

IN CATILINAM I

[1] How far, I ask you,* Catiline, do you mean to stretch our patience? How much longer will your frenzy continue to frustrate us? At what point will your unrestrained recklessness stop flaunting itself? Have the nightly guards on the Palatine, have the patrols in the streets, have the fears of the people, have the gatherings of all loyal citizens, have these strongly defended premises in which this meeting is being held, have the faces and expressions of the senators here had no effect on you at all? Do you not realize that your plans have been exposed? Do you not see that your conspiracy has been arrested and trapped, now that all these people know about it? Which of us do you think does not know what you were up to yesterday evening, what you were up to last night,* where you were, whom you collected together, and what plan of action you decided upon? [2] What a decadent age we live in! The senate is aware of these things, the consul sees them—yet this man remains alive! Alive, did I say? He is not just alive: he actually enters the senate, he takes part in our public deliberations, and with his eyes he notes and marks down each one of us for assassination. We meanwhile, brave men that we are, think that we have done enough for our country if we merely get out of the way of his frenzy and his weapons.

You, Catiline, ought long ago to have been taken to your death, and on a consul's order. It is on yourself that the destruction which you have long been plotting for all of us ought to be visited. [3] The distinguished chief pontiff, Publius Scipio, as a mere private citizen killed Tiberius Gracchus,* when Gracchus was causing a mild disturbance in our country: so are we, as consuls, to put up with Catiline, when he is aiming to devastate the entire world with fire and slaughter? I will pass over precedents that are too old, such as Gaius Servilius Ahala, who killed Spurius Maelius* with his own hand when Maelius was contemplating an uprising. Gone, gone is that one-time public virtue which led men of courage to punish a citizen traitor more severely than the deadliest foreign enemy. But in fact we have a decree of the senate* against you, Catiline, that is stern and authoritative. So it is not the national deliberations or the

resolution of the senate that is wanting: it is we, we the consuls, I tell you, who are failing to act!

[4] The senate once decreed that the consul Lucius Opimius should see to it that the state came to no harm.* Not a night intervened. Gaius Gracchus, despite his illustrious father, grandfather, and ancestors, was killed on suspicion of stirring up dissension; and the ex-consul Marcus Fulvius was also killed, together with his children. A similar senatorial decree put the state into the hands of the consuls Gaius Marius and Lucius Valerius*—and did even a single day then elapse before death and the state's vengeance overtook the tribune of the plebs Lucius Saturninus and the praetor Gaius Servilius? But we for twenty days now* have been allowing the edge of the senate's authority to become blunt. We have a senatorial decree like those earlier ones, but it is filed away, as if hidden in a sheath—but on the strength of that decree, you, Catiline, should have been instantly killed. You remain alive, and yet you live on not to put aside your recklessness, but to increase it. Conscript fathers, my only wish is to be compassionate,* my only wish is not to appear remiss in the midst of a national emergency, but already I find that I am guilty of doing nothing, and doing wrong.

[5] There exists in Italy a military camp, hostile to the Roman people, in the mountain passes of Etruria. Each and every day, the number of the enemy increases. The commander of that camp, and the leader of that enemy, you can see inside the city walls, and even in the senate, plotting some form of ruin for our country each day from within. If I now order your arrest, Catiline, and if I order your execution, I suppose what I shall have to be afraid of is not that every loyal citizen will accuse me of being slow to act, but that someone will say I have been too severe! But as it happens, there is a particular reason why I am still not bringing myself to do what I ought to have done long ago. You will be executed only when no one can be found so criminal, so wicked, and so similar to yourself as to deny the justice of that course of action. [6] As long as there remains a single person who has the temerity to speak up for you, you will remain alive—and live in the way you do now, surrounded by the many strong guards I have posted, and prevented from moving against your country. In addition, the many eyes and ears that you are not aware of will continue, as in the past, to track your every move and keep guard against you.

What is the point, Catiline, in waiting any longer, when night cannot cloak your criminal plots in darkness, when a private house cannot confine conspiratorial voices inside its walls—if everything is exposed to the light of day, everything breaks out into the open? Take my advice: call off your plans, and stop thinking of assassination and arson. Whichever way you turn, you have been thwarted. Your plans are all as clear as day to me. Let me take you through them.

[7] Do you remember that I declared in the senate on 21 October that Gaius Manlius, your sidekick and partner in crime, would take up arms on a certain day, and that that day would be 27 October? And was I not correct, Catiline, not just about the rising, so large, terrible, and extraordinary as it was, but also—and this is much more remarkable—about the actual date? I also informed the senate that you had deferred your massacre of leading senators until 28 October, although by that time many of our national leaders had already abandoned Rome, not so much from a desire to save their lives as because they wanted to thwart your plans. Surely you cannot deny that, when that day arrived, my vigilance, together with the guards I posted, successfully prevented you from taking action against the country? Or that you kept on saying that even though the others had left, you were quite happy with massacring only those of us who remained behind? [8] And when you were confident that you were going to seize Praeneste* on 1 November by a night attack, did you have any idea that the town had been fortified on my orders with troops, guards, and watchmen? Nothing that you do, nothing that you attempt, and nothing that you contemplate takes place without me not only hearing about it, but actually seeing it and being fully aware of it.

Now go over with me what happened last night; you will see that I am much more vigilant in defence of the country than you are for its destruction. I declare that yesterday evening you went to the scythe-makers' quarter—I will be absolutely precise—to the house of Marcus Laeca,* and that you met there a number of your accomplices in this criminal lunacy in which you are all engaged. Do you dare to deny it? Why do you say nothing? If you deny it, I shall prove it. In fact, I notice that there are here in the senate several of those who were with you. [9] Immortal gods! Where in the world are we? What country do we inhabit? In what city do we live? Here, conscript

fathers, here amongst our very number, in this, the most revered and important council in the world, there exist men who are plotting the massacre of all of us and the destruction of this city—and even of the entire world. I, the consul, see them; I ask for their opinion on matters of state; and men who ought by rights to be put to the sword I am not even wounding, as yet, with my words.*

So you were at Laeca's house last night, Catiline. You parcelled out the regions of Italy. You decided where you wanted each man to go. You selected those you were going to leave behind in Rome and those you were going to take away with you. You designated the parts of the city to be burnt. You confirmed that you were on the point of leaving Rome yourself. But you added that you would nevertheless have to stay just a little longer—because I was still alive. Two Roman equestrians* were found to relieve you of that particular concern: they gave their word that they would assassinate me in my bed the very same night, just before dawn. [10] I discovered all this almost as soon as your meeting had broken up. I protected and strengthened my home by increasing the guards, and I denied entry to the men whom you yourself had sent to call on me first thing in the morning—and who did indeed come at that time, as I had meanwhile told numerous prominent people that they would.

In view of this, Catiline, finish what you have started: leave the city at long last. The gates are open: go. For too long now have Manlius and that camp of yours been waiting for you to assume command of it. And take all your followers with you; or if you cannot take them all, take as many as you can. Purge the city. As for me, you will release me from the great fear I feel, if only there is a wall separating us. At all events, you cannot stay any longer with us: I will not tolerate it, I will not endure it, I will not allow it.

[11] We owe a great debt of gratitude to the immortal gods and especially to this Jupiter Stator,* the god who from the earliest times has stood guard over our city, for enabling us time and again to escape this pestilence, so foul, so revolting, and so deadly to our country. But we cannot go on forever allowing the survival of the state to be endangered by a single individual. As long as you, Catiline, set traps for me while I was consul-elect, I used private watchfulness, not public guards, to defend myself. Then at the last consular elections,* when you wanted to kill me, the consul, together with your fellow candidates in the Campus Martius, I foiled your abominable plot by

the protection and services of my friends, without declaring any public state of emergency. In short, whenever you went for me, I stood up to you on my own—even though I was aware that if anything were to happen to me, it would be a terrible disaster for our country.

[12] But now you are openly attacking the country as a whole. You are calling to destruction and devastation the temples of the immortal gods, the houses of the city, the lives of all Roman citizens, and finally the whole of Italy. Even so, I will not yet venture to carry out my first duty and act as befits my office and the strict traditions of our ancestors: instead, I shall act in a way which is more lenient, but also more conducive to the national security. For if I order your execution, all the other members of the conspiracy will remain within the state; but if you leave Rome, as I have long been urging you to do, the voluminous, pernicious dregs of society—your companions—will be flushed out of the city.

[13] Well, Catiline? Surely you cannot be hesitating to do on my orders what you were already doing anyway of your own free will? The consul orders a public enemy to get out of Rome. Into exile, you enquire? That is not what I am ordering—but if you ask my opinion, it is what I advise.

At Rome, Catiline, what is there, at the present time, that can possibly give you any pleasure? Aside from your degraded fellow conspirators, there is not a single person in this city who does not fear you, not a single person who does not hate you. Is there any mark of disgrace with which your private life has not been branded? Is there any dishonour in your personal affairs that does not besmirch your reputation? From what lust have your eyes, from what crime have your hands, from what outrage has any part of your body ever abstained? Is there any youth that you have ensnared with the enticements of corruption whom you have not then gone on to provide with either a weapon to commit crime or a torch to fire his lusts?

[14] Or again, when you recently made your house ready for a new bride by bringing about the death of your previous wife, did you not compound this crime with yet another that is quite incredible? But I will pass over this and let it be veiled in silence, because I do not want such a monstrous crime to appear either to have been committed in our country, or to have been committed and not punished. I will also pass over the financial ruin which you will find hanging over you on the 13th of this month.*

I come now to matters which relate not to the shame of your personal immorality, nor to the disgraceful state of your financial affairs, but to the supreme interests of Rome, and the lives and survival of each one of us. [15] Can this light of day, Catiline, or this fresh air afford you any pleasure, when you are aware that nobody here is ignorant of the fact that on 29 December in the consulship of Lepidus and Tullus you stood in the assembly armed with a weapon, that you had formed a body of men to kill the consuls and the leaders of the state, and that it was not any change of mind or failure of nerve on your part that prevented you from carrying out your insane crime, but simply the good luck of the Roman people? But there is no need to go on about that: after all, those crimes are well known, and you have committed a good many others since. But how many times you have attempted to assassinate me as consul-elect, and how many times as consul! How many seemingly inescapable thrusts of yours I have dodged by a slight swerve and, as they say, by sleight of body! You achieve nothing, you accomplish nothing, but that does not deter you from trying and hoping. [16] How many times that dagger of yours has been wrenched from your hands, how many times it has dropped by some lucky chance and fallen to the ground! But you still cannot manage without it. With what special rites you must have consecrated and dedicated it I do not know, for you to plunge it into the body of a consul.

But as for the present, what sort of life are you living? You see, I shall talk to you in a way that will not seem motivated by the hatred I ought to feel for you, but by the pity you certainly do not deserve. A short while ago, you walked into the senate. Who out of that packed gathering of people, and out of so many of your friends and connections, offered you a single word of greeting? If no one else in history has ever been treated like that, do you really wait for the insult to be expressed in words, when you have been crushed by the strongest verdict—that of utter silence? And what about the fact that, when you entered the chamber, these benches suddenly emptied? That all the consulars, men whom you had many times marked down for assassination, left the area of benches near you empty and unoccupied the moment you took your seat? How, I ask you, do you feel about that?

[17] By Hercules, if my slaves were as afraid of me as all your fellow-citizens are of you, I would certainly think I ought to leave my

house—so don't you think you ought to leave Rome? And if I saw my fellow-citizens looking at me, even without justification, with such deep hatred and suspicion, I would prefer to remove myself from their sight than remain before the hostile gaze of all of them. But you, knowing the crimes you have committed and so being aware that the hatred everyone feels towards you is merited and has long been your due, do you hesitate to remove yourself from the sight and presence of those whose minds and feelings you are injuring? If your very own parents feared and hated you, and it was absolutely impossible for you to become reconciled with them, surely, I think, you would withdraw to somewhere where they could not see you. But now your own country, which is the common parent of us all, hates you and is frightened of you, and has long ago come to the conclusion that you are contemplating nothing but her destruction. Will you not then respect her authority, defer to her judgement, or fear her power?

[18] Your country, Catiline, addresses you, and, though silent, somehow speaks to you in these terms: 'For years now, no crime has been committed that has not been committed by you, and no crime has been committed without you. You alone have killed many citizens, and have oppressed and plundered our allies, while escaping punishment and remaining free.* You have managed not merely to ignore the laws and the courts, but to overturn and shatter them. Your previous crimes, intolerable as they were, I put up with as best I could. But now I am racked with fear solely because of you; whenever there is the slightest sound, it is Catiline that people fear; and it seems inconceivable that any plot can be formed against me without your criminality being the cause of it. That this should be so is unendurable. Therefore depart, and release me from this fear! If my fear is justified, your departure will save me from destruction; but if it is not, it will at long last spare me my alarm.' [19] If your country were to address you just as I have done, ought she not to be granted what she asks, even though she could not force you?

But what of the fact that you gave yourself into custody—that, to allay people's suspicions, you said that you were prepared to live at Manius Lepidus' house? When he would not have you, you even had the audacity to come to me and request that I keep an eye on you in my own home! But I gave you the same answer as he did, that I could hardly consider myself safe within the walls of the same house as you,

when I was already in considerable danger being within the same city walls. So off you went to the praetor Quintus Metellus.* And when he had sent you packing, you made your way to your dear friend, the excellent Marcus Metellus,* whom you obviously thought would be very conscientious in guarding you, very quick in suspecting you, and very active in punishing you! But how far away from prison and chains do you think a man ought to be who has already himself come to the conclusion that he needs to be kept under guard?

[20] In this situation, Catiline, if you cannot bring yourself to die, surely you cannot hesitate to flee to some other country, and surrender that life of yours—which you have saved from a whole series of just and well-deserved punishments—to exile and solitude?

‘Put the question to the senate,’ you say. That is what you demand; and if this order should pass a decree saying that it wishes you to go into exile, you undertake to comply. I am not going to put it to the senate: it would not be my practice to do so.* All the same, I will allow you to see what view these senators take of you. Get out of Rome, Catiline. Free the country from fear. Go into exile—if that is the term you are waiting to hear. Well then? Don’t you hear, don’t you notice the senators’ silence? They agree, and say nothing. Why then do you hold out for a spoken decision, when you can clearly see their silent preference?

[21] Now if I had spoken to this fine young man here, Publius Sestius,* or to the valiant Marcus Marcellus,* in the way I have just been speaking to you, the senators would have physically assaulted me, consul though I am, and in this temple too; and they would have been fully justified in doing so. But in your case, Catiline, their inaction denotes approval, their acquiescence a formal decree, and their silence applause. And this does not apply only to the members of the senate, whose opinions you clearly value highly, even if you hold their lives cheap: what I say applies equally to those Roman equestrians, fine and honourable men that they are, and to the rest of the citizens, men of great courage who are surrounding this building, whose numbers you could see, whose feelings you could observe, and whose shouts you could hear only a moment ago. For a long time I have only just managed to keep their hands and weapons away from you; but I am sure I shall have no difficulty persuading them to escort you all the way to the city gates, if you now decide to forsake everything that you have for so long been desperate to destroy.

[22] But why am I saying this? Do I imagine that *your* resolve could be broken? That *you* could come to your senses? That *you* could think of escape? That *you* could consider exile? How I wish the immortal gods would put *that* idea into your head! And yet, if my words did frighten you so much that you were driven to contemplate exile, I can see what a storm of unpopularity would break over me—not necessarily immediately, when the memory of your crimes was still fresh, but at a later date. It would be worth it, however, so long as the consequences only affected me, and did not put the state at risk. But that *your* character should be reformed, that *you* should be deterred by the penalties of the law, or that *you* should put your country before yourself—that is too much to ask. For you are not the man, Catiline, to be turned from disgrace by a sense of decency, or from danger by fear, or from madness by reason.

[23] Therefore go, as I have said often enough now. If I am your enemy, as you say I am, and your aim is to whip up hostility towards me, then go straight into exile. If you do this, it will be hard for me to endure what people will say about me; if you go into exile at the consul's command, it will be hard for me to bear the burden of the odium that will fall on me. If, on the other hand, your aim is to enhance my glory and reputation, then leave with your desperate gang of criminals, take yourself off to Manlius, stir up the bad citizens, separate yourself off from the loyal ones, make war on your country, and revel in banditry and wickedness! If you do that, it will look not as if I have driven you into the arms of strangers, but as if you have been invited to go and join your friends.

[24] Yet why should I be urging you, when I already know that you have sent a force ahead to wait for you under arms at Forum Aurelium,* when I know that you have agreed a prearranged day with Manlius, and when I know that you have also sent ahead that silver eagle* to which you have dedicated a shrine at your house, and which I trust will bring only ruin and disaster to you and all your followers? How, after all, could you go without the object to which you used to pay homage each time you set out to commit a murder, when you would touch its altar with your sacrilegious right hand before using that same right hand straight afterwards to kill Roman citizens?

[25] You will go, at long last, where your unrestrained, insane ambition has long been driving you; nor will this cause you any regret, but, on the contrary, a sort of indescribable delight. It was for

madness such as this that nature created you, your own desire trained you, and fortune preserved you. Not only have you never wanted peace, but you have never wanted war either—unless it was a criminal one. Drawing on the worst of society, you have scraped together a gang of traitors, men entirely abandoned not just by fortune, but even by hope. [26] What delight you will take in their company, what joy you will experience, what pleasure you will revel in, seeing that from so sizeable a gathering you will be able neither to hear nor to see a single decent man! Those physical powers of yours* we hear so much about have set you up for a life of this kind: the ability to lie on the bare ground has prepared you not just for launching sexual assaults but for committing crime, the capacity to stay awake not just for cheating husbands in their sleep but for robbing unsuspecting people of their property. Now you have an opportunity to show off your celebrated capacity to endure hunger, cold, and the lack of every amenity—hardships which you will shortly find out have finished you off! [27] When I prevented you from attaining the consulship,* I at least managed to ensure that you would be in a position only to attack the country as an exile, not to devastate it as consul, and that the criminal enterprise you would undertake would only go under the name of banditry, and not war.

Now, conscript fathers, I want to avert and deflect a particular complaint that our country might—almost with reason—make against me. So please pay careful attention to what I am going to say, and store it deep inside your hearts and minds. Imagine that my country, which is much more precious to me than my own life, imagine that all Italy, imagine that the entire nation were to address me like this: ‘Marcus Tullius, what are you playing at? Are you going to permit the departure of a man whom you have discovered to be a public enemy, who you see will be a leader in war, who you are well aware is awaited in the enemy camp as their commander, a man who is an instigator of crime, the leader of a conspiracy, and the mobilizer of slaves* and bad citizens—so that it will look as if you have not driven him out of the city, but let him loose against it? Surely you are going to give orders that he be cast into chains, led away to execution, and made to suffer the ultimate penalty? [28] What on earth is stopping you? The tradition of our ancestors? But in this country it has very often been the case that even private citizens have punished dangerous citizens with death. Or is it the laws that have been passed

relating to the punishment of Roman citizens? But at Rome people who have rebelled against the state have never retained the rights of citizens. Or are you afraid that history will judge you harshly? Although you are known only for what you have done yourself, and do not have distinguished ancestors to recommend you, the Roman people have nevertheless seen fit to raise you, and at so early an age, through all the magisterial offices and elevate you to the supreme power. Fine thanks you will be paying them in return, then, if you neglect the safety of your fellow-citizens through concern for your reputation or fear of any kind of danger! [29] But if you are afraid of being judged harshly, being criticized for showing severity and resolution is no more to be dreaded than being criticized for criminal neglect of duty. Or, when Italy is ravaged by war, her cities destroyed, and her homes on fire, do you imagine that your own reputation will be exempt from the flames of hatred?

To these most solemn words of our country, and to all individuals who share the feelings she expresses, I will make this brief answer. Had I judged that punishing Catiline with death was the best course of action, conscript fathers, I should not have given that gladiator a single hour of life to enjoy. For if it is the case that our most distinguished and illustrious citizens did not merely not damage their reputations when they killed Saturninus, the Gracchi, Flaccus,* and many other figures of the past, but actually enhanced them, then certainly I had no need to fear that killing this murderer of Roman citizens would do any harm in the future to my own reputation. But even if there was considerable danger of its doing me harm, I have always been of the opinion that unpopularity earned by doing what is right is not unpopularity at all, but glory.

[30] And yet there are not a few members of this order who either fail to see what is hanging over us or pretend not to see it. These people have fed Catiline's hopes by their feeble expressions of opinion, and have given strength to the growing conspiracy by their reluctance to believe in its existence. Their authority is such that, had I punished Catiline, many people—not just traitors, but people who do not know any better—would say that I had acted in a cruel and tyrannical manner. But as it is, I know that if he goes to Manlius' camp, as he means to, there will be no one so stupid as not to see that the conspiracy exists, and no one so wicked as not to acknowledge that it exists.

But if he, and he alone, is killed, I know that this cancer in the state can be repressed only for a short time: it cannot be suppressed permanently. On the other hand, if he removes himself and takes all his followers with him, and brings together in one place all the other castaways he has collected from here and there, we will be able to wipe out and expunge not only this cancer which has grown up in our midst, but also the root and seed of future ills.

[31] We have been living for a long time now, conscript fathers, amid the dangers of a conspiracy and the attempts on our lives, but somehow or other all this criminal activity and this long-standing violence and frenzy has come to a head during my tenure of the consulship. If, out of so many brigands, only this man here is removed, we will perhaps be under the impression, briefly, that we have been freed from our fear and anxiety. But the danger will remain, enclosed deep within the veins and vitals of the state. It is like when people who are seriously ill toss and turn with a burning fever: if they have a drink of cold water, they initially seem to find relief, but are afterwards much more seriously and violently ill than they were before. In the same way, this disease from which our country is suffering will initially seem to abate if this man is punished, but will then break out much more violently, as the other conspirators will still be alive.

[32] Therefore let the traitors depart. Let them detach themselves from the good citizens, gather together in one place, and, as I have said many times now, be separated from us by the city wall. Let them stop attempting to assassinate the consul in his own home, thronging round the tribunal of the city praetor,* besieging the senate-house with swords, and preparing fire-arrows and torches to burn the city. Finally, let it be inscribed on the forehead of every citizen what he thinks about his country. I promise you this, conscript fathers, that we the consuls will show such conscientiousness, you will show such authority, the Roman equestrians will show such courage, and all loyal citizens will show such solidarity that, once Catiline has departed, you will see everything revealed, exposed, crushed, and punished.

[33] With omens such as these, Catiline, and for the sake of the survival of the state, the death and destruction of yourself, and the ruin of those who have linked themselves to you in every type of crime and murder: be off to your sacrilegious and wicked war! And

you, Jupiter, who were established by the same auspices as those by which Romulus founded this city, whom we rightly call the ‘Stayer’* of this city and empire, may you drive him and his associates away from your temple and the other temples, away from the buildings and walls of the city, and away from the lives and fortunes of all the citizens! And on these men who are the opponents of decent citizens, the enemies of their country, brigands of Italy, and linked together in an unholy alliance and syndicate of crime, on these, living and dead, may you inflict everlasting punishment!