

The Day My Body Gave Up on Me

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I was 10 years old when a woman told my mother I was ready for a bra.

It was in a 7/11 convenience store, such a strange place for something so life altering as that moment.

My mother was chatting with the cashier and I was at her side, my mother's ever-present shadow.

The woman looked at me, and the two small sacs of fat and nerves that sat upon my chest and admired me.

"She's about to hit puberty!" She admonished, the word feeling not foreign in my vocabulary, but something I thought would never apply to me personally.

As soon as the word "bra" left her lips, I stopped listening.

I didn't hear the typical "you're going to have to chase the boys away with a shotgun!" jest people always told my mother.

All I heard was that a total stranger pointed out the truth I had been trying to deny for months. That my body was changing, and I could do nothing about it.

My starter bra was tiny, more of a sports bra than anything.

It was cute and strange with little witchy designs and phrases like "charm school" on it.

I didn't like wearing it because it made my chest more apparent to me.

Curves I didn't have before were starting to emerge. Curves I never desired at 10 years old.

By the time I was in the fifth grade, I was a B Cup.

I always hung out with boys. Girls never liked me much and I didn't like feeling like I always had to pretend with them.

But since The Change had begun to occur within me, I noticed the shift.

It was the smallest nuances, so simple that anyone with a neurotypical brain would not even detect it.

I am not neurotypical. I noticed the scab forming and I picked at it.

The boys I used to play Pokémon with, tackle and wrestle with, staring at my chest more. I would catch them in conversation, and they would always look away, always ashamed, but not enough to not go back in for another look.

I stopped hanging out with boys who were attracted to me.

It gutted me, being caught between a rock and a hard place, for no other reason than because I was becoming "womanly" earlier than my peers.

My fear of the male gaze drove me to do destructive things to my body. I felt utterly betrayed by it, this one thing I used to appreciate and covet as a child.

I used to appreciate the fact that if I fell and scraped my knee, I would heal quickly. I started testing that ability by harming myself intentionally.

When I couldn't take the eyes of grown men, oversexualizing my adolescent body, I tried binding my breasts. I was unsuccessful, and this only extrapolated my desperation.

My early teenage years were decimated due to the self-image issues that plagued me.

These things still plague me.

I often wonder, after days of starvation, if I will ever love my body the way I did when I was four years old, back when I could walk around without a shirt on, my chest completely flat.

Back when my little potbelly was considered cute and my mother used to blow raspberries on it to make me giggle.

Back when I was too young to remember people oversexualizing my full lips and big doe eyes.

I hold onto those memories, when I am at the mercy of my dysphoria's grip.

I hold onto these, and hope for the best.