The Seven Sins

Graves, his manner a smidgen overbearing,
Came to see how I'd been faring,
Suggesting that now I was affiliated to an exclusive society,
I should hold a dinner party for seven characters of notoriety.
"Legendarily, they're collectively referred to as 'deadly',
However, I believe you'll find them an interesting, unusual medley.
It promises to be an out of the ordinary 'housewarming' party;
In particular you'll appreciate one guest of great intellect –
    a member of the literati.
Rest assured, I shall organise everything,
Haute cuisine, vintage wines 'fit for a king',
A full orchestra, a concert, even a cabaret;
Whatever it takes to make it a most memorable soirée.
Just let me know what you desire;
Remember, there's nothing I can't acquire!"
As Graves left, I thought, He's little more than a jumped-up executive,
Full of self-importance, morally shifty, a bit of a spiv.

Theoretically, I considered Graves' suggestion a terrific idea –
Practically, surely a tricky situation to engineer.

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The notorious Seven's materialisation had seemed to me
quite improbable;
However, Graves evidently had the power to make
anything possible –
For here were the 'Sins' in the flesh – no creatures of allegory or fable –
Taking up their positions at my solid mahogany circular table.
Was I not fortunate to play host to such infamous sinners?
I had high hopes that this would prove to be the dinner
of all dinners.
On my right sat thin twitching tabby twins,
'Bitter and twisted' sister sins.
Endowed with the keen vision of predatory hawks,
Covetousness and Envy, rapacious eyes out on stalks,
Spent most of the evening assessing my possessions,
Seldom changing their begrudging expressions.
Next to them Wrath, short and wiry,
And as his name would denote, frequently fiery.
Rough furrowed fur, predominantly gingery,
Bore the hallmarks of many an injury.
Scarred nose and deep diagonal disfiguring scratch
Only partly hidden by a bulging black eye-patch.
Black-furred Pride, seated directly opposite me,
Made little attempt at concealing his ennui.

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In the pecking order he saw himself as top cat,

Given neither to pleasantries nor to chit-chat.

Reminiscent of Malpuss, similarly sagacious,

But nowhere near as endearing or gracious.

Grey slouching Sloth, minus a single iota of grace,

Had indolence draped all over her dewlapped face.

Unkempt, unhealthy, obese of belly,

Too lazy to wash, fiendishly smelly,

Reluctantly, groaningly, picking at her food,

Soon succumbing to lassitude.

Etiquetteless Gluttony sat by Sloth's side,

Gauche and flatulently undignified.

His once-white Persian coat stained and shabby,

Girth and posterior grossly flabby,

Sagging skin overhanging the edges of his seat;

Between mouthfuls he complained there wasn't enough to eat.

Gluttony's neighbour, similarly possessed of an insatiable appetite,

(Which soon revealed itself, much to Covetousness's delight),

Was long-limbed Lechery, smooth and glossy-black,

The quintessential sex maniac.

Skilled charmer, fluent flatterer,

No deep conversationalist but an effortless chatterer.

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Reflecting that extreme haughtiness to which he had

a genetic predisposition,

Pride principally adopted a pompous perpendicular position,

Uttering occasional sardonic witticisms

Interspersed with a litany of barbed criticisms.

Apparently, compared to him, we were all of lesser intellect,

And consequently completely undeserving of his respect.

Looking down his nose with a hint of a supercilious smile,

He announced, " The music you have chosen is, at best, intellectually infantile;

My choice would be the operatic genre, music-drama

on the grand scale."

I found his remarks beyond the pale.

With characteristic quickness to condemn,

He then turned on Sloth: "You laze about *de die in diem*.

Ugh! *Corpus vile!*

Corpus sine pectore!

Incurious, sluggardly slut;

Ignoramus, contentedly stuck in your rut.

You do a huge disservice to felinekind

By exercising neither body nor mind.

It is absolutely essential

That we all fulfil our potential –

Take me, a scholar of the beaux-arts and belles-lettres;

Fie upon you, Sloth, you obviously have no raison d'être."

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His invective

Was soporifically effective.

Slumped in sleep, Sloth started to snore.

Pride exclaimed, "*Comme d'habitude – comatose bore!*"

With Sloth in oblivion, Gluttony helped himself to the remains

of her food,

Prompting Pride to remark censoriously on his social ineptitude.

As Gluttony fiendishly stuffed his face, I held my breath,

For I was certain he was about to choke to death.

Of Gluttony's gesticulations for more substantial servings

of goose and pheasant,

Pride deprecatingly declared, "Mannerless peasant!

You have already devoured six bowls of consommé,

Toujours sans politesse, absolument inapproprié!"

Wrath, always one to call 'a spade a spade',

Shot up, hackles raised, and discharged a verbal fusillade:

"If you can't speak bleedin' English, go to blazes!"

Clearly incensed by Pride's penchant for French and Latin phrases,

Wrath continued his broadside against the number one Sinner:

"Don't need yer highfalutin crap in the middle of me dinner!

Talk about a death's head at a party,

Smarmy, smart-arse arty-farty.

Why did yer soddin' well bother to come,

Sittin' there in judgement on yer self-righteous bum?!

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