along’, it wasn’t too bad, he says. ‘I did used to say, “Why Hero?” My brother would say, “Why Titan?” Then a couple of years later, you realise it’s just a name, and you just deal with it and it’s good for small talk.’ If anything, it’s quite nice how he resolutely stands by it, even keeping both parents’ names to ‘honour’ both sides (for industry purposes, he could easily have just been Hero Fiennes). That said, he does prefer to abbreviate it all.

‘I once got in trouble in school for writing “Hero FT”,’ he recalls. ‘My teacher was like, “Write out your full surname because there might be more than one Hero in school.” She quickly realised that was dumb,’ he smiles, although he admits that he probably wouldn’t give his own offspring a similarly unconventional name. ‘If I have a kid, I’m going to call it something simple like John,’ he says. I believe him. After a morning in his company, that would be a very Hero Fiennes Tiffin thing to do.



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vest, £455, at
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MARNI shirt,
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Grooming by Teddy
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Photographer's
assistant:
Tommy Francis