

ATTIS by Catullus

Over the heights of the marine deep
Driven fast in a speeding ship
Attis with feisty foot touched down
And sped to the Phrygian grove

He landed at the evergreen
Land of the goddess
And molten with madness, mind
In a trance, with a slit
And a slice of a sharp flint stone
Tore off the weights of his groin.

When Attis looked down at her virile pile
Fresh soiled in the bloodshine earth,
She fast took up the light tambour drum
In the palms of her snow white hands.
Your tambour drum, Cybele.
Your sacred custom, Mother.

And beating now the tight-stretched bull-hide,
she began to sing, twitching, insane
to the spinning crowd around:

“Come! you Gallae. Come! my friends.
Let’s fly to Cybele’s wooded peaks - Let’s
go you wide-eyed, blinded flock
Made mad by the shepherdess of Dindymon!
Come! let’s fly now we’re exiles
Spilt on a land that’s not our own.
Followers, Friends, follow my lead!
You’ve followed me here across the saline surge
Through the cruelties of the sea.

In deep disgust for the goddess of love
You’ve scraped all man from your manly bones;
Now excite the spirit of our happy queen
With your madman dashes and your madman screams,
May slow delay
Leak from your brains.

Come! follow me to the home of Cybele

To the Phrygian grove of the goddess.
Where the voice of the cymbals sound,
Where the tambour drums resound,
Where the Phygian piper plays
Low songs with horn-shaped reed;
Where twisted maenads in ivy
Rattle their ivy heads;
Where they howl and squeal with fanatic zeal
Through their howling sacred rites.
Where the mad crew of the goddess fly,
That place to where we're magnetized
In our manic, skipping flights!"

When fake-lady Attis stopped
The whole troop trilled
With fast flickering tongues.
The shallow tambour droned
The concave cymbals crashed
The quick chorus with flying foot
Set off for lush green Ida.

In full trance now and gasping
Snatching breaths to the breathless beat,
Attis wove the mindless band
In and out of the dapple-lit trees.
Like a herd of untamed oxen
Thrashing at the heavy yoke,
The sprinting Gallae follow Attis
And her fast-footed lead.

When their toes touched down on Cybele's ground
Their adrenalin flight lost speed and drowned,
Their fire and wild power slid fast
Into empty-bellied sleep.
Slothful languor smeared their eyes
With summer-honeyed sleep.

Sleep leaving quick left Attis awake
Snuck back to Pasiphaea's spasmodic hips.
Fresh soothed now with gentle sleep,
Her manic mind of madness clear,
Her aching chest played back her deed,
She saw what she no longer had

And where it was she'd come.

With crawling mind she crept back to the waves
And wept at the width of the tear-smudged sea.
"O Land my creator, land that gave me life,
I miss you like runaway slaves
Miss masters and their beds.
I've turned my feet to Ida's grove
Now I live cold, amid the snow,
Bed down cold with wild beasts.
In madness I came to these dark haunts
Where wild animals roam.

Where are you? I can't even tell,
The pupils of my eyes themselves
Ache to sink their gaze on you -
For now, while I'm still free
In mind from my lunacy.
Am I to suffer these woods for life
So far from my home?
So far from my native land, possessions,
Parents, friends?
So far from the forum, racetracks and gyms?
O sad, sad, my soul is sad -
I'll complain like this forever.

What kind of shadow will I not have cast?
I a woman
I a young man
I a teen
I a boy.

I was the flower of the gym.
I was the glory of the oil.
Mine were the always-crowded doors,
Mine the threshold warm with lovers,
My home knee deep in Valentines
When sunlight tipped me from my bed.
Am I now to forever bow to Cybele?
Am I a maenad?
Am I part of me,
A sterile man?

Am I to camp down in these snowbound
Fields of ice in "evergreen" Ida?
Am I to live out my days under Phrygian peaks
With the woodworshipping dear
The groveroaming boar?
Now, right now, I regret what I've done.
Now, right now, I'm sorry."

When from lush lips her voice quick slipped,
The twin ears of Cybele twitched.
She loosed the yoke of her leonine pair
And whipping the left, the enemy of flocks
said:

"Go now, Ferox! Go make her mad!
Make sure that she, who wants to flee
And be free of me and my sovereignty,
Goes back into my forest!
Whip yourself on with your own tail.
Endure the lashing goad!
Roar and roar 'til the whole shore roars
With you flesh-curdling growl.
And shake you red mane, Ferox!
Shake it with muscular neck."

The mighty Cybele spoke these words
And set the lion loose.
The beast now full of burning rage
Stuffed his heart with still more rage,
Let out a roar and dived and tore
Up the trees with his thundering claws.
At the white-crest wetness of the coast
He saw tender Attis by the marble sea.
Now in his sights, he pursued his prey
With still more fearsome speed.

Attis, shocked back out of her mind,
Dashed back wild into the trees
Where she spent the rest of her life
In the service of Cybele.

Goddess, great goddess, Cybele
Divine Lady of Dindymon.

May all your fury, my good queen,
Stay far away from my home and me.

Drive other men to madness.
Drive madness to other men.]