

# The Seven Deadly Sins

## *A Sequence*

### *Introduction*

They all go together  
 But you can part them carefully,  
 Sparely,  
 Like a surgeon making the incision  
 With decision  
 And with dexterity.  
 So the Seven Deadly Sins are committed,  
 Deliberately and wilfully.

### *Sloth*

He lies long in bed,  
 The warmth round body and head.  
 He will not work because he knows  
 National Assistance or Sickness Benefit can close  
 All doors to work.  
 Watch him shirk  
 Full of food and with a wide smirk.

### *Envy*

This is hard.  
 It can exist in a word or a thought. The mind  
 (That delicate thing)  
 Controls it  
 As it controls everything.  
 Envy is subtle.  
 Unlike jealousy, it will not settle  
 Just for what others have,  
 Whether a meal or an expression of love.  
 It wants deprivation,  
 It wants what someone else has  
 And leave them to starvation  
 Of any kind,  
 The body or the mind.

### *Greed*

There is not much to be said about greed  
 Except that it is disgusting and, indeed,  
 Can consist of too much or too little eating.  
 It is the fleeting  
 Yet sure intention that matters.  
 Food on great platters,  
 Or a delicacy cooked to a turn,  
 Can burn, burn  
 And produce greed.  
 It is desire dressed up as a need.

*Lust*

This is the kindest of the seven  
 Because it can produce happiness.  
 It only goes wrong when personal desire  
 Presses on, with no tiny thought even  
 Of the other's feeling.  
 It misses out all that love means—  
 Giving, taking, accepting, perhaps abstaining,  
 Always being gentle and full of thought.  
 It breaks what a life-time has carefully wrought.  
 All these, Lust demeans,  
 All it knows is desire,  
 The bonfire-burning of a fire.

*Anger*

A child can show its beginnings  
 By kicking a door.  
 A murderer knows the end  
 And with a hand,  
 A gun, a rope, any weapon  
 Can open  
 The door to real ire.  
 It comes close to desire  
 Because it is self-seeking.  
 Of that I am speaking.

*Despair*

Wishing not to be here—  
 That is Despair.  
 But it is, in its stark form  
 Much more than that.  
 It is wanting not to exist at all,  
 Considered, in cold blood;  
 It is not just a melancholy mood,  
 But a wish to fall down, down, down  
 To nothingness,  
 With no desire to bless.  
 It is a wish to make everything nothing,  
 Not just hanging on and still breathing,  
 But annihilating everything.

*Pride*

The worst of the seven we call  
 This one.  
 And so it is, because it encompasses all  
 We know, of love, beauty, nature,  
 Every animal and human creature,  
 Because it wishes to possess,  
 To own, to caress  
 Not with love but in order to own  
 The desired object, whether a human body  
 Or a distant star.  
 And we are all prone to this, we are,  
 And if we give in we are left silently, coldly, justly, alone.

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