

My childhood was weird. I grew up in rural Ireland. Not only was I a Protestant, which meant I had to go to a different school from most of the other kids, but my father worked for Guinness and his job meant we moved a lot.

By the time I was 16, I'd lived in 13 houses. Moving that often wasn't too difficult. Sure, it was sometimes upsetting when I had to leave friends behind, but it was always exciting to move into a new house. And it wasn't as though I had a choice in the matter; my parents just told me we were moving and off we went.

Acting was my escape route out of Ireland. If I'd stayed, my choices were to work in a bank or on a farm, and I didn't want to do either. Acting seemed glamorous and easy; you got to dress up and be someone else.

I went to drama school thinking I was going to be the greatest Hamlet of my generation. The only thing I learnt was that I wasn't going to be the greatest Hamlet of my generation. But I also realised I could make people laugh and it was a skill to be valued.

While I was at drama school, I came very close to dying. I was mugged while walking home late one night. When I got up off the ground, I realised I was covered in

I LOVE...

"my dogs. I have a labradoodle called Bailey and a terrier called Madge. And I do, to a ridiculous extent, live my life around theirs - like they care!"

I LOATHE...

"joggers. I wish they'd stop doing it in public; it annoys me having to look at them wheezing and groaning as they run past. Clearly they aren't enjoying it."



"I STILL GET STARSTRUCK" GRAHAM NORTON

blood and had a hole in my chest.

I remember crying out for help. An elderly couple eventually came to my aid. I instinctively asked the little old lady to hold my hand while we waited for the ambulance. I think that's human nature; you don't want to die alone.

More than 20 years on, I still get nervous when I'm in strange places late at night. But it put things into perspective. In my final year at school, there was a lot of crying from my classmates because they didn't get the roles they wanted. I couldn't have cared less. It levelled out the whole experience for me.

I've always loved chat shows. As a kid, my fantasy was to be the guest, rather than the host. It's a miracle it's all worked out, because the TV world is littered with people who haven't made the transition [to host] very well.

I'm not the greatest interviewer. If you want a proper interview, there are other people who do that far better than me. I like meeting celebrities in a shallow way, but after that, what are they really going to tell me? I have no interest in my guests crying; I just want everyone to have a nice time.

I still get starstruck. If I go into a dressing room and Cher or Jennifer Lopez is sitting there, that's a big deal. These people exude a certain something and you'd be dead inside if you weren't affected by it.

Dolly Parton is my favourite guest. I adore her. What you see is what you get. As for a bad guest, well, if someone isn't great on my show, then it's probably more my fault than theirs.

I'm an agony uncle [for a UK newspaper]. It's my dream job. I take it very seriously, but

sometimes I feel woefully out of my depth. **I've been seeing someone for about six months.** We're having fun, but being in a relationship is not the be-all and end-all for me. Some people will endure awful relationships rather than be single, whereas I've always preferred to create my own misery rather than be made miserable by someone else. **I'm hurtling towards 50.** There's nothing I can do about that. But I'm very comfortable in my own skin. I've gone beyond anywhere I thought I'd go professionally, and that's brought all kinds of creature comforts with it. I'm not worrying about how I'm going to pay the phone bill, and that's a very nice place to be. **JOANNE HAWKINS** **The Graham Norton Show** airs 8.30pm Saturdays on Network Ten.