

THE CIRCUS OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

by Jon Jory

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THE CIRCUS OF THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

A one act play in monologue form

by Jon Jory

SYNOPSIS: “Step right up, step right up! See yourself in the mirror, take a look at the human parade. The Circus of the Seven Deadly Sins!” Follow the Ringmaster as they lead each deadly sin to the ring. Wrath is steaming with their hatred of Brussels Sprouts (understandably!), the misunderstood Gluttony, is overflowing with joy to share their love of competitive eating, and let’s not forget Sloth, the anti-doer and their four step plan of greatness and that’s not even the half of it! This collection of monologues is easy to produce on a virtual platform or socially distanced.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 females, 2 males, 5 either)

RINGMASTER (m/f)	(12 lines)
WILLY WALLER (m)	(7 lines)
WRATH (m/f).....	A sin. Monologist. (2 lines)
SLOTH (m/f)	A sin. Monologist. (1 line)
ENVY (f)	A sin. Monologist. (1 line)
GLUTTONY (m)	A sin. Monologist. (1 line)
PRIDE (m/f).....	A sin. Monologist. (3 lines)
LUST (f)	A sin. Monologist. (3 lines)
GREED (m/f).....	A sin. Monologist. (1 line)

DURATION: 40 minutes.

TIME: Any time.

SETTING: A circus ring.

COSTUMES: The length and breadth of your imagination.

PRODUCTION NOTES: If required for competition, cuts to individual monologues (as long as all Seven Sins are retained) to get the Work under forty minutes is authorized.

AT START: *On stage a circus ring, the rest of the stage floor a dark color. At lights up we see RINGMASTER wearing a top hat, a bright red or spangled tailcoat with dark pants and high boots. RINGMASTER carries a straight cane. As RINGMASTER speaks we see the SEVEN SINS forming a tableau in the ring, arms extended.*

RINGMASTER: Welcome, welcome! Welcome ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, home fries and French fries, children of all ages. Welcome to the big top and The Circus of the Seven Deadly Sins!

The SINS form a different tableau.

RINGMASTER: See mankind in free fall. See fools, clowns and nincompoops, buffoons and dunces of the human persuasion. Have a good laugh while you look in the mirror.

WILLY WALLER: *(Shouted from offstage.)* Hold it right there!

The SINS and RINGMASTER freeze. WILLY WALLER enters wearing a dark suit, big clown shoes, very large glasses, and a red velvet book.

WILLY WALLER: Good evening all, I am Willy Waller the Scholar, here to give you an unbelievably boring context for the Seven Sins.

The SINS fall down and snore.

WILLY WALLER: Quiet!

The SINS stop.

WILLY WALLER: Don't think you get The Seven Deadly Sins just for the fun of it. After all sins are... well... sins. Now, The Seven Deadlies were also known as "The Capital Vices" or "The Cardinal Sins." I know, I know you think they were straight from the Bible, but they're not.

ALL SINS: *(Sitting up. Extremely cheerful.)* But we're not! *(ALL lie back down.)*

WILLY WALLER: Let's introduce them.

WILLY WALLER steps aside and points at the ring. Each SIN sits up to say their name and then lies back down as the next SIN sits up. In the order of: Pride, Greed, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Wrath and Sloth!

WILLY WALLER: The Seven Sins got thought up to help keep the people on the straight and narrow. Of course there were virtues too.

The SINS leap up and form a chorus saying the virtues all together.

ALL SINS: Chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness and humility! Boring. *(ALL fall back down.)*

WILLY WALLER: Now we all wish humanity was composed of the virtues, but you can't help wanting to try out the sins. If you absolutely must, I suggest you concentrate on one sin at a time until you get it right. I mean, until you get it wrong. Down the road you'll come home to the virtues because the sins make you sneeze. Plus there is nothing more frustrating and demeaning than a half-baked sin. Ringmaster, take it away!

WILLY rushes offstage and RINGMASTER rushes forward.

RINGMASTER: Ladies and gentlemen, nasty children with runny noses! Let me present to you...

When each SIN is named the performer rushes down to the audience and does exaggerated bows to the audience and rushes offstage.

RINGMASTER: Pride... Gluttony... Lust... Envy... Greed... Sloth... and Wrath!

ALL SINS rush offstage except WRATH who works herself up into a fury while the RINGMASTER says...

RINGMASTER: They're all here under The Big Top of humanity. Step right up, step right up! See yourself in the mirror, take a look at the human parade. The Circus of the Seven Deadly Sins! And now, Suzie and Jimmy, daddy and Aunt Helen, we present that magnificent monstrosity... wrath!

WRATH storms center stage. RINGMASTER picks up a plate set downstage and hands it to WRATH. WRATH takes it and roars at the RINGMASTER.

WRATH: Beat it!

WRATH watches the RINGMASTER run offstage. Focuses on the plate.

WRATH: What is this? What is this I see before me? It's very hard for me to believe what I am looking at on that plate. Wow. Okay, that is a definite provocation and you know it is. See this is a sign that you are willing to use your intimate understanding of everything about me to torment me like a charmed dog in a thunderstorm. You know I know what this is, right? And you know how I have wrestled with my demons to win the temporary victory of delicious, life-giving, calm and what that has cost me? You know that "anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured." Yes, I know Mark Twain said that. No, I wasn't pretending I made that up. Do you actually believe I should take time to source a quote when my entire nervous system is set on fire by this deliberate provocation? These are Brussels sprouts! Bruxellis Pullulant [Latin]. Choux de Bruxelles [French]. The green dyed monster. Brussels sprouts [Irish]!

You know my history with Brussels sprouts. How I was forced by an overbearing father to eat them. How he pried my jaws open and had my younger brother throw them in from across the table as if I were carnival game. How, as a grand finale, he stuffed one up my nose. How I ran screaming out the front door, foaming at the mouth and crawled into the dog house with our Dalmatian, Spotbuddy, and threw up on him. How he would never again come to me when called. How Spotbuddy was stained green and yellow and would hide in the old freezer in the garage when anyone came to the house. You know how I became a laughing stock when I ran screaming from the high school cafeteria when I realized what was under the Velveeta cheese in that casserole? How I wept and tried

to hide under my seat in assembly when the entire senior class sang a Brussels sprout song they had made up when I went up to get my good citizenship certificate? You knew all this, and yet this is my birthday dinner? I say to you what Falstaff said to Prince Hal in *Henry IV, Part 1*. "Away you starveling, you dried neats tongue, you bulls pizzle, you stockfish!" I have given you my love, my heart, my secrets, my adoration and you give me Brussels sprouts?! I feel myself breaking out. When I'm enraged I deploy this full body rash of fluid-filled blisters that pop and form a honey-colored burning crust.

(Scratches wildly.) Do you see what you've done to me? My body is in revolt at my feelings. My anger is not only emotional, but violently physical. My nervous system is popping like popcorn in a greasy frying pan. Everything is becoming red as if Sangria had been poured in my eyes. My left foot has taken on a life of its own. *(It has.)* And my rash is spreading north of my waist and south of my ankles like a horseman of the apocalypse. I could chew up my nails and spit out a barbed wire fence. I'm madder than the snake that married a garden hose. You don't watch out, I'm going to cream your corn! I would rather eat Brussels sprouts and you know it. I can feel the anger pouring up through my ankles, poisoning my entrails, tightening my chest, scorching my throat, withering my lips... what is the meaning of these Brussels sprouts?! You pediculous, fopdoodle, raggabrush, fufuraceous, whiffle-whaffle, lubberwort! You put Brussels sprouts in front of me, I will show that person the end for the world in Technicolor. I will mash you like an Idaho potato and cook you over an open fire 'til you are home fries, I will cook your tongue in corn meal and serve it as a chicken tender. You know what the Brazen Bull was? It was a solid sculpture of brass with a side door that could be latched shut, and then the ancient Greeks would set a fire under it, shove you in and lock it up and the whole thing was specially designed to amplify your screams and make them sound like the bellowing of a bull!! I know, I know, I shouldn't have these feelings. At the very least I should control these feelings. But it's welling up. It's in my feet, now in the knees, rising to my stomach, burning in my chest, scorching my fingertips, my throat, tearing at my lips... *(Screams.)* I hate Brussels sprouts!!

WRATH rushes off, crossing SLOTH who enters in exaggerated slow motion and then stops and looks at the audience in silence for maybe ten seconds. RINGMASTER enters a step or two.

RINGMASTER: Pssst! Sloth?

SLOTH turns his head toward RINGMASTER.

RINGMASTER: You're up. You're on. Do your thing, right? Wow the crowd. They're waiting. Crowds are very dangerous when they wait. They wait too long they become mobs. Entertainment, Sloth, they're slaving for some entertainment. I can hear rustling, rustling is a very bad sign in an audience. In 1851 when Rigoletto was signing "La Donna è Mobile" he stopped singing. Just stopped, and the audience stormed the stage and ate him. Do something!

RINGMASTER exits. SLOTH turns front and looks at the audience.

SLOTH: You're thinking I should do something, right? That's because you don't think it out. Most things people "do" aren't thought out, and what is the result of all this "doing?" Regard the miserable state we are in. We have made a catastrophe out of "doing." Take my brother, Mortimer. He plays football, which is sixty minutes of nonstop "doing." He's a left tackle, whatever that is. So far this season he is personally accountable for two broken legs, a shattered wrist, three concussions, a misplaced rib, a fractured nose, multiple black eyes and the better part of an ear he bit off. This, in his case, is the result of doing something. Multiply that by a world population of seven and half billion and consider the damage. The other result of this "footballing" is that our team, the Martinsville Mallards have lost seventy-three straight games which is so embarrassing that this year's opening game had a paid attendance of fourteen, all of whom left by halftime. Because of this constant embarrassment, our halls look like a zombie exercise track... therapists have been flown in from three surrounding states. "Sportsdoing." If the entire team had stayed home on Friday nights and watched "Dog with a Blog" on Disney, the school would be

straight out of *Footloose*. And what about war? Why do that? They should sit national leaders down at a computer and let them play DEFCON. Remember that saying, "What if they gave a war and nobody came?" Take a nap people! Plus most of the stuff we do is incredibly frustrating, right? I won't even go into online dating. People, we need a few simple rules to help us stop doing things like little robot cleaning discs.

Number one, obviously, the four hour workday and four day workweek, duh.

Two: Every country can only have one tank, one bomb and armies are capped at 12. Wars are fought in the Rose Bowl and tickets are only \$17.50.

Three: A mandatory twelve hours in bed. The floors around the bed are electrified so if you get out earlier you're electrocuted. Chairs. All chairs in your house must be used four hours a day or we take away the chair. Sofas give you massages and sing to you. Everyone must exercise one hour a day in your basement. No basement, you must exercise standing in the shower. Singing in the shower is mandatory and will be recorded and released as an album.

Four: You must write all your fantasies down and mail them to your local government. Insufficient fantasies will be punished. Each citizen must read one book a week. The books' words must be forty percent two syllables or more. Then you give a book report on the web which will be graded by haters. Another hour must be spent thinking out loud. This will become an audio book. Finally you must talk to another person two hours a day. One of the two people must be up a tree. That's it. And no football. Football sucks. If you must play something play Monopoly. People who fulfill these requirements will be guaranteed really hot dates. Those who do not must watch terrible films about Robin Hood over and over. The above world saving rules will significantly cut down on all this dangerous "doing" we've gotten into. These cultural changes will be called the standard living operational torpidity hierarchy or SLOTH. Phase two of SLOTH will be conducting your life in slow motion,

which will not only be deeply pleasurable, but allow you to enjoy life around you, which our damaged egos have increasingly prevented. I spent a half hour yesterday staring at my thumbnail, which was surprisingly arousing. I have written a little poem which will keep you on the right track.

Go outside and do more mooing,
Like a cow
Instead of doing.

Think about it people. Now, if you wish to order a "SLOTH" t-shirt with my picture on it, call 800-111-2222 or Love Me Lazy, but dial very, very, very slowly.

SLOTH exits in slow motion at the same time RINGMASTER enters very quickly.

RINGMASTER: *(Stops dead. Does an arm waving "present." And cheerfully says in a loud voice....) Envy!*

ENVY, a woman in some form of beach attire (say a Hawaiian shirt, beach bag, and cut-offs.), enters.

ENVY: *(Applying sun lotion.)* I'm trying this new sunburn stuff called "Rattle." It's made basically from snake spit. Really. Also sets off olfactory alarms so guys don't hit on you.

Puts the cap back on the lotion and tosses it in the bag she carries over her shoulder. Looks out at the audience.

You know where Cape May is at? It's like, well, way, way down at the tip of Southern New Jersey, you know, on the peninsula. Which is a weird word, right? Peninsula. From the Latin word, *paene* and *insula* which means island. I know, I know, I'm over educated. Anyway my family has come out of there, Cape May, for like five generations. We been cheating the tourists down on the beaches since 1848. Y'know like fraudster kinda people... con artists? I grew up there selling purple popsicles to dehydrated tourists for three dollars a throw. I was kinda, you know, hostile? I'd lick 'em before I

sold 'em. Anyways, I'm not here to itemize the fraudulence of my genealogy, I'm here to reveal my broken heart. See, since I was a "tater tot", I got fed a steady diet of compliments on my manifest attractions from every which way. Polly Kecherneche, that's me.

A little curtsy.

A real pleasure to make your acquaintance. See, they started calling me "Pretty Polly" down on the sand and it stuck like tar. Yeah, I was like the Mount Everest of attraction. I pretty much owned Cape May. I once had a prince from a far off land fall in love with me on a schooner. Not everyone can say that. A full moon with someone playing the bassoon on a schooner. Yeah. Gave me a nosebleed when he did that. Memories, memories. Then she showed up. I recall that I was on the beach surrounded by an admiring crowd while I did my flaming hula hoop routine. The secret, don't tell, was that I wore an asbestos bikini... when suddenly all of a sudden, dead quiet descended and then... there she was. The air vibrated. Some say she came down for the summer from Kodiak, Alaska, and others that thought she was, for sure, Icelandic because, it was said, she was below zero to the touch. Anyway she was a killer blonde, six foot five with legs forever and a bad attitude. It wasn't more than five minutes before my crowd was her crowd, because I'm tellin' you that girl could juggle. She started with seventeen ping pong balls and capped her act by keeping three highly irritated Mozambique spitting cobras in the air at the same time. Lemme tell ya, those snakes was pissed. I had, at the time, three champion weight lifter boyfriends, who I rotated without incident and they followed her off that beach like puppies! Her name as I recall, was Lotta Amoré, which I'm pretty sure was a nom de plume. You getting' this? I had always swam in a sea of attention and admiration and Lotta Amoré she just drained it dry in a weekend and left me there like a beached porpoise. Oh, I tell you I stewed like a prune. I had dreams so dark and bloody I woke up screaming at myself. I had inchoate fantasies of boiling her in a pot, of training a gorilla to jump out of a giant cake and strangle her, of putting her in a giant blender and flipping the switch. I awoke in a sweat so heavy I nearly drowned. Naturally my sweat is scented. Scented, lemon ginger

usually. I tried to walk off the prison of my hallucinations on a moon swept beach in dear old Cape May but... voila! There she was, a silent sentinel out on the carnival pier wearing an icy smile and red silk robe tied at the waist with a diamond backed rattlesnake, a Balinese twisted dagger in her hand reflecting broken shards of moonlight and she was practicing an ancient martial art with some dance moves to it. She stopped. I stopped. Time stopped, and we looked each other over. Then she smiled that thousand megawatt smile and smeared that honey-voice all over me saying, "Well now, my little kumquat, I thought it might come to this." and I slipped my army issue 45 out of my hairdo and gave her my crooked smile and said, "Glad to meetcha, here to greetcha." Then I sidled up and said real quiet, "You took my beach." Whack! She whipped a dagger out of her bra and threw it down into the pier where it vibrated like a tuning fork and she said, real vile like, "I didn't take nothing honey, it just came to me like a whipped dog." "Come the dawn," I said, "you better be in that beat up, coral colored Dodge Viper headin' south out of New Jersey." She laughed real throaty and came back with, "Might do, baby, but it'll have your head for a hood ornament." Then there was lightning across the sky and it was the moment. You know, the moment when your whole life can go either way, balanced in a wind storm on a pin head. And right then, out of a tornado of silence, we just fell down laughing, layin' back on the pier like a pair of looney tunes and talkin' like Siamese twins wrapped up in the stars. Talked all night right through the dawn and into the noon's inferno walking' down the beach hand in hand wearing polka dotted evenin' gowns and six inch heels. The crowds they parted like Moses through the Red Sea, and we called out, "We got the beauty!" Oh yeah. Strong men fainted and weak men ran and the ladies got them a glow on was pure pink delight. We crossed the parking lot like we was on a tightrope and got us into Lotta Amoré's dodgy ol' Dodge and drove straight through to New Orleans where to this day we run the Double Hot Bar and Grill right down on south Bourbon Street. Every night on the stroke of midnight we climb up on the bar an' drive the men gut-shot crazy with some low-cut, high-steppin', let-it-all-hang out choreography. Oh yeah. There's way-over-priced purple popsicles for everybody. You come on down.

ENVY struts offstage and RINGMASTER does the same strut on.

RINGMASTER: You got the smells, you got the sights, you got the nerves on edge like a cat on a hot tin roof.

For every soul is a circus

And every mind is a tent

And every heart is a sawdust ring

Where the circling race is spent

Ladies and gentlemen! Hot dawgs and chili peppers! Let's put our hands together for the one, the only, Gluttony!

GLUTTONY waddles out a colorful enormity. GLUTTONY and the RINGMASTER do an elaborate slap routine and the RINGMASTER dances off. GLUTTONY eats a red Twizzler.

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