First, imagine the sounds.

But don’t just imagine them, feel them; know them. There’s the hum of the lights, getting louder now and more violent - but receding suddenly, the intensity ebbing and flowing like the tide. The soft ticks of the radiator, the low murmur of voices down the hall, the faint puffs of your breath. This is the lullaby you wake to.

The room is lukewarm, stale air clinging to your skin. You feel limp, weak between your sheets, and too soft to emerge from them. But they are thick and damp, and films of sweat are forming in the hollows behind your knees. The carpet is itchy when you stand, rough and worn down from years of use. You lift your feet as you walk, cringing away from the harsh drag against your fragile skin. The lino, when you reach it, is pleasantly cool, if one remembers to sidestep the tacky patches.

Your hands shake as you squeeze toothpaste onto your brush, the tube dropping to the floor before you can stop it. The paste oozes out, blue-green gel spread over blue-grey floor. Leaning down to grab it makes you dizzy, red and yellow and white flaring across your vision. You lean against the sink, wait for it to pass. By the time the muted cream of the walls comes back into focus and the queasy lurching in your stomach fades, you're late. Very late. The long black hand of the clock on the wall moves slowly around, taunting you as you scrub your teeth more viciously than you should. When you spit, the foam is stained pinky-red with blood.

Dressing leaves you panting with exhaustion, the muted taste of bile lingering in the back of your throat. The meal brought to you makes your stomach growl despite this, and you immediately sit down to eat. The milk is fresh and creamy, soothing the acid in your belly, while the porridge is thick and wholesome and sweet, comforting on your tongue. You want to close your eyes and savour it, hold the food in your mouth and dream of the Great Before, but you're hungry, more hungry than you've been in weeks.

The tray is taken away promptly, and the only reminder that it ever existed is the lingering smell of sugar and oats. You know what you should do next - after Breakfast, you should Take a Walk. The planner on the wall keeps reminding you of that, in neat, cherry-scented letters. You feel pleasantly dozy, don't want to move from your chair, but you must. And you do. Stepping out of your doors is a relief; the faint traces of chemical cleaners losing its strength almost immediately. You head towards the centre of the hospital, the gift shop, where forgetful family members can purchase last minute flowers. You hardly ever smell real flowers; the ones you'd been sent are fake, no smell whatsoever, but who wants flowers that are falsely lovely? It detracts from it, the sentiment of it all - the real beauty of flowers lies in the fact that they are temporary. Like you. So yes, you find comfort in these visits. You lose yourself in the bouquet of aromas, free from the confines of harsher, man-made scents.

Eventually, you leave. Your legs tremble beneath you, your breath stretches away from you, your vision begins to blur. You nod farewell, to the pale lilies, the velvet roses, the vibrant pansies, and you make your way back up to your room. The colours blur as you walk, tired, dull, a far cry from the dreamy ghost who tread the same path just before. You find it difficult to stay upright, the flat off-white of the walls blending into the flat off-white of the roof. The floor, at least, is distinguishable; it's the only thing in the hall that isn't a variation of white.

When you move through the doorway and into your room, the air is too warm. It clings to you as you stumble through. The bedsheets are soothingly cool, but the stitches catch against your skin as you collapse onto it. You're used to this, the ultra-sensitivity that comes with the dizziness and nausea. You can feel the air you've disturbed moving in currents against your skin, the cold sweat pooling on your clammy palms. Your pulse, pounding and throbbing through your whole body, hot and repetitive and overwhelming. Everything you are, relying on the continuation of that beat.

Someone comes in, helps you into your bed, plumps your pillows to support your head. They're speaking, you think, but you're so dizzy that all sounds are muffled, the occasional syllable bursting through with sharp, painful clarity. They linger, and you hear yourself protest, the loudest noise you can make - a barely audible whimper. It exhausts you, sends you spinning back. You feel like you're in a car speeding down a tunnel, and all you can hear is the rush of the wind and the roar of your blood in your ears, and - they leave the room. The noise disappears with them, and you are left in peace. The hum of the lights; the soft ticks of the radiator; the low murmur of voices down the fall; the fading puffs of your breath. This is the lullaby that rocks you to sleep.