



How to Make Friends with Demons

Graham Joyce

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William Heaney is a man well acquainted with demons. Not his broken family — his wife has left him for a celebrity chef, his snobbish teenaged son despises him, and his daughter's new boyfriend resembles Nosferatu — nor his drinking problem, nor his unfulfilling government job, but real demons. For demons are real, and William has identified one thousand five hundred and sixty-seven smoky figures, dwelling on the shadowy fringes of human life, influencing our decisions with their sweet and poisoned voices.

After a series of seemingly unconnected personal encounters — with a beautiful and captivating woman met in the company of an infuriating poet, a troubled and damaged veteran of Desert Storm with demons of his own, and an old school acquaintance with whom he shared a mystical occult ritual — William Heaney's life is thrown into a direction he does not fully comprehend. Past and present collide. Long-dormant choices and forgotten deceptions surface. Secrets threaten to become exposed. To weather the changes, William Heaney must learn one thing: how to make friends with demons.

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How to Make Friends with Demons Details

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From Reader Review How to Make Friends with Demons for online ebook

Kristen says

Well, I read all 308 pages of this book, but I'm not exactly sure how to write a review of it, because truthfully, I don't have the first clue of what the hell the book was about, or what actually happened in it.

There was something about demons attaching themselves to people, forgeries of rare books, poetry written by one person passed off as that of another, broken marriages, a slightly deranged story about what happened to a British soldier serving in Iraq that seems to suggest demonic involvement, messy family dynamics, an angelic woman helping homeless people. Oh and A LOT of wine-drinking [I was all for that part!!].

The problem was that these disparate components never seemed to ever come even close to forming some sort of cohesive whole. At times it felt like it was the written transcript of someone's very nasty acid trip.

I just never knew what the heck was going on with these kind of crazy bits and pieces, and how they were intended to come together into one book. It seemed to eventually end well, although I can't even say THAT with any certainty. Overall, this book just left me perplexed about what the point was. I didn't get it.

Rick says

William Heaney, head of the the UK's National Organisation for Youth Advocacy, leads a troubled life. His wife left him for a celebrity pastry chef, his teenage son hates him, and his oldest daughter has moved back in with him — and brought along her boyfriend. Heaney can also see demons. In his latest novel, *How to Make Friends With Demons*, Graham Joyce brings these entities to vivid life for his readers, too.

Ever since a traumatic event in college some 20 years ago, Heaney witnesses the hidden demons that haunt us all, creatures that only a few can see.

There are one thousand five hundred and sixty-seven known demons. Precisely. Okay I know that Fraser in his study claimed to have identified a further four, but it's plain that he's confusing demons with psychological conditions. I mean, a pathological tendency to insult strangers in the street is more likely caused by a nervous disorder than the presence of a demon. And chronic masturbation is what it is. I suspect that Fraser didn't even believe in his own case studies. I think he just "discovered" four new demons so that he could peddle his bloody awful book.

According to Heaney, common demons include the "messy intellectuality" manifested in compulsive footnoting, the "collecting demon," and demons that feed on various emotional ailments. Alcohol is not one of them, but rather "a series of volatile hydroxyl compounds that are made from hydrocarbons by distillation. The fact that it is highly addictive or that it can drive men or women to extreme and destructive behavior does not make it a demon." Heaney, incidentally, spends large portions of the novel in pubs, often inebriated.

He also fronts a trio of forgers who fake antiquarian books. Heaney sells the illicit products to unsuspecting marks. At heart an altruistic philanthropist organization, his crew promptly donates all proceeds to the GoPoint Centre, a perpetually underfunded London homeless shelter.

Through potential buyers, Heaney meets two individuals who change his life. Toy-shop owner Otto introduces him to the first, the homeless Desert Storm veteran Seamus, who has chained himself to a railing in front of Buckingham Palace. Lashed with what appear to be explosives, he threatens to blow himself up if the police approach him. Heaney and Otto meet with Seamus.

“I want an audience with the Queen. I want to tell her what I know.”

“Eh? The Queen? Queen doesn’t give a fuck about the likes of you and me, Seamus.”

“I’ve been a fucking loyal soldier to the fucking Queen. I want to tell her what I know. And if she won’t come down here, she can ride raggy-arsed to Birmingham.” Whatever this phrase meant, Seamus found its utterance very funny. He tipped back his head. “Ha ha ha ha ha!”

Otto looked at me again. “Tell him the Queen won’t come. Tell him she’s eating pie in the palace, and too busy.”

“He’s right, Seamus,” I said. “The Queen won’t come here.”

The old soldier looked around at the gritty pavement on either side of him. “Yeh,” he said seriously, “it’s bit mucky, innit? Maybe we should sweep up a bit.”

The second encounter occurs while Heaney drinks in the Museum Tavern — legendary watering hole for Karl Marx located across from the British Museum — where he runs into poet and frequent Heaney client Ellis, and Ellis’s beguiling young companion.

She held out a tiny white hand across the table. “My name’s Yasmin.”

No, it isn’t, I wanted to say, because she didn’t look or talk at all like a Yasmin. Demon of false naming, we know all about that one. But I held my tongue. “William Heaney.”

“I know.”

Well, there we had it. She knew my name before I’d revealed it; I didn’t know hers even after she’d declared it to me. Another demon in there somewhere. Perhaps we held each other’s gaze a splinter too long because Ellis said, “I think I’m going to vomit.”

“How do you two people know each other?” I asked genially.

And as she told me, my demon, my real demon, who had been listening, crouched, always attentive, breathed its sweet and poisoned breath in my ear. “Take her away from the lout. Take her home with you. Lift her skirt.”

She talked at length and I listened. Voices are sometimes like the grain in a strip of wood. You can hear the character of someone's experience in their voice. Hers was warm, and vital, but damaged.

The alluring Yasmin promises the most riveting and engrossing fictional femme in fantastic literature since the elusive title character of Jeffery Ford's sensational *The Portrait of Mrs. Charbuque*.

Leaping forward and backward through time, Joyce expertly weaves a cohesive novel that essentially chronicles a mid-life crisis. The book successfully explores a range of emotional states with a heady combination of horror, humor, and wonder, while maintaining its center on the kindhearted, confused, and at times delusional narrator Heaney. *How to Make Friends With Demons*, expanded from his O. Henry Award-winning short story "An Ordinary Soldier for the Queen," displays author Graham Joyce in all as his finery and ranks among the best novels of the year.

This review originally appeared in the *San Antonio Current*, September 9, 2009.

J-D Kelley says

I read this first almost ten years ago, close to when it came out. I liked it then, and a few parts stuck in my memory, though most of the plot had faded. I re-read it on a whim while in law school, and found myself enjoying it much, much more a second time.

I wonder if it's because I now identify more with the older version of the protagonist, who is in his 40s and is featured in a majority of the novel, than his college self, who is featured in maybe a fifth of it.

This book is not an easy one to categorize. Horror? Romance? Mystery? I am not even sure if it's meant to be fantastical. Whatever it is, it is a work I found supremely moving, though it certainly would not be everyone's cup of tea.

Carmen says

I surprised myself and ended up really loving this book. It's not perfect but in some ways it really touched me.

Alyssia Cooke says

You know, I'm not sure if this novel had an actual plot or if it was just the entertaining ramblings through a rather odd man's life, but I really don't care. I had great fun reading it and surely that has to count for one hell of a lot. It's superbly written, to the degree the half the time you don't notice that it really isn't going

anywhere fast and the other half you simply don't care.

The characters are wonderfully real and they leap off the pages at you with all their faults and all their flaws. They immerse you in the grit of London, whilst at the same time taunting you with glimpses of demons lurking inside the world of man. The dividing line between reality and fantasy is blurred, explanations are offered on both sides of that eternal spectrum and it is up to you what you will make of it. But this truly is a tale of the characters. It's a tale of the fine line between sanity and madness. It's a tale of the blurred edges of our conscience and what it can drive us to do.

It's a tale of the future and the past and the two intertwine in the most unnerving of ways and how forgiveness is a powerful tool which can be wielded with a scalpel or a hammer. It's a tale of the frailties and mortalities of the human condition, and of how love and life can be the greatest joy or the greatest trial or perhaps both at once. It offers a witty and dry viewpoint at some of the highs and the lows of humanity... and they are not always where you would expect to find them.

It's a meandering and sometimes aimless novel that moves along very much at its own pace, but it reminded me of taking a slow cruise down a swollen jungle river. The characterisations and life stories and wholesome and full enough that you don't mind the wandering pace.

Liviu says

The author is of course Graham Joyce and the book will be published in the US too as *How to Make Friends with a Demon* under his name, but the joke in the UK author byline works very well too...

I have never read Mr. Joyce's fiction before, tried once but did not hook me, but this book is so wonderful that it made me order 3 more books by him and if I like them even half as this one, I will get the rest too.

William Heaney is a mid-late forties UK government bureaucrat in charge of a Youth funding umbrella organization and an antique book dealer hobbyist. But under his polished, charming exterior, he is a very complex, tortured man with a fondness for wine and an ability to see the demons inherent in most humans. His wife of 20 years Fay left him 3 years ago for a celebrity chef, and while his two girls, Sarah a college age teen and Claire a 13 year old are still on good terms with him, his 15 year old son Robbie refuses to talk with him since William cut his posh private school tuition and sent him to a local school after Robbie showed snobbery that affronted him.

William has also been atoning for some perceived misdeeds from his college years that led to a lot of tragedy and death even though he was not directly responsible.

His atonement takes the unusual form of selling forged antiquarian books - done by one of his main two friends the strange painter/artist Shinx - to rich guys and using the profits to fund charities, especially the Go To Point a homeless last resort shelter run by his friend Antonia who annoyed the government enough by actually being useful to the down on their luck people that she is kept from official funding, grants and such and she is harassed for being such an embarrassment to the powers to be.

He also provides poetry to the other of his main friends, a youngish bisexual multi-ethnic photo model Jaz who finds the "marks" for the forgeries, and despite that both William and Jaz believe the poetry to be rubbish doggerel, such are the winds of political correctness that Jaz became very renowned as a young

minority - both ethnic and sexual - poet, invited to galas, competing for prizes...

Of course at their bar haunt the 3 against the world friends laugh at their "pranks" and commiserate about their failing private lives...

But one day William meets an unusual 29 year old girl that calls herself Yasmin, and also uses all his private money and even gets a loan to fund Antonia's Go To Point shelter, risking bankruptcy and possible exposure if Shinx does not come through with their latest forgery and the confluence of these events sends him on a journey of redemption.

Extraordinary book and it became one of my top 5 fantasy and all around books of the year. A masterpiece...

Charles says

Quite possibly the greatest novel that I have experienced in my adult life. I swear Graham Joyce must write these works in reverse order because every time I finish one, I am mind swept with how did we get here. This book originally published in the U.K. in '08 written under pseudonym of the principal character, William Heaney, was republished in '09 out of San Francisco. It does have the book with in a book quality across many layers. I also found about six errors in formatting. Spring busy, it took over six weeks to finish the 298 descriptively rich pages. Overdue by three days from the Public Library, I will gladly pay the fine.

"Then, just to satisfy myself, I switched on the tall standard lamp. What I saw made me rear back. It doesn't matter how many you've encountered, it always hits you like a thump in the gut. It was a demon. They can be seen in certain light but not in others, and now with the standard lamp on I could see it slumped in the corner of the room, against the book case. It looked desperately unhappy; it was covering its face with its hands, and peering at me from behind its fingers, waiting.

...

I looked back up at the sky, blinking at the lustrous beauty of the ascending and departing demons. They formed an alphabet I was beginning to learn to read. They were fire in the sky."

Lynda Rucker says

Graham Joyce, so brilliant as always. It's frustrating that such a fine writer seems consistently unable to break out to the larger mainstream. He'd easily fit alongside, say, Michael Chabon, but I think he's better.

John Day says

An amazing book. I recommend highly. Compares well with Neil Gaiman, but with a very distinctive voice. I can't believe I've never read anything by Graham Joyce before.

Kendra says

“It was like falling off the world, and falling for days, until you hit a shelf. There you lay for a while until, struggling to your feet in the dark, you found steps hewn in the stone. Though your heart felt too heavy to climb the steps, climb them you did, knowing they were without number.”

Note: In the US, this book is "How to Make Friends With Demons" by Graham Joyce

Graham Joyce never fails for me. He remains my favorite author. Seamlessly balancing this world and the surreal, he uses clear storytelling with extreme subtlety.

This book is a little different than previous. Perhaps that's why he originally wrote it under a pseudonym.

There's no way to thoroughly do justice to the storyline. Essentially, the narrator sees demons everywhere ... in penance, almost. You spend the novel wondering if he's truly seeing them, or if it's his imagination, or something else entirely (this is the beauty of Joyce; a choice where you wouldn't think it possible).

This is the first book I've read in which the narrator is truly unreliable. It was jarring, but fascinating.

When I got to the below passage, I was actually moved to tears by the raw truth of it.

"I looked at the hardness of my own heart and I looked at this great capital city, where we have no leaders and no one to admire. Our government ministers are fraudsters, liars and deceivers without conviction, whose only ideology is to cling to power; our captains of commerce are wolves dining out of blood and bone; ... our media poison us with consumerism, a hideous bloated worm eating its own tail ...

I rage! I do! I rage when I see the lives of ordinary people squandered. The lives of young men and women, weak like me, going under the tidal sludge of drugs spilling across the sink-estates of the nation; the homeless drifting like wraiths; people eating themselves into oblivion and doping themselves with bad television; brave boy soldiers sacrificed in the deserts for the ambitions of the insanely rich. I rage! I weep! To see life held so cheap! And all I have as antidote as I stand lost in the middle of these leaders who are not leaders, these demons hidden in the souls of men and women, are my humanity and my rage."

Jennifer says

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I picked this one up to read. I did not expect to sit an entire day and finish the entire book. I did not expect to cry. I thought I might laugh, and yes I did several times out loud. I did not expect to have a verbal conversation with the story teller. At one point I might have said "Why did you not go home with that women you crazy man". Again I was sucked into this world. What world you ask. Well I am not sure. The world that cats see and we can't? The world that as children we see but when we reach adulthood we loose our vision ? And best yet, this is a story about books and the power they have. This story is about family and friendship. And maybe a love story as well. And lets not forget the demons. They are the most important part.

Tita says

O nosso protagonista é William Heaney, que para além do seu emprego, escreve poesia para um amigo, organiza edições falsas dos livros de Jane Austen, mas desenganem-se se pensam que William é má pessoa. Nada disso, o lucro que recebe das falsificações vai para um lar de sem-abrigos. Além disso, falta um pormenor importante e que faz a ligação entre os personagens, Heaney vê demónios.

A escrita de Graham Joyce é simples mas estruturada, com um narrador que nos envolve na história e que nos permite "sentir" como se a história fosse nossa, sempre com um humor algo sarcástico.

Gostei também do leque de personagens. Não são personagens típicas, temos personagens com a sua dose de loucura, excentricidade e problemas, mas temos também Antónia, que acaba por ser a pessoa mais positiva que William conhece.

Além das personagens, temos também os locais onde a acção se vai desenrolando, onde quero salientar os pubs ingleses que transmitem a sensação de obscuridade. Temos ainda os demónios que dão à história um ar mais sobrenatural, no entanto gostava que este aspecto tivesse sido um pouco mais explorado e explicado, pois cheguei ao fim e não fiquei totalmente esclarecida se seriam reais ou fruto da imaginação de William.

A acção foi decorrendo, ora na actualidade, ora voltando várias vezes ao passado, o que pode ser algo confuso para alguns leitores pois não vamos tendo nenhuma indicação específica do espaço temporal.

Foi uma leitura mais leve do que esperava e até algo divertida. No entanto, esperava um pouco mais em relação aos demónios, devido a todo o mistério em torno do passado de William.

Michael Allan Leonard says

One of the most enjoyable, elegant stories I've read in a long time, and also one of the most difficult to classify: not quite a horror novel, not exactly a contemporary dramedy with humor that's often black. Neither a romance story, although that looms large, and containing an moving extended story-within-a-story of a British soldier in the Gulf War that would be well-worth reading alone outside of the context of the book.

William Haney is, at first glance, a seemingly ordinary man in present-day London with a thoroughly relatable set of problems: he loathes the mindless bureaucratic red tape of his government job, he loves wine a little too much, he's affable yet lonely and dealing with his ex-wife who left him for a minor celebrity chef and took his three children to set up house with an annoying twit. He also donates a considerable amount to charitable causes and is the sole benefactor keeping a homeless shelter afloat ... money which he obtains as part of a small forgery ring of rare and valuable antiquarian books that he passes off to unsuspecting collectors. He gets associated with a tragic suicide that could be considered by some a failed terrorist attack on the Queen. And William can see demons: not only the ones that are haunting him, but those that trouble and manipulate others. And it all began with his discovery of the remnants of an occult ritual in the attic of his college dorm, based on materials from a stolen unpublished manuscript he completely made up as a lark to try to sell as an 'authentic' work of magic and involving photographs of five girls he was romantically involved with, all of whom begin to suffer strange accidents and mishaps, some of them lethal.

There's a lot of allegory at work here: the titular demons are not just supernatural entities, but they also represent our mistakes, failures, and shortcomings, and our inability to exorcise the past and free ourselves. There are moments where there's certainly a thin line between the demons being poignant stand-ins for undiagnosed and untreated mental illness: is this really a tale of malevolent otherworldly entities, or the delusions of a high-functioning schizophrenic? (The author teases out both as distinct possibilities, inviting

the reader to play detective as they go along.)

Joyce performs an amazing set of creative sleight-of-hand flourishes, not only using first person narration to create a protagonist who is both likeable and charming yet also duplicitous to everyone, including the reader, but deftly intercutting between past and present to unravel the mystery at both ends. Brilliant, engaging work that was difficult to put down. Fans of Neil Gaiman will certainly feel at home here.

Cat Rambo says

Graham Joyce's work is always full of wonderful darkness. No exception with this one.

Nádia Batista says

Graham Joyce apaixonou-me desde o primeiro livro que li seu, Os Factos da Vida. Mal tive oportunidade de ler outra obra sua, não hesitei, e assim Memórias de um Mestre Falsário veio parar às minhas mãos. As expectativas para esta leitura eram muito altas, e não fiquei desiludida.

A história é acerca de um homem, William Heaney, que escreve poesia para um amigo - poesia muito apreciada - e que tem como ocupação falsificar livros antigos e raros, cujo lucro reverte a favor de uma associação solidária. Entre bebidas e demónios, a vida deste personagem vai-se desenrolando, num caminho um pouco negro, ao mesmo tempo que outras revelações acerca da sua vida são relatadas.

A forma como Graham Joyce escreve é simplesmente viciante. É muito simples e de fácil interpretação, com um ritmo rápido e agradável. Isto é pouco para se dizer acerca da escrita do autor, de tão simples e complexa se torna, mas receio que me falham as palavras correctas para a descrever. Quem gostar deste autor facilmente pode comprovar as minhas afirmações, pois sentimo-nos de tal modo enredados pelas palavras e frases que nem damos pelas páginas a voarem. Isto aliado a personagens fantásticas e bem construídas, torna-se dois factores na excelência desta obra. William é completamente doido. O seu raciocínio, a sua lógica, a sua forma de ver o mundo, acompanhado de demónios. Os copos de vinho. O medo de amar, a bondade generosa, tudo neste personagem é de tal modo intrincado que chegamos ao fim com a sensação não só de o ter conhecido realmente em pessoa, como a gostar dele.

Mas não é só William que brilha em Memórias de um Mestre Falsário. Jaz - um bissexual que vive da fama da poesia escrita por William - e Stinx - um artista que faz falsificações perfeitas e com a vida amorosa constantemente destroçada - são também personagens bastante especiais, assim como Antonia, a luz do livro. O próprio Seamus, que entra pelas páginas do livro dentro e que por momentos nos faz esquecer do livro que estamos a ler, é bastante incomum, com traços quase paranóicos, sendo boa pessoa. Yasmin, a personagem duvidosa da história: podemos confiar, ou não? Até o pormenor do companheiro da ex-mulher de William está bem construído - é até esse detalhe que o génio de Graham chega.

E depois há o ambiente criado. Grande parte da história é passada em pubs ingleses - cada qual diferente, com um sentimento único, mas todos inegavelmente sedutores. Dá vontade de visitar cada um deles e sentir as mesmas coisas que William/Graham descreve. Detalhado sem roçar sequer o aborrecido, o autor consegue transportar-nos para cada um desses pubs, deixando-nos com um leve sabor amargo por não estarmos lá a ler as suas páginas.

No entanto, no final do livro fiquei um pouco zangada comigo mesma, por não ter a certeza de que demónios são estes falados no livro. São demónios como estamos acostumados a imaginar, ou apenas os pequenos demónios de cada um, que andam encostados ao nosso ombro? E, para piorar, será que William vê mesmo

estes demónios, ou imagina-os? Não consegui chegar a uma conclusão satisfatória, mas estou mais inclinada para o lado fantasioso da situação. São demónios que William vê, e penso que esta solução me completa.

Recomendo vivamente a leitura destas Memórias de um Mestre Falsário. São memórias, revelações, segredos e rebelias de pessoas, sentimentos, causas, com um toque sobrenatural e humano. Uma leitura obrigatória!

<http://eu-e-o-bam.blogspot.pt/2013/12...>
