



Letter to Slumgob

A Mighty Arrow
St Mary Church, Pompano Beach, FL

I don't know if the "experienced" or "head" devils of Satan's army give advice to the "novice" devils on how to tempt people, nor do I by the following letter wish to suggest that they do. It could be that this is a purely humanistic way to look at the underworld. Yet, if we were to suppose for a moment that the novice devils did learn in this way, I am sure that we could come up with a few things the "elder" devils would say to the novices. Indeed, our great Fathers of the desert spent much time telling their disciples the methods the devils use to deceive and the way they think—a sort of "inside intelligence".



Following this tradition, albeit without the exceptional wisdom of the Fathers, the following letter attempts to do the same—but with a twist. It is written by an elderly devil, experienced in the ways of temptation ("experience" which could stretch thousands of years), to a younger devil who is trying to learn the sly and mischievous ways of temptation. One note I will include

is that the style of the letter is not innovative: I must give credit to a certain deceased writer who I will marginally refer to as Professor Clive.

My Dear Slumgob,

I have just received the letter you sent me as to your recent graduation from the Diabolical Tempters Training College. Congratulations! I wish you much misery and glum in your future career. From what I understand, you have been assigned to a human who has just begun on the spiritual road. I t was wise of you to ask my advice on how to tempt him to get the best results. But without your getting too upset, let me just mention that it was a bit naïve of you to ask me to give you all the tricks in the book in one letter. For the spiritual war that we wage with the humans is complex and vast in scope; it is not the simple cause-and-effect game you make it out to be.

That is, one temptation does not necessarily equal one sin. Sometimes, it might take ninety-nine temptations, administered in slowly increasing doses over a period of several years, to get your patient to fall into one great sin which you have planned for him. Of course, in order for him to eventually fall into the one great sin, he will have to have fallen at most of the preceding ninety-nine—in order to build up a sort of numbness to sinning. However, if he resists sin during the initial ninety-nine, chances are that he won't fall into the big one. Temptation has a nasty character of strengthening the human when it fails to throw him down. So you must be very careful with what you do with your temptations. Not any temptation is given at just any time. For, as I said, if you patient willingly refuses to sin and walks away, he will be unquestionably strengthened by it; and it will be slightly harder to get him to yield to the same temptation the next time. I f you don't offer your temptations the right way, they will backfire.

Your Faithful Teacher,
Quagmire