

Dissociation

"It's getting worse again"

Staring at the wall, the black mould that has been there for a month, no, two months maybe, has been growing faster and faster than expected. That reminds me: my friend Emily used to help me clean the house.

"Now, what did Emily call it again? Oh yes. *Stachybotrys chartarum*... what a long name."

A faint memory, but strangely, a special one to me, made me reminisce the time I had with her before she left. She was always a science freak.

I stood up from the floor; it was still slimy as usual. Everything in this household has not been cleaned for ages: there's so much filth, slime, and dust everywhere. With a loud exasperated sigh, I decided to finally go and take a shower after days of not bathing.

Walking up to the bathroom door, the door handle was covered in similar gooey substances, grabbing it, I can feel all the disgusting moist textures that had been living there. Pushing the door open, a whoosh of disgusting, yet familiar, smell went up to my nose. As per usual, my bathroom was dirty and covered in a similar-looking mould. Except, there was more.

"Now, let's see."

I turned the tap for the shower. Slowly but surely, water started to drip out. Moving my left hand underneath the grimy shower head, I was met with the cold and slightly coloured water.

"Not again," I grumbled. "Better than nothing."

Changing my clothes to some new ones, I instantly remembered that I had forgotten something. Constantly, every morning, I remind myself. But alas, I always forget.

"Oh, I forgot to check it again." I muttered.

Dragging my feet downstairs, I made my way towards the kitchen window. The window had a great view of my backyard, overseeing my garden: I couldn't help but whisper to myself,

"The grass seems to be growing fine."

At least, I think it is. My eyes always seem to be getting blurry and itchy all the time.

Itching my eyes, the quick feeling of relief washes over me. "Ah, maybe I should go to sleep. Sleep always fixes things."

Looking down at my red and lumpy arms, my concern has slowly risen.

"Hopefully, these will go away in a few days too," I mumbled. "Hopefully."

My skin, my eyes! It's getting worse. I think it's swollen; everything burns.

Few days have passed now, and my symptoms had not gotten any better. Even worse, I've started coughing and having trouble breathing. Trying my best to open my eyes, I can see the different types of mould on my walls. But there was one mould that stood out most; it was the black fuzzy one.

"Oh, it moves?!"

Blinking my eyes, the burning sensation throughout my body had gotten worse.

"Oh god, what the hell?" I cried out.

I want to stop all this itching. Should I clean my house? No. What's the point? Cleaning won't help. I want it to stop. It's getting hard to breathe.

Begrudgingly, I lifted my shaky arms and reached for my phone.

"Better to get treated than to suffer, right?" I laughed to myself, but ultimately, it ended with a cough.

Typing in a number I'm well acquainted with; I pressed the stiff call button to call my local general practitioner. And after a few rings, someone picked up.

"Oh, hello. My name is Ally Johnson and I..."

Suddenly, a violent uncontrollable cough escaped my mouth. Unable to get any words out, I just coughed. I coughed and coughed. I couldn't breathe; I didn't have any lung problems before, not like this. In just a few long agonising seconds, everything around me started spinning. Until suddenly, everything turned black. No sound, no light. Nothing. Just pitch black.

Opening my eyes slowly, I began to see white lights. Although my vision was still blurry, I could make them out to be the overly dear hospital lights I had come to know back four months ago. In fact, a couple of more times before four months ago.

"I see you're awake, Miss Johnson," a man's voice calmly said. Turning to my left, a tall man with the typical doctor's coat was standing beside me. "you've been unconscious for quite a while."

I recognise that voice; it was Dr Brown.

With a hoarse voice, I tried to talk. "What happened?"

"Well..." The doctor, Dr Brown, cleared his throat. "It's hard to say what you got. But it seems to me that you either have an infection or a virus."

With a puzzled look, I instinctively ask, "What do you mean?"

"Well, your symptoms seem very strange and your coughs on the phone sound horrendous. We did some tests and I originally thought you had a simple infection like *Labyrinthitis* or *Staph infection*."

Again, with the annoying and confusing words. I gave the doctor a funny look and tried to sit up. However, I was immediately stopped in my tracks as Dr Brown chimed in.

"Oh, please relax, Miss Johnson. Please lie down."

Reluctantly, I lay back down. In an irritated tone, I asked: "Can you please carry on?"

"Alright then..." he replied with a worried look. "Anyways, what you have seems to either be a new strain or a different type of infection. We tried to give you some medication to help relieve your symptoms, but they don't seem to be working too well. Which is most likely due to the antimicrobial resistance."

"I see..." Closing my eyes; I tried to drift off to sleep.

"By the way, Miss Johnson."

Opening my eyes, I looked straight at Dr Brown. "Yes?"

"Your *acute toxoplasma*," He began. "It's gone now, right? No hallucinations?"

With a straight face, I said with confidence: "Of course," He smiled. "I've also double-checked the meat I eat, no contamination for me. Although, I will admit that I had a bad hallucination around 4-3 months ago. Just after being diagnosed by you."

"Oh?" Surprised, Dr Brown stared at me. "What do you mean?"

Trying not to worry him, I responded with: "Oh, I saw black fuzzy monsters-like people. But, not to worry, I took the *Pyrimethamine* and *Sulfadiazine*. Just like you prescribed me to, and they started to disappear in a couple of days." I chortled.

With a slightly concerned look on his face, his facial features eventually softened. "Ok, that's good to hear. It must have been terrifying."

I turned my head away. "It was."

An awkward silence soon followed.

Sitting here, I get flashbacks of when I was a child. A child that was always physically sick, forever needed some type of treatment. It's a good thing I was diagnosed as 'only' physically sick. But my thoughts were suddenly interrupted by Dr Browns voice.

"How's Emily? I haven't seen her in months."

Looking up at the ceiling, I responded.

"I don't know. The last I saw her; she gave me a lecture on being clean and not lazy."

Scratching his chin and slightly nodding his head, Dr Brown spoke.

"I see, she's always been that kind of person. Well, rest well, Miss Johnson. I'll check up on you later and see what we can do for your symptoms, we might have to do more research though." With a quick wave, he left the room.

Softly, the sentence: "I'm here again..." escaped my mouth. Closing my eyes, I decided to try and sleep.

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock.

Staring at the clock, it read exactly three AM.

"Emily..."

I remember it clearly; that day was one I could not forget. She was so unknowing about what was going to happen to her. So, sweet. So, innocent. So, dead.

That memory about four months ago, the day where 'they' spoke loudly. The day where 'they' gave me a great and extremely fun idea... And with one clean hit, she had finally shut up.

I smiled and couldn't help but laugh out loud.

"No one will find your body."

Beside me, the black fuzzy 'thing' stood there watching me laugh. 'They' never really left, I lied.

And unbeknownst to me, the black mould growing in my house... is also growing inside me.