

Humane revils

An artistic illustration on a teal background. A hand with long, dark red, pointed fingernails and a gold ring on the ring finger reaches down from the upper right. In the bottom left corner, there is a brown gift box with a yellow ribbon tied in a bow. The box is decorated with small, light blue star-like patterns. Swirling, ethereal smoke or mist flows around the hand and the gift box.

- Ode to Dionysus -
ISSUE 4

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EDITORS' NOTE

We're so proud to bring to you the fourth issue of *Ode to Dionysus*! We have now been doing this journal for two glorious years, and we hope to carry on for many more. Thank you to everyone who submitted, and to everyone currently reading this.

Issue Four is inspired by the myth of Pandora's Box. Pandora was a woman created by Hephaestus, under the order of Zeus, after Prometheus illegally introduced humans to fire. She was the first woman, made from clay, and was gifted beauty, charm and cunning from the other gods. Zeus bestowed a jar upon Pandora, with strict instructions not to open it. Pandora's curiosity got the best of her, and she opened it, unleashing all the evils and miseries into the world. As Pandora closes the jar, only hope remains trapped inside, a symbol of humanity's resilience and ability to find strength in the face of adversity.

We hope you enjoy reading. Please do read the contributors' bios and support them in their other literary endeavours!

Love,

The Editors

CONTRIBUTORS

In order of works

[Casey Dickinson](#)

Casey is an aspiring writer who surrounds himself with creativity within his various Lego sets, books, and games. Each one inspiring him through his youth, and now, watch on as he attempts to craft new worlds. They set him on the journey to write, reminding him of the power of his mind.

[Diego Calle](#)

Diego Calle is a poet and a student at the University of Toronto.

[Devon Webb](#)

Devon Webb (she/her) is an autistic writer & editor based in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her award-winning work has been published extensively worldwide & accumulated six Best of the Net/Pushcart nominations. She is currently working on her debut novel & various creative enterprises, & can be found on social media at @devonwebbnz.

[Jawn Van Jacobs](#)

Jawn Van Jacobs is a rock n roll poet who holds back nothing in the name of poetry. His work has appeared in Cool Beans Lit, Moonday Magazine, Red Cedar Review and Paper Dragon.

Jawn's poetry explores the raw, untamed narratives of outlaws and mystics, shedding light on the lives of those living on the fringes of society. His forthcoming chapbook, bastard bee, will be published by Finishing Line Press in August 2025.

John RC Potter

John RC Potter (he/him/his) is an international educator and gay man from Canada who lives in Istanbul. He has experienced a revolution (Indonesia), air strikes (Israel), earthquakes (Turkey), boredom (UAE), and blinding snow blizzards (Canada), the last being the subject of his story, 'Snowbound in the House of God' (Memoirist). The author's poems, stories, essays, articles, and reviews have been published in various magazines and journals. His story, "Ruth's World" was a Pushcart Prize nominee, and his poem, "Tomato Heart" was nominated for the Best of the Net Award. The author has a gay-themed children's picture book that is scheduled for publication. He is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Recent Publication: "Heimat" in Overgrowth Press (Poetry) March 14, 2025 – Overgrowth Upcoming Publication: "Clara Von Clapp's Secret Admirer" (Prose) in The Lemonwood Quarterly.

Lorna Rose

Lorna Rose is a published poet, novelist and actor, and a devotee of Dionysus, soon to start her training as an official priestess of. These poems are from her poetry and prose collection 'Rebel Heroines' out next year, inspired by Ovid's 'The Heroides'. The book explores the lives of the women and goddesses of Greek myth who want their voices heard and refuse to know their place. Her homage to Dionysus and Ariadne, 'Crown Her with Ivy', a dramatic poem is out now with Tenebrous Texts. Her debut novel 'Hearth: A Tale of Hestia and Dionysus', the first in a trilogy about the wild god and the women in his myths, will be released in December. Her debut poetry collection, 'Caterpillar Soup' is out now with Verve Poetry Press, her second collection 'All the Colours of the Night', has just come out with Tenebrous Texts and her podcast Rebel Heroines, celebrating the women of Greek Mythology and the women who write about them, is available on Spotify.

Yucheng Tao

Yucheng Tao is a Chinese poet based in Los Angeles, currently pursuing a B.A. in Songwriting at the Musicians Institute. His work has appeared in over 40 journals internationally, including Wild Court (King's College London), NonBinary Review, Apocalypse Confidential, The Arcanist, Red Ogre Review, Cathexis Northwest Press, SHINE: International Poetry, In Parentheses, and more. He was a semifinalist for the Winds of Asia Award. One of his poems recently became a semifinalist in a horror-themed competition hosted by Alien Buddha Press, with final results expected in October 2025. He has also been invited for interviews by four literary magazines. His debut chapbook will be published by Alien Buddha Press in August 2025.



Unreleased, *Casey Dickinson*

Hope persisted.

Hope could not be quashed.

Hope could not be extinguished.

And as long as she had hope, she too would persist.

The mantra cycled through her mind as she was once again battered by the ocean. The torrent dragged her beneath the bleak waves. Its chilling grasp merely allowed her a glimpse of the light that shone above the surface, before consuming her within its waters. The constant battle against the tide and towards the glimmering rays was the only thing she could remember. Nothing from before she was plunged into the depths, and yet she remained hopeful for something more when she finally reached her goal— a life outside of the torment. And so, she began her ascent again, pushing her body back up through the maelstrom toward the shining light above the surface. Her target once again came into view. It shimmered against the ocean's waves.

Until it vanished.

Darkness blanketed the surface where the light had been a constant beacon for her. For the first time, she found herself completely isolated from her only positive sensation. Never had she experienced such a void, even whilst bleak vast oceans surrounded her. She felt herself beginning to drown, as her senses became overwhelmed in the dark and the cold. Without the light to reach for, she could only hope for its reappearance.

She relaxed her body, and she gave into the rushing current. It battered her. Yet the drowning sensation didn't worsen, it only lingered, prolonging her suffering.

As she floated there in the abyss, she glanced up to where her beacon of hope had once been, craving its return lest she began begging for her own end.

A blinding flash projected across the ocean.

Its rays penetrated the water, reaching down and casting light upon her skin like she had never felt before. Even with the bitter water encompassing her body she could still feel a gentle heat on her body.

Her hope of survival grew once more.

Currents rushed about her and churned, as if the light was boiling away at the water. She began kicking her legs, more determined than ever to reach the surface. Yet, as she swam it felt like she was sinking further down— though it felt different than the cold drag she'd grown used to. The entire ocean seemed to rush about her body, racing toward the source of the light that she had longed for.

Before she had time to recover from the torrent, it stopped, and she found herself laid in silence. A different kind of silence. No water filled her ears. Her lungs were full of air. Her eyes could see more clearly. Nothing reminded her of the vortex that had been holding her prisoner.

She had hoped for a change.

The ground was damp against her skin. Not wet, merely damp. Rocks surrounded her, reaching up towards where the surface of the ocean had once been. What remained was the familiar keyhole of light, now clear as day without the lens of water. There was nothing to stop her and drag her down this time. The only obstacle between her, and all she had hoped for, was a careful climb out of the trench.

From the bottom, the ascent seemed daunting. The stone was still slick from the seawater. Her nerves were the highest they'd ever been, and yet she was still full of determination.

She began the climb. Every movement was calculated, checking her grip and footing before making her next step. Slowly, she made her way further up the wall of rock. Each part of the ascent

was agonising as her muscles moved bit by bit, straining to keep her holding on. It was so dissimilar to the ocean she had once battled against, yet her goal remained the same.

Barely reaching the halfway point, her body wanted to give up. Her hands were covered in lacerations. Her limbs trembled, threatening to surrender and let her plummet back down to the pit she started in.

However, her hope persevered.

Even as blood began seeping from the cuts in her hands, wetting the stone more. She took her time. Adjusting her grip and focusing on the light in view.

Even as her knees buckled under her weight. She found perches to allow them a moment of reprieve before returning to the climb.

Even as her lungs struggled to fill with oxygen, having only known the feeling of the ocean within them, she continued upwards. She knew she could handle it.

Finally, as she clawed her way up to the last ledge, where she felt that gentle heat against her skin once more. She knew her hope had carried her thus far. Without it, her torment and trials would have consumed her long ago. For the final time, she pulled herself onto her feet, stumbling slightly as she stood. She looked up, towards the source of the light.

“No...” She cried, her voice hoarse.

A large, simple crack in the stone, shaped eerily like a keyhole, allowed in the sun's rays, but nothing more. On the other side she could see a different world to her own, in all its splendour. Grass hills, columns of marble, and even people in the distance. She pushed herself against the crack, trying to squeeze through. The jagged rock cut at her skin more and more as she was determined to fit. But she was too big. She couldn't have faced a lifetime of torment only to be denied all she longed for at the final hurdle.

With her hands, bloodied and aching, she pulled at the rock around the crack. Some shifted, while others fell away, fracturing on impact with the ground. Some landed on her feet, yet she continued to claw at the stone, ignoring the throbbing of pain. Reaching out a hand into the crack, a slight breeze catching on her fingertips, she felt so close to freedom.

“Help me. Please.” She said, hoping someone would hear her.

More rocks loosened and fell away, giving her hope of escape soon. She clambered into the gap with as much of her body as she could manage. On the other side she heard muffled voices. She shouted more, hoping to draw in the attention of anyone nearby, as she pried at the rocks. Blood dripped onto the stone beneath her, but she paid it no mind, too focused on freedom.

“Why did she have to stay behind?” She heard a woman’s voice say from beyond the crack.

Straining her neck, she caught a glimpse of two figures, a male and a female, sitting on a set of steps between two columns.

“Hope is the worst of all evils. It prolongs the suffering of man. After all you just released into the world, you would do well to remember that, Pandora.”



At Icaria, *Diego Calle*

A CHORUS OF SATYRS.

We've lost our Bromios to the sea,
where no green grape can grow.
He'll grace no more the hill, the lea:
we've lost our Bromios to the sea . . .
and seek him not (no sailors, we)
but cry alas and woe.
We've lost our Bromios to the sea,
where no green grape can grow.

A Shrine of Pan, *Diego Calle*

I had not a ram nor a ewe
I could give thee,
nor a lamb nor a kid
I could spare thee,
nor the strength for the
hunt which doth please
thee.

I had not a spray of green bay
I could twine thee
(a wreath of bright-leaf
for to crown thee),
nor a cone you could crush
with a hoof-beat.

Nay:
not a cup of brown beech
deep for drinking
(fringed, by fine art,
with smooth ivy),
nor a note of my pipe
fit to play thee;
yet I came,
and I prayed—
and you loved me.

// PANDORA //, *Devon Webb*

my first broken bone but it's every bone in my body
my baby teeth ripped out at the gums
my speech reduced to inarticulate snatches

But I'm glad to have seen her again, before the tragedy—
the girl I could've been if I'd been loved right
the girl you found & set free
even accidentally, Pandora's box of purity

I guess you can't put the heart back once it's been given
you held it haphazardly like a ticking clock
with an alarm set waiting to go off
but for me, time stopped

I turned it back, the second hand
& the minutes & the hours & the years
till my only wound was the absence of my heart
still beating blood-red in your bedroom

It's that question again, isn't it?
would I have brought her back to life if I foresaw her demise
is innocence something you can infinitely revive
or can you lose it for a last time?

Was it worth it, meeting my sweetest form
just to see her die?
I'll give the same answer every time I ask it—
she lived forever in an instant

// LET THEM DISCOURSE //, *Devon Webb*

some of you bitches are so cynical & I'm sick of explaining myself

let them discourse! let them make me their subject I'm such a muse after all

such a queen of a main character complex

let me dip my fingers in taboo & suck on them while maintaining eye contact with my haters

oh do you really wanna try me do you know enough about me

are you daring enough for a woman who understands herself better than you ever could

there's a whole expanse of psychology searing under my exterior

can you handle the heat or will you talk shit & never touch me

// SORRY MY APOLOGY //, *Devon Webb*

according
to neurotypicals
they are not responsible
for our emotions
which we have too much
or too little of
I'm sorry
I did not hit
my socially allocated quota

they vilify & infantilise us at the same time
are we a child or a cunt
oh so you're not
ableist
you just hate when we act
autistic
lol

as if you know shit about us
enough to decry victimhood
to be a little bitch
on main

oh so we're not allowed to be triggered
but you're allowed to be triggered
oh so you're policing us
but we're not allowed to say
hey that's kind of
privileged

I am not a paragon of virtue!
I am not one to deny honesty!
I get pissed off sometimes!
& I got pissed off at you!

fuck
your
selfish
haughty
entitlement

fuck
your
straight
edged
purity

fuck

your
perfect
crystal
I've
been
broken
&
you
cry
when
you
step
on
the
glass

sorry my hurt hurts
sorry I'm not
soooooooooo
emotionally regulated
sorry I've lost my patience

sorry my apology
is never enough for you
sorry my heart beats too loudly

you
are so
inclusive
until you're not

please girl just block me
I've no desire to be seen in bad faith.

names, *Jawn Van Jacobs*

Eddie put his hands on me
because he *knew* i'd like it –
at least, that's what he said
when i asked why he'd
done it

Tony did the same in high
school – the common
denominator: me so, how could
i not blame myself when Terry
felt me up at the party?

Gio needed a place to live
that wasn't his parents' place –
threw me up against the door
when i asked him kindly to
leave

Scott sold me weed
then gave me an STD –
always had to learn the hard way
love's price shouldn't have to be
me

Rites of Samael, *Jawn Van Jacobs*

tired of my errant ways,
i fired up the Fiat 500
& drove to the cemetery –
stopping for peaches on the way

upon arrival, i set my
intention: to let the early
autumn wind have harvest
my mind
by walking as old thought died
– biting my peach, accepting
the sweetness a reach away, as
far as the feather left
at an ancestor's grave
where i leave my peach pit offering

but across the way,
on a freshly placed
headstone, i saw a cat lay in
grief
for its owner passed

i bowed in respect,
left without turning
back – in acceptance
that death
is a daily practice –

some refuse to participate

Pea Green, *John RC Potter*

Pea.

Green.

With.

Envy.

Sibling rivalry,
but not related.
Curious that you are
pea green
with envy.

Envy.

With.

Green.

Pea.

Not siblings,
but long-time friends.
Strange that you are
pea green
with envy.

Perhaps you're jealous,
more than envious.
With your leonine ways,
and need for praise.

We're not an Owl and Pussy-Cat,
and this is not a pea-green boat;
flush those feelings away like shat,
so that our friendship stays afloat.

Pea-Green...

Ariadne, *Lorna Rose*

To Theseus

Now I'm done raging,
I'm happy you left me here.
Away from the endless twisting
through dead end corners
mazes of blood
horror in the guise of love,
dread churning my guts.
My guts spilled out to lead you to your glory,
to death,
where all shine is seen for its deception.

You did one good deed with your powerful hands,
your talent for butchery.
I hope when my brother breathed his last,
he remembered me singing soft as I rocked him
under stars and sunlight he never saw again,
until your light came all blazing fierce.

There is a force here on this island prison
that watches over me,
without taking from me.
That comes with drums in the dark and freedom
screeching through the trees.
I'm getting braver.
One night I will join them
and when you see me you will not know me.

So sail on.
Try run from your black soul,
but it will creep up and drown you,
this I promise.

There is a lover here for me with more to offer
than the world you go to thrust yourself upon.
A world that calls my brother monster and you hero.

Daphne, *Lorna Rose*

To Apollo

A last breath that bursts into the first,
stronger,
full of life,
I am all lungs now.
Stumbling feet centred,
seeking depths you cannot fathom.

I was scared at first,
at the price of my refusal.
As my heart cracked open and became
a bending twisted spiraling creature.
But to rise above your magnitude,
to touch the clouds,
to be by fed by the sun
without your permission,
was true freedom.

To see your petty rage,
as each new branch of me hit you like a fist,
was quite glorious.

You wept because I was no longer weak flesh to plunder.
I could bear my own weight in my majesty.
Roots searching out the next opening
so they could flow like water,
asking the land to accommodate.
I begged mother earth to save me and she answered.

The mother you slayed then swaggered around bragging,
your colonisation of mystery.
This is what makes my endless alert stillness worth it,
to see your surprise that she was not conquered.

I puffed out my wooden chest,
took up space,
breathed for the world without taking
and even then you could not let me be.
You had to make your pursuit of me a noble symbol,
as if to say,
Look how I have honoured her,
how she bends to me still.

But you and I both know the truth.
That I would rather be this
than in your smothering arms.

Because now I can give back what you steal,
in symbiosis with nature,

witnessing the beauty of sun rays
through iridescent wings,
singing with the wind,
covering forbidden lovers in my shade.
So much more than the insistent gift you hounded me with.

You may deck those who please you with my bounty,
but you cannot have me.
You may stroke my bark in awed frustration,
but you cannot touch me.
So who is truly immortal cruel god?
That is for me and my progeny,
not you to define.
To the winner goes the laurel crown,
but the victory is mine.

Psyche, *Lorna Rose*

To Eros

1

You were not what I expected,
when I saw your face finally,
after so many nights in your arms.

You were beautiful
and I shuddered,
for only gods are this beautiful and gods are cruel.

I couldn't make it fit,
your face and my ingrained fears,
because you were so kind,
fascinated,
protective,
human.

Then when you woke to show me your deep cosmic eyes,
you proved you could be cruel
as you wrenched yourself from me,
but I am a determined woman,
I know what I know
and I will not let us be a tragedy.

2

Your mother taught me well,
with her jealous testing.
How to discern,
where to find courage,
the wisdom to walk the depths of death
and feel the futility of my heartbeat.
But because it was beating for another,
its light led me out
and now with every birth pang,
I feel my wings sprouting.
Doubly blessed as you hold my hand,
pour your divinity into me.
I knew you would bend
to the love you held at bay so long,
thinking you knew it well,
that it was all pain,
I knew you would know me for what I am,
a fearless vessel for the truth of love.

Thetis, *Lorna Rose*

No sooner am I butterfly,
after years of writhing within tightening cocoons,
eating my way out one bite at time,
toothless,
vomiting up my shell to make room for slippery wings,
than I must change again.
The hour glass turns,
freedom is fleeting,
beauty is blurring and useless,
when it's the soul that craves motion.

No sooner is the brief peace
after the trial of transmutation,
balanced with quivering life,
than the wind changes
and fragility must turn tooth and claw.

But next time,
whether I choose fur or fangs,
feather or scales,
water or fire,
it will be because I decide,
not because a man was on my back
proclaiming, "submission."

Whether I become a pebble that ripples out a tidal wave,
or an empty void that eats the world,
this time,
wings I wrenched out of my shadow,
will be strong enough to smash the glass
placed over the sky,
to keep me searching in mirrors,
sipping at drops of sustenance,
handless,
making the most of every moment because time is short.

This time,
like Thetis,
this body demands forever.

They Came, *Yucheng Tao*

Tuol Sleng
like a poisonous flower
exhaling
a piercing venom.

The palm trees swayed
beneath the faltering shadow,
a procession of bones

—the dead—
labeled as intellectuals.

They came
like a gust of wind,
They came
like a herd of wild beasts.
They came
slaughter upon slaughter,
cursing Tuol Sleng,
damning its streets and rivers.

They regarded themselves as fanatical idealists,
But never, made the place a paradise.
Passion torched it into a fiery hell.

They came
with frantic lusts.
They came to Cambodia—
its flesh drenched in rouge.

When Tuol Sleng opened,
Moonlight buried people
in a sunken pit of earth.

None to cry those words:
“They came!”

Previously published in Cathexis Northwest Press

Observation of Blood, *Yucheng Tao*

Today, the museum closes its doors early,
 waiting;
 how much of the night's bleakness
 seeps into it, enjoying the dark corridors.
 The Indian tents with pointed frames,
 like spears of bone, stand pierced
 in the empty lobby, lonely,
 waiting;
 how the winter wind cuts through it.
 As the cold artifacts of the museum
 catch the outside glow,
 the carnivalesque slaughter brings
 laughter to civilization.

Denver's rain is absent and dry,
 the natives of the Arapaho
 meditate on the sacred mountain
 when the invaders come.
 I watch how blood spreads—
 past and present—and death favors
 their flesh, buried under black moonlight
 by fire and sword.
 Left with sword marks,
 they dye the river bend with blood,
 winding like red silk;
 now it leaves collections
 lying in the museum of darkness.
 Their bones cannot be read,
 as their residues are covered
 under the ash of death.

Inside or out, there is no sweetness—
 only the salty taste of blood.
 The truth sinks and vanishes;
 as for the sleeping city folks,
 the moon is clear tonight.

Previously published in The Lake

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