



IMPRINTS.

CF LITERARY & ARTS MAGAZINE

IMPRINTS.

Volume 34 | Spring 2026

NEW BEGINNINGS

Imprints Magazine is the living voice of student creativity at the College of Central Florida. Since 1990, it has served as a space where stories, images, and ideas come to life through writing, photography, and visual art. Each page reflects the perspectives and experiences of its creators. This issue embraces new beginnings, bold voices, and the courage it takes to create.



Editor's Note

BY LISETTE KOEHNER

Not every ending gives us closure. Some leave us in unfamiliar places, asking us to begin again before we feel ready.

This issue of *Imprints* explores that space through a collection of work centered on growth, change, and renewal. Each piece reflects a unique perspective on what it means to move forward and embrace new beginnings.

Serving as Editor-in-Chief has been a meaningful opportunity to help shape this publication alongside a dedicated and creative team. I would like to thank all of our contributors, advisors, and supporters who played a role in bringing this issue to life. Your efforts made this possible. We hope these pages inspire reflection and encourage you to embrace the possibilities that come with beginning again.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Dressed Crane by Chloe Waldorf
- 2 From Ashes to Flight by Danielle Bryan
- 3 The Quiet Beginning by Lisette Koehner
- 6 His Beginning by Lisette Koehner
- 7 Bumble Three by Malarik Cruz
- 9 The Eternal Dance of the Sun & Moon by Celina Stafford
- 10 New Beginnings by Victoria Pineda
- 11 Smoke Addled Sunlight by Malarik Cruz
- 13 When the Night Returns by Ashley Brace
- 15 The Middle Child by Amanda Cook
- 16 Searching by Malarik Cruz
- 17 New Beginnings of Romance by Lainey Brown
- 18 One Sided Love by Deborah Charlemagne
- 19 The Storm That Stayed by Danielle Bryan
- 21 The Bridge Between Us by Allyiah Gomes

-
- 22 Do You? by Libby Denesha
 - 23 Morning Flight by Lisette Koehner
 - 24 Untitled by Eileen McNiff
 - 25 Winter on the Lake by Abigail Colon Davila
 - 26 Swimming with Turtles by Danielle Bryan
 - 27 The Red by Ashlynn Holly
 - 28 First Bloom by Michaela Lasmanis
 - 29 The Ride That Changed Everything by Frida Dajes
 - 32 Is This a Monarch? by Malarik Cruz
 - 33 Morning Reflections by Emily Boring
 - 35 First Camping Trip by Johnathan Gatlin
 - 36 A Candle's Death by Briley Ballard
 - 37 Seasons by Ayana Wilson
 - 38 Southwest Sunset by Alyssa "Alyx" Monahan
 - 39 Love Begins at Sunrise by Alex Koehner
 - 40 Love Begins at Sunrise (Poem) by Alex Koehner



From Ashes to Flight

DANIELLE BRYAN

I shrink back, I hide, I fade away,
Afraid to burn but afraid to stay.
I pull back, afraid to try,
Convinced I'll fail if I reach too high.
The fire's there — I feel it rise,
Yet doubt still whispers, You're not enough.
Too small, too weak, too scared to fight,
I pull away — I hide from the light.
But flames don't ask; they don't request,
They rise, consume, and do their best.
And so the fire takes its due,
Burns me down, through and through.
The heat is sharp, the dark is deep,
I lose myself, and I start to weep.
But in the ash, in wreckage bright,
A flicker dares to reignite.
Not just a spark, not just a game,
But something fierce, something untamed.
I stretch my wings — the sky is wide,
And I refuse to run or hide.
No longer trapped, no longer small,
I rise, I burn — I take it all.
A phoenix now, I claim my name,
And fly, unshaken, through the flame.

The Quiet Beginning

LISETTE KOEHNER

It was one of those mornings
you didn't want to go.
Your small hands reached for mine
like home was something
you could hold onto.
The sun stretched slowly across the field,
finding you first,
wrapped in gold and wildflowers,
standing at the edge
of something new.
You wanted one more moment
where everything was still simple,
where I could walk beside you
and make the world feel smaller.
And I knelt down
and made you a promise
mothers have been making
since the beginning of time:
"I will be right here
when you come back."
What I did not say
was how much of me
had to stay behind
so you could step forward.
Because some lessons, my love,
are not taught in my arms,
but in the quiet spaces
just beyond them.

His Beginning



LISETTE KOEHNER • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



BUMBLE THREE • MALARIK CRUZ • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



The Eternal Dance of the Sun & Moon

CELINA STAFFORD

The sun rises over the horizon,
Spreading her wings of flame across the world,
Lighting up the sky with color,
As she glides slowly across the great blue, The creatures below warm
themselves in her light, And the plants extend their tendrils upward,
As the sun glides down and disappears behind the horizon,
The world is shrouded in darkness,
As the sun sets the moon rises,
He lifts his head and drifts across the darkened sky, A gentle light shining
through the veil that had dimmed the Earth,
The sounds of the day fade replaced by a calm quiet, As the moon continues to
drift the night-dwelling creatures stir,
They wake and hunt in the tranquil night.

New Beginnings



VICTORIA PINEDA • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



SMOKE ADDLED SUNLIGHT • MALARIK CRUZ • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



When the Night Returns

ASHLEY BRACE

When the night returns, the fog unfurls like a forgotten prayer.

When the night returns, the trees stand as silhouettes of what they once were.

When the night returns, rain stitches the broken earth with silver threads.

When the night returns, the bats rise – slow, uncertain, like memories learning flight.

When the night returns, the forest inhales the darkness it has been missing.

When the night returns, something in me awakens with it.

When the night returns, I hear the echo of wings inside my ribs.

When the night returns, the shadows shift as if remembering their names.

When the night returns, the air tastes of endings that pretend to be beginnings.

When the night returns, even silence grows restless.

When the night returns, the past leans close enough to breathe on my skin.
When the night returns, I feel the world rebuilding itself in the unseen places.
When the night returns, identity drips from the leaves like rainwater.
When the night returns, I stand on the edge of something half-real, half-forgotten.
When the night returns, I am not who I was, yet not who I will become.

When the night returns, the past leans close enough to breathe on my skin.
When the night returns, I feel the world rebuilding itself in the unseen places.
When the night returns, identity drips from the leaves like rainwater.
When the night returns, I stand on the edge of something half-real, half-forgotten.
When the night returns, I am not who I was, yet not who I will become.

When the night returns, I step into the dark without fear.
When the night returns, something waits – And I do not know if it is the beginning
or the end.

The Middle Child

AMANDA COOK

I follow a path
markers along the way,
Some areas are divided but return anyway.
This looks like a draft
and I am the pen.
It curves and bends
until the end.
The original path continues
while I do not,
I guess I must make
a new path, my own way.
Now my path is shiny and scary,
I don't have my sister to follow
However, some markers are still here
No turning back, only trudging forward
Trees bristle like a book in the wind
Books remind me there's always another way
My pen turned into a pencil but a highlighter
comes along the path, but soon her brightness
will turn to a pencil,
just as mine has
but still colorful because her soul is still filled.
Looking forward I see what I wish to be
but beside me I see others walking far
faster and surer than me.
The joy the sunlight brings as it weaves in and out of the trees
Is almost as much as a fictional world gives to my soul.
I don't know exactly where my path leads,
But I do know I will be okay
with my draft so far away but
my younger sister is right behind me.
All I must do is keep writing on,
Write until my legs ache,
Write until my path ends,
Write until I'm out of the wood,
And whatever lays beyond.





One Sided Love

DEBORAH CHARLEMAGNE

In the realm of love, a tale unfolds,
Of a heart that beats, but one side holds.

A love unrequited, a silent plea,
Aching in the depths, for eyes to see.

Like a lone star shining in the night,
It yearns for warmth, for love's sweet light.

But destiny's hand, it plays its part,
Leaving one soul with a broken heart.

Whispers of affection, left unheard,
As the other's gaze wanders, undisturbed.

Yet the one who loves, with every breath,
Holds onto hope, despite love's cruel theft.

In dreams they dance, hand in hand,
But reality's grasp, they cannot withstand.

For love's embrace, it remains afar,
Leaving one soul, forever ajar.

But in this tale of one-sided affection,
There lies a beauty, a hidden connection.

For love's true essence, it's not in return,
But in the courage to love, despite the burn.

So let the heartache be a testament,
To the strength of love, its sentiment.

For even in one-sided devotion's strife,
Love's purest form, ignites a spark of life.

The Storm That Stayed

DANIELLE BRYAN

The first time the storm said her name, she thought she imagined it.

It came threaded through the wind, low and distant, like something unfinished. Like a warning she didn't yet understand.

She ignored it.

People always told her she was strong. Said it like it was armor, like it meant she didn't feel the cracks forming beneath her ribs. So she smiled when she was supposed to. Nodded when silence was easier. Learned how to carry things that didn't belong to her.

The storm learned her name anyway.

It found her in the quiet moments—when the world slowed just enough for the weight to settle. In the spaces between breaths. In the nights where sleep felt like something other people deserved.

At first, it whispered.

Then it grew louder.

Until one night, it broke.

Rain slammed against the windows like fists. Thunder split the sky open, sharp and unforgiving. The power flickered, then died, plunging everything into a darkness that felt too familiar.

And there it was again.

Her name.

Clear this time.

Not a whisper. Not a warning.

A challenge.

She stood in the center of the room, heart hammering, every instinct telling her to shrink—to wait it out, to let it pass like she always had.

But something in her... shifted.

Because the storm wasn't new.

She was just done running from it.

"You don't get to take me," she said, her voice unsteady but real.
The wind howled in response, rattling the walls like it was laughing.
Good.

Let it.

Her hands shook as she struck the match. The flame was small—fragile, almost nothing against the violence outside. But it burned steady, stubborn in a way that felt familiar. She held it close, watching the light push back against the dark.

"I'm still here."

The words landed heavier this time.

Stronger.

Something inside her cracked open—not breaking, but releasing. Every swallowed fear. Every quiet ache. Every moment she had almost disappeared into the silence.

The storm surged, louder, angrier.

And she didn't flinch.

Because now she understood.

It hadn't come to destroy her.

It had come to name her.

Lightning split the sky, and for a single, blinding moment, the room was filled with light. Not outside.

Inside.

She exhaled, slow and steady, the match still burning between her fingers.

"You were never my ending," she whispered.

The thunder rolled, but it no longer sounded like something to fear.

It sounded like an answer.

By morning, the storm was gone.

The air was clean. The world washed new.

And when she stepped outside, the sunlight didn't feel distant anymore.

It felt like something she had earned.

Because the storm still knew her name.

But it didn't own it.

Not anymore.

The Bridge Between Us



ALLYIAH GOMES • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Do You?

LIBBY DENESHA

Land once lush now lies in ruins,
No more laughter fills the houses,
Once proud buildings are broken heaps,
The birds no longer sing, but weep.
But at least the fire stopped roaring.
Is this what hell looks like?
Surely it must be.
But look up, child,
Do you see it in the sky?
Do you see the blue beginning to shine?
Do you hear its whisper, its soft whisper-
"Today is a new day".
The past is no more.
It is now simply lore.
Do you see the sky?
Do you see the blue sky?
Look with me and believe,
Believe the promise of the new day.
I see the sky,
I see the blue sky.
And wait- do you hear that?
Do you hear the children singing?



Untitled



EILEEN MCNIFF • DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION



WINTER ON THE LAKE • ABIGAIL COLON DAVILA • ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

Swimming with Turtles



DANIELLE BRYAN • CERAMIC

The Red

ASHLYNNE HOLLY

I pity the walls of my bedroom-
For the silly, scarlet costumes I made them wear.
Forced to dance in bashful sunlight
Shining onto costumes of my own.

Powered by hue, they began to erode
The contents they were built to protect.
The Red bit at the edges of my belongings-
The things I foolishly thought were mine.
It crept up my pens, posters, and portraits,
Until all that I held
Burned Ruby.

Who was I to paint these walls
With such a violent shade of bitterness?
Who was I to impose these plights
On those who could not fight back?
Are these not the same hands
That held that same paintbrush?

I look at my palms a little more these days
With no choice but to make peace
With those old, tired canvases.
I am worthy of greens and yellows and blues,
So long as I don't forget
The Red.

First Bloom



MICHAELA LASMANIS • ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

The Ride That Changed Everything

FRIDA DAJES

The bus sighed to a stop in front of Peter, releasing a hiss of steam like it was as tired as he was. Rain drummed steadily on the roof, hard and insistent. Three days before his wedding, his car had died in the middle of traffic, and now he was on a crowded city bus that reeked of wet jacket. He gripped the poles as the engine rumbled them back into motion. The floor vibrated under his shoes. He could feel the tension rising in him like a fever he just couldn't sweat out. His phone buzzed. "Hello, this is Serene's Bakery, am I speaking to Mr. Harley?"

Peter closed his eyes. "Yes, this is him. Please tell me you're calling with a confirmation."

A pause, soft static on the line. "I'm very sorry Mr. Harley. We have to cancel your wedding cake order. We had a medical emergency, and we won't be able to—"

"You can't cancel?" he whispered softly. The bus lurched; people shifted, murmuring. "My wedding is on Saturday. I already paid. My fiancée loves your bakery."

"We apologize sincerely. Our hands are tied."

The apology dissolved into the engine noise as Peter hung up. He pressed his forehead to the cool metal bar. One job. Calliope had given him one job, smiling like she always does, soft but certain. "It doesn't need to be fancy," she said. "It just needs to feel like us." Nothing about this week felt like us.

"Excuse me," a woman's voice said gently. He glanced across the aisle. The woman in the gray sweater looked to be about mid-thirties, with soft brown curls and hazel eyes. A tote bag rested at her feet, flour smudged across it like fingerprints of another life. "I'm sorry," she said, "but I overheard. I assume you lost your wedding cake?"

Peter exhaled. "Yeah. I'm kind of drowning this entire week. My fiancée is going to kill me."

She chuckled softly. "I'm Betty. And I bake." She lifted the tote. "Small orders from home. But I've done weddings."

Peter blinked. "You'd bake a cake for somebody you just met on a bus?"

"Kindness doesn't require introductions," she said. Then after a pause: "If you look like someone who could use a miracle."

The bus rattled as if agreeing. Rain streaked sideways across the windows; city lights blurred like smudged pastels.

Peter noticed something strange. Betty had the same half-smile as Calliope. The same thoughtful tilt of the head. "You remind me of... someone," he said.

"Weirdly, a lot."

She laughed, a soft sound that almost blended into the hum of the bus. "Maybe I've got one of those familiar faces." But her eyes shifted strangely, like she knew something she wasn't sure she should say.

They exchanged numbers when they got off at the same stop. She promised she'd text cake sketches that night.

Peter walked home in the drizzle with a strange sense of steadiness, as if the universe had paused the storm just long enough for him to grasp a thread to hold onto.

From that night on, Peter found himself looking forward to every buzz of his phone. Betty sent pictures of lemon sponge layers cooling on her counter, voice notes asking for Calliope's favorite flavors, little updates filled with warmth & humor. Calliope teased him, "You're taking this cake thing very seriously," but she smiled every time, touched by the effort.

Peter didn't mention how similar Betty seemed to her. Maybe it was a coincidence. Maybe he'd imagined it. It didn't feel like something to say out loud.

By the morning of the wedding, the fear & chaos of the week had softened around the edges. Betty had shown up at every step quietly & generously, almost like she was walking a path she was always meant to find.

And then the day arrived.

The reception hall glowed in warm afternoon light. Betty's cake, three tiers of lemon & elderflower, stood proudly at the center table. It looked like a small miracle made of sugar. Guests whispered slowly.

The moment Betty walked in, Calliope approached slowly. Same height. Same eyes. Same way of tucking a curl behind the ear.

"I'm sorry," Calliope said. "But... do we know each other?"

Betty's breath hitched. "Not yet."

Their mothers—Calliope's mom & Betty's adoptive mom—ended up side by side, pale as linen, and the truth spilled out: two terrified teenage parents. A choice made out of fear. One baby kept. One baby was placed for adoption. Calliope grew up with her birth mother. Betty grew up in another home. And their parents never imagined they'd one day meet.

"Are you... my sister?" Calliope whispered.

"Your twin," Betty said. "Fraternal. I guess I was the one who left the hospital."

The room buzzed, music, voices, forks clinking, but between them, everything went silent & sacred.

Peter watched their hands meet gently, as if holding something breakable & irreplaceable.

All because of a broken car. All because of a bus ride. All because one stranger offered kindness.

Gratitude rose inside him steadily, a warmth that filled every corner of him. Betty squeezed Calliope's hand. "Seems like I baked more than a cake," she smiled.

And Peter knew she was right.





MORNING REFLECTIONS • EMILY BORING • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY





A Candle's Death

BRILEY BALLARD

The concept of sacrifice is one I know well. Humans imagine that sacrifice requires nothing but the forfeit of time or resources—passing things that would never have lasted whether they gave them freely or not. True sacrifice requires the laying down of one's very life. And so, moment by excruciating moment, I die. Death comes slowly for me. I fade and fade until the remnants of my life
are

nothing but a vapor that hangs in the air for an instant before being forgotten. Death comes painfully for me. A single flame draws me out of myself, and the biting blade of fire divides every component of my being. Death comes deceptively for me. I almost believe at times that I have been spared, but after weeks of cautious hope, the flame is held out to me again. And I take it up.

Yes, I have a choice. When I hear the scrape of the match and the hiss of the flame, when I feel anew that tortuous agony ignited by the piercing shards of fire, my initial impulse is to resist. To refuse. To repel. But the truth penetrates me like a searing dagger. It finds its way into my innermost being and gives a fatal twist. So I release my vice-like grasp on life and surrender to the relentless
onslaught.

In my death, I do not find pain alone. The same vacuous furnace that extinguishes my life heralds also purpose and fulfillment. I realize in the midst of the scorching blaze that it is only in death that I truly live. My life begins when I yield to my mortality and cede every last shred of my light, my warmth, my fragrance to those who incite my anguish. In this act of sacrifice, I embody the union of death and life, of pain and purpose, of beginning and end.

Seasons

AYANA WILSON

slowly, as daylight dawns, she rises out of her bud.
she stretches and squeaks with her head tilted up.
bellowing a near inaudible screech that only the daisies and tulips hear,
the girl has awoken, and spring is near.

her body now stretches lithe and willowy, her hair like the gleam of the sun.
her towering size no taller than a mere thumb.
so begins the blossom of the fruits, the birth of the sparrows' young,
her honeyed song indubitably signals that summer has begun.

an early morning she rises, and reminisces about her favourite seasons,
for autumn eventually comes, and she begins to question all reason,
for her purpose why, her place nowhere here,
she knows with resign, that her winter is near.

no longer is a squeak heard, nor is a song sung.
when moons and summers have passed, and the year is done,
the last birch leaves are shed and the flora all shriveled up,
and the dusk approaches, and thumbelina has returned to her bud.

Southwest Sunset



ALYSSA "ALYX" MONAHAN • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

LOVE BEGINS AT SUNRISE • ALEX KOEHNER • DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Love Begins At Sunrise

ALEX KOEHNER

We met under a weary moon,
two souls lost in the dark.
Spoke about hopes and dreams,
not sure we could even keep.
Somewhere between night and day,
seeds of a new beginning we set,
a future not lost but made.
The sun rose to wrap us,
a warmth grew within our hearts.
This sparked our promise to keep,
turn endings into beginnings.
We could not know then,
even ten years later still,
we built this life from the spark.
A home filled with laughter,
a child born from destined love.
A future grew first as friends,
our devotion and love bore more.
That with faith and hope,
souls grow strong together more.
Wonder if maybe the sunrise knew,
that healing is not simply found,
waiting at the end of the journey.
These trusted souls we touch,
will journey beside us with grace.
So we didn't just start,
as night began our love grew.
Two hearts discovered the world,
deeper our souls bonded more,
the spark gave way to day.
Dreams of the journey rose with dawn,
holding the warmth from our spark,
found ourselves in love between sunrise and the dark.

MIN

DRINK

DR

NTS

**MEET
THE
STAFF!**



LISETTE KOEHNER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Maleta and Go! Chase your dreams and dont look back.



AYANA WILSON
MANAGING EDITOR

Too many thoughts about hedgehogs, trolls and angels in her head.



ALYSSA "ALYX" MONAHAN
ASST. MANAGING EDITOR

If you have to do anything, always step out of your comfort zone.



EILEEN MCNIFF
LEAD ART EDITOR

Chasing the spark that makes art worth doing. Moved by the meaningful, inspired by creative essence.



MICHAELA LASMANIS
BOOKKEEPER

Here for the spreadsheets and mild confusion.



ALISA ROBERTS
IMPRINTS ADVISOR

We're not chasing perfect—we're building better.

A THANK YOU LETTER.

This issue of *Imprints* would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and creativity of so many people who poured into this work and into us.

We begin by honoring Debora Vasquez, Founder, whose original vision created a space where student voices could be seen, heard, and remembered. That vision continues to guide everything we do.

We would also like to recognize Professor Jong Ash, Creative Writing Professor, whose students brought powerful and meaningful contributions to this issue. We are deeply grateful for her guidance, encouragement, and support as a voluntary advisor.

With heartfelt appreciation, we recognize Professor Abigail Stallings, Digital Design Consultant for *Imprints*, for her guidance, encouragement, and support throughout the creation of this issue; Professor Sandra Cooper, Faculty Advisor for *Imprints*, for her steady leadership and continued belief in this team.

Of course, Professor Melissa Schuck, Collaborative Communications Advisor for *Patriot Press*, for her collaboration and encouragement in strengthening student voices.

A special and deeply personal thank you goes to Professor Alisa Roberts. Your voice, leadership, and unwavering presence have shaped not only this magazine but the people behind it. You have guided this team like a true creative family, reminding us that this work is not just about pages and print, but about purpose, connection, and growth. *Imprints* carries your influence in every chapter of this issue.

We extend our gratitude to Faith Ruiz, CF Library Director, for creating an exhibit that showcases *Imprints* student artwork and allows it to live beyond these pages and into our campus community.

We also sincerely appreciate Dr. Allan Danuff, Associate Vice President of Liberal Arts and Sciences, whose leadership was especially meaningful at the beginning of this new chapter. His support helped build the momentum behind this “new beginning” and continues to shape the growth of *Imprints*.

We are grateful to The College of Central Florida for fostering an environment where student voices are valued and creative expression is encouraged to thrive. Finally, to every student who contributed to this magazine, our creative community, thank you. Your stories, your art, your courage, and your willingness to share your voice are what make *Imprints* come alive.

With gratitude,
The *Imprints* Magazine Team

“...Every day I discover even more beautiful things. It is intoxicating me, and I want to paint it all - my head is bursting...”
— Claude Monet

