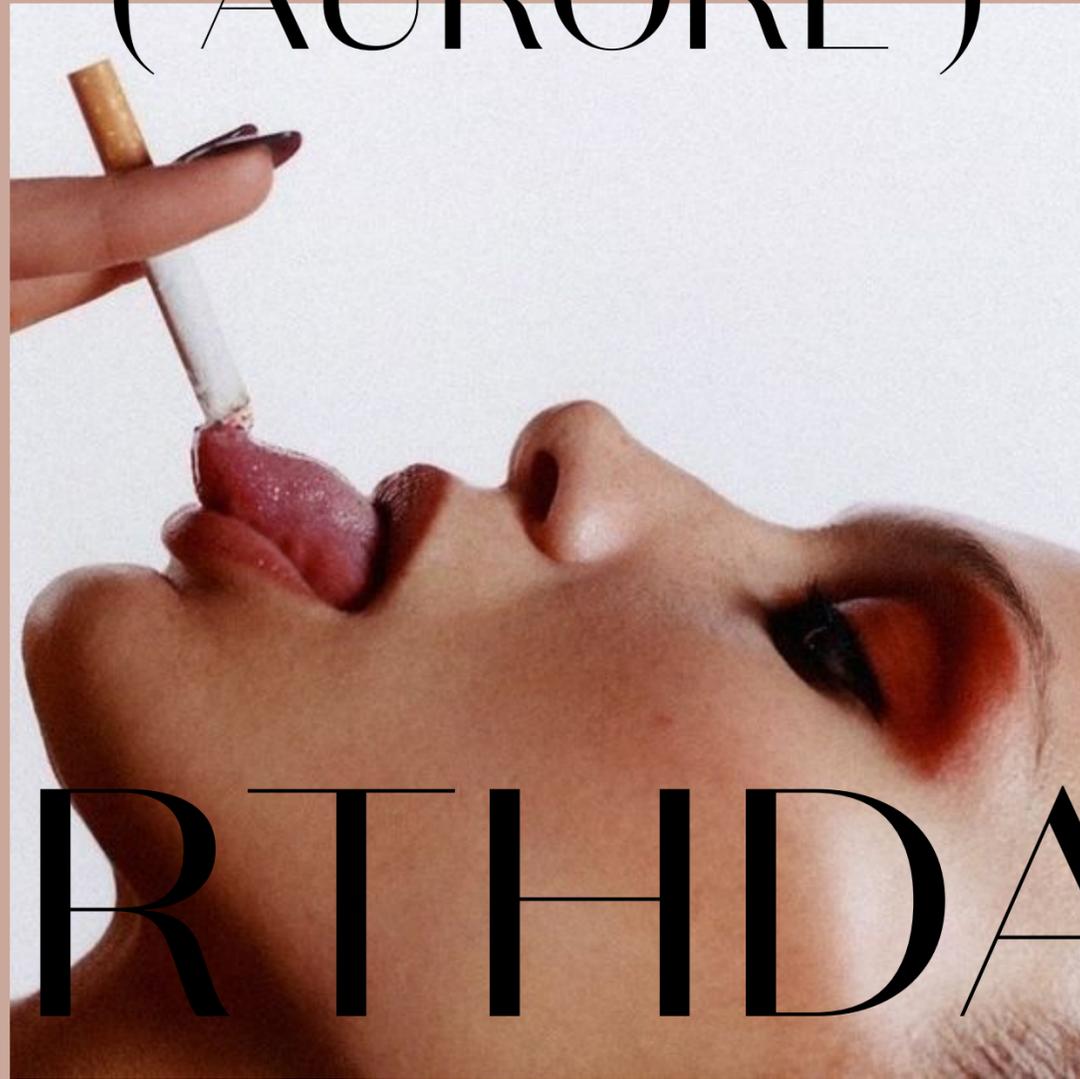


(AURORE)



BIRTHDAY

THEORY

## editor's note

On your birthday, you walk around with a secret, and whether or not you blurt it out depends in part on how much you are willing to be vulnerable. A kind, soft day lets you unroll into it, you wear a smile like a birthday crown and people congratulate you accordingly. But sometimes the desire for perfection creates a steel facade, your stiffness manifests in distance, love runs from you. The problem is, you don't get to choose the perfect days, they just happen, usually when you don't plan it.

And so a reframe is necessary. You can still hope for the perfect day, as long as you're fully aware that may not happen. Your role is to reflect on your year, the beauty, the life you live. And collect the little loves—the little loves are the best. Most of life is the little things. The only way to make something immortal is to savor it. Focus on the good, zero in on the smallest pleasures. Take a superpowered fucking microscope at your life and blow up the beauty in your memories and moment.

xxxCarly



*“We turn not older with years, but newer every day.” — Emily Dickinson*

What emotions do you associate with your  
birthday? Why?

# Write about your past birthdays

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Choose a format to apply to each or just one. Detail a birthday in haiku form, then one line of prose. If writing about them all feels like too much, choose a handful of memorable birthdays. As you go through the memories, consider the emotions that come up.

# Describe Your Ideal Birthday Celebration

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What will you wear? Where will it be? Who plans it? Who attends? Cake flavor? Party favor? How do you feel? What happens when it's over? Detail the scene. Write the invite.

# Expectations vs Reality

Have you ever experienced an occasion, whether sexual or a holiday/event that was hyped up only to let you down? How does disappointment feel when you have high expectations? Can you shift expectations to leave room to find surprise and delight? How can you change a situation that is tanking for yourself and anyone else involved?

# Birthday Suit

Get naked, either literally or metaphorically. Lovingly describe your body as if you are seeing someone incredibly fuckable for the first time. Linger over every curve, dimple, freckle. Undress yourself slowly and marvel at what's underneath.

# Perfect Imperfections

What are you most insecure about physically? What teachings/ads/beauty standards have informed these insecurities? What if the parts of you you are most ashamed of were the most alluring? Write a sexy scene in which your insecurity is being flaunted as a hot commodity. The thing you're most hung up on is what your lover is most obsessed with. Write from whatever POV makes this possible.

# Highlight Reel

Share a strong of highlights from your year thus far (or the past month, or the past week, any time frame that works for you!) Think small, like tiny: something you ate that was delicious, a time you observed the clouds and felt connected to nature.

# New Year, New You

It's always the perfect time for a ritual cleanse (but especially birthdays!)  
What intentions do you want to set for your upcoming week/month/year?  
What feelings/anxieties/people do you want to leave behind as you move  
forward?