



# Aphrodite

*Pierre Louys*

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## **Aphrodite** Pierre Louys

Set in Alexandria, the novel tells the story of Chrysis, a courtesan, and the sculptor Démétrios. A Galilaean with long golden hair (source of her Greek nickname), Chrysis is proud of her beauty and her skill at winning the devotion and servility of men. Démétrios, for his part, is worshipped by the women of the town, but has grown tired of their devotion. He has come to prefer his statue of the goddess Aphrodite even to his lover, Queen Bérénice, who posed for it. Chrysis is the only woman who does not care for him; piqued into desire by her resistance, Démétrios is spurred to commit theft and murder for her, to win the three objects she demands in return for her charms: a rival courtesan's silver mirror, the ivory comb of an Egyptian priestess, and the pearl necklace that adorns the cult image in the temple of Aphrodite. After carrying out these errands, Démétrios dreams of the night of love that Chrysis has offered him; and while she falls in love with the man who was moved to crime for her, Démétrios rejects the real Chrysis, sufficed by his dream. She presses her desire, so he makes her swear, as he had, to do his bidding, before revealing what it is: to wear the stolen items in public. She does so, appearing on the Lighthouse of Alexandria in the role of Aphrodite, nude and with the items worn as the attributes of the goddess. Imprisoned and condemned, Chrysis drinks hemlock in the indifferent presence of Démétrios. He then uses her nude body as a model, posing it in the violent attitude in which he had seen her in his dream, to create the statue of Immortal Life.

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