

68. FRIENDSHIP: TO MANLIUS



hat you send this letter to me, written with tears,
to me, crushed by fate and bitter ill-fortune,
that I might raise up, and return from the threshold of death
one shipwrecked, cast from the foaming waves of the sea,
one whom sacred *Venus* [p. 237] deprives of gentle sleep,
forsaken, enduring an empty bed, not delighting
in the sweet songs of the *Muse* [p. 221] of the ancient poets,
lying awake all night with an anxious mind:
that's pleasing to me, since you call me your friend,
and search here for the gifts of the Muses and Venus.
But in case my troubles aren't known to you, *Manlius* [p. 236],
or you think I dislike the duties of a friend,
let me tell of waves of misfortune that I myself plunge in,
lest you seek rich gifts any more from a wretched man.
At that time when the first white toga was handed me,
when my youth passed in flower through happy spring,
I played more than enough: the goddess was not unknown to me,
the work that mixed bitter with sweet.
But all my studies were lost in the grief at my brother's death.
O wretched, to take my brother from me:
you brother, you, in dying, wrecked my good fortune,
with you our whole house is buried together,
with you all our joys perish in one,
that your love nourished in sweet life.

So that ruined in thought I forsake those studies
and all the delights of the mind.

Therefore, when you say that it's shameful for *Catullus* [p. 205]

to be in Verona, that here someone well-known
only warms cold limbs in an empty bed,

it's not shameful, Manlius, my sadness is great.

So pardon me if I don't bestow those gifts on you
that grief takes from me, while I cannot.

Since there's no great store of books here with me,
it needs me to be living in Rome: there's my house,
there's my place, there my time is spent:

only one of my many book-boxes follows me here.

since it's so, don't think I do anything with ill intent,
or that I'm lacking at all in noble feeling:

it's on you and no other I seek to lavish riches:

besides I'd offer whatever riches I had.