

The Seven Deadly Sins

by Pennfana

How can her love for him be right when so much about it seems wrong?

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Chapter 1 of 1

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WARNING! If you are easily offended by things related to religion, particularly unsound theology, you may want to skip this story.

Seven Deadly Sins

Send home my long strayd eyes to mee,

Which (Oh) too long have dwelt on thee...

...John Donne, "The Message"

Peccavi.

...Latin word meaning "I have sinned"

I love him. They say that love is never morally wrong, but is that really true? How *can* it be true when through my love for him, I have been tempted into at least six deadly sins, and have somewhat touched on the seventh?

Now, my parents have always been indifferent to religion. Nominally we are of the Church of England, of course; my family's been baptized, married and buried by its clergy practically since the second Act of Supremacy. Still, my parents, being the scientifically-minded dentists that they are, view most religion as superstitious nonsense. They agree with keeping certain traditions...as Mum says, "where would we be without them?" It's a reminder of the things that came before; my parents have always been firm believers in the idea that in order to go forwards, we must always remember what happened in the past, and religion is part of that. However, they have never particularly felt the need to educate me about religion. To them, it's the physical, not the spiritual, that matters the most.

I've always been grateful that they hold none of the religious biases that stop some Muggle-borns being able to attend Hogwarts, and strangely enough, the tangible proof that I was capable of working magic actually made it easy for them to accept that I am in fact a witch. Unfortunately, this also means that I've always been left to study spiritual matters on my own. Naturally, I've devoured various religious texts with the same enthusiasm that I have for my schoolbooks.

In my reading I've naturally come across the Seven Deadly Sins as listed by Saint Gregory...pride, anger, gluttony, lust, envy, covetousness and sloth. Most recently, when I was re-reading some of my notes about them, I realized with absolute horror that I could see myself in almost all of them, brought there by what is supposed to be the purest emotion of all...Love.

First, there's pride. I've always been proud to call myself his friend. He has changed so much from that boy I first saw on the Hogwarts Express all those years ago, but he still has the courage and determination that led the Sorting Hat to place him in Gryffindor, even though it thought he would do well in Slytherin. He stands by his friends and

he does what he thinks is necessary to get the job done, and I am excessively proud that I have managed to become one of those friends. And though it pains me, I am also proud to love him. Over the years I've been attracted to some real twits, you see, but he isn't one of them. The pride in this case comes from the fact that...hooray!...I've finally got it right and I fell for someone who isn't a complete arse. Even if he'll never return my love, at least it's been given to someone who actually *deserves* it. It's almost as if falling in love with Harry is some sort of great accomplishment, though I'm sure you'll understand that I don't think it's much of an accomplishment after all. It was really very easy.

Next is anger. I grow angry every time I think of all the time I've wasted on loving him...all these years I've lost to dreaming, all this time I've felt so ridiculously giddy when I think about him and yet so depressed when I realize that I love a man who will never love me as more than what he calls "the sister I never had". Furthermore, I get angry with myself for the fact that for all my brains, for all my supposed intelligence, I still managed to get myself into this unbelievably stupid situation. The brightest witch of my age, indeed! I may have memorized more about magic than most other fourteen-year-old witches when Lupin made that remark, but book-smart doesn't always translate to life-smart. Sometimes I just want to scream with anger...let loose a bone-chilling howl at the moon...because it's the only thing I can do to release this incredible rage I have, this anger at myself and at fate (and perhaps even at Cupid himself) for putting me into this situation that has caused me so much pain.

And then, of course, there's gluttony. He hasn't tempted me to it in the traditional sense of the greedy consumption of food (though he and Ron have displayed that often enough), but he has made me a glutton anyway. I am greedy for every moment spent in his presence. I hunger for it. I prolong our contact every time I see him these days. Even as it wounds me, it heals me. I treasure every word we speak to each other, each view of his handsome face, every shared laugh, even the occasional argument. No matter how much of any of this I get, I want more, more, always MORE! It's almost an addiction. If it weren't for the length of time we've known each other and the ridiculous number of years I've been in love with him, I'd have thought it was just some stupid infatuation. But I know his bad side as well as I know his good, and I've never had the mistaken impression that he was perfect.

Lust. Ah, yes, of course there's lust. I could hardly call myself "in love with him" if it wasn't there in some significant amount. For years I have wanted to feel his touch, to be enveloped in his most loving embrace. I want his arms around my body, his lips on mine, his hands roving. I long for the...shall we say...*intimate* acquaintance of various parts of our anatomy. Besides, he's got an absolutely gorgeous bum, firm but rounded in precisely the right place.

Er...for decency's sake, I'll say no more about *that* one.

And naturally I am guilty of the sin of envy because he is in love *with* her. I am sickeningly jealous of their relationship...you might say that I'm a victim of the green-eyed monster over my green-eyed friend. Why couldn't it have been me? I have been there for him damn near every time he needed me. Why can't he look at me the way that he looks at Ginny? Why wasn't I good enough when she very clearly is? I envy her every moment she has spent in his arms, every kiss she has had from him and every time he has told her that he loves her. I wish he would look at me with those intense green eyes and say those words to me. She is luckier than she knows. Ever since he first asked her on a date, I have wished that I were Ginevra Molly Weasley, not Hermione plain-Jane Granger. I have never before been so jealous of a friend.

Which leads me right to covetousness. I want something that belongs to Ginny...I want his heart, his love, his devotion. He gave those to her years ago, though; perhaps he'd done it even before he realized it. Perhaps it goes back to the day he rescued her in the Chamber of Secrets. I've been told that there's something almost frighteningly romantic about that sort of thing...not so much while you're experiencing it, but when you're thinking about it after. Perhaps it was the memory of her ginger hair spread out on the cold stone floor, her skin as white as alabaster and her body still as death. Perhaps it was the relief as her eyes opened, or the hero-worship that was so obviously there from the very first day of their meeting, strengthened by the fact that now he really had saved her life. They say that every man wants his woman to look at him like he's the only man in the world to her. She has done so, and I wish I had the opportunity to look at him that way without ruining our friendship or disturbing him in any way. I wish I had that power she has that makes him notice her as a woman. I wish I had her destiny with him. More to the point, I wish I had *him*.

Well, I suppose that I actually *do* have him, but not in the way that I would like...

Sloth is the only one that I haven't directly experienced because of my feelings for him, though I've come pretty close. Sometimes I've felt very lethargic because I have lost any hope whatsoever that he could ever love me as I love him. On my days off from my job at the Ministry I've been known to just lie in bed feeling sorry for myself because I know that he is with her at that very moment...that they've been together since the evening before. I know this isn't healthy, and I've tried to stop doing it, but once in awhile I just can't face the world until I've had a good cry.

It is this last one, that lazy lack of enthusiasm and energy, that overwhelms me now as I stare at the frilly pink envelope on the table. I haven't opened it yet, but I know precisely what it contains. They announced the engagement three weeks ago and asked me to be the Maid of Honour the day after. Of course, I said yes. It will break my heart, of course, to stand with them and watch as the man I love marries the woman of his dreams. But that day can't possibly be any worse than what I've already experienced because of that shameless pair, and it won't be as bad as what I know will come. They will, of course, have a long and happy life together. They will have children...Harry wants at least three, and I think Ginny wouldn't mind one or two more than that...and anniversaries and arguments and make-up sex and an overall happy family. But most of all, they will have each other. They will know that whatever happens, they love each other, and that their love will inspire them to conquer whatever problems they will face as they build their life together.

In a letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul once wrote that the greatest power of all is love. I'd be inclined to agree. Love has the power to unite people or drive them apart, the power to heal, the power to harm and the power to change a lifetime. It is what ultimately led to Voldemort's many defeats at Harry's hands and what finally led to his complete downfall. It has the power to save lives, literally and figuratively. I have never quite known a magic like it.

And even if the power of love *has* led me to commit the Seven Deadly Sins, perhaps I don't mind it. The pain that I will carry for the rest of my life because of my love for him is penance enough for committing these sins. If I wanted to get metaphysical, I could say that these sins are in a way my salvation because in this particular context, I cannot help but do penance for them. Furthermore, this penance is something that cannot be faked; I cannot pay lip service to my punishment. It is practically self-inflicting.

The Catholics have a concept called Purgatory, a place inhabited by the souls of the newly-dead, paying for the sins they committed in life before they may ascend into Heaven. Barring the fact that I'm obviously not dead, perhaps this is mine. And if someday I manage to put aside this senseless, hopeless love for Harry, the sins...and thus the penance...will end, bringing me into a happier and brighter life.

Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

...The Catholic sacrament of Confession

Author's Notes:

First of all, I am well aware that my theology may not be sound (and in fact, I'm sure it isn't). I'm no religious scholar, though I've studied various religions in some depth over the years. Like the Hermione in my story, I was raised ostensibly as a member of a certain Christian tradition (in my case, Roman Catholic), but aside from sending me to Catholic school from kindergarten until I graduated from high school, religion wasn't exactly one of their priorities when I was growing up. This was further complicated by the fact that my father is Anglican. I suspect that he didn't really want to see his children grow up worshipping angels and saints and bits of bread (for any non-Catholics who read this, the Catholic church states that the bread and wine blessed during the Eucharistic rite actually becomes the body and blood of Jesus through a process called transubstantiation). I suppose I could've done a bit more research, but I didn't want this to be a treatise on Love as it's portrayed in Christian theology with a Harry Potter spin. I wanted it to be Hermione's personal reaction to something that's just dawned on her. (I'll explain later why I decided to set this in the Potterverse rather than in a piece of original fiction.)

This story kind of just happened after I watched *Stigmata* a few days ago. That movie's one of my favourites simply because it always gets me thinking about spiritual matters, though of course I've always enjoyed Gabriel Byrne's wonderful performance as Father Andrew Kiernan as well. This time, because of some circumstances in my personal life which I won't bore you with, my thoughts turned towards love and how it tends to get people in trouble in various ways. Now, I happened to be listening to Melissa Etheridge when I was writing down my initial thoughts on the subject, and one of the lines in her song "I Wanna Come Over" references "some kind of sin".

Immediately, I thought of the Seven Deadly Sins and the result was this story.

I suppose that in a way, these are my own thoughts filtered through my perception of Hermione Granger. It was easier to think about my own situation when I put it into the context of Hermione, Harry and Ginny, though my "Harry" isn't engaged to be married...he's not even seeing anyone seriously at this point in time. Furthermore, although I don't have a particular favourite 'ship, I've always had a bit of a soft spot for Hermione/Harry fics. Given that I've always suspected (especially since HBP came out) that Harry/Ginny will become canon, I thought it would be interesting to add Hermione to the mix and have her meditate on the fact that love has led her to commit the Seven Deadly Sins, in spite of the fact that love is supposed to be one of the purest things that a human being can experience.

Naturally, I put a fair amount of thought into the epigraphs at the beginning of the story. You may note that the spelling in the first, the quotation from John Donne, is a bit odd. I've retained the spelling found in my copy of the poem, though it's been modernized in the link I've provided for you (see <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/donne/message.htm>). This quote actually comes from a poem which expresses a fair amount of loathing as well as love. I thought that these first two lines were oddly appropriate to the story, though. After all, Hermione doesn't exactly want to be in this situation...when I was writing this, I had the sense that although she is resigned to her love for him, she wants out, a fact which is hinted at near the end of the story. The second, the Latin word "peccavi", literally means "I have sinned". Interestingly enough, I read somewhere that "PECCAVI" is also the text of the shortest telegram ever sent. It was sent by Sir Charles Napier to indicate that he had annexed Sind in 1843, though I have my doubts as to whether this is true. If you don't get the joke, say "I have sinned" and "I have Sind" out loud and I'm sure you'll understand.

I suspected that Hermione might have researched various other Christian denominations besides the Church of England, so I felt free to let some of the things I learned about in Catholic school slip into the story, particularly the bits about purgatory and the line from the ritual undergone during the sacrament of penance, better known as "Confession". Furthermore, I could think of no better way to end the story, particularly after the reflection from Hermione right at the end. However, to be honest, I'm a little nervous about having placed it there. To some mindsets, it (like much of the rest of the story) could be seen as being more than a little sacrilegious. It is sometimes also misquoted as "Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned".

Lest my notes be longer than the story itself, I'll end here. I hope you've enjoyed this little ficlet, and that I haven't offended anyone by the way that religion influenced and was used in the writing of it.