

Trypophobia

by  
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**FADE IN ON:**

**INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

Discarded gadgets, ingredients. A space that's seen cleaner days.

Heavy breathing. Objects SCRAPE, moved around.

As trembling hands yank open a cabinet. A SALT SHAKER falls over, flashes its perforated cap.

The owner of the hand shrieks and recoils. They grab a COFFEE POD. Slam the door.

Cradling the pod like Food of the Gods, TANYA (19) shuffles past the kitchen table. On it, a LAPTOP glows.

She beelines for a COFFEE MAKER. The cheery mug in Tanya's hand displays a "Hello Kitty" logo:

"Don't talk to me 'til I've had two cups!"

Even with that cartoon cuteness, Tanya's stained robe, disheveled hair and weary eyes drag down the mood.

Shaking like an addict, Tanya inserts the pod and hits "Brew". As she slips the mug under the spigot-

...the DRAIN HOLES in the Keurig's base catch her eye. Startled, she *almost* drops the mug.

Then gulps and slips the mug into place. Caffeinated goodness rains down. Taking a few steps back, she eyes the holes.

TANYA

Dammit, pour! How long does filtered water take?

The coffee tops off. Tanya slurps it. Burns her lips.

TANYA

Ow!

The doorbell RINGS. A freaked out Tanya jumps! Coffee sloshes her robe and skin. Reddened skin burns.

A flurry of KNOCKS on the door, followed by a female voice. Tanya listens. Realizes who it is.

TANYA

Alice! Thank God. Be right there!!

**INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

As messy as Tanya. Books scattered everywhere. Food takeout cartons on the floor.

Tanya throws the door open, revealing:

ALICE (18). Fashion personified. Colorful DOTS on her shirt. Alice double takes at Tanya's appearance.

ALICE  
Nice party outfit, T.

Tanya starts to retort. Gasps in fear at Alice's shirt.

ALICE  
What?

Tanya doesn't respond. Yanks Alice in. Alice scans the living room. Appalled by the disaster zone.

ALICE  
You email me to come over, and don't clean?

TANYA  
I've been kinda... distracted. OK?

She leads her friend towards the kitchen. Alice tiptoes past trash on the floor.

ALICE  
Is this about the Psych paper you're working on? I know you're a perfectionist. But sometimes you've got to set aside "me" time. Take a break!

TANYA  
It's not about the paper. Well, at first it was. But now there's more. This way!

**INT. KITCHEN**

Tanya forces Alice to sit. Commanding a seat herself, she slurps more coffee - now cooled down.

Swinging the laptop around, Tanya points at the screen.

TANYA  
See?!?

Alice squints at a Yahoo image search: a BEE NEST, TERMITE HLL, a skin rash, SPONGE - and more.

ALICE

If you're looking for new wallpaper,  
don't go so goth. Just a suggestion, but  
try kitty pictures perhaps?

She eyeballs Tanya's mug.

ALICE

You like those.

TANYA

No! I mean, sure - cats are cool. But  
don't you see what these pictures have in  
common?

ALICE

Some insect-y stuff, I guess?

(beat)

No wonder you're acting weird. Isn't your  
paper on phobias? Staring at creepy  
crawlies all day would creep *anyone* out.

Alice jumps up, grabs Tanya's arm.

ALICE

Let's go score drinks at Starbucks. A  
Frappe Latte Carmel will cheer you up!

Tanya shudders, pulls away.

TANYA

Insects *aren't* the connection.  
(waves at the sponge pic)  
Do you see any bugs there?

ALICE

(squints)

Microscopic, maybe? Ooooooh, wait. That  
rash pic is uber yuck. Is the phobia  
you're writing about "germs"?

TANYA

You're the math major, Alice. Look  
closer. Recognizing patterns is supposed  
to be your thing!

ALICE

If there's a pattern to find. Well, most  
of 'em do have holes...

TANYA

Bingo! Tiny, teeny, creepy holes.

Dragging Alice back to the laptop, Tanya pulls up a website. The title reads: Trypophobia.

TANYA

It's called Trypophobia - a fear of small, clustered holes. Bumps, too.

ALICE

Well, *that's* different.  
(squints at the pictures)  
And gross.

TANYA

No-one's gonna get an "A" in Taylor's class writing about *generic* phobias. You've got to break new ground, stand out! Agoraphobia's ancient news. Arachnophobia? Been there, done that.

ALICE

(laughs)  
That was a good film. Maybe it's due for a reboot?

TANYA

While surfing, I discovered Trypophobia on a click bait site and... it felt like fate. This is what I was meant to write about. Like karma; I just knew!

Alice's grin fades, replaced by concern.

ALICE

Tanya, you know how sometimes you're *too* intense? Well, right now it's even worse. Screw those pictures. Now you're starting to freak me out!

TANYA

You think they're disturbing? What happened to me next is worse! After I started reading up on Trypophobia, I started... seeing things. Here. I mean, it's possible they were always there and the articles caused me to notice them *more*. But other stuff just appeared!

She drags Alice over to a wall outlet. And points at a cluster of TINY HOLES, between the plastic and floor.

ALICE

(squints)  
It's not like your apartment's new. Maybe the plaster's just flaking.

TANYA  
Plaster doesn't create little dots!

ALICE  
Maybe termites then?  
(shudders)  
Ew.

TANYA  
Do termites move in overnight?

ALICE  
(shrugs)  
I'm no entomologist. Call your landlord.  
He'll gas 'em out.

TANYA  
This isn't about bugs. Look here, too!

She thrusts her palm at Alice, reveals:

A set of red SCRAPES and CUTS. Ugly, painful stuff.

ALICE  
OMG, that looks bad. Is it infected?

TANYA  
No. I mean, not yet.

ALICE  
What happened?

Tanya darts to a cupboard, rips it open.

TANYA  
Yesterday, I was brainstorming about the  
paper and making lunch. All I wanted was  
a little cheese on my salad. Sure it's  
heavy on the calories, but I've been  
working hard. Is a splurge so bad? I was  
grating some Pepper Jack, when -

She points at: a CHEESE GRATER on the shelf.

TANYA  
It cut me!

Alice grabs the grater, looks it over end to end.

TANYA  
Careful. It'll get you next!

Dots of dried blood still decorate a few holes. Alice  
gags, puts the gadget down.

ALICE

It's a *cheese grater*, T. There's no way it bit you. You just got a bit distracted, and... slipped.

TANYA

That's what they want you to think! But "accidents" like this never happened to me before.

Alice stares at Tanya.

ALICE

Don't take this the wrong way, but I'm starting to think you've had a caffeine overdose. Too much coffee can cause psychosis. You're the Psych major, you should know.

TANYA

You don't believe me? Explain THIS!

Tanya runs to the counter, picks up her PHONE. She holds it with two fingers; like a snake which just might bite.

TANYA

You see the little holes?

ALICE

Duh. They're called "speakers", hun.

TANYA

When I realized I was onto something, I tried texting you. But before I hit send, something started talking back to me through this.

ALICE

Baby, that's a phone. Talking's what it's designed to do.

TANYA

But *it wasn't even on*. And it wasn't a normal voice. More like mini micro people. And their words sounded like a hiss. That's when I realized maybe Trypophobia isn't irrational after all! What if the holes and bumps are portals to different dimensions? Just like senses differ from person to person, some people aren't tuned into it well enough, but others are. And when that connection happens, it *feels* like fear!

Grabbing Tanya's arm, Alice drags her into the...

# **LIVING ROOM**

And frog-marches her towards the door. Tanya resists.

TANYA

Let go! What are you doing?

ALICE

What I should've done when you started talking weird. Getting you a psych eval!

Tanya gasps, offended. Alice drops her voice to a gentle, reassuring tone.

ALICE

I mean, let's just go visit the campus nurse. Your hand needs first aid, sweetie. Come with me, you'll be fine.

TANYA

You can't make me. I'm not crazy!

Wild-eyed, Tanya pulls free.

TANYA

I won't be scared out of my own apartment by those... those things. And I've got to finish my paper. When the news of all this breaks, it's gonna be an epic A!

Alice slumps. There's no talking Tanya out of this. Instead, she inches toward the door.

ALICE

Whatever floats your boat, T. I'll go get us some donuts for the all-nighter...

TANYA

No, don't. Donuts have holes!

ALICE

Fine. Pizza, then. With no pepperoni, promise. Just plain.

She smoothes her friend's hair, worry on her face.

ALICE

Just... take a break from "researching". 'Til I'm back, stay put and chill.



**EXT. SIDEWALK**

Alice closes the door gently. Dials as she walks away.

ALICE

(into her cell)

Hey, off-campus security? I have to report a mental health crisis. No, not mine. My friend! No, not drugs. She's not into that. But she had a psychotic break doing homework.

(listens, frustrated)

Please, just do a safety check. No, I'm not being dramatic. I'm a math major, for fuck's sake!!

**INT. LIVING ROOM**

Tanya turns from the door, sighs.

Wandering back towards the kitchen, she mutters, kicks trash out of the way:

TANYA

Alice thinks she's sooo smart. Mathematicians deal with imaginary numbers, not real life stuff like this. She doesn't understand how pivotal breakthroughs like this are!

**INT. KITCHEN**

Rooting in the refrigerator, Tanya pulls out a wilted salad (cheese on top.) Grabs a fork, and sits down.

Nearby, something HISSES. Half-heard tiny VOICES.

Wild-eyed, Tanya looks around. Side-eyes her phone. The sound's not coming from the speakers... this time.

The laptop FLASHES, kicks into screensaver mode. A TIME-STAMP displays. SMALL BUBBLES float around the screen.

Tanya sees them and shrieks. She swings the laptop around to face the wall. Eats and broods.

TANYA

They know where you live, T. They're never gonna leave you alone.

She pouts at her hand. Sits up when inspiration hits.

TANYA

What I need is camouflage. Make them think I'm one of them!

Hand shaking, she trails the fork past the wounds on her palm... to the soft underbelly of her arm.

Braces herself. Presses down.

TANYA

(grits her teeth)

Ow. But... skin grows back. It's not like a few pinpricks will *kill* you, Tanya. As long as you don't hit a vein.

She presses down harder. Blood oozes from little holes.

Behind her, the HISSING continues. Soft, barely seen vapor circles lazily in the air.

**LATER**

According to the laptop's clock, 30 minutes have passed.

Tanya lies slumped across the table. Her arm now a battlefield of tiny, clustered puncture wounds. The fork's done major damage.

In the living room, someone KNOCKS on the door. A male voice yells.

MALE VOICE

Tanya Lanier? We hate to bother you, but it's security. We received a call.

Tanya doesn't move.

Behind her, something *does*. More smoke - emanating from the "termite holes" near the outlet.

The HISSING grows. Through which, tiny voices muse.

TINY VOICE 1

Is the interloper still moving?

TINY VOICE 2

No, she is due to expire. Our secret will be safe now.

At the door, the knocks get louder.

MALE VOICE

Ms. Lanier? Are you home at all?

A second voice grumbles behind him.

SECOND MALE VOICE

Give it a rest, Roger. She's probably  
sleeping. Let's leave and call tomorrow.  
I'll bet you a Benjamin she's OK.

Tanya groans, twitches.

Her hand spasms, smacks the coffee mug. The Hello Kitty  
cartoon SHATTERS.

Its liquid brown contents splatter the laptop. The  
research paper file corrupts. Circuits fry.

Sparks light up the dim room. As...

Blood pools under Tanya, drips to the floor. And leaves  
tiny, clustered dot formations on the tile.

FINAL FADE OUT: