



happenstance

2025

DANMARK

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Meet the Staff

Kate De La Torre | Editor-in-Chief

Kate De La Torre is a junior who loves challenges. Taking almost all honors and AP classes is just one example of challenges she takes on. She also loves getting involved with clubs, organizations, volunteering, and school events. She enjoys cinematography, writing, reading, listening to music, making crafts, and trying new looks! Being a generous person and good friend is someone she loves to be. Her passion for helping others leads her to her dream that she will major in nursing at a highly reputable university.

Elizabeth Swallow | Layout Editor

Elizabeth Swallow is Happenstance's layout editor. She is a senior at Nease and is also a member of the school newspaper The Vertical. For the past three years she has enjoyed her time on Nease's Dance Team, being a member of Sources of Strength, and involving herself with other clubs on campus. Outside of school, Elizabeth is an assistant teacher at Grace Conservatory Dance School and enjoys spending her free time with friends and family.

Elena Schaffstein | Art Editor

Elena Schaffstein is Happenstance's art editor. She is a senior at Nease and planning to attend FSU starting in fall. She enjoys listening to music, thrifting, watching movies and TV shows, and travelling. This is her first year on The Vertical staff and is excited to be a part of creating this year's issue of Happenstance.

Bianca Thompson | Poetry & Prose Editor

Bianca Thompson works as the editor for the creative writing department. She is currently a junior at Nease High School. Moreover, outside of school, she additionally enters her own work into local poetry competitions. Bianca is interested in a lot more than just poetry, she also likes attending concerts, hanging out with friends, and playing video games from time to time. Overall, Bianca hopes that Happenstance becomes very integrated within the school and thrives!



Letter From the Editor:

I would like to recognize all the efforts made by our Happenstance team this year to bring this magazine back to life after it was discontinued for some years. Every student that submitted work, whether it was poetry, art, or short stories, contributed so much to Happenstance and the team and I are so grateful we get to be the individuals working on getting this magazine to come together. It is an amazing showcase of talent that the school does not see enough. I hope that everyone is proud of their work and knows that their work and themselves are so unique in their own way. It is beautiful to see my peers submit work that they probably would've kept to themselves if Happenstance was not brought back this year.

Despite the diversity and differences within Nease's population, they all have one thing in common: creativity and diligence. My team and I have gone through so many submissions, and I have not seen even one submission that is like another. I hope to continue to improve Happenstance even more next year and I can't wait for the next round of submissions. Enjoy this display of talent from just a small percentage of Nease's passionate students!

Student Poetry & Prose Table of Contents

"An Eye for a Mask"	Jocelyn Chambers
"Don't Cry Over Spilled Cider"	Vio Levrini
"The Taxicab"	Katherine Fasula
"A Simple Wish"	Kaylin Chen
"Computer Paper"	Jocelyn Chambers
"Dance Fever"	Carrie Wachala
"Faith"	Sani Singh
"For Him"	Bianca Thompson
"High School Villanelle"	Vishnu Gupta
"Plentiful Harvest"	Evynn Heim
"Summer"	Evynn Heim
"Reni"	Carrie Wachala
"The Little Things"	Kaylie Dollard

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Student Visual Arts Table of Contents

<i>Amalgamation</i>	Sam Morgan
<i>Arabelle</i>	Kayte Buttacavoli
<i>Cafe</i>	Nya Miller
<i>Fission and Fusion</i>	Freya Chen
<i>France Under Fog</i>	Nya Miller
<i>Funeral Bouquet</i>	Sam Morgan
<i>Kai</i>	Jocelyn Chambers
<i>Life In Photos</i>	Marinna Siciliano
<i>Lilies and Dahlias</i>	Sam Morgan
<i>My Year Scrapbooked</i>	Marinna Siciliano
<i>Nature's Mirror</i>	Kayte Buttacavoli
<i>Pegasus Rising</i>	Mckenna Getka
<i>Place Setting</i>	Ella Eutson
<i>Rae's Room</i>	Sam Morgan
<i>Resilience</i>	Freya Chen
<i>Still Life</i>	Shannon Fischer
<i>The Heart's Undertow</i>	Kayte Buttacavoli
<i>Time of Aversity</i>	Sam Morgan
<i>Timeless Innocence</i>	Kayte Buttacavoli





Amalgamation

Sam Morgan



A simple wish

By Kaylin Chen

Beauty milks my dreams in drunk delusions.

Reality is mundane for the rusted mindsets.

The world introduced a hoax of promises.

So I plead to no one:

"I wish to be somewhere else."

A serenity of unrealism

A light of perfection

A soul allowed to wander in immortality

A sky of golden stars and indigo night.

Heaven

Is where I wish to be

When in a room of vulgar animals





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- Jocelyn Chambers 7

Don't Cry Over Spilled Cider

By Vio Levirini

Fall leaves smooch into the cracks of the brick streets that line the city. They also form small piles, often tossed up by kids merrily on their way to school or by curious birds in search of a snack. In addition, when the leaves turn red, the sky turns grey and the air gets crisp. Not only does the air get crisp, but so do the apples. The apples that made the cider and the cider that made Chelsea's heart warm up. Chelsea, a young, freckled woman with warm auburn curls, skips along, kicking at the leaf piles with excitement as though she were a child. Excitement for her favorite thing.

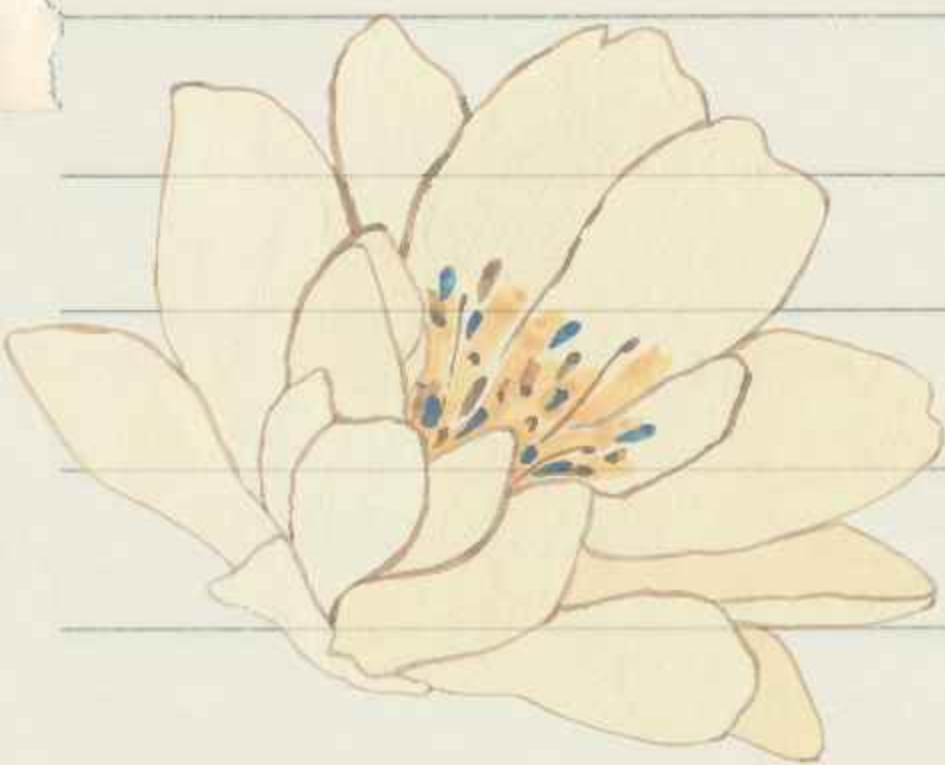
Lana's Cider Spills, a café that only opens in the chilly months and serves the best apple cider in the world. The interior is always cozy and dimly lit with warm-toned light. But it's the smell that gets to you. The moment you walk in you are flooded with the warm scent of apple cinnamon. It feels like home to Chelsea since she has spent so much time in the café. The comfy couches in the dining area feel cozier to her than her bed at home. The thing that makes her feel the best, however, is the crisp taste of that warm apple cider sliding down her throat. At first the cinnamon spice burns, and then it relaxes and tastes heavenly, leaving love in her stomach.

She first tried it on a snowy day in November when she was 3 years old. And for 20 years, she has sipped a full cup, if not two, every day when the café was open. The café was a place where she could simply listen and take in all five of her senses, an escape from the overwhelming world that she struggled to navigate so much. Navigating a world with no voice was hard, but Chelsea had a place that allowed her all the comfort she so desperately needed. So, anyone can imagine her surprise when the air started to get crisp and the wind started to pick up, but the café did not unlock its doors. She feels the cold glass of the window and runs her fingers along the vine covered exterior walls. When she looks inside, it is empty. The couches that sank when you sat on them are gone. The orange fairy lights and pumpkin decorations are gone. Even the tiny wooden stage that would sometimes be a place for live guitar has disappeared. Everything is gone, and Chelsea has no idea if her home is ever coming back. She rattles the door handle and continues to peer in, hoping for something to happen, or for her to wake up to reality. But she is already in reality, and Lana's is gone.

A passerby bumps her shoulder as she steps back in disbelief and makes eye contact with her, expecting an "excuse me" or something along those lines. However, Chelsea is mute. She says nothing and her voice fails her once again. Angry at herself once again, she stomps through the alleyway to the side of the building to the back alley by the dumpsters and finds the back door. The air is moist and cold back there, much different than the crisp wind outside on the street. She approaches the door and rattles the door handle as well. In fact, she wraps her hands around and pulls on it with all her strength before taking the opposite approach and stepping back before ramming her shoulder into it. She slams into the door over and over, tears starting to wet her cheeks. Her normal bright toothy smile completely gone, that cheery young lady that only lived on waiting for her fall cider, completely gone. She falls back onto the cold damp floor. The smell of the muck and the sewage from the back-alley creeps into her nostrils as she stands up, wiping her eyes.

...the island being brought back to life anyway, I had

When she gets home, she immediately rushes to her laptop to solve her mystery. She slumps on the couch with a mug of plain hot water and her laptop and shivers. Her room is colder than the outside air, so she sets her mug and laptop on the coffee table in front of her and gets up to check if her windows are closed. Seeing that they are, she goes back to the couch, accidentally bumping the table and spilling her now lukewarm water onto her laptop. She silently gasps before rushing to soak up any water she can with her sleeves with furrowed brows and a clenched jaw. Nothing seems to be going her way. Finally, she gets to her laptop and searches up Lana's Cider Spills. It wasn't a chain business, just one store so all she finds is an abandoned webpage that hasn't been updated since it closed last year and a Facebook page with the username lanasciderspills2, but no other information. She slams her laptop shut and lies down on her couch, her room seeming to get colder and colder. The day slowly got darker until her apartment living room is pitch black. The atmosphere feels empty, as if the matter and movement of the atoms surrounding her have disappeared. The night air intrudingly sneaks in through her closed windows and fills her room with cold. Chelsea has no energy to get up and get a blanket, or even move to her bed. The only thing she had, filling that emptiness, gone entirely.



Feeling the Florida breeze in the summer heat
Waves crashing, children laughing, waiting for fresh fruit to eat

Sand in your salty hair
Not a worry or care

Summer
By Carrie Wachala

UV of ten perfect for a tan
Hunting for seashells, is that a tooth or clam?

Volleyball, pickleball all under the sun
I can't wait for the endless fun



Lillies and Dahlias
Sam Morgan





Faith

By Sani Singh

I used to stand so proud and sure
My heart unshaken, bright and pure
But now I wade in doubt and fear
With little shadows that whisper in my ear
With each step I take, I falter and sway
Each word I speak, seemingly fades away
The mirror no longer shows my face
But a stranger, with dreams I can't replace
The light in my heart that lit the way
Flickered so dim, the path became grey
reach for strength, but my hand touches air
A voice, one I don't recognize, says an empty
prayer
When did I lose the trust I knew?
The very faith that kept me true?
Now taunting voices replace the hope that once
grew
And every road and door disappear from view
But even in the darkness, where it had drowned
I hope that there's a spark waiting to be found
The faith I once thought died
Still lingering there... just tucked deep inside



Marinna Siciliano

High School Villanelle
By Vishnu Gupta

These halls are filled with echoes of our youth,
Where laughter blends with dreams that rise and fall,
A fleeting time that holds our deepest truth.
Each room hides a tale, a subtle sleuth,
Of secret hopes we dared not to tell at all,
These halls are filled with echoes of our youth.
Through sleepless nights, we sought the light of proof,
In tests and trials, we answered every call,
A fleeting time that holds our deepest truth.
Friendships, like constellations hung aloof,
Their patterns etched within my heart's great hall,
These halls are filled with echoes of our youth.
Each triumph sung, each failure's quiet ruth,
The tale in this tapestry will be tall,
A fleeting time that holds our deepest truth.
Glancing in the rearview, I cherish time's uncouth,
Each lunchroom bond, each rise, almost every fall,
These halls are filled with echoes of our youth,
A fleeting time that holds our deepest truth

Dance Fever
Carrie Wachala

I must go back to dancing free again, feel my thoughts and sorrows subside,
And all I ask is an open space, and a cultivating beat to feel inside,
And something in me leading the way, guiding me to the perfect thing to do.
The desire begging to be let out and express what I know is true.

I must go back to dancing free again, for the call of freedom and flow
Is a liberating call that I feel throughout and was born to know,
And all I ask is to feel no fret frolicking forever, the mirrors reflecting my grace,
And the barre positioned just right and the music filling the air, and happiness expressed on my face.

I must go back to dancing free again, my feet tracing the picture I can't speak,
To the sweet flow of sound enveloping the lit room where I dance to my peak,
And all I ask is my hair electrified from the music swelling,
And all within the space I feel at home and a restful sleep when the show is over.



France Under Fog
Cafe

Nya Miller



Computer Paper
By Jocelyn Chambers

My life is a piece of paper.
Delicate,
Easy to manipulate.
Rocks thrown at me make holes,
Rips,
Tears,
But I keep going.
“Why are you ripped?” They ask,
Holding a lighter to my page.
I burn under the heat of the question.
“I’m okay.”
I turn each rip, each singe, each wrinkle,
Into a story.
I add color where color is needed.
Then they cut it off.
“You don’t need the extra colors.”
Their scissors cutting deep.
“No rips.”
“No tears.”
“No wrinkles.”
But they don’t see,
The invisible flame they hold against me.
It makes me smaller,
Till I am only a pile of ashes.
A memory of what once was.
My life is a piece of paper

The Little Things By Kaylie Dollard

Bits and pieces of me,
To nobody they were shown,
You trust me with your life,
When I don't trust me with my own,
I wish there was a way to show, to reciprocate how much you
care about me to you,
It is so much more than an "I love you"
Those three little words just don't seem like enough,
You deserve the world and so much more,
Everything. All the stuff,
So take this small poem as a reminder,
A thought in the very back of your head,
That you are the only one i can imagine myself with now,
You are my greatest reason to be alive and not dead

Pegasus Rising by McKenna Getka





Resilience

Freya Chen

An Eye for a Mask

By Jocelyn Chambers

Nothing hurts more than taking off a mask that's consumed your entire life. Makeup is my mask. Some girls use it as a weapon, just a toy to get people to pay attention to them. It makes people see them. But my mask helps me to blend in. I'm a pretty girl, or so my mom told me. Well, she said that I have a beautiful inside, but boys just look on the outside. They read the back of the book. No scratch that, they look at the cover. They never read the pages that

up.

Without my mask, I'm nothing. A nobody. A nobody that takes up valuable space. My mask makes me who I am.

People are monsters though. They drink because they need a way out of their loneliness, so they see you and yell. They yell until they get sick of yelling. So, they hit. They hit, and hit, and hit, hit, hit, until they see that splash of color that they say my face so desperately needed.

He said he loved me, and that he wouldn't do it again. It was an accident. A horrible

accident. I

I just need to put my mask on.

I just need to cover up my secrets.

I just need to hide in the shadows.

I'm always hiding. It's like a game of hide and seek, but I never want to be found. If I hide, then they can't find me. If they can't find me then they can't get mad. If they can't get mad, then everyone is happy.

That's all I want to be. Happy. That's what he promised me. Happiness.



Nature's Mirror by Kayte Buttacavoli

Reni

By Evynn Heim

Reni looked across the field, searching for something that was there. But where? She'd seen it merely seconds ago. The flowers stick together. A path to the right and the starry sky above. In some places that sky would be a symbol of night. Here, there's no difference between night and day. A hint of gold slips between the flowers. Reni leaps forward, catching the animal gleefully. She knew that she wasn't seeing things. Holding the golden bunny, Reni steps onto the path and skips onward; the road going on and on with nothing in sight but flowers and stars.

Arabelle by Kayte Buttacavoli



The Heart's Undertow by Kayte Buttacavoli



The Taxicab
By Katherine Fasula

Scene One

It is a bustling night in the city—blinking lights on buildings, stop-and-go traffic, people walking and weaving between cars. Jazz music can be heard in the distance. We focus on a single taxi. Inside sits the driver, a young man in his late twenties. He has brown hair, messily combed to one side, and aviator sunglasses, even though it is dark outside. He grips the wheel with one hand, the other resting on the center console beside him. A woman in the distance signals to his taxi, and he pulls over to let her in the car.

GRACE enters the vehicle. She is in her early thirties, her auburn hair tied up in a bow. She wears a pearl bracelet, a white blouse, and a long black skirt. She is visibly upset and looks to be on the brink of tears.

GRACE, on the phone

No, I understand, baby.

She pauses, listening for a response. The cab does not move, though the driver watches her impatiently through the rearview mirror. GRACE realizes she has not given a destination.

GRACE

Oh! Ah, one moment,

She takes the phone away from her mouth and speaks to the driver.

Hotel Marlowe, please.

The driver nods, and the cab takes off. GRACE returns to the call, chewing her lip.

GRACE

Yes, Jack, I remember our deal.

There is unintelligible yelling from the other end of the phone. GRACE flinches and takes the phone away from her ear. There is silence for a moment, then talking from the other line.

No, it's-it's ok. I forgive you

She pauses.

It's my fault for leaving late anyway. But tonight will be the end of everything, I promise. Everything will go back to the way it was.

She becomes sad and speaks under her breath.

The way it should be.

GRACE looks out the window as the person on the other line talks. She watches her pearl bracelet reflect the light of the city.

GRACE, in her normal voice,

Okay, I'll see you at the hotel.

A pause,

I love you too.

She hangs up and puts her head in her hands for the remainder of the ride.

The cab pulls up to the hotel. Jazz music can be heard from inside. GRACE pays the driver, leaving a generous tip, and leaves the car. She looks over her shoulder, uneasy, as the cab drives away.



Still Life
Shannon Fischer

Funeral Bouquet
Sam Morgan



Plentiful Harvest

By Evynn Heim

Dusk was just hours away, the sun reigning in the sky. The trees cast odd shadows over the field, a group of people placed in the distance. Clara moved eagerly through the field, dropping wild blueberries into her basket and moving farther from her family.

Her basket hung with the promise of a plentiful harvest. Where were all the berries? In the past, there had always been more – unless that mouse-brained Beatrice got her grubby hands on them first. But no, she couldn't have, not with that burning illness. Clara glanced around. Still, no blue shone through the green. She moved on, walking through the knee-high grass. While the rest of her family spent their time playing and relaxing, she worked hard towards a blueberry pie for the festival. It seemed that she would have to move onto the farther fields to find more berries. Clara picked her way to the edge of the forest and sat at the base of a tree while working out her time frame; the sun was already setting, and she hadn't brought a lantern. Perhaps it was best to come back the next day.

Clara set the basket down beside her, rubbing her aching feet. There must be more around here somewhere. The forest shifted, something cracking. Curiosity drove Clara to take a peek. The green bush looked as innocent as ever. With nothing discovered, she pushed herself to her feet and grabbed her basket, ready to leave, but the sound continued. Clara paused, trying to identify the sound. Curiosity pulled her into the forest, leaving the field behind.

Oaken trees arched high overhead and cut off the sun, darkening the forest. Clara looked around in search of the sound. One tree stood out to her; the bark spiraled at the base, opening into a hole. Through the hole dark green grass was visible. Even with only one glance, Clara could tell that it was mystical. Where could it lead? She knelt, setting her basket to the side and touching the rough edges of the bark.

Something was on the other side. Something straight out of the books her sister read almost every hour of the day. A bitter feeling rose in Clara, her sister read to the point where she'd refused to go berry picking for even a minute. Maybe she should get Ilona... but no, if she had come along then she would get to see this. Out of spite, Clara decided. She slipped her arms through the bark and grabbed the grass lying on the other side. The grass ripped from the ground and her skirt caught against the tree bark as she pulled herself through. This new place seemed alive. The trees held their breath as she stood.

She brushed her bodice off, ignoring the tear in her skirt and examining the area around her. Small flower petals floated through the air, shining red and exploding with pollen when they touched a tree. Shadows overcast the forest; these trees were taller than any she had seen, and their branches weaved together to create a roof of branches. The world appeared to tilt towards one point – all focusing on the shimmering red and orange flower blooming out of a bed of moss. The moss sat atop a flat stone and reflected the flower's light. It was magnificent – certainly more beautiful than anything she'd ever seen. Clara walked towards it, wanting to be just a little closer. Behind her, the bark twisted over her exit. Oblivious, Clara stepped closer to the flower, kneeling on the moss with wonder-struck eyes. When closer, she could see the tiny dots that lined the edges of the triangular petals.

From behind one of the distant trees, another woman watched, waiting for Clara to touch the flower. For the second she did, the trap would show its worth: the flower would swallow Clara whole to join the various other orange and red cocoons hanging high in the trees.

Fission and Fusion
by Freya Chen



Rae's Room
by Sam Morgan



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your
u'll be
learn.
-oti



as a holiday

Times of Adversity
Sam Morgan



for him

By Bianca Thompson

you were a depot of love.
filled infinitely with affection and fondness applicable to any and all.
and your love wasn't simply just that,
it was more than a warm feeling in your heart.
it was the small boost of confidence you needed that day.
it was all the reassurance and encouragement someone could ever ask for
it was something you would never forget.
and as of this present time, i realized that more than ever.
i'll never let go of the love that was handed to me by you.
i'll keep it safe in a heart shaped box,
tie it up with rope,
and seal it with your spirit.
but eventually,
i'll release the gift you gave to me,
and spread it to others and all who need it.
because everyone deserves to be loved by robin.
inherently, he was special,
beginning to end.
he wasn't one in a million,
he was one in one.
his impression is impossible to replicate,
i'll never meet someone like you again.
but that's okay,
because for now,
i have your heart shaped box.
and i'm sorry for those who have never met him.
because they'll never understand what unconditional love feels like.
how it feels to be appreciated regardless of your quirks.
he embraced his own,
teaching me a valuable lesson.
to always,
always remember who you are,
and never forget where you came from.
continue to remember your growth,
and never stop the marathon.
it's okay to walk, you don't always have to run.
just keep in the race,
for robin.

