

The room is cold. My blanket's on the floor, but I don't feel it; I don't feel anything outside of the loop my fingers are hypnotized in. My eyebags glow an artificial blue from the light of my screen, neck tilted at an angle that'll ache tomorrow, but I won't realize until it does. Nothing exists except for the same 15 second video. Replaying. Replaying. Replaying, until even the high it gave me the first time runs flat. Scroll, repeat, and—

I pause. My finger hovers over the phone, strained eyes zeroing in on the composite of everything I have *ever* desired. Perfect nose, perfect hair, perfect life. But a voice whispers from the depths of my sleep-deprived mind, asking: “How *would* you define perfect?” Before I could answer, the screen dims. Battery low? Or maybe it wanted me to see. My reflection greets me, but I know I'm not welcome. My brows furrow as I try to ignore the very image I learned to forget, but reality seeps through the mirror. Unforgiving.

It was for a split-second, but the screen lit again, inviting me on the same loop. I couldn't forget what happened. My fingers curl around my phone possessively, my blood boiling not at someone else, but at myself. My hand snapped to a button I'm used to, and I rampaged through countless filters, reshaping my face altogether until I was satisfied. It was addictive, seeing my features morph into their opposites. And I loved it all, couldn't pull back, until not just my face, but my body was sinking into a tunnel of fabrication.

The air feels the same, stale, tired, nothing different. However, the screen of my phone says otherwise. I notice there's no filter on this time. I touch my new face, ecstatic, but it quickly gets

replaced by a quiet laugh. I know this isn't my face, and I'm not mad. But this definitely isn't my body, life, or voice. My own laugh sounds foreign in my— *her* throat.

I reluctantly crawl out of bed when I trip on a pair of Isabel Marant shoes, although I could tell it was a rip-off. Crumpled math homework, a closet teetering on the edge of a dumpster, and a tangle of jewelry, tangled the way I feel, looking for an owner.

I'm now reconsidering. This *does* feel like my body. This *does* feel like my voice. This feels like *my* reality. I pull myself towards a mirror, wincing, yet intrigued. Being "perfect" was the only thing I knew I wanted, but my reflection in the mirror challenges that conviction. Memories dig through the vision boards, magazines hung up, every fragment of my goal, and how obsessively I've catalogued every feature of this body. As if I knew her myself, my way around her, simply through a screen. I look different, too.

"Ding!" A notification bounces on my homescreen, insidious. "Ding!" teases another. I pick up her polka-dot encased phone, finger sore from before, and scroll through the endless comments. "Your hair is so gorgeous omg." I look in the mirror. Curled. In the video? Straightened. "Body tea, drop the workout routine PLEASE." I look in the mirror again. This does not look anything like the body in the video.

A faint buzz echoes throughout the room, perhaps from the thousands of eyes I sense staring at me from the sea of fabric dumped below. Empty. Almost as empty as my messages, not a single compliment describing *me*.

My thumb finds the app again, reflex before reason. “How would you define perfect?” Still no answer. I put the phone down and pick up the mirror instead, inhaling sharply. The breath is broken by the clawing of my fingers scratching the mirror, confronting the tiny glass circle of everything I’ve disavowed. I find the reflection of my nose, tearing at it away, trying to bend the mirror’s shape. Bent, just like how that filter did.

My nail pauses at the glass, hovering. It’s not her face flinching back at me, but mine. Exhausted, uneven, real. I slap my palms on the mirror, dragging it down the cold glass, and for the first time all night, I don’t flinch. Don’t look away.

I’m back in my old room, the AC indifferent to my return. Blanket still on the floor, my phone glows beside me, a video paused mid-loop. I ignore it. I find the mirror on my dresser and look at my nose. Look, not scrutinize. The one I clawed at for not being hers, the one I traveled a hundred strangers’ faces just to escape, faces I thought I knew my way around. It’s still here, still mine. Maybe I didn’t need the journey to find “perfect.” Maybe I just needed to come home.