

“Uterus, 15”

by

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Her belly protrudes in front of her like a beacon, guiding stares her way. Like a honeycomb sprouting off a thin branch, it is surrounded by bzzzing and hmmmimg. No one notices the tree anymore.

She wonders if it will always be like this, for the rest of her life. She can see the future when she stares at the backs of her eyelids: standing in line at the grocery store, the women will coo and crow over the bundle of cloth, not the arms that hold it. And as they walk away, they may whisper comments about her youth.

She already knows what will happen when the bundle develops feet and arms and learns to speak and dance and tell stories and cry. That was her, once. It wasn't so long ago that she doesn't remember the way her chest swelled up with pride during playground comparisons of their mother's ages.

When the other children got old enough to do the math, she stopped telling them. That was when she learned the shame in numbers.

And now she is a number, a statistic, the kind of girl that people love to tell stories about and write about because she is so tragic. And she knows that when strangers write her story, it won't be hers anymore. It will be the story of that thieving, thriving life inside of her.

She thinks to herself, *I have become nothing more than an age and a body part.*