

**overture**  
literary magazine  
summer 2020 | calypso



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# OVERTURE

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Summer 2020 | Calypso

Dear Reader,

We would like to welcome you to our Summer 2020 Issue, surrounding the theme of Calypso, the Greek mythological nymph banished to the island of Ogygia as punishment for her father's wrongdoings.

Calypso came to symbolize loneliness and longing, and those themes are now as relevant as ever. We wanted to encourage our writers and artists to express the current situation from their own perspective through their pieces by drawing inspiration from this character, so we did something unconventional; every single piece in the issue will have the same title. As our members explain their vastly different quarantined lives with stories and colors, we hope that we can unite to persevere through these trying times—and come back stronger than ever before.

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# OVERTURE

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This is *Overture Literary Magazine*, a pursuit by Miller Middle School and Lynbrook High School to expand writing, art, and imagination within the Miller Middle School community. Join us as we share the creativity of students by publishing their work in a monthly magazine.

In musical terms, an overture is an orchestral composition forming the prelude or introduction to a musical piece. Much like an overture in music, this creative writing program will serve as an introduction to the landscapes of creativity, self-expression, and imagination.

*Overture* strives to inspire imagination, foster literary and artistic talent, and promote creative growth by teaching middle school students how to develop their own creative writing or art styles through mediums not offered at their own schools.

FOUNDED SPRING 2011 BY  
ROOPA SHANKAR AND KIMBERLY TAN  
*www.overtureliterarymagazine.com*

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The logo for Overture Literary Magazine is a black silhouette of a key. The head of the key is on the left, featuring a decorative, scroll-like pattern. The shaft of the key extends to the right, and the bit is on the far right. The word "Overture" is written in a white, serif font across the middle of the key's shaft. Below "Overture", the words "Literary Magazine" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**Overture**  
**Literary Magazine**

*[www.overtureliterarymagazine.com](http://www.overtureliterarymagazine.com)  
[overtureliterarymagazine@gmail.com](mailto:overtureliterarymagazine@gmail.com)*

# STAFF

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Divya Pereira

## Assistant Editors

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Elizabeth Cheng

## Adviser

Hiroko Niksch

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Tanay Ubale

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Vedhikaa  
Medampalli  
Xingxi Li

**Cover Image**

Divya Pereira

\*Not all staff members listed will have worked published in each magazine

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## HELEN WU; GRADE 6

I used to be a regular nymph, just like every other one. I played, slept, ate together with my family. Then one day, there was a war. At the start of it, it was not that bad. We couldn't go outside, unless necessary, but we could still play inside. However, each of the men in each household above 18 years old and below 40 had to join in the war. So my mom and I said goodbye to my dad and tried to go back to our old way of living. But it wasn't easy. Without dad, either my mom or I had to go out to buy food when we ran out. Then there was the weird feeling I had inside of me the day after we got the news dad had to leave for war. We kept this up without dad for about a month, and then one morning, everything changed.

I woke up, got up, and went into our kitchen, where my mom was supposed to cook breakfast. But, my mom wasn't there, or in her room or bathroom, as I checked later on. Then I heard it. No matter what the rules were, when I looked outside from one of our windows, there were everyone in our village, right in front of our door, shouting and chanting something I could not understand, even though they were not supposed to go outside. Then I saw my mom. She was sitting in my dad's favorite rocking chair, her face as white as a ghost, reading the newspaper. I asked her what was going on, and all she did was thrust the paper into my hands. As I scanned the page, the weird feeling inside of me increased and increased. And then there it was. "Father of nymph Calypso, found being leader of enemy."

Then there was a blur of activity when everyone outside our window started booing and yelling at us. Then the security people came and rushed them inside to their own houses. There was a witch that came to our door, no matter how hard the security people held her back. She threw back our door by magic and took me out without me realizing what she was doing. Too late, she was saying a curse, and the last thing I saw before darkness fell upon me was my mom sobbing.

When I woke, I was in an unfamiliar place. I stood up with my head throbbing, and took a look around. I could tell that this was an island, and there seemed to be nothing here. Later on, though, I found out that there was a pack that was gigantic, and realized that there was food and clothing in there, with a note that says, "I will miss you," Mom. "I will miss you too," I whispered. There was another piece where it said, "Never ending supply of food, tent at bottom." I dug around, and saw a big tent, and set it up. But what about the curse that the witch put on me? Maybe it was only to be stranded on this island?

However, I was wrong. I realized it first a couple of weeks later. A sailor came by, and stopped at this island. I found a weird sensation I could not explain, and found myself flirting with this sailor. When he said he had to leave, I found myself so heartbroken that I cried for weeks. The same thing happened again and again with new people that came. I realized that the curse was that I would fall in love with every sailor that came. I once tried leaving this island, but found that there was an invisible force that didn't let me go farther than a foot into the freezing waters. So I lived here, on this island I named Ogygio, and wrote my story.

## MAHATI RAMAKRISHNAN; GRADE 7

Music blasted from the radio as she swayed and danced with the hip hop beat. The tension in her body relieved after she took a large whiff of her cigarette, and then carelessly threw it in the trash. Unwrapping her takeout noodles from its thick plastic, she plopped on the couch and began to slurp them down. Her silken, ebony hair swished in the air without a single tangle in sight. Before taking the last bite of her food, she smelled something sharp-sharper than the jalapenos in her noodles. Like bandits surrounding a wealthy merchant, thick layers of smog started to fill the room quickly. She abruptly got up, rubbing her eyes, telling herself nothing happened. But after a couple of seconds, she saw them. They had eyes like blood, ready to make her pay for all the years of damage she had done. It was a fire. They charged. Shrieks tumbled out of her mouth, smeared with pink lipstick and oil from the noodles. Frantically, she ran around in circles, trying to find some water. She saw a small opening that the fire didn't take over, but it was about to close down. Taking the chance, she rolled out of the inferno, and sprinted into her untouched kitchen. The world seemed blurry as she grabbed her water bottle and started to speed back to her couch. But she stopped. She stopped to look at the gnarly trash can, burnt to the core. A single cigarettebutt lay there, smoke spewing from its end. Trying to forget the fact that her addiction started the fire, she lay down on the ground, and started to crawl her way through the smog and flames to just get to the door. She was trapped in an inferno, and the only way to get out was to face the flames. They were dancing high above her, wearing clothes made of red and orange gas, laughing and taunting her. The image of the cigarettebutt flashed through her mind. "Please," she said in a hoarse voice. "Please, let me live!" Her lungs couldn't take it anymore. The damage had been done. She completely forgot about the water bottle clutched in her sweaty hand, as she took in a last breath filled with smog and ash. She collapsed right in her living room, isolated, with just the flames to keep her company.

## ANGELA WU; GRADE 8

The beautiful girl stared into the mirror, marveling over her perfect features. Her soft eyes were as blue as the sea, her hair gleaming like silver in the sun, her face petite and her lips like rosebuds. She's seen her own face millions of times, but the beauty of it never ceased to impress her.

Soon her own beauty made her conceited

And in this world, in the world that she lived in, prettiness is all people will see. Eventually, she realized the power her body held over others and used it, wielded it like a blade. At first it began in curiosity and earnest—but gradually it grew to obsession and evil.

Every month, she would attract, like a bee to a flower, a poor young man. Each time the moon disappeared, she broke his heart and moved on. At first she longed for sincere love, but overtime, lust and love were one to this beauty now. Because so many people desired her, she began using them, knowing the power her body gave her.

Of course she would never love, not like this. It would take more than her beauty, and it would come at a great price.

But she didn't know that. Calypso peered in the mirror and smiled elegantly. Oh, how beautiful she was! How perfect! Her honey curls emphasized the blue in her eyes.

"Calypso? My love," a poor young man said behind her. They were in her mansion, him still sleepy-eyed. "We've been together for almost a moon now, and I—"

She turned and put a delicate finger to his lips.

"Leave," she said, already uninterested. "Get out of my mansion."

The poor young man stared, realization slowly settling on his face. Alas, he was not alone. Thirty one of him had suffered this beauty's wrath, her shining hair hid a coy and sly head, the words honeyed and spiced. But he could not be angry. How can someone be angry at something as pretty as she?

So he left, his heart bleeding and broken.

Yet Calypso's words did not ignite a single spark of sympathy or sorrow in her, as she'd done it too many times. And she prepared to seek another soul. What she did was a cruel joke, to those other souls who took for different and better reasons.

Her father was equally cruel, but in other ways. He found joy in other's suffering and failures, and sinned in the same way Calypso did. They were a pair, the two of them.

And they would have stayed a pair if an old hag had not shown up on their doorstep that night, while Calypso was applying red paint on her lips and pinching her cheeks, getting ready for another night at the ball, and her father upstairs planning another sly plot that would make him richer than he already was.

It was her father who opened the door to this hag.

"Please, my lord, may an old woman ask for something to eat?" the old hag asked.

If Calypso and her father had been raised on a healthy dose of stories and fairy tales, they would have recognized this type of plot.

But they were not.

And so her father laughed a sinister laugh and grabbed the poor hag by the scruff of her scraggly cloak.

"Homeless hag, go back to where you came from," he snarled.

But the hag only smiled.

It was at this moment that Calypso entered, all dressed up and ready for the ball. The old woman had a dark hood and a lean posture. She turned her sparkling eyes up to this beauty. They bore into Calypso, as though she could see *through* her, into her soul.

“Young lady, may an old woman ask for something to eat?” the old woman repeated.

“Ugly woman, go back to where you came from,” Calypso said, her eyes darkening with deep disgust at the ugliness of this hag.

But the hag only smiled.

In front of their eyes, she slowly transformed into a shining figure. A warrior, in gleaming armor, with a billowing cloak. Calypso gasped—but when she realized it, it was too late. The warrior had pinned her father down. He screamed and struggled, lashing out with his hands and feet. His eyes bulged, darkened with fear and shock. What used to be the hag grabbed him by the throat.

“You are cruel.” Her father choked out his last words.

“I am a mere mirror to what you are,” the warrior replied.

His violent struggles slowed into tiny twitches, until he was still. Calypso was forced to watch as she slowly killed him.

“No!” Calypso screamed, her pulse thundering with fear and panic. “No.”

Her father was gone. While others knew him as a sly liar and selfish baron, she knew him only as the man who provided her with all she needed. They had never exchanged affection, but he was one of the pillars holding up her life. Tears had started to stream down her cheeks but she didn’t dare go near the body.

“Please, spare me,” Calypso begged, going on her knees. “I will give you all my beauty.”

The warrior turned to her. Even though she did not possess Calypso’s sharp features and gold curls, her eyes shined with power and spirit and her features proud. Her face held a different beauty from Calypso’s.

“I have no need for your falsity,” she said. “Calypso the beautiful, you have been ugly, uglier than most. You have been selfish and you have broken the hearts of many, ruined the lives of thirty two men.”

Calypso said nothing. She wanted to tell the warrior that inside, she *knew* she was wrong, that she *used* to be good too. But she knew it was all in vain.

“Foolish girl,” the warrior said. “You want love, do you not? You will come to love, but through this curse. I curse you to forever be trapped in this mansion, forever young, but forever *ugly*.”

“No! No, please!” Calypso cried, her heart ripping. Beauty was all she had, all she’d known. She couldn’t take away that from her too!

But she had vanished, the hag and warrior, the beautiful but not.

And so Calypso lived.

Years passed, and her face slowly changed. Her nose grew crooked, her olive skin pale, her curvy body lean and flimsy, her eyes the rust of brown. Freckles dotted her face and her teeth were yellow, her lips scraggly. Her hair became fuzzy and messy.

Years passed, but Calypso did not just change outside. This time gave her room for thinking. Thinking of the meaning of this, of what she had done, of why she was here.

Eventually, young men were lured to this huge mansion, with its rich and lavish with its marble stairs and statues. They stepped inside to find a hooded young woman. Her brightness and

laughter entranced them, while they were not able to see her face. The warrior was right: Calypso would learn to love. But she could not live forever under a hood; that would be impossible. She was forced to reveal herself, hoping and wishing that the young men would see beneath her ugliness.

They did not. Alas, the years Calypso had spent poisoning the minds of her young men, they had slowly turned like her too. Their eyes did not see beneath her face. Slowly, Calypso realized it was true: The narcissist world she used to take, it valued appearance over anything else, and that her love's price was to never be loved back.

She began to realize what it felt like to not be pretty. Each day it brought her closer to who she used to be, but it was too late.

Calypso would forever be trapped in her mansion, cursed to love all the men who were lured there, but they would always leave her.

## ANNE XU; GRADE 8

“Father! Father, no!” The shrill voice of a woman filled the stone marble room. The room was huge, and it was obvious that it was a prison room. Cages filled the floor, and chains seemed to hang from every crook in the ceiling. Guards stood on four sides of the room, and an old man in a cage was stumbling as the cage was dragged out with guards. The man’s eyes were blind, and although he looked beaten in the cage, it was clear that he had once held great power in his hands as he tried to stay upright and held his head up. It was winter, and the room was crowded with prisoners... The woman’s back turned and revealed the most beautiful face a man will ever lay his eyes on. She was on her knees, her clothes dirty and ragged with dirt covering her entire body, but none of them could mask the beauty of her face. She kneeled on the ground, reaching toward the metal bars being dragged out, but because her entire body was chained to a sword of a nearby guard in armor, all she could do was scream with despair.

Soon the woman was moved out of the room and into a much larger, grander room that was a long way from the prison room. Her name was Calypso, and she had once been the most beautiful girl in the kingdom, once doted on, or in her thoughts, by her father, a king. However, her father knew cruelty at its best forms. With no mother, Calypso seeked attention her whole life from her father, but he was often disappointed. As a young girl, she had squeezed into the best dresses and performed endless tasks to please her father. Her father was not easily pleased, and often she was only regarded with a nod. Her father would often neglect her, leaving her to explore the wonders of the large palace which she lived in.

“Come on, darling, you know I love you more than anything else”, was what her father would always say when he felt her slipping away and becoming angry. These words were often accompanied by a gift, either a golden ring from a foreign ambassador or another one of the countless treasures in the palace. This would always lure Calypso back into her father’s arms and often facing an empty chair at dinner. No matter how she tried, she could not tear herself away from the rare smiles her father granted her, nor the even rarer compliments. After all, her father was just busy. Yes, she had thought to herself, he was a great and fearless man, and he only didn’t notice her hair, which she had worked on for hours, because he was busy, with a kingdom to run, and that he will always come back from wars with gifts and treasures for her.

Calypso had tried to befriend those who worked in the palace as they were the only ones other than her in the palace, but when their friendships blossomed with time her father would always find out, and instead of encouraging this he had scolded her for talking with a servant, for befriendng those who were beneath her. It was impossible to hide from her father as he knew her every move, and he would claim that they had an ulterior motive for befriendng with her and punish them severely. So she stopped in fear for the servants, no matter how lonely she became.

So when she had heard that her father was fighting in a war in which he seemed to be losing, she was not afraid. Her father was a king who had won many wars that this kingdom has seen, and they will win like always. She pushed the news away and set to sewing her new dress from a blue fabric which her father had given her as his latest present months ago.

But he did not win the war. In the end, her father was blinded and sent to prison, and her as well. Soldiers had barged in at night, their fires burning the palace and rooms. She had been dragged out, linked to chains, and forced to walk the cold, hard, road with nothing but her sandals for days.

It was hunger and thirst like she never knew before, and she had only been given food from the guards because they admired her beauty.

Now in the room with her father taken away, it seemed as if Calypso was on her own. Her greatest dream, to be able to stop from pleasing him, and her worst nightmare, that she would be truly alone, have been combined into one, but she did not know which side to take. Should she betray her father, who had neglected her? Or should she be loyal to him, who has cared for and loved her, showered her with gifts, given her his sweetest smiles?

In the end, she broke down to the winners of the war, gods with power in their hands, like she always did in front of her father. She stayed loyal to him despite the war raging on inside her, bowing her head down to the gods like she always did. After all, her father will award her, won't he? Or will he ignore her, like he often did when he was busy? The consequences she could bear, because she, Calypso, would perhaps finally win all her father's love. Even if all the caring he had shown to her was fake, he was still the only one who did. He was the only one who seemed to care about her, and she will please him with this action.

She was sentenced to an island and cursed to live forever in a castle, isolated. The gods had stood up with her sentence and said, "Your beauty and youth will stay forever, but you will be cursed to fall in love, forever, with each hero that comes up to this island, and be broken-hearted as they leave, which they will do eventually." She could also not inflict pain on others nor herself, but others would scar her heart forever.

The island was glamorous, full of rose gardens and warm springs with the best beaches ever seen. Calypso lived in a castle, one which was dark and gloomy and far away from the wonders of the island. She could not step out of the castle, and could only see the island from a tiny window in the castle.

It was torture for her to look outside, for she knew that she could never enjoy the warm sunshine, the beaches, and the soft sand like heaven, and that she would always stay, isolated, in the castle. But some days she sat besides the window, looking at the sights, and if a hero would find her, she would know.

Heroes will come upon this castle, will be spellbound with her beauty, and fall in love with her for a time, often short, and eventually leave the gloomy place to enjoy the world. She felt each stab to her heart no matter the amount of stabs she had already taken. She dreaded the arrival of each hero for she knew that they would leave, but she still always indulged in the most romantic moments when they fell in love.

Time trickled away, and at first, Calypso had expected her father. She had planned for him to visit, to shower her with gifts and compliments, for she had left knowing that her father had lived and was free.

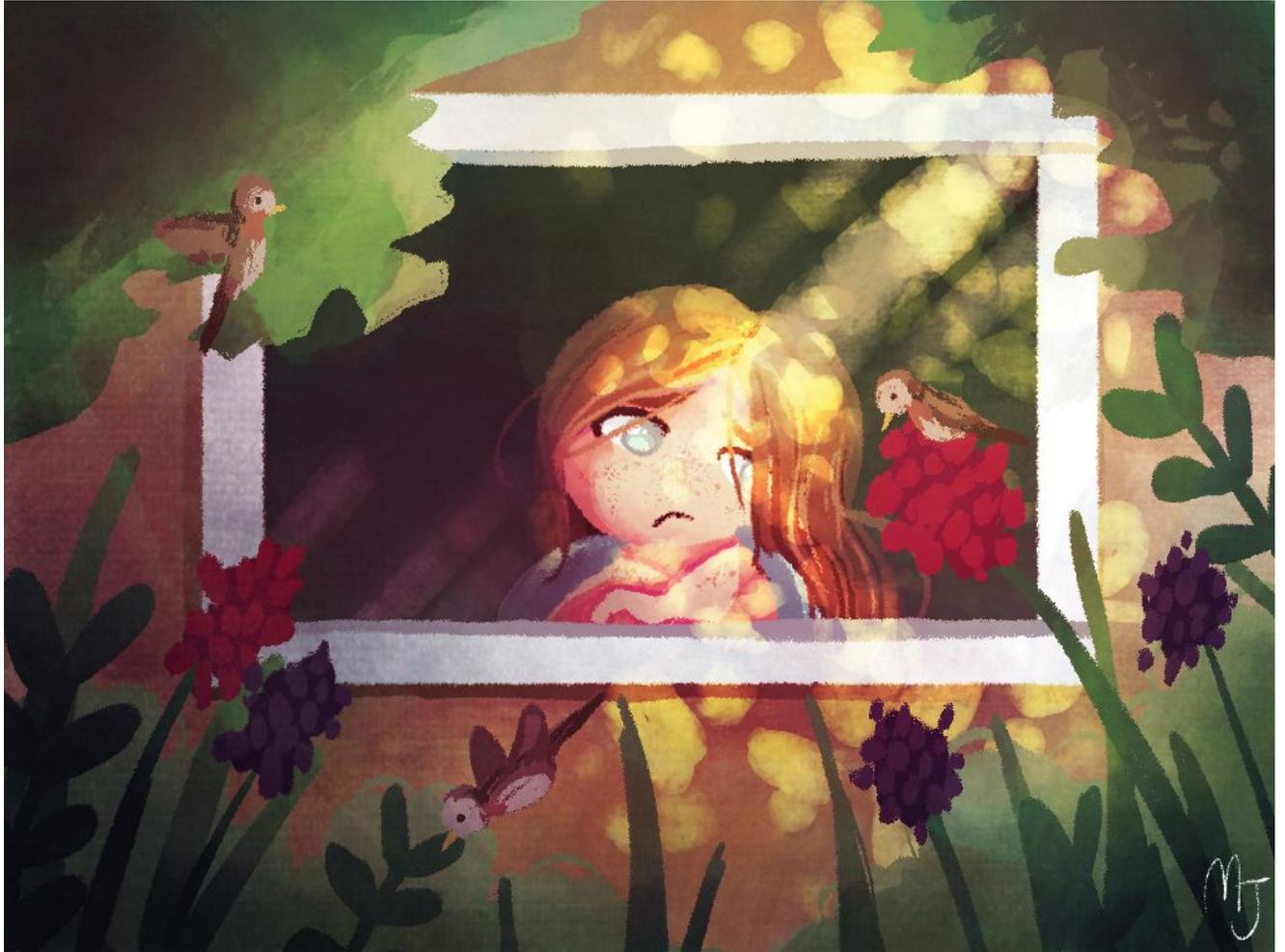
But he never came. Calypso waited and waited, and at last she was forced to accept the truth that her father had simply forgotten her, left her behind like a bag of dust, and that she would receive nothing for her sacrifice.

After decades, it seemed that the curse had weakened over time. There were times that she could enjoy the sunshine from her window, and heroes fell in love with her for longer periods of time, and it seemed that the hurt and pain inflicted on her was also lessening. Calypso seemed to be forgotten by all, including the gods that gave her the curse, and it was this ignorance that was affecting her.

It was a majestic day with the greatest weather, when the last hero who arrived left, when she broke free of the curse. It was noon, the brightest time of day, when Calypso raised a knife to her throat and took her own life.

She was not interested in seeing the world as she thought she knew them from her days exploring at her father's palace, and the pain of her heart's wounds and scars had broke her years before.

MICHELLE JIANG; GRADE 8



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