

## **You Don't Have To Be Beautiful, But It Helps**

"I take, like, 500 selfies a day to get one I like."

Kylie Jenner, 20 years old, Reality TV Star, Cosmetic Line Owner,

Welcome to my thesis.

This masterpiece is about beauty, the perception of beauty and self-perception in the age of social media and many other things. It's partly inspired and based on the phenomenon of the Kardashian family, the Instagram beauty image and perfect people in general, from an angle of personal experience.

For two years I have been obsessed with the Kardashian/Jenner family, with their appearance, their way of talking, their general behaviour and the fact that they're incredibly influential (at least for a part of my generation). This year is the ten year anniversary of their show, *Keeping Up With the Kardashians*. And even though I told myself that I was not going to write my thesis about a family that most people find unnecessary and dense, I couldn't find a way around them.

So the show first aired 10 years ago. I've always known they existed, but I had never watched the show until like two years ago.

The reason why I started watching was a discussion in the media a few years back: did Kylie Jenner (the youngest of the five sisters) get her lips injected at sixteen years old?

I started to be very curious and it literally only took three episodes to get me hooked and I've seen every episode since.

I am actually using *Life of Kylie*, the reality series about Kylie Jenner, as a reference for this piece of work, so now you know what you're dealing with here.

A reason for me to write about this and to use this polarising family as a subject, is that I really have the urge to understand the phenomenon that they have become. Because it has influenced me personally as far as that I got lip injections myself, and I still don't completely understand how I got there. So this is supposed to help me figure that out.

I got sucked into the world of beauty, beauty standards, social media and plastic surgery in a very short amount of time and it made me suffer from time to time. It is hard to feel beautiful nowadays. There are so many different ideals that can influence us on some level that I think it's hard to still know what you want out of all of them.

I've been researching for a while now, and I do want to talk about beauty standards and how quick they change but I also want to get into what they can do to you mentally. Because I have personally been struggling and there is a bigger mental health issue hidden behind all the pretty faces, that we are not aware of, an issue we might want to pay more attention to.

Because the experience I've had over the last couple of months was much tougher on me than I thought it would be. Not necessarily physically, but mostly mentally. Being stuck in a beauty obsession is harder than you think. It made me very unhappy and insecure, so I really felt the need to address this topic.

## Obsessing over an Imagined Ideal

A recent study cited in *Teen Decisions: Body Image* (Ojeda 2002) showed that by the time a girl reaches age 17, she has been exposed to more than 250'000 bytes on beauty.<sup>1</sup>

This was a study in 2002, a time when social media didn't exist yet. Now imagine the exposure to images of beauty in the year 2017, a time where the internet memorises every single thing you've ever looked up. You look up certain products once, or stalk the same three Instagram beauty queens few times and it will haunt you, you will see those images everywhere. Imagine you are a twenty four year old girl, who is very impressionable and you are being bombarded with those images of perfection, perfect bodies, perfect faces, everything perfect. And it doesn't matter if you chose to see them or not, because that is not the point. In the end we all see the beauty advertisements on billboards on the street, in newspapers and on TV. We see articles about "perfect people" in magazines and all the "beautiful people" that are being portrayed on television and in movies.

More specifically, in my case or the case I want to talk about, the ideal portrayed on social media and in celebrity culture, which nowadays pretty much goes hand in hand.

The mainstream media portrays celebrities in the way it always has. The way they are portrayed gives them a superhuman status, they are being glorified, not because the media necessarily shows the most flattering photos or tells the most interesting stories. Actually it's the opposite. The media glorifies celebrities by publishing the most banal stories, because it's not like we care who does their groceries where. But by publishing it in a magazine or a newspaper, it seems like these people are much more interesting and important than they actually are. And their images are being spread everywhere, newspapers- print and online, TV and advertising. Some of them photoshopped to perfection, some of them in the most unflattering positions and angles.

And on the other side there is social media. The platform that gives everyone the chance to show themselves in the best way possible. The fact that everyone can use it, because it's accessible and easy, also makes the celebrities on social media more accessible. It gives you the feeling that they actually allow you to have a glimpse in their glorious, fabulous lives. Which is still all show, but now it's like a very personal show. And maybe the fact that they seem to be so accessible and "normal" also gives us, or maybe just me, the feeling that, if they can look that incredible on every picture they must look like that at all time. And if they can, so can I, right?

The thing is, we are given an ideal, role models, of which we know they're not reality, but we don't want to admit to ourselves that it's not real. For some reason we seem to need that, for some reason we seem to need something to look up to.

For me, the Kardashians actually became role models. Not for a long time, and not in every aspect, but in some ways they did and it was exhausting.

At some point I figured out that even though most people despise them, because they are a bunch of untalented, empty minded, some might even say stupid, women, a lot of people still have an opinion about them. Especially because they are constantly in the media for some reason, if the rumours about them are true or not doesn't matter anymore. They're talked about, and they usually give people something to talk about, something to judge.

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<sup>1</sup> The Safe and Sane Guide to Teenage Plastic Surgery, Copyright © 2010 by Frederick N. Lukash, MD

**By judging, we admit the attraction.**

Even though he judges them when he speaks, in his description lies fascination, as if even he couldn't withdraw himself from the temptations of these wonderful beings.<sup>2</sup>

Reading this phrase by Umberto Eco, made me think of the Kardashians, not because of the "wonderful beings", don't worry. In the book Eco talks about the beauty of monsters, but for some reason it seems fitting for the Kardashians too, I'm not saying they are monsters, but they have some monstrous qualities. Physically they have literally become a monstrous version of themselves by enhancing certain body parts to the maximum. They are the embodiment of the modern over-sexualised way women are portrayed in the media.

And even though a lot of people say that they totally don't care about "all that stuff". "All that stuff" in this case would be the lifestyle of the rich and famous, a lot of the same people do have opinions and they do judge.

So there is something about it, that still draws our attention, even if we constantly reassure ourselves of the fact that we really don't care about any of it, because something seems to be so wrong about it, about actually finding it interesting. Interesting is maybe the wrong word, maybe it's more like a fascination.

A fascination for the absurd.

And it seems to be a form of distraction. Distraction from real problems, distraction from our own lives. But we would never admit that it actually influence us in certain ways, that people like the Kardashians can actually become role models of some sort. We are scared to admit that, because if we did, what would people think?

On the other hand they (the Kardashians) have become huge influences in the beauty and fashion industry, where a lot of people actually look up to them, want to look like them, want to be like them.

Over the past few years they changed their image from trashy drama queens to influential business women. Ten years ago, when *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* started they weren't all "perfect". They were loud, they were annoying and they were dramatic at all times. Then with time, their show took off, and they became more and more famous for existing on a television show about nothing else than themselves, and now it seems like no day can go by without at least one headline about one of them. It took them ten years to build an empire, it took them ten years to turn themselves into businesswomen and it took them ten years to turn themselves into some of the most influential role models when it comes to beauty and fashion in 2017, and it's obvious that it's not mother nature or puberty or whatsoever that changed their looks, but that there is a lot of money and surgery involved. And still, they worked themselves up from the pages of trashy gossip magazines to the pages of vogue and other high end magazines. They have their own clothing and cosmetics lines and it seems like everything they touch turns into gold.

So it makes sense that they have a collective Instagram following of almost seven-hundred million people, they make the life of the rich and famous seem so easy, so close. That for a second there I might have wished to have that too. And it took me another second to realise that it really is something you really, really don't want.

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<sup>2</sup> De Geschiedenis van de Schoonheid, Umberto Eco, © 2004 rcs Libri S.p.A Bompiani

**Because even though I know that it's a fake reality, and deep inside I know that not all that glitters is gold<sup>3</sup>, I still don't really care because maybe I like to think that I can become gold too.**

Beauty is a currency system like the gold standard.<sup>4</sup>

Gold in this context is beauty. There is something just as precious about beauty as there is about gold, and it makes me want to have it. And not just any beauty, I want that very specific beauty, I want that flawless look.

And I don't know what it is that got me so obsessed with these people, their beauty and their look. Somehow they have a certain effect on me. And unlike other people, who find the Kardashians plain stupid, to me they have this strange mesmerising quality. But I've also always had a thing for everything fake, and they are pretty much the embodiment of the fake.

So let me talk you through the look that is considered perfection, in the world I live in.

### **The Beauty of the Internet Rich and Fabulous Explained Or How to look like a Kardashian**

We bob our "family noses", lift our ageing faces, suction extra fat, remove minor "flaws" with seemingly little concern for any "deep" meaning that our bodies might have, as repositories of our histories, our ethnic and racial and family lineage, our personalities.<sup>5</sup>

Imagine yourself standing in front of a mirror and I will tell you what you see. Because you don't see yourself, you see what I tell you to see, you see what you would look like if you were "perfect". You see your face in the shape of a heart, meaning you have a big forehead and a small chin. Some people might say that that is alien like, but you don't listen to them, because deep down you know it's not true and you don't care that the proportions in your face are slightly off.

You look at yourself through a pair of big beautiful eyes. They are almost doll-like, but seductive at the same time and framed by full, long, perfectly curled, black lashes.

Now go a little lower. Look at your nose. It's small and straight. Obviously. It's very cute. And if you got there with make-up or rhinoplasty really doesn't matter in the end, because you got there, you are beautiful and people won't ask questions as long as you're beautiful.

The position of your nose is very important too as you might have noticed. It's just a little lower than the middle of your face, and since your desired forehead is big, that makes sense. Because everything needs it's space.

I know that you've been looking at your lips the entire time already, and we will talk about those gorgeous lips now. They are full, they are big, they are plump and naturally pink and luscious. Your lips are a very sexual part of your body, so treat them right. Keep them moisturised at all times. You don't even necessarily need lipstick or gloss because they're naturally so perfect. And even though

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<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All\\_that\\_glitters\\_is\\_not\\_gold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_that_glitters_is_not_gold)

<sup>4</sup> The Beauty Myth, Naomi Wolf, first published 1990, Published by Vintage 2015, Copyright © Naomi Wolf, Introduction copyright © Naomi Wolf

<sup>5</sup> Nip/Tuck: Television That Gets Under Your Skin, Published in 2011 by I.B Tauris & Co Ltd

they are slightly out of proportion compared to the rest of your face, your eyes are too, so don't worry about it.

So far you looked at the "main" parts of your face, but don't forget to look at the structure either. Your eyes wouldn't be the same without your eyebrows. And I'm not sure if you're familiar with the expression: eyebrows should be sisters, not twins. Well, if you look closely, they're maybe not identical twins, but fraternal twins for sure. They are thick, dark, and shaped to perfection. They add extra expression to your already incredibly beautiful eyes.

Another very important part for your facial structure are your cheekbones. Look at your cheekbones. They are not just mediocre middle class, they are high. And high cheekbones is what you want, because they give your face the mature, elegant look. So, even though your doll-eyes might give you a childlike look, your high cheekbones bring back the balance you need.

Now, last but not least, for a good facial structure you want a sharply defined jawline. Nobody wants a chubby double chin, and thankfully you don't have that. You have that beautiful head sitting on a long slim neck. No double chin, whatsoever, in sight.

I hope you are happy with the way you look so far, and I hope you feel as good as you look. Because we continue. Down your neck, you look at your chest and you see a pair of nicely defined boobs, a perky C- or D-cup. They are full and still pointy. Yes, you really have beautiful breasts, you are lucky.

Further down you see your perfectly toned belly and the pretty thin little waist. The waist that gives you the hourglass figure you desire.

Of course that hourglass figure is also strongly supported by your hips and your butt, which is not too big and not too small, it's perfectly in the middle of the two. It's full and perky.

And oh those legs, they are beautiful. They are long, slim and toned. They complete the perfect human you see in the mirror in front of you.

Now imagine. This is what you want to look like. This is what you want to be. You want to be a Hyper-Female<sup>6</sup>. You want that your body is the reflection of the images you see. The superhuman, pore-less image of perfection. And it doesn't seem to be so hard to get there. Because apparently, if you look at your idols, you don't seem to have to work out or watch your diet. It seems so easy, so effortless. It just comes to them.

But why can't you look like that?

What is wrong with you?

What's wrong with your body?

Why are you not born rich and can just afford to have someone change your imperfect self?

Life would be so much easier if you could just look the way perfection does.

## **Mirrors, Constructs and Distorted Images**

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Beauty Myth, Naomi Wolf, first published 1990, Published by Vintage 2015, Copyright © Naomi Wolf, Introduction copyright © Naomi Wolf

<sup>7</sup> Greek saying 3rd century BC

Now that you are over the part where you've been obsessing over the images of perfect bodies, and beautiful faces, we might be able to get to the point where you realise that you have been obsessing over something completely unreal. Now you have reached the point where you might want to step back, look in the mirror and just really look at yourself. And look at the image you constructed, the complete mess you are making of yourself by trying to reach impossible goals. Goals that have been constructed for you, to make you feel like a lesser human being, to make you buy the products that are supposed to make you stay skinny, make your skin glow and make your hair shine forever. Because in the end, it's all about money. Without money, you will never be beautiful, basically.

They construct an unreachable standard, to provide you with products, from creams to injections, for you to come closer to a standard they knew you can't reach to begin with.

Just look at yourself and try to see what other people see. Ask yourself when the last time was somebody told you "you are beautiful", and you actually believed it. It's been a while right? Because you were too busy worrying about imaginary flaws.

When did you stop trying to look at yourself and start projecting everything you want to be on yourself. Project something unreal on a person you don't know anymore. Project on your self, an image that has been distorted over time, partly by society and the media, and partly by you. The fact that you will never actually see yourself, or at least you'll never see what anybody else sees, doesn't help obviously.

You are projecting an image of a certain standard on yourself in the hope that it will fix an underlying unhappiness, an underlying issue. You think that changing something on the outside will resolve something on the inside. And this isn't necessarily only about the outside as in; your appearance. Maybe you buy something expensive in the hope that it will take away that nasty feeling you've been having.

But it's actually quite likely to change something in your appearance. Because it's your body, it's close to you. And if you feel shit about something, but you can't really pinpoint what it is, it's easy to look in the mirror and find something to project that feeling of dissatisfaction on, and you don't even try to actually figure out what the issue was in the first place. You just go with the fact that you are now unhappy with the way your legs, your ass or your upper arms look.

... *Nip/Tuck*, literally and metaphorically, goes beneath the surface through talk and action to represent the difficulty of getting the outside of one's appearance to match the inside of one's psyche.<sup>8</sup>

So by projecting an ideal of which you know that it's not real, on your physical appearance, you lose what you're maybe used to see. And you have completely given up on trying to match the two at all, or at least the physical aspect seems to be much more important.

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<sup>8</sup> *Nip/Tuck: Television That Gets Under Your Skin*, Published in 2011 by I.B Tauris & Co Ltd  
*Nip/Tuck And the Literal Unconscious*, Erica D. Galito

Do you have a preferred mirror? Because I definitely do. The mirror in my own bathroom. The mirror that never fails to make me look slim and and fit, even though that's only a projection. The mirror where the light is always flattering. The mirror that hides small flaws.

And do you have a preferred app to take selfies with? Because I definitely do. The Snapchat selfie camera. The camera that smoothens my skin. The camera that erases my pores and dark circles under my eyes. The camera that shapes my face just that tiny little bit, brightens my eyes and plumps my lips.

So basically, I constantly lie to myself, or at least when it comes to my appearance. And I am aware of that too. We are fooled by the media and technology. Because now I get the feeling they go hand in hand. The media invents and introduces the always changing "ideals". And we, let's be honest, struggle with them. Like I said before, we want to keep up with something we can't keep up with, since it's not real, BUT, what's different now is that technology can actually bring us closer to the desired look, with zero effort.

Obviously Photoshop has been around for a while, but with that there is still some effort involved. Now we have smartphones, with apps that are capable of changing our facial structure and skin quality. Some are ridiculous and turn your face into a cute kitty or an old grumpy man, but some are very subtle, and they really just make you look flawless. And the great thing about it is, we don't actually have to do anything besides choosing the filter and the right pose and angle. We could be laying in bed in our pyjamas with no make-up on and make the prettiest selfie. Because Snapchat is incredible, you turn that camera and all your blemishes just vanish. It's like magic. Your skin is smooth, and it immediately makes you feel better. It makes you feel more confident, so you end up with a better picture.

And it doesn't stop there, or at least it doesn't for me. And I am sorry if I keep talking as if I knew what goes on in other peoples heads, but I am pretty sure I am not alone in this.

Beauties in Photographs are different from beauties in person. It must be hard to be a model, because you'd want to be like the photograph of you, and you can't ever look that way. And so you start copying the photograph. Photographs usually bring in another half dimension.<sup>9</sup>

With the invention of the smartphone, we now all have the option to stage the most perfect version of ourselves. We learned how to pose.

But not for someone else, we learned how to pose for the photos we take of ourselves. It's like we don't actually need mirrors anymore. Of course we need them to get ready, but what really counts is how we then look through the lens of the camera of our phone. Mirrors are just the step in between. Because in the end that is the image that is actually capable of giving us the confidence we look for. Just a mirror doesn't do the job anymore.

In the mirror you can see how you look and you can flex a muscle here and there, but you will always have the small moments of imperfection, that can become much bigger than they should. With your phone you can freeze the moments of perfection, so instead of focusing on the moments of imperfection, which you don't really want to see anyways, you can focus on the photo, where your shape is ideal and imperfections hardly present.

Now this might seem crazy to a lot of people, but for me this partly conforms reality.

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<sup>9</sup> THE Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again), Andy Warhol, 1975

I know my angles and my lighting. I know how to hide the fact that I might have had a pizza instead of a salad for lunch, so I know how to hide my slightly bloated belly. I know how to shine the best light possible on my butt, and I know how to make my legs look skinnier and more toned than they are.

What stimulates our desire is good.<sup>10</sup>

I know how to seduce a camera. I know how to seduce my own camera. But do I know why I am so eager to do that, and where the urge to look attractive for myself comes from? Do I think that when I look attractive to myself, other people will see the same? Does seeing myself in the "most perfect" way stimulate my desire to push it even further, to become even more perfect, so that other people desire me and my beauty as well?

...the body - both male and female - is increasingly used as a signifier for status.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Disease of Ugliness and Perfection<sup>12</sup>**

Jewellery doesn't make a person more beautiful, but it makes a person *feel* more beautiful. If you draped a beautiful person in jewels and beautiful clothes and put them in a beautiful house with beautiful furniture and beautiful paintings, they wouldn't be more beautiful, they'd be the same, but they would *think* they were more beautiful. However, if you took a beautiful person and put them in rags, they'd be ugly. You can always make a person less beautiful.<sup>13</sup>

With this quote I want to introduce the most personal part of this text. Because I know what this feels like. The desire to constantly want to be something or someone else, to want to be better, using whatever it takes to get there. Of course only physically, if any of my actions had any influence on my mental well being wasn't taken in consideration at all.

### **My looks are my happiness, and as long as other people love me, I can love myself.**

You might have noticed from what you've read so far, that I seem to care a lot more about my physical appearance than my mental well being. Because maybe I think that as long as I'm physically attractive, mentally I will be fine too. But this couldn't be further from the truth. So the diseases I want to talk about are not actual diseases, but I suffer from them. I suffer from an issue I'm partly creating for myself.

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<sup>10</sup> De Geschiedenis van de Schoonheid, Umberto Eco, © 2004 rcs Libri S.p.A Bompiani

<sup>11</sup> Nip/Tuck: Television That Gets Under Your Skin, Published in 2011 by I.B Tauris & Co Ltd

<sup>12</sup> The Beauty Myth, Naomi Wolf, first published 1990, Published by Vintage 2015, Copyright © Naomi Wolf, Introduction copyright © Naomi Wolf

<sup>13</sup> THE Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again), Andy Warhol, 1975



## **The fear not to be loved**

I want to be adored, I want to be admired. And maybe I keep saying I don't, or that I don't need that. That I am a strong enough person on my own. That the only thing that counts is that I love myself and that I am content and happy with the person I am and that I don't need recognition from outside. But here I am, lying to myself again.

And I am not talking about compliments, I am talking about the physical things, someone that physically makes you feel loved, someone who makes you feel wanted, someone who takes away your insecurities.

Because even though I kept telling myself that I was the strong independent woman I always thought I was, and that I didn't need the physical affection, turns out, I am desperate for it. And as hard as it was to admit that to myself, that's how it is. The problem is, I need it to an extent that doesn't seem so healthy, and this is where social media comes back into the game.

Whenever I feel shit about myself, which sadly enough depends way more on the actions of other people than I'd prefer, I look for attention and affection online, purely to compensate. I have to make myself look the best I possibly can, so I tell myself I am not a complete piece of shit. Even if it's just for that one photo and for satisfaction that stays for maybe half an hour.

I started realising that beauty and sexuality sort of seem to go hand in hand, since I feel more beautiful and confident when I know that other people find me attractive. Which also makes sense I guess. If somebody gives you the feeling that you are physically wanted and attractive, that does give you confidence, don't you think?

But should appearance really become such a big part of our identity? Because as long as we are perfecting the outside, we won't really be able to work on the inside. And by now I know how important it is not to let the inside slip away completely. I did that for way too long to now be able to tell you, the more you work on the outside, the more you try to reach "perfection" in your appearance, the unhappier and the more insecure you become, about both, inside and outside.

## **Perfection is the disease of a nation.<sup>14</sup>**

I want to be beautiful, and I don't care about the potential price I have to pay.

Because I want to be beautiful no matter what. I want other people to find me beautiful in order to find myself beautiful too.

Why did you make me like this?

## **Would you sacrifice your happiness, your mental well being, your sanity for physical perfection?**

Because I did. And it was one of the most confronting moments of realisation for me. I got my lips done. I got lip fillers. Not because I was deeply unhappy with them or uncomfortable with my appearance in general. I kept telling myself I was doing it for an experiment, that I wanted to know what all the fuss was about and why people are so judgemental on the topic. And it took three months of fooling myself to realise that what I kept telling myself was not true at all. Although, partly it was. I did want to know what all the fuss was about, but afterwards I have to say, there might

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<sup>14</sup> Pretty Hurts, Beyoncé, 2013

have been a better way. A less traumatising, less insane way. I don't know if you are familiar with the term crash-dieting<sup>15</sup>. It's when you lose a lot of weight in a very short amount of time. Your body physically goes through the change, but it does that too fast. Your brain can hardly keep up with the change. So if you look in the mirror, because your mind hasn't actually adjusted to your physical change, you might not be able to actually fully see the change in your reflection.

And that is what I experienced with cosmetic surgery. I got lip injections and after the procedure, when I looked in the mirror, I couldn't see the difference. I went back for a checkup and got asked if I was happy with the result and I said that I couldn't see the difference so I got a refill. I did see a small difference, but it took me three months to realise how much fuller my lips actually were. And I only realised it because I saw footage of myself from the weeks right after the procedure. It took that much overdoing and time to realise that I had gone too far.

The more I was striving for perfection, or what some people consider perfection and what I considered to be beautiful at the time, the more I doubted myself. I have never been as insecure in my life as during the time I wanted to be more ideal. The prettier I thought I was the more aware I became about everything I did. It was like I could see myself from outside of my body at all time, and mercilessly judge.

### **Ugliness as a disease**

Because of people's presumptions, those who are deemed attractive tend to be treated better and are more socially accepted.<sup>16</sup>

We seem to be incapable to appreciate flaws. Why else would so many kids in western society have braces. We are used to straight teeth, so we start fixing them at a very young age.

Weirdly enough, the people I personally, genuinely find the most beautiful, are people with flaws. People with flaws who don't hide them, because they are content with who they are, so they don't have to focus on how they look. It makes a person so much more interesting.

But for some reason I am not capable of appreciating my own flaws. They bother me and they make me unhappy. Only the thought of gaining weight drives me a little crazy, and that really shouldn't be that way. I've reached a point where I am so obsessed with my looks, that I go kind of nuts about the smallest things. Things that are completely invisible to everyone else. But I can freak out about it for days.

Because I fully live life with a "If I'm pretty, life will be easier" attitude. And I don't treat other people like that, but I am really hard on myself.

And I think I've started confronting myself at the right moment. Because I could've continued playing the game, I could've continued downplaying the fact that I felt shit and I honestly believe that it could've gone way worse.

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<sup>15</sup> Believing is seeing: a new perspective on body dysmorphia | Meredith Leston | TEDxOxford, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53\\_2kLU0ZCc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=53_2kLU0ZCc), 28.04.2016

<sup>16</sup> The Safe and Sane Guide to Teenage Plastic Surgery, Copyright © 2010 by Frederick N. Lukash, MD

**When do we ever have time to build ourselves and what point does it get to where we start living for ourselves?<sup>17</sup>**

Am I ever going to be capable to disconnect myself from all the ideals that made me a person I don't necessarily want to be? Am I going to be capable to stop being an insecure little bitch who lets everything get to her?

Because here I am now, writing about a topic that is very close to me, very personal, trying to figure out what my point is.

On one hand I am very judgemental towards everything; social media, the beauty industry and people who got completely sucked into it, and on the other hand, I am a part of it and this world managed to suck me in too.

The whole process of writing this text and reflecting on my own stupidity has been very confronting. To realise that in all the time I've been trying to get to know myself, I just got further away from who I actually am or I ever wanted to be, sucks.

So what is it that makes me different from all the other people who are a part of this? Am I ever going to be able to convince people that I am more than the superficial girl who is obsessed with herself and her looks?

I guess I wanted to try to make people understand how easy it is to lose control over yourself. To lose control over the way you see yourself and how big the influence of social media is when it comes to self perception.

When the whole social media thing started, or at least Instagram, it seemed pretty harmless to me. It was about sharing parts of your life online with your friends by posting pictures. But it didn't take long until it became about how many likes and followers you have, how big your reach is. And what started out as the pleasure of sharing specific moments of your life with your friends turned into a business for a lot of people. It's a constant competition, and maybe I never wanted to be a part of that competition, but it's hard to completely stay out of it too. And even though I am not necessarily getting anything out of it other than the online confirmation that I indeed am a pretty girl and that people would want to "do me", for some reason I can't stop.

Of course you can tell me that I can just delete my accounts and stop caring about it, but for some reason it's not that easy, because I don't know who I am anymore without it.

Who I am if I would stop taking racy selfies to make my body look incredible, just to share them with people I don't know, I have no idea. And who I was before all of this started, I don't remember.

I've been thinking about quitting so many times, but I realised that quitting from one day to the other would be incredibly confronting too. I got stuck in a spiral, not necessarily downwards, but I don't know where it's going either. So to quit this part of my life, that unintentionally became way bigger than I ever intended, is not really an option right now.

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<sup>17</sup> Jordyn Woods, Life of Kylie, 2017

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**Visuals**





