

## Instagrave

This isn't my bed. The mattress is so firm I barely make a dent. The sheets feel like paper so every slight adjustment is greeted with the sound of a crunching newspaper. However my bed remains perfectly silent, I'm so weak I can't even move.

The only noise comes from footsteps and food carts going by outside and the idle chatter that follows them. Occasionally the machines next to me will chime and beep and then somebody will come in to adjust the consoles whose tubes reach into my veins.

Other times people enter to ask me questions. Today a man stands over me with a grave look chiselled into his face. He wears typical business attire. Dress pants and shirt without a tie. Maybe this is someone higher up who long ago moved past scrubs and into management and is only brought back to the floor by a particularly difficult or interesting case.

"Do you know where you are?" he asks.

"I'm in the hospital."

"What is the last thing you remember?" he asks.

This conversation is too fast paced. The utterance of those four words has completely taken it out of me. My eyelids weigh a tonne. Thoughts are much less physically demanding although difficult in a different way.

"Being in my room. Someone was there. I fainted." That's the best verbalisation of events I can provide with my current energy levels.

He lets me rest. He studies me for a moment. He checks a chart and the machine that chimes every now and again before trying another question.

"What is the first thing you remember?"

The first thing? That's a weird question, I'm not an amnesiac. I'm an assault victim. Maybe he's been off the floor too long. But after my hesitation he changes tact.

"When do you feel this first started?"

When *did* this start? This journey to ICU. I think it started with Kim Kardashian.

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Kimmy K just posted a picture of herself. Don't pretend you don't know who I'm talking about. It's nothing special, just her at a fashion show, or a concert, or some other event. You can't tell exactly where she is because her face literally takes up 90% of the frame. If you drag your thumb down her giant head, by the time the little circle has managed to complete a full rotation there will be an extra 10,000 people giving their approval underneath. Refresh it again, and there will be yet another 10,000. You can repeat this process until there is about 1,000,000 names as love hearts.

My posts never reach those dizzying heights but every great journey starts with a single step. Every mighty oak started from an acorn. These are inspirational quotes from some of my favourite influencers. One day my measly few likes will germinate into an army of hearts if I can just keep persisting and upping my game. You can use filters or you can use simple poses to help your posts.

Migraine pose is great way to frame your shot and give your skin a temporary tautness. Just put one hand up to your temple like you have a splitting headache and lift that skin. Wrinkles no more. Elegance with a purpose. It's like a temporary face lift and you look fierce.

In terms of filters it's all about selecting the right tool for the job. Are you trying to hide or enhance? If your complexion is blotchy I always use "Inkwell" as my filter. Not only does black and white make you look totally classy, but it can hide unevenness in your skin tone. Red blotches be gone.

Or if you are wanting to enhance your done-up look, then "Rise" is the answer. Put simply "Rise" makes you glow. The softer light brightens up those bags and leaves your skin looking tight, bright and healthy. This only works if you are sporting at least the bare minimum: blush, mascara and lipstick. If not your bare face will shine like a lighthouse, repelling sailors for miles.

Even with all my tricks and tips, nothing is working for me today. Every photo is a dud. No filter can save this kind of ugly. Swipe. Double chin. Swipe. My eye looks bung. Swipe. My smile is awkward. Swipe. Can see my love handles. Swipe. This one has three chins! I give up!

Before I throw down my phone I notice something new. A filter I've never seen before. It's called "Bone". I choose the best photo of the bad bunch. As Marilyn Monroe said: "if you

can't handle me at my worst, you don't deserve me at my best." Another influencer favourite. The photo is amazing. My pores shrink, my complexion glows, my lips get fuller and my eyes turn from muddy puddles into swimming pools. All my lines disappear and my cheek bones look like they can cut. My neck stretches and my hair goes from grease pit to fresh wash. All my flaws are airbrushed away. My waist looks perfect, those last five kilos that are impossible to get rid of are gone. I look perfect. With and without the filter is like a photo of two different people. It can't wait. I post it immediately.

One after the other the likes start rolling in. Then the comments start "Flawless", "Stunning", Fire emojis, Love heart eye emojis. People I know, friends of friends, even people I don't know are liking and commenting. Falling back onto my bed, my head is swimming. If this is what I can do with a bedroom selfie, imagine what I can get with a nice location and lighting. That's for tomorrow. I need my beauty sleep. My stomach grumbles but I'm too excited to think of anything else. Today is fast day. The two and five diet, or is that five and two?

It's early. Really early. But I can barely sleep I'm so excited to get some new shots. Dawn is a perfect time anyway. The light is soft and the streets are deserted.

#theearlybirdgetstheworm. Shower, shave, style, hair, make up, outfit and I'm out the door. I don't have time for breakfast so I throw a granola bar and an apple in my backpack. Today I'm going for the active wear look. Always do your photos first, I don't care who you are no one can pull off sweaty beetroot face. I'll do my 10kms after. Usually it's better to have someone take photos for you, but I get the best I can with a selfie stick and self-timer. With my phone storage full the 10k's home are flying by, my excitement is pushing me to a personal best. In the early morning the sounds are clear. Crunching leaves, a puddle, gravel, footsteps. Is somebody following me? Could just be an echo. I run harder all the way home. #painisjustweaknessleavingthebody

My tried and true filters just don't cut it anymore. Mayfair, Rise, Moon none of them make me look as good. All the influencers with their teams of make-up and digital artists have got nothing on 'Bone'. And now it's finally happening my gram is blowing up. My DM's are exploding, there's new followers every time I check and the likes are growing every day. I tease a little skin here and some cleavage there. Out to brunch, in the park, at home, at the beach, by the pool everything is a hit. My inbox is full of unanswered 'hey' and 'hi' messages. There is however the occasional pig sending creepier ones. They search for truffles the only way they know how, digging in the mud, dirty texts. But every growing farm has a

couple of pigs around. Pigs mean produce. If you manage things carefully you'll be bringing home the bacon but don't ever get into the pen with them. I'm onto this new meatless diet anyway. I brush off these messages careful to never give myself away. Where I live are where I'm going are secrets.

I've asked around no one else seems to have this filter. Maybe it is in a test phase and only a lucky few have access. So I have to strike while I have the advantage. Growth can be exponential if you play it right. Use hashtags but never more than ten, people see that as spamming. Comment and like posts to get yourself on potential followers radar. Post at the right time and post at least every day, avoid work hours when posting. Soon enough there will thousands upon thousands of eyeballs on your content. #theharderIworktheluckierIget

I'm taking photos in my room and setting up for today's selfie. I'm thinking of using the mirror, with a strategically placed flash to cover some exposed areas. The lighting is good, but there is a slight blemish on my cheek. I reach into my backpack, digging past a granola bar and a rotting apple, to grab my emergency concealer. With a few dabs of potion and a change of pose that's as good as perfect. 'Bone' will take care of the chubbiness.

The lights are ready, the camera is ready, everything is perfect until I see it. There is a hollow faced silhouette with large teeth and bug eyes staring from the window inside the mirror. I whirl around to confront them, or to pull the blinds shut and call the police. I wanted eyes on me but through a screen not through my window. Between the shock and the adrenaline I'm completely light headed. I fall back onto the bed and that is the last I remember. I don't really want to know what happened next.

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That's how I got here. Between my bed and this bed. To this uncomfortable bed, hooked up to these uncomfortable machines, and to the uncomfortable doctor standing over me. They won't let me have my phone, they won't let me near a mirror. I want to cry but I can't because it's too exhausting. I want to scream but I have no voice left. I just want to go home. Before the doctor leaves me alone, he tells me they're keeping me here a little longer, to monitor me. He gives me the names of some other people who will be coming to poke and prod. More doctors, nurses, psychologists, dieticians. How about the cops? That's what I really need.

He steps out and I'm alone. My parents will be along soon and the silence will be replaced with mum's tears and dad's attempts to soothe. I turn my head to the window. With my phone gone boredom is back for the first time in a long time. I'd like to see what's happening below but I can't see from lying flat. With great effort I inch my way up the bed. In the time it takes to get halfway to sitting the sun has practically set. Lifting my own weight is near impossible. Moving myself is a marathon. The darkening outside and the fluorescent light inside my room turn the glass into a blurry mirror. I panic. I try to reach for the nurse button. Hollow eyes, sunken cheeks, and thin lips pulled back over protruding teeth stalk me through the window. I must be hallucinating, the tubes in my arms must be making me delirious. That face with skin stretched over bone leers at me. I have no energy to fight it, I'm spent, this demon can have me. My eyelids feel so stretched they can barely close on their own so I reach up to cover my eyes. The watching face does the same. I touch my nose, the face does the same. I touch my cheekbones, it touches his, touches hers. The hollow eyes, the sunken cheek bones, the thinness it all belongs to me. I can't move because my muscle has started to erode. I'm hooked to feeding bag because I can't remember the last time I ate something, or if I did, kept it down. This demon that stalks me, lives within me. It's terrible but all I can think when looking at my shrivelling frame is 'Hudson' would be great for adding bronze to cover my pale complexion and its low on contrast so it will help hide the boney shadows.

#youarewhatyoueat