Meds

1st Place, by Kalana Slack

People say you shouldn't go on your phone first thing when you wake up, that it's bad for your mental health to see a screen before the sun. As I reach for my phone I glance at my closed curtains and the light spilling through the gaps, trying desperately to reach me. Opening my phone makes me squint; the bright blue stings. Muscle memory kicks in and Instagram opens, the logo flashing quickly before I see the first post.

A picture of my friend posing happily with a recently cleaned up second-hand car, holding a piece of paper above her head. Reading the caption, I understand that the paper means that she passed her restricted licence test, and is celebrating getting a car.

My thumb passes over my screen, after double tapping in the bottom corner.

The next post I see is of a restaurant, swiping to see beautiful food and a cute selfie of my friend and her boyfriend with little ice cream cones. The caption tells me that he surprised her with fancy dinner, and a walk in the park with dessert. I type out "OMG that's so sweetttt!!!!" and scroll again.

I start to get sad, for no particular reason. What is happening?

The scroll reveals a 0.5 selfie of another of my friends in an unrecognisable uniform, different to the last one I remember her wearing to work. I look closer at the logo on the front pocket and realise that it's the uniform for the local vet, an internship there contributing to her veterinary major. "I am soooooo proud of you!!!!!!" I press enter, swiping up yet again, another muscle memory.

I should be happy for my friends, and I am. So why do I feel like this? Why does my stomach want to curl in on itself?

I scroll until I see a photo of a cozy set-up with lots of blankets, a screen showing a show I don't recognise and some delicious snacks. I feel relieved, represented with my slower lifestyle. Another caption, this one saying "Finals finally done!!! Time to chill and anxiously await results".

I stare at the screen.

Shit, they've already been and gone? A small wave of panic flows along my duvet-covered body, despite the fact that I am not enrolled in tertiary education. I should be. Everyone else is, they are progressing in their life as everyone expects them to.

An alarm pierces my ears and takes over my phone screen. Time to take my medication. I'll need water for that. Maybe they will work today and quiet the voices in my mind that are constantly comparing me to my lovely friends, telling me where I should be in my life.

'Look at her—she's younger than you and she's already moved out! What the hell are you doing? Why aren't you—'

I stand up and walk to the kitchen for a glass of water.