

## CATULLUS

### THE LESBIA POEMS

#### Carmen 2.

Sparrow, favorite of my girl,  
with whom she is accustomed to play, whom she is accustomed to hold in her lap,  
for whom, seeking greedily, she is accustomed to give her index finger  
and to provoke sharp bites.

When it is pleasing for my shining desire  
to make some kind of joke  
and a relief of her grief.

I believe, so that her heavy passion may become quiet.  
If only I were able to play with you yourself, and  
to lighten the sad cares of your mind.

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#### Carmen 2b.

It is as pleasing to me as they say  
The golden apple to have been to that swift girl,  
Which untied that long-bound girdle.

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#### Carmen 3.

Mourn, oh Cupids and Venuses,  
and whatever there is of rather pleasing men:  
the sparrow of my girlfriend has died,  
the sparrow, delight of my girl,  
whom she loved more than her own eyes.  
For it was honey-sweet and it had known its  
mistress as well as a girl knew her mother,  
nor did it move itself from her lap,  
but jumping around now here now there  
he used to chirp continually to his mistress alone:  
who now goes through that gloomy journey  
from whence they denied anyone returns.  
But may it go badly for you, bad darkness  
of Orcus, you who devour all beautiful things:  
and so beautiful a bird you taken away from me  
o bad deed! o miserable sparrow!

Now on account of your work my girl's  
slightly swollen little eyes are red from weeping.

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#### Carmen 5.

Let us live, my Lesbia, and let us love,  
and let us judge all the rumors of the old men

to be worth just one penny!  
 The suns are able to fall and rise:  
 When that brief light has fallen for us,  
 we must sleep a never ending night.  
 Give me a thousand kisses, then another hundred,  
 then another thousand, then a second hundred,  
 then yet another thousand more, then another hundred.  
 Then, when we have made many thousands,  
 we will mix them all up so that we don't know,  
 and so that no one can be jealous of us when he finds out  
 how many kisses we have shared.

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### **Carmen 8.**

Poor Catullus, you must stop being silly,  
 and count as lost what you see is lost.  
 Once the sun shone bright for you,  
 when you would go whither your sweetheart led,  
 she who was loved by me as none will ever be loved.  
 Then there took place those many jolly scenes  
 which you desired nor did your sweetheart not desire.  
 Truly the sun shone bright for you.  
 Now she desires no more: do you too, weakling, not desire;  
 and do not chase her who flees, nor live in unhappiness,  
 but harden your heart, endure and stand fast.  
 Goodbye, sweetheart. Catullus now stands fast:  
 he will not look for you or court you against your will.  
 But you will be sorry when you are not courted at all.  
 Wretch, pity on you! What life lies in store for you!  
 Who will come to you now? Who will think you pretty?  
 Whom will you love now? Who will people say you are?  
 Whom will you kiss? Whose lips will you bite?  
 But you, Catullus, be resolute and stand fast.

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### **Carmen 11.**

Furius and Aurelius, companions of Catullus,  
 whether he penetrates the furthest of the Indies,  
 or the shore where the beating of the eastern  
 waves resonates far and wide,  
  
 whether he penetrates into the Hyrcanos or the gentle Arabs,  
 or the arrow-carrying Parthians,  
 or the seven fold Nile which  
 which colors the plains,  
  
 whether he will go across the great Alps,  
 intending to see the great monument to Caesar,

or the Gallic Rhine or the horribly distant Britain,

you who are prepared to try all these things,  
and whatever else the will of the gods will bring,  
announce to my girl a few  
nasty words.

Let her live and let her flourish with her adulterers,  
whom having embraced 300 of them at the same time, she owns and keeps them,  
truly loving none of them, but repeatedly breaking the groins of  
all of them;

nor, let her no longer look back for my love as before,  
which by her fault, has fallen,  
just like the farthest flower of the field  
has been killed by a passing plow.

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### **Carmen 43.**

Hello, girl, neither with the smallest nose,  
Nor with pretty feet nor with black little eyes  
Nor with long fingers nor with dry lips  
Nor clearly with a very refined tongue.  
Girl/friend of the spendthrift from Formiae,  
Does the province report that you are beautiful?  
Is our Lesbia compared with you?  
O tasteless and crude age!

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### **Carmen 51.**

That man seems to me to be equal to a god,  
That man, if it is right to say, seems to surpass the gods,  
who sitting opposite to you repeatedly looks at you  
and hears

your sweet laughter, something which robs miserable me  
of all feelings: for as soon as I look  
at you, Lesbia, no voice remains  
in my mouth.

But the tongue is paralyzed, a fine fire  
spreads down through my limbs, the ears ring with their  
very own sound, my eyes veiled  
in a double darkness.

Idleness, Catullus, is your trouble;  
idleness is what delights you and moves you to passion;

idleness has proved ere now the ruin of kings and prosperous cities.

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**Carmen 58.**

Caelius, our Lesbia, that Lesbia,  
that same Lesbia, whom Catullus loved  
more than himself and more than all his own,  
now loiters at the cross-roads and in the backstreets  
ready to toss-off the grandsons of the brave Remus.

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**Carmen 70.**

My woman says to me that there is none  
With whom she'd rather spend her days than I,  
Should even Jove himself ask her to wed.  
So she says, but women often lie,  
What a woman says to a desirous lover,  
This he ought to write in the wind and rapid water.

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**Carmen 72.**

You used to say that you knew only Catullus,  
Lesbia, neither did you wish to know Jupiter instead of me.  
At that time I loved you not as the common crowd of men love a girlfriend  
but as a father loves his sons and sons in law.  
Now I know you: wherefore even if I burn the worse,  
you are cheaper and of less meaning to me.  
You say how can this be? Because a hurt of such a kind  
forces a lover to love more, but to wish her less well.

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**Carmen 75.**

To this point here my mind has been dragged down, Lesbia, by your fault  
And so by its own devotion the mind itself has destroyed itself,  
As now it is not possible to respect you, if you should become very good,  
Nor is it able to stop loving you, even if you should do every bad thing.

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**Carmen 79.**

Lesbius is pretty. Why not? Since Lesbia likes him  
more than you and all your people, Catullus.  
But still let this pretty boy sell Catullus and all his people  
if he should find three to acknowledge his birth.

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**Carmen 83.**

Lesbia says many bad things of me in front of her man:  
 These are the source of greatest joy for that fatuous ass.  
 Fool, do you perceive nothing? If she could forget me and shut up,  
 She'd be sane: now because she whines and slanders me,  
 Not only does she remember me, but, what is oh so much worse,  
 She is angry. That's that, she burns even as she speaks.

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**Carmen 85.**

I hate and I love. Wherefore would I do this, perhaps you ask?  
 I do not know. But I feel that it happens and I am tortured.

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**Carmen 86.**

Quintia is beautiful to many. For me she is white, tall,  
 well-built: I admit these attributes singly.  
 But deny the notion of the idea of beauty: because no grace,  
 not a grain of humour is in such a large body.  
 Lesbia is beautiful, who is not only totally and extremely so,  
 but also has stolen all the attractions of all other women.

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**Carmen 87.**

No woman can truthfully say she was so much loved,  
 as my Lesbia was loved by me.  
 No such big trust was ever kept in any commitment before  
 as, on my side, my love for you was kept.

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**Carmen 92.**

Lesbia always talks bad to me nor is she ever silent  
 about me: Lesbia is loving me, if not, I may be destroyed.  
 By what sign? Because they are the same signs: I am showing her  
 disapproval constantly, I am lost if I do not love.

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**Carmen 107**

If anything happened to one who is desirous and hopeful, yet unexpected,  
 this is especially pleasing to the soul.  
 Therefore, this is pleasing, and dearer than gold to me,  
 because you, Lesbia, have restored yourself to desirous me.  
 You restore yourself to desirous, unexpected me, you return yourself  
 to me. O, light of a fairer mark!

Who lives more happily than I alone, or who will be able  
 to say that these things are to be hoped for more than this life?

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**A FEW OTHERS****Carmen 9.**

Veranius, being superior to all  
 300,000 of my friends in my eyes  
 Have you come home to your household gods  
 and loving brothers and old mother?  
 Youve come back! o happy news for me!  
 I will see you unharmed and i will hear  
 you telling about places of the spaniards, the deeds, the tribes  
 as it is your custom, and drawing your neck close  
 will I kiss the delightful eyes and lips?  
 O how many happy men there are,  
 who is happier and more blessed than I am?  
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**Carmen 13.**

You will dine well with me, my Fabullus, in a few days,  
 if the gods favor you, if you bring with you a good and large dinner,  
 not without a dazzling girl and wine and wit and all your loud laughter.  
 If you bring these things, I say, our charming one,  
 you will eat well; for the wallet of your Catullus is full of cobwebs.  
 But in return, you receive pure loves of anything that is more sweet or elegant:  
 for I will give you perfume, which the Venuses and Cupids gave to my girl,  
 which, when you smell it, you will ask the gods,  
 Fabullus, to make all of you a nose.  
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**Carmen 15.**

I entrust my loved ones and myself to you, Aurelius.  
 And I humbly ask a favor from you,  
 that if you have ever valued anything,  
 which you might have wished to keep pure and true,  
 then modestly guard my boy for me,  
 not I say from the populace, I don't fear  
 them who just pass by here and there on the street  
 occupied with their own affairs.  
 In truth, I am afraid of you and your penis,  
 hostile to boys, both good and bad.  
 Because you let it go where it pleases, as it pleases,  
 as much as you wish. When it is out, you are ready.  
 This one boy I ask humbly, I feel, you exclude.  
 For if foul thought and senseless passion drives  
 you, wretch, to such a crime  
 that you plan in your mind treason against me,  
 Then you will have a miserable and ill fate.

Because with feet tied together you will be run  
through your backdoor with mullets and radishes.

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**Carmen 24.**

O you who are the youthful flower of the Juventius family,  
not only of these, but however many either were  
of after this will be born in later years,  
I would prefer you to give wealth to that Midas  
who has neither servant nor money-box,  
than you allow yourself like this to be loved by that guy  
"Who? Is he not good-looking?" you ask. He is.  
But to that good-looking man belong neither servant nor money-box.  
Throw it away and make light of this as much as you want,  
but nevertheless that man has neither servant nor money-box.

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**Carmen 33.**

O greatest of thieves skulking about the bathhouses,  
The father, Vibennius, and Vibennius Junior, the catamite son  
(For dad is the one with the more sordid thieving hand,  
While sonny boy is busy peddling his voracious fundament):  
Why don't you both get the hell out of here and go to the devil?  
Since the thieveries of the father are common knowledge  
And you, son, couldn't sell that hairy ass of yours for a penny.

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**Carmen 41.**

Ameana, the well-worn prostitute,  
demanded the whole 10,000 from me  
this girl with the ugly nose,  
friend of the indebted man of Formianus.  
Relatives, to whom the girl is of concern,  
call together doctors and friends:  
the girl is not sane, nor is she accustomed to ask  
for bronze reflective of her looks.

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**Carmen 49**

Most eloquent of the descendants of Romulus,  
As many as there are and however many there have been, Marcus Tullius,  
And however many there will be in the years to come  
Catullus, the worst of all poets,  
gives the greatest thanks to you,  
as much the worst of all poets  
as you are the best patron of all.

**Carmen 54.**

Otho's head is quite tiny,  
 and its owner's legs loutishly unclean,  
 soft and delicate is Libo's farting:  
 if not with all that, then let me displease you  
 with Sufficio, old age renewed...  
 again let my worthless iambs  
 rile you, our one and only general.  
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**Carmen 57.**

Everything is turning out well for those disgraceful Cinaedii\*  
 Caesar and Mamurra the pathicus\*  
 No wonder: the stains are equal for both of them,  
 But one is from the city and the other is from Formia,  
 And they are so ingrained that they cannot be washed out:  
 They are diseased equally, and both are twins,  
 Both are educated in one little bed,  
 Nor is the latter a more gluttinous adulterer than the former;  
 They are allied rivals even for little girls.  
 Everything is turning out well for those disgraceful Cinaedii\*.

\* - Cinaedus (in the plural form, Cinaedii) and pathicus are both vulgar and insulting words that refer to sexually perverted individuals.

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**Carmen 69**

Wonder not, Rufus, why none of the opposite sex  
 wishes to place her dainty thighs beneath you,  
 not even if you undermine her virtue with gifts of choice  
 silk or the enticement of a pellucid gem.  
 You are being hurt by an ugly rumour which asserts  
 that beneath your armpits dwells a ferocious goat.  
 This they fear, and no wonder; for it's a right rank  
 beast that no pretty girl will go to bed with.  
 So either get rid of this painful affront to the nostrils  
 or cease to wonder why the ladies flee.  
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**Carmen 77**

Rufus believed friend to me in vain and to no purpose  
 (in vain? rather with a great and evil price)  
 Is this the way you creep up to me, and burning my inner organs  
 you snatched away all our good things from miserable me?  
 You snatched away, alas alas cruel posion of our life,  
 alas alas plague of our friendship.  
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**Carmen 99.**

I stole from you, while you were playing, honey-sweet Juventius,  
 a kiss more sweet than sweet ambrosia.  
 But I did not get away with it: for such a long hour  
 I remember being crucified on the greatest cross,  
 and then I apologized to you, but I was not able to remove  
 with any tears even a little of your ferocity.  
 For at the same time it was done, you wiped clean  
 your lips, bathed by many tears, with all your fingers,  
 nor did anything remained received from my face,  
 just as if it were the filthy spit of a filthy prostitute.  
 Besides this, you did not hold back from making me miserable,  
 troubled by love, and tormented in every way,  
 so that to me that kiss changed from ambrosia  
 to a bitterer thing than a bitter herb.  
 Because you put forth such a punishment for miserable love,  
 never will I after this steal a kiss.  
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**Carmen 101.**

Through many nations and many seas have I come  
 To carry out these wretched funeral rites, brother,  
 That at last I may give you this final gift in death  
 And that I might speak in vain to silent ashes.  
 Since fortune has borne you, yourself, away from me.  
 Oh, poor brother, snatched unfairly away from me,  
 Now, though, even these, which from antiquity and in the custom of our  
 parents, have been handed down, a gift of sadness in the rites, accept  
 them, flowing with many brotherly tears, And for eternity, my brother,  
 hail and farewell.  
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**Carmen 108**

If, Cominus, by the will of the people,  
 you should die in grizzled old age,  
 depraved by impure customs,

I for my part do not doubt that first  
your tongue, having been cut out  
as the enemy of good men,  
would be given to a greedy vulture,  
a raven would devour your gouged-out eyes  
with his black throat, dogs your intestines,  
and wolves the rest of your limbs.  
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<http://rudy.negenborn.net/catullus/text2/ei.htm>