



GROWING AND SHRINKING

Growing is no piece of cake no matter how tall we are or how long we've lived. We progress, we fall back, we start all over again, ferblungeoning forward into our future even while kicking and screaming. The universe commands expanding, and we obey, improvising every step of the way.

The side of the bookshelf at the door of my studio records the vicissitudes and ambivalence of growth in blurry No. 2 pencil. Four years of measurements meticulously cataloged the height of a small visitor, Roxy, now eight. Suddenly, last summer, when we measured it appeared as if she'd become shorter from February to October. In a fit of disbelief and frustration, she erased her carefully annotated entries up to that point, burst into tears, and wrote: I shrank.

I know that shrinking feeling all too well. Just when you think you've got it together, your life makes a beeline for the toilet. Plans dissolve, goals fade into impossibility, friends and lovers go their separate ways, creativity falters, and you're beached, shrunk to a lowly worm, writhing around fecklessly, squirming towards an unknowable, unfathomable, and undoubtedly grim future. And then...

A knock at the gate, a friend with a book, a purring cat, a surprise email requesting one's presence, a tulip blooms, and we gather courage, center ourselves, and start anew.

