

Catullus 2

Sparrow, my lady's pet, with whom she often plays whilst she holds you in her lap, or gives you her fingertip to peck and provokes you to bite sharply, whenever she, the bright-shining lady of my love, has a mind for some sweet pretty play, in hope, as I think, that when the sharper smart of love abates, she may find some small relief from her pain—ah, might I¹ but play with you as she does, and lighten the gloomy cares of my heart!

2A

...

This is as welcome to me as to the swift maiden was (they say) the golden apple, which loosed her girdle too long tied.

Catullus 3

Mourn, ye Graces and Loves, and all you whom the Graces love. My lady's sparrow is dead, the sparrow my lady's pet, whom she loved more than her very eyes; for honey-sweet he was, and knew his mistress as well as a girl knows her own mother. Nor would he stir from her lap, but hopping now here, now there, would still chirp to his mistress alone. Now he goes along the dark road, thither whence they say no one returns. But curse upon you, cursed shades of Orcus, which devour all pretty things! Such a pretty sparrow you have taken away. Ah, cruel! Ah, poor little bird! All because of you my lady's darling eyes are heavy and red with weeping.

Catullus 5

Let us live, my Lesbia, and love, and value at one farthing all the talk of crabbed old men.

Suns may set and rise again. For us, when the short light has once set, remains to be slept the sleep of one unbroken night.

Give me a thousand kisses, then a hundred, then another thousand, then a second hundred, then yet another thousand, then a hundred. Then, when we have made up many thousands, we will confuse our counting, that we may not know the reckoning, nor any malicious person blight them with evil eye, when he knows that our kisses are so many.

Catullus 7

You ask how many kissings of you, Lesbia, are enough for me and more than enough. As great as is the number of the Libyan sand that lies on silphium-bearing Cyrene, between the oracle of sultry Jove and the sacred tomb of old Battus; or as many as are the stars, when night is silent, that see the stolen loves of men,—to kiss you with so many kisses, Lesbia, is enough and more than enough for your mad Catullus; kisses, which neither curious eyes shall count up nor an evil tongue bewitch.

Catullus 8

Poor Catullus, 'tis time you should cease your folly, and account as lost what you see is lost. Once the days shone bright on you, when you used to go so often where my mistress led, she who was loved by me as none will ever be loved. There and then were given us those joys, so many, so merry, which you desired nor did my lady not desire. Bright for you, truly, shone the days. Now she desires no more—no more should you desire, poor madman, nor follow her who flees, nor live in misery, but with resolved mind endure, be firm. Farewell, my mistress; now Catullus is firm; he will not seek you nor ask you against your will. But you will be sorry, when you are a nobody in favours asked for. Ah, poor wretch! what life is left for you? Who now will visit you? to whom will you seem fair? whom now will you love? by whose name will you be called? whom will you kiss? whose lips will you bite? But you, Catullus, be resolved and firm.

Catullus 11

Furius and Aurelius, who will be Catullus's fellow-travellers, whether he makes his way even to distant India, where the shore is beaten by the far-resounding eastern wave, or to Hyrcania and soft Arabia, or to the Sacae and archer Parthians, or those plains which sevenfold Nile dyes with his flood, or whether he will tramp across the high Alps, to visit the memorials of great Caesar, the Gaulish Rhine, the formidable Britons, remotest of men—O my friends, ready as you are to encounter all these risks with me, whatever the will of the gods above shall bring, take a little message, not a kind message, to my mistress. Bid her live and be happy with her paramours, three hundred of whom she holds at once in her embrace, not loving one of them really, but again and again draining the strength of all. And let her not look to find my love, as before; my love, which by her fault has dropped, like a flower on the meadow's edge, when it has been touched by the plough passing by.

Catullus 51

He seems to me to be equal to a god, he, if it may be, seems to surpass the very gods, who sitting opposite you again and again gazes at you and hears you sweetly laughing. Such a thing takes away all my senses, alas! for whenever I see you, Lesbia, at once no sound of voice remains within my mouth, but my tongue falters, a subtle flame steals down through my limbs, my ears ring with inward humming, my eyes are shrouded in twofold night.

Idleness, Catullus, does you harm, you riot in your idleness and wanton too much. Idleness ere now has ruined both kings and wealthy cities.

Catullus 58

O, Caelius, my Lesbia, that Lesbia, Lesbia whom alone Catullus loved more than himself and all his own, now in the cross-roads and alleys serves the filthy lusts of the descendants of lordly-minded Remus.

Catullus 72

You used once to say that Catullus was your only friend, Lesbia, and that you would not prefer Jupiter himself to me. I loved you then, not only as the common sort love a mistress, but as a father loves his sons and sons-in-law. Now I know you; and therefore, though I burn more ardently, yet you are in my sight much less worthy and lighter. How can that be? you say. Because such an injury as this drives a lover to be more of a lover, but less of a friend.

Catullus 75

To this point is my mind reduced by your perfidy, Lesbia, and has so ruined itself by its own devotion, that now it can neither wish you well though you should become the best of women, nor cease to love you though you do the worst that can be done.

Catullus 83

Lesbia says many hard things to me in the presence of her husband, a great joy to the fool. Dull mule, you understand nothing. If she forgot me and were silent, she would be heart-whole. But as it is, her snarling and railing means this: she not only remembers, but—a much more serious thing—she is angry; that is, she burns, and so she talks.

Catullus 85

I Hate and love. Why I do so, perhaps you ask. I know not, but I feel it, and I am in torment.

Catullus 86

Quintia is thought beautiful by many; I think her fair, tall, and straight. I so far allow each of these points, but I demur to “beautiful,” for she has no grace; there is not in the whole compass of her tall person one grain of salt. Lesbia is beautiful: for she possesses all the beauties, and has stolen all the graces from all the women alone for herself.

Catullus 87

No woman can say truly that she has been loved as much as you, Lesbia mine, were loved by me.
No faithfulness in any bond was ever such as has been found on my part in my love for you.