

## *Mysophobia*

Enna was a normal girl. She felt ordinary. However, sometimes she would feel a wind whip around her, compressing her body, like it was trying to swallow her. When she felt it, she was left paralyzed, her skin burning wherever there was contact. She tried to be as still as possible so that the wind would just blow over her. She avoided anything that triggered it.

It was a summer afternoon. The pool had been swamped earlier in the day, but now there were only a few people lounging around, besides the other lifeguards. Enna took her sunglasses off, and looked to her right, “Ellis, can you pick up the trash? Those little kids from the birthday party earlier trashed the benches.”

Ellis let out a sharp exhale. “No. I monitored the party. Besides, it’s your turn to clean.”

Enna went to pick up the different ice cream sticks and wrappers, used paper towels, half-eaten pizza, and soda cans, gagging a little from the different materials. She chucked the trash in a bag and went to throw it away in the dumpster outside the pool area. She shuddered from the activity as she felt the compulsive necessity to wash her hands. Enna walked outside to the dumpster, feeling a chilly breeze prickle her exposed skin.

She walked back through the pool lobby and took a left into the break room. Enna looked around for some wipes to clean her hands after she noticed something sticky on her hand. She inhaled and exhaled. She started taking sharp breaths. Her chest started to tighten. Her vision became blurry. She tried to keep looking for anything that would get her clean but became dizzy and disoriented like she had come down with vertigo. Enna reached out wildly, trying to grab a hold of anything. In her crazed manner, she found the sink, placing both hands on the ceramic to

balance herself. She turned the knob, rubbing her skin harshly to get everything off, to be clean again. She inhaled slowly, catching her breath. Still, with both hands gripping the sink, she looked up. She stared at the small dingy mirror hanging crookedly on the wall.

She paused.

In the tiny mirror, she saw Ellis standing in the doorway. Enna turned her head silently.

“Are you okay?” Ellis asked.

“Yes. I don’t know. I just need a minute,” Enna responded.

Ellis guided Enna to the small plastic card table and helped her sit down.

“Thanks,” Enna remarked.

“Don’t worry about it!” Ellis replied with a concerned smile, “I’ll finish up outside.”

Ellis left the cramped room, closing the door behind her. Enna closed her eyes and put her face in her hands. She still didn’t feel clean. She felt a chilly breeze on her legs. The door is closed, she thought to herself. She couldn’t resist peeking up at the door through her fingers.

She stared. The door stared back. She took a deep breath. Still looking at the door, it seemed to also take a deep breath. The door flew open, and the cold wind rushed in. It engulfed her, stealing her breath. She felt like she was on fire. Her skin felt like it was rotting, falling right off of her. She couldn’t make a sound, silently suffocating. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She couldn’t resist peeking up at the door through her clammy fingers.

She stared. The door stared back.