

FREE PRESS
THE
GR**WTH**
ISSUE



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Hey Sprouts!

Welcome to our Growth Issue—a journey through unique and personal stories, poems, and artwork, submitted by you! We are celebrating the dualities of growing; the blooming and decaying of nature, spiritual and emotional experiences, the pain implicit in the beauty of things, and so many more striking contradictions. However, these seeming contradictions are also part of the cyclical nature of growing; this process is not linear, but in constant flux. In our last issue of this school year, we wanted to highlight what growth means to you—the similarities in our differences, the harmony among dissonance.

As the sun comes back out of retirement and brings the environment around us back to life, we are celebrating the banishment of Binghamton’s notorious cold, dead, gray skies and reveling in all the new growth happening around us, both mental and physical. We at Free Press are no strangers to growth, as we challenge not only ourselves to create bigger and better issues every semester, but to you all as well, our loyal and beloved reader-base. Nature and growth evidently go hand-in-hand, and the plant, flower, and fungi imagery displayed throughout this issue is the physical expression of the mental processes occurring inside of us. In a time and place where growth often is thought to be an extremely private process undertaken for individual benefit, foregrounding these images is one way to attest to the importance of weathering turbulent times among trusted peers and mentors.

As always, we want to thank our many contributors who make this publication possible; without your voices and uniquely creative ideas, this issue would be severely malnourished! Your submissions continuously inspire and motivate us to keep producing these issues! To our dedicated eBoard members—it has been an honor and privilege to work with you! The core idea of this issue just happened to be crafted on the flourishing green grass of the peace quad nearly a year ago, as our newly formed eBoard came together and enjoyed the sunlight. That day, unbeknownst to any of us at the time, serves as a marker to look back and reflect on and see just how far we all have truly come.

Like nature itself, growth can also be unwieldy and difficult to recognize or understand at first glance. Burying bare hands in the soil of our old backyards is a daunting task for that reason—we don’t know what we’ll unearth.

In that spirit, we hope you leave this issue with some dirt beneath your fingernails.

With love,
Emily, Sydney, and Rosa

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2. Letter from the Editors

3. Table of Contents

4-5. Meet the Eboard

6-7. To who I used to be by Olivia Giangrosso

8. A Musing on Rot and Rebirth by Gabby Lipkin

8-9. Art by Kayla Huang

10. Dear Birthday Haters by Sam Bunk

11. Untitled and Art by Elizabeth Kromer

12. Art by Elizabeth Kromer

13. Tequila Sunrise Girl by Katherine Quinn

13. Growing Pains by Sydney Newton

14. Growth by Victoria Barics

15. How to Build a Terrarium by Noelle Dutch

16. to be found by Oakley B

16-17. Tarot Cards by Olivia Giangrosso

17. Art by Sophie Roth

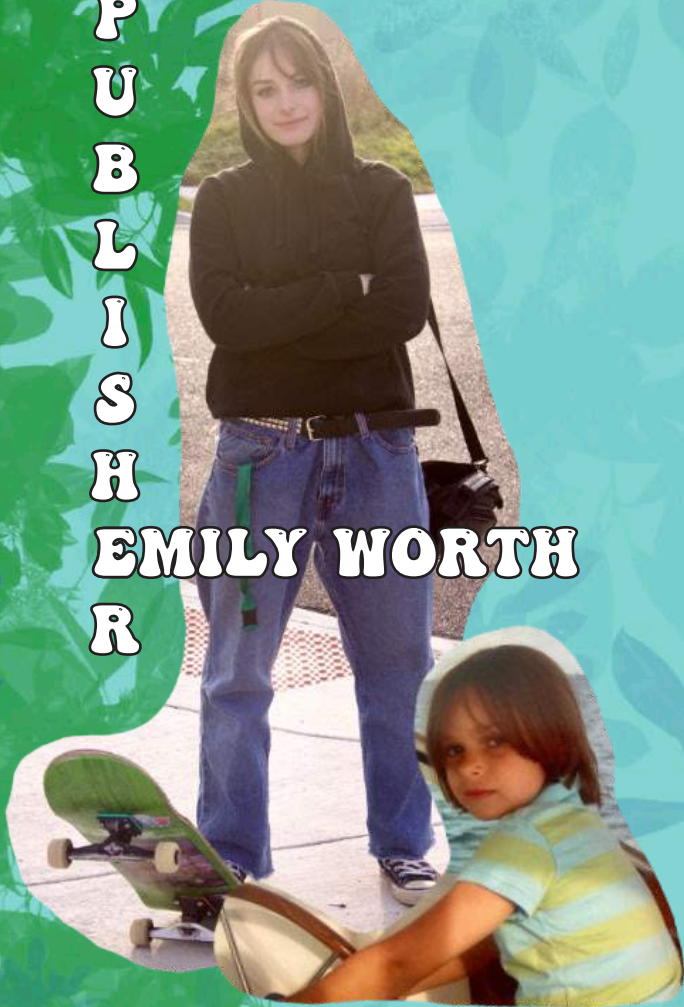
18. I Think It Was A Green Robe by Olivia Palmeri

19. Nineteen by Katherine Quinn

MEET THE

E-BOARD

PUBLISHER
EMILY WORTH



SNYE DWNTEYN

LEAD EDITOR

ASSISTANT TO



ROSA SICKS



VICTORIA BARICS
CREATIVE EVENTS MANAGER

LEAD LAYOUT EDITOR

NHAT-DINH NGUYEN

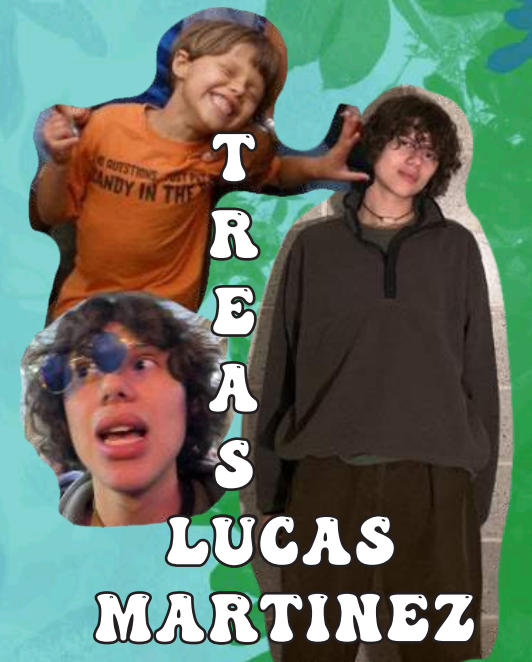


ILLUSTRATOR
EMILY GANGLOFF



TREASURER

LUCAS MARTINEZ



ILLUSTRATOR



Go who I used to be

by Olivia Giangrosso

To who I was ten years ago,

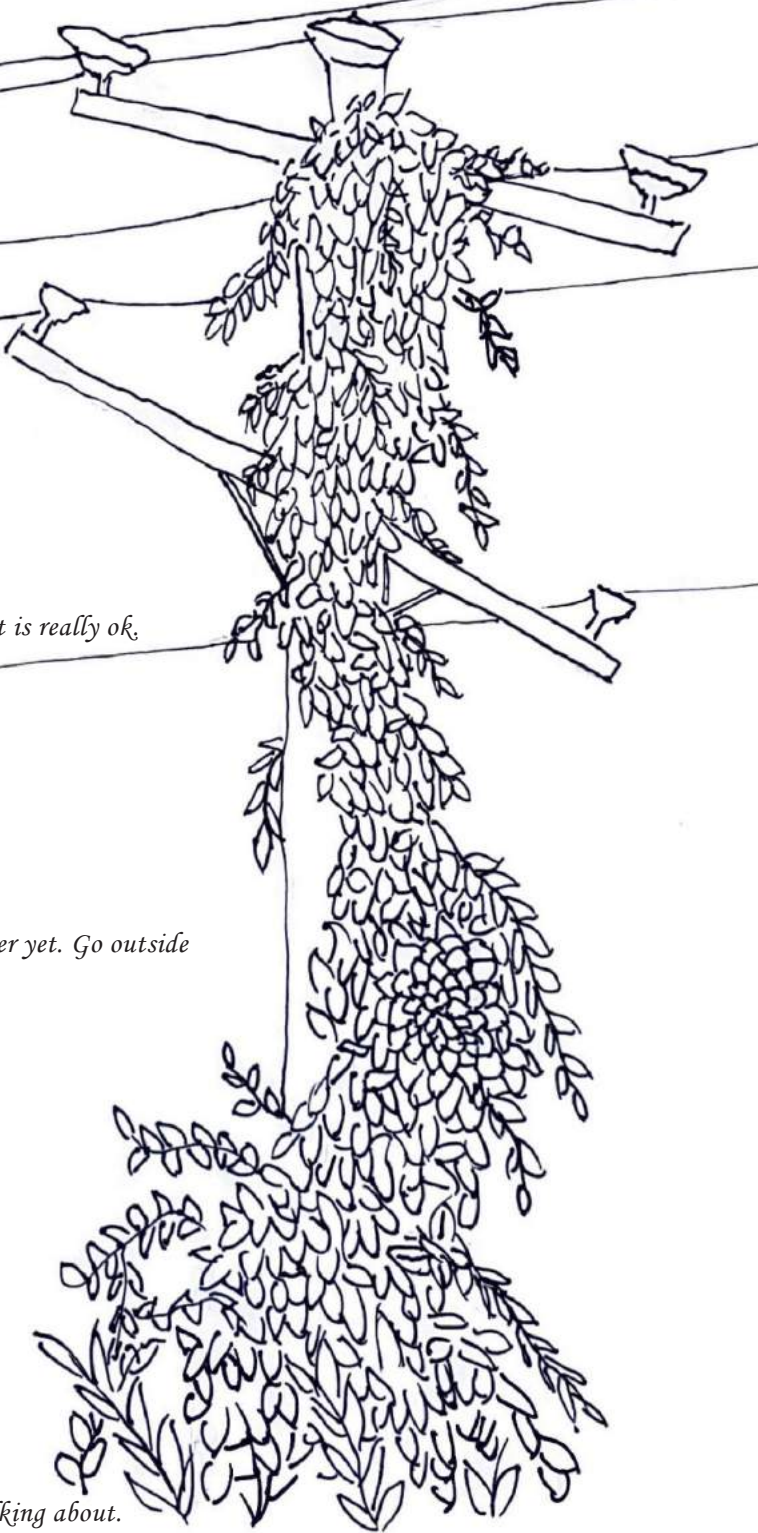
Hi honey.
I'm going to be gentle with you right now.
That's what you need.
You're figuring out that adults don't know everything.
I know it's hard.
I know it's harder when it's people you used to trust.
Follow your gut.
You're right about a lot of things but not everything and that is really ok.
You don't have to know it all.
Nobody does.
Don't be so obsessed with growing up either.
It's coming. Don't worry.
Dreaming of it is better than actually doing it anyway.
I love you.
Tell people you love them.
It's not embarrassing. It's honest.
And stop stressing about your math classes, they do not matter yet. Go outside

Love,
Olivia

To who I was five years ago,

My goodness am I jealous of you.
You are so excited and so loved and so ready to go.
A word of advice, though.
Give out more hugs.
Some of those people will be gone in a year.
Some will be gone in a month.
Make time to say goodbye. There's never another chance to.
Breathe more. The answers are on the ceiling.
(You'll know what I mean next year).
Do not LISTEN to that boy, he does not know what he's talking about.
When you finally quit that job, you are going to be so stressed. Don't be.
It's the right call.
And please stop dying your hair and please start caring about math again

Love,
Olivia



Art // Lucas Martinez

To who I was three years ago,

No, this is just as crazy as you think it is.
The world will go on. You've dealt with loss before, you will do it again.
It does not get easier though.
What happens is it gets easier to recognize.
So many feelings are grief surfacing when you don't expect it.
It's ok to feel them.

You must be careful with them.
You're going to hurt some people soon. They will be ok. You will need to learn from that.
You will see your friends again. In the meantime, recognize which ones know how to love you.
Even from a distance.
And even when you're hurting.
Also you're going to get a concussion soon. And mono. Again.
Just a warning

Love,
Olivia

To who I was a year ago,

It's really ok.
I know that right now it seems like there's too much and not enough and nothing fits right.
You're going to figure it out soon, I promise.
Stop looking for answers and start just enjoying life.
You are so worried about so many things that are so completely out of your control.
Also sorry about the car. It's going to be fixed soon though and I'm glad you didn't get hurt.
And that is what matters.
The people you like being around? Take note of them.
They're the ones you should be trying to keep around.
You figure that out, by the way. Just bears repeating.
And you're right, don't buy those shoes yet. They'll go on sale soon.
See you soon!

Love,
Olivia

To who I was ten years ago and who I am today.

And to whoever else is reading this right now,
I don't know either.
I'm still growing and I'm still learning and I just don't know most things.
That's ok.
It's more fun that way.
There's more to enjoy and more time to do it and so many people to love and like and let go.
Things don't have to be perfect to be worth your time.
Nor do they have to last forever.
The best things don't. Love them while you have them.
Change will happen, whether you pay attention or don't, but it's better if you do.
Be gentle. Be kind. Be brilliant.
Admit when you are wrong and try again tomorrow.
Try to be better.
I'll love you no matter what.

Love,
x

8
t
h
e
2
0
2
3
g
r
o
w
t
h
i
s
s
u
e

A Musing on ROT and REBIRTH

by Gabby Lipkin

Mushrooms grow on dead things.

I like to think I've died a few times. It's easier to process all the things that have happened to me that way, to think of a death of my past self leading up to that moment instead of moping about how I'll never be the same again. To think of the passing of a bad thing as a new opportunity for life makes grief and pain into something beautiful and comforting.

When I first died, I was scared. Hurt. Confused. Everything I knew was crumbling down around me, and my body and mind couldn't process it. I dissolved into the earth, and mushrooms grew from where I lay. Even though I could not sustain myself at that moment, a part of me still continued to grow and nurture new life.

I often compare myself to this dead tree in the nature preserve that I used to sit on and smoke by myself last spring. I went there so often that I could see it slowly decompose - and the one thing I noticed was that the more it rotted, the more new growth sprouted up from it. Mosses, lichens, fungi of all sorts blossomed across it. There were even small shoots that poked up from it, developing a new tree out of the carcass of the old one. It was dead, yes, but it had never been more alive.

Yes, I have died a myriad of times, but does that mean I have ceased to exist? Where all the hurt and agony resided, new life pushes up through it. My sad, tattered heart, so sore from abuse upon abuse, now grows sprouts and mushrooms from where the tears in it were. My poor lungs, all crackly from smoking, are full of soft, plush mosses that comfort all the smoke and ash away. The ferns that creep around my aching limbs whisper loving words to me when I feel empty.

It's almost comforting in a sense to think about how there are so many plants and bugs and bacteria that thrive in an environment of death and grief. That in sadness, something is living and being nourished and stretching out into the world. In your death, whether it be literal or metaphysical, you will never be alone, and a part of you will grow and continue to live.

When considering yourself and your own trauma, viewing it as a matter of self-death and rebirth may be scary to think of. I know it can be difficult at first to see this in yourself and to reconcile with all the horrid things that have happened to you, but growth will happen inevitably and soon the current barren wasteland of you will teem with new life. As the tree in the nature preserve had fungi and lichens sprout from its rot and centipedes made gentle homes in its crevices, so too will you.

(Someone once told me that I am an unlovable, hollow thing, and I think that statement is so far from the truth it's laughable. I have been through so much and yet, I am filled with more beauty than ever.)



9
t
h
e
2
0
2
3
g
r
o
w
t
h
i
s
s
u
e

Art // Kayla Huang

Dear birthday haters,

In one week, I turn twenty. The first year I cried on my birthday I had just turned seven. I was laying on my bunk bed, my little sister beneath me, in pink and purple sponge-painted walls crying into a dolphin pillow pet because I realized I would never be six again, and in just a year I would have to be eight. It was as if March 26th marked the death of who I had become that past year, as if I was being forced to become someone new—the someone I was meant to become. I held grudges at whatever “God” made life fleeting, said goodbye to the age I wasn’t, grieved where I could never be again, all while dreaming about and dreading the days where I could be grown up.

If life was a hill, the slopes just got steeper: time slipped between my fingers like a bubble bursting in my hand. Birthdays came, each with a whisper of “never again” and a shout of “you are all grown up now!” First, I was ten (double digits), then thirteen (a teenager), then sixteen (a driver), until it was eighteen and the “ALL GROWN UP” resounded—bulging from my head like in a comic book. And I didn’t know anything more than a fucking clue and that I was still a kid crying into a stuffed animal because I couldn’t be seventeen anymore when a year ago, I hated her too.

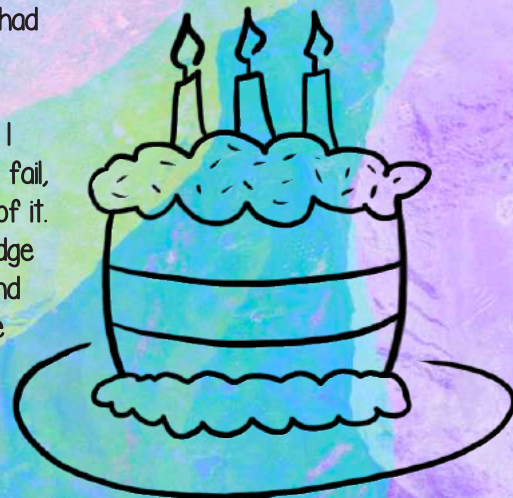
When I turned nineteen, I thought this was the last real year of childhood. Twenty was when I would be grown up—a woman in her twenties! But twenty is knocking at my door, she’s stalking the foot that dangles out of my blanket at night, and she’s the eyes seeping into my neck when I’m turned around. I’m running from her... like how I ran from nineteen...how I ran from seven. Please let me catch my breath. When is my death no longer tragic?

I am a pessimistic romantic. The future is like a sunny summer day: I have to put on my rose-colored shades before letting the sun sink into my skin—but I’m always forgetting sunblock. In the past two decades I’ve been growing, and I wasn’t the only one. My mother is twenty years older, my father too. Slipping through their first go at life and it took twenty years for me to realize they don’t have a clue, either. When I’m surrounded by friends, I notice how much I laugh like my mother, and smile like her. I notice how the features on my face mesh with her own and into her mother’s. I remember how the egg I came from formed while she was in the womb, a lineage of women who were worth growing into. I remember the woman she had to grow into first so that she had a chance to meet my father. I remember that I am simply a chance of one in millions, that I am the product of love, that it all grew into what it had to be.

I hate my birthday. But I love having stuffed animals on my bed to cry into. I will never be a noun; I am a verb, and I am growing. I laugh, sob, guess, crave, fail, impress, ignite, cherish, and quiver. How easily I could have experienced none of it. I’m grateful to still be blowing out candles...even now when they’re at the edge and slipping down the frosted sides. The slopes won’t stop getting steeper and the change that comes with that is the only promise I can make. But, you are worth growing into and I am celebrating with you.

Happy birthday—be slow with this year.

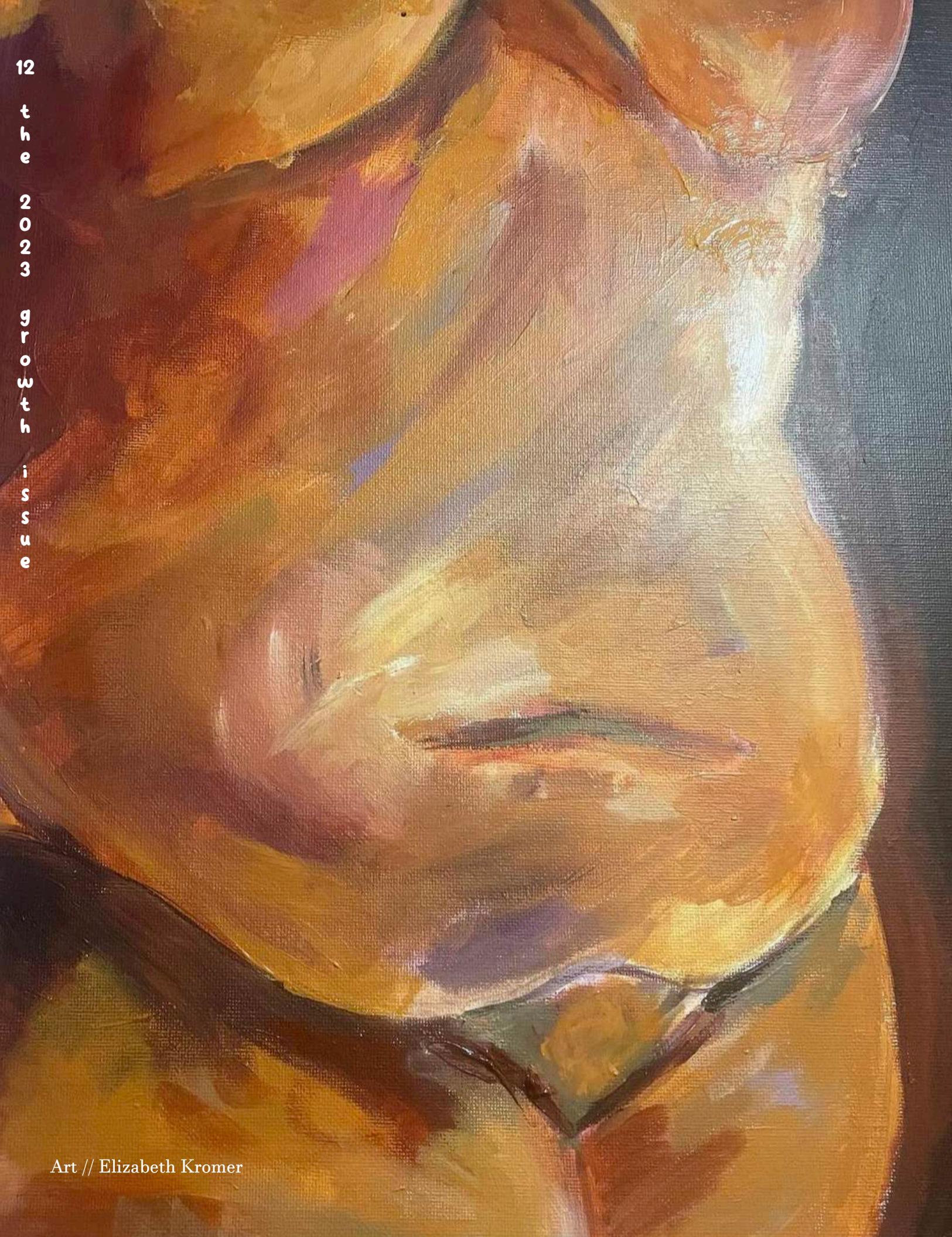
—Sam Burtk



Art // Emily Gangloff

**what are my bones without my blood?
i can feel you reach inside me.
what is my heart when i have no one?
i'm reaching for each memory.
the flame burns hard late at night?
but hardly shows at dawn.
help me help make things alright?
and rewrite all of my wrongs.**

Art and Poem // Elizabeth Kromer



Art // Elizabeth Kromer

TEQUILA SUNRISE GIRL

by Katherine Quinn

Tequila sunrise girl
She woke up in an unfamiliar bed
Yet she felt better
Untethered
to you.

You don't know her
but she slithered out from under your thumb
one night
and swam through flames,
Golder than your tarnished chain
brighter than you thought she was

I think I was so focused
on growing old with you
that I forgot—
how to be young,
that I could be young
forever—
Because falling in love was the most pathetic thing I ever did.



Art // Emily Gangloff

GROWING PAINS

by Sydney Newton

Growing pains, my friend:
Team with or agaist me
I am too young to care.
Bold and unremarkable;
Free yet caught in a web
Spun a millennia ago.
Teach me the words of my
Forgotten follies, the masks
I've come to wear—I am alone
And breathless—

Growing pains, why am I so
Hungry; unsatisfied? Is it
Me or the potential of me that's
Setting fire to my unrequited
Love of the world?
But I am too young to care.
I think you are my enemy—

**G
R
O
W
T
H**

What does growth really mean, anyways?

It's a rather broad concept, and it is something that never really stops happening.

When most people think of growth, I think they think of big things, the monumental life changes, the important breakups, getting into their dream school. These are all big, and all important. These moments all are certainly reflections of growth. They should be celebrated.

I'd like to raise a different perspective. I want to ask you to look more into the celebrations that happen on the daily basis.

To me, this is what growth truly means: the ability to celebrate little wins in daily life. Bonus points to celebrating wins that are not your own. Going past celebrating wins, I would argue that growth occurs when we are able to determine a day is a good day even if it doesn't have a win, or a defining moment. If we look at life with a closer lens, there are so many more positive moments that happen right in front of us. The stress of the world often lets us miss them.

I'm not saying this is easy! Who has the time to sit down and think about the little wins in life, especially ones that are not about you? Well apparently I do, so let me help you out there! Below is a list of little wins and joys to celebrate in life. This list is certainly not an exhaustive list, more so just the little things I have enjoyed witnessing in life.

by Victoria Barics

- Seeing people smile walking away from a conversation, even after they have turned their back from the person they are speaking to
- When you go to a friend with a problem and the response is "we will figure this out, together."
- When a friend sends you a song because it reminds them of you, or because they think you will like it
- When an artist writes a song and your name is the title!
- When people accidentally start saying each other's phrases because they spend so much time together
- When you thrift THE item
- Hearing your favorite song for the first time
- Watching a proposal happen!
- When strangers are celebrating their birthday in a restaurant and everyone there joins in to sing a long
- Going to a coffee shop and having the barista know your order
- The first bite of your favorite meal after craving it for a long time
- Trying on and purchasing your pair of go to jeans
- Listening to a friend talking about their passion or hobby
- Laughing so hard alongside your friends you can't get any words out
- You! I celebrate you!

Remember that while each day may not have a big accomplishment attached, life is more than these big moments. I urge you to submerge yourself in the small moments of life. Let yourself be showered in joy, love, and daily gratitude. This is how we grow.

How to Build Your Own Terrarium

By Noelle Dutch

Supplies needed:

- Terrarium container
- Small unfinished pebbles
- Houseplant Soil
- Charcoal
- Peat Moss
- Plants of your choice (good in humid environments)
- Tweezers (optional)
- Additional decorative pieces (stones, figures, felt, magnets, etc)

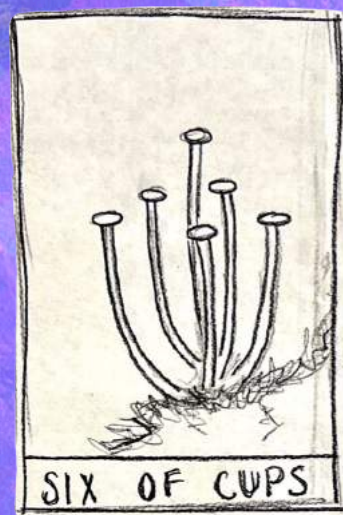
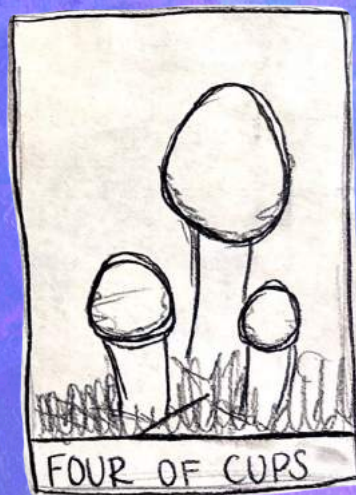
1. Find an old container like a water bottle, or liquor bottle, to be your terrarium's home. Make sure you can reach your hand or a pair of tweezers into the hottle completely to arrange your plants! Also be sure you can seal the container to allow for a humid environment to develop.
2. Once you have your container, clean it and dry it thoroughly! You don't want any tequila remnants getting into your soil. Make sure it is dry as well so soil does not stick to the sides of the container.
3. Time to fill your terrarium! Start with small pebbles covering the bottom of the bottle to allow water to drain out of the soil. Then sprinkle the pebbles with a thin layer of soil (you will add more soil layer so I mean thin when I say thin). Atop this soil a thin layer of charcoal to prevent bacteria growth.
4. Now add the thick layer of soil! It should be a few inches thick depending on the size of the bottle and the types of plants you will be using. Do some extra research for your own plant's needs.

5. When choosing your terrarium plants, make sure they survive well in humid environments since your terrarium will be closed! Place down a soft bed of moss then root your plants in. Feel free to add other decorative pieces like stones or little figures.
6. Cleaning hack! If you want to clean off the condensation to see into the terrarium, wrap 2 magnets in felt and place them on either side of your glass. You can move the outer magnet and the inner magnet will move along with it so the felt will wipe away water out without having to open the tightly-sealed container.
7. Now you have a terrarium! House it in a sunny area and enjoy watching your little plants grow :)

to be found

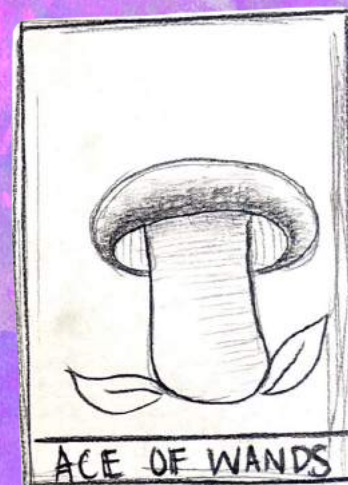
*i've gotten by, blending in,
 safe in being unknown;
 in being quiet,
 in being disinterested...
 now you want to get to know me,
 to peel back the layers that i've known,
 the shields that have kept me safe,
 though alone,
 caged away,
 quite detached...
 the bright lights terrify me,
 too much, too much at once,
 the noises reverberate,
 too much, too much at once,
 and my voice runs,
 so far that...
 sooner or later it thins,
 like a deer in headlights,
 i am seen,
 like a deer in headlights,
 i am confused,
 blinded by the lights,
 so very
 terrified
 to be seen,
 to feel caught,
 to be found.*

~oakley &



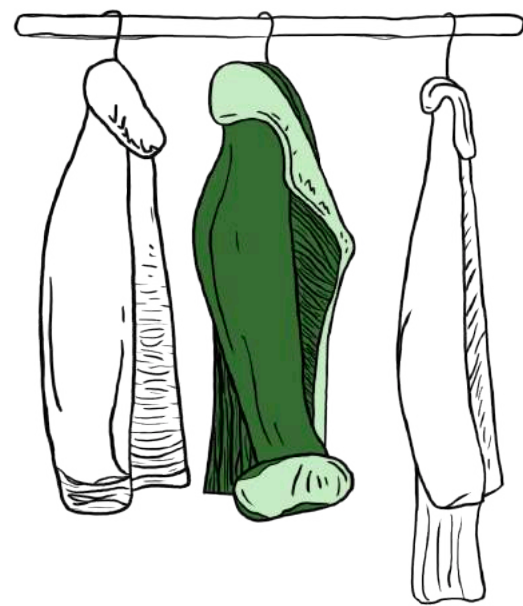
Art // Olivia Giangrosso

Art // Sophie Roth



I Think it was a Green Robe

by Olivia Palmeri



I call you Mom now. At some point, I don't know what age, I found it embarrassing to keep calling you Mommy. Worried about being made fun of by my classmates. Or embarrassed to admit that I was still just a kid, thinking I knew so much but in reality, being so incredibly naive that now I'm embarrassed to think back on my embarrassment.

I remember you in your green robe. Or maybe the pink one. When you wore it as you kissed us goodbye before heading out to the bus. Or on Sunday mornings when we were all still so sleepy but you made us pancakes and bacon to start the lazy day. Or on Christmas mornings as you wrapped the cloth tight around you to shield yourself from the brisk Buffalo air because Dad would refuse to let us put the heat on higher than 72. Your robe always smelled of you even when you didn't have it on. A mix of Grace perfume, the same one your Aunt uses, and the spiced scent of our home. It was always so soft.

As the fabric grows harsher and the smell fades, so do my memories of you in it. I haven't seen you wear it in a while but I don't want to forget you in it. I long to always hold the memory of you wrapping your arms around me in your bed. Sometimes you did it so much I got annoyed and I would wriggle my body away from your grasp.

I regret passing the chance to hug you whenever you barreled toward me with your outstretched hands because I know those days won't last forever. I know you only do it out of the ever-flowing love that you hold in your beautiful heart. I know you express your love so much because you didn't get to have that time with your mom, who passed when you were just fifteen. So hold me, kiss my forehead, and love me as you wish your mom would have. I always want to be your little girl. The one who you long to cradle in your arms forever. The one who you would read to from our favorite bedtime story, Love You Forever. And as the book goes, "I'll love you forever, I'll like you for always, As long as I'm living My Mommy you'll be."

Nineteen

By Katherine Quinn

"Nineteen?" I questioned, pointing to the two little digits tattooed on the back of her forearm, enveloped in a rectangle.

"Oh," Brandy smiled. "There's a funny story behind that one. I actually got that tattoo with this guy I was dating years ago."

"What was his name?" I asked.

"David." She giggled, tossing her long dark waves over her shoulder. "Anyways, he took me to an arcade, and we were on fire that night! When we got to that game, Deal or No Deal, he said, 'On the count of three, let's both say which brief case we think the money's in.' And we both said nineteen, at the same time!" She sighed, shaking her head. "I mean, isn't that crazy? So, I said, 'If the money's in the nineteenth briefcase, I'm telling you I love you. And guess what?'"

"What?" I laughed, already knowing the answer.

"It was lucky number nineteen! So that night we went to Jamaica Ave. and got the number nineteen tattooed, matching, me and him." She rubbed her bright acrylic nails over the numbers, 1-9.

"How long were you with him?" I asked.

"A month."

I gasped.

"No, it's fine. I just love that memory." She smiled for a moment. "Well, back to work." She said, as she swiped the bill from the register, snapping it shut between the covers of the little leather book.

Brandy was my favorite coworker I've ever had. I still find her mannerisms and vocabulary seeping into my own. I carry that story with me always—there was something poetic about it. I was nineteen when I worked at Tony's Bar and Grille; Brandy was in her mid-twenties. She was, in many ways, what I would want in an older sister. I never imagined that I would ever be like her.

The thing I admire the most about Brandy is how she didn't let that nineteen keep her where she wasn't meant to be. Perhaps someone else would have seen those two digits as a reason to stay.

I think about Brandy and David when I think of me and you.

I gave you my first "I love you." And to me, that was enough of a reason to stay and fight when things got hard. Those three words were my nineteen. But ultimately, you came to your decision. And when you left, I let you go. I never begged or pleaded or called you late at night.

Love does not have to be eternal to be profound. That nineteen is still on her arm. I still told you I love you. I can never swallow back words that I've already said. But that cannot be the thing that holds me from finding the place I'm meant to be. You can be a beautiful memory, a jackpot briefcase on the highest shelf, a blinding light on Jamaica Ave. You can be a crazy story I tell younger women, someone tattooed on my heart yet someone I don't think of all that often. But you will always be my lucky number nineteen.

