

4am Cupcakes

By C. Jade Wyton

Becky Bloom awakes from a stress-induced nightmare with a start and decides that, to cope, she wants to make cupcakes with her family. Even if it is 4am.

Contains mentions of suicide, grief, and ptsd.

~~~~~

Becky woke up with a jolt, sweat running down her face and back as she sat up straight and let out a shout.

Horrible images, flashing through her mind.

Zombies, gods, spirits— Vicious animals, and burnt toast, and horrible fighting and screaming and mockery.

Her classmates' tears.

The end of the world.

And her friends screaming for her, while she couldn't undo her car's seatbelt to get out and help them.

It was like everything bad that had ever happened to her had somehow pushed its way back into her mind all at once and combined into one horrible, inescapable nightmare.

Though, Becky realised it really was *just* a nightmare and let out a long breath. A nightmare.

She'd just had a nightmare....

A nightmare about.... What had it been about, again?

As soon as she tried to grasp the dream's memory into the waking world, it wisped away into nothingness, leaving her naked and sweaty in bed with Mimi bounding around her, chirping and trying to comfort her.

Becky pet the mimic— And then jumped in surprise as a light knock sounded from her door.

'Becky?' Isa's voice asked, quietly. '*Are you alright?*'

Becky swallowed, and let out her breath as the knock at her door was echoed by a rapping at her window. 'Yeah, Isa. I'm fine. Just a— Just a bad dream.... *I think,*' she said, rising to her feet and going to let Don inside.

Instead of clumsily flopping to the floor as he usually did, the mimic leapt onto Becky's arm and scooted up to her shoulder so it could nuzzle into her cheek.

'Good boy,' Becky told him, scratching the back of its neck. 'Oh— Yes, Mimi, you too. Good girl.'

Becky scooped down to pick up Mimi, placing it on her other shoulder and stretching.

*What time had she gone to bed again?*

She'd gone to bed early, she knew that.... But when. And... why...?

'Becky?' Isa's voice sounded again. 'May I come in? I'm really worried.'

Oh, *right*.

The incident at the lake.

'Yeah, you can come in,' Becky said, quickly grabbing some clothes and throwing them on. 'I'm dressed!'

She'd been at Shady Hollow Lake with Portia. They'd had fun, but then Portia had gone and gotten a... spirit. That she'd made some sort of deal with when they'd been looking for the kidnapped kid, Danny Hitchcock, months ago....

The spirit was the patron of the lake and had simply wanted to talk to Becky. And relay a message from her mother....

But there had been some sort of miscommunication. And Shady Hollow had assumed that Becky *knew* that her mother had drowned herself in the lake— Which, Becky had *not* been aware of. Not until the patron had risen from the lake, having taken the form of her mother (which she couldn't change, she'd mentioned; something about Becky's mother being the last creature to give up her body to the spirit...) and caused her to break out into a screaming fit of hysterics.

The spirit had assumed Becky's reaction had been because she'd done something wrong and upset the girl with a message that was somehow terrible and unwanted— But that was *far* from the truth. The message had been the most beautiful, reassuring thing Becky could ever have possibly wished for.

And she felt bad that the spirit had been left feeling like she'd done something wrong....

Isa wrapped her arms around Becky, and Becky felt herself pulled back to reality. She realised she'd been staring at herself in the mirror, vacantly, and not responding as Isa had been talking to her.

'Are you alright?' Isa asked.

'I think so, Ilhar,' Becky let out a long sigh. 'Just... a lot's been going on.'

A kiss pressed into Becky's cheek, followed by two mimic tongues, and Becky felt herself give a weak smile.

Then it fell again as she remembered her father's reaction to her retelling of her visit to the lake. 'Isa? Is Dad okay?'

'Mm,' Isa winced, and Becky felt her tense. 'He's... stressed.'

'He hasn't been able to sleep?'

'I'm not sure he'll ever sleep again,' Isa sighed. 'What you said really shook him.'

'Sorry,' Becky let out a long, heavy breath.

'No, Becky, don't be sorry,' Isa gave Becky another cheek-kiss. 'He's *worried* about you. And how you're coping.... We should have told you a lot sooner about your mother. It was just... hard.'

'I know,' Becky said. 'I understand. I, uh... don't know how I would have handled it, either....'

Becky saw, then, Isa's eyes soften as she gave Becky a look of pride.

'What?' Becky asked.

'You've grown,' Isa said, softly. 'So much. It's good to see....'

'Well, I wasn't always this tall,' Becky joked.

And Isa laughed. 'You know what I mean, Rebecca!'

'Heh, yeah,' Becky finally looked away from the mirror; turning to look at Isa

properly. 'Can we make cupcakes?'

'What. *Now?*'

'Yeah.'

'Well... hm,' Isa shrugged, slowly removing her arm from around Becky and heading for the door. 'I suppose.... Just let me check on your father, first.'

'Mhm,' Becky gave a nod, and trailed after Isa.

Becky followed the drow to her father's bedroom, where she knocked twice and —upon there being no answer— slowly pushed open the door.

'Ken?' Isa called, softly. Then, she sighed and opened the door fully. 'Ken, are you alright?'

Becky saw her father pacing from one wall of his room to the other; his hands against his lips as he mumbled to himself.

'Ken?' Isa called again.

'Dad?' Becky tried.

'Hm? Oh—' Ken turned to the women and his eyes widened. 'Oh, hello— Sorry. Were you saying something?'

'Are you alright?' Isa asked.

'Uh... not sure,' Ken answered, shuffling as he finally stopped pacing. 'It has been a very... *hmm...* hectic time, hasn't it? There always seems to be *something* going on, doesn't there?'

Becky looked away, knowing that most of those *somethings* were her own fault.

'You shouted,' Ken said, motioning at Becky. 'Are you okay? I-I heard Isa going in so I didn't leave my room, but.... Was it another nightmare?'

'Yeah,' Becky admitted.

'About, uh...' Ken made a vague motion, before glancing at the wall.

Becky followed her father's gaze to a picture of her mother, and bit her lip.

'Um... surprisingly... no. I think Mum was the only thing I *didn't* dream about.'

Ken let out a long, tired breath before slowly looking back to his daughter.

'Are you... upset that we didn't tell you sooner?'

'Mm, a little bit,' Becky answered, honestly. 'But I understand why you didn't— I really do. And, like. As long as there's nothing else you're keeping from me, you know? Like, I don't have a secret half brother in France or something, do I?'

Ken's eyes widened, at that suggestion, and he looked terrified. 'Gods, I certainly hope not!'

Becky couldn't help but giggle at her father's reaction— Which earned her a firm look from Isa.

So she quickly swallowed her laughter down and offered her father her hand.

'We're making cupcakes. You should come help.'

'Mm...' Ken gave a nervous hum before slowly taking Becky's hand. 'I-I'll come down, but I'm not sure how much help I'll be.'

~~~~~

'Why do we even, like, *bother* being awake in the day?' Becky asked, piping a swirl of colourful icing on the top of her freshly-cooled cupcakes. 'Like. What's

the point, when we all seem to find it so much easier to be awake at night?’

‘Because nobody else is up this late,’ Isa answered. She placed the baking tray she’d been washing onto the drying rack and then turned around, removing her gloves. ‘And it would be pretty lonely if we were the only ones awake, don’t you think?’

‘I could live with that,’ Ken said, before squeezing his own piping bag of icing directly into his mouth.

‘I don’t think I could,’ Becky admitted, taking inspiration from her father and switching from decorating her cupcakes to drinking the icing directly. ‘I think if I... *mm...* I think if had to stop talking to even *one* of my friends, I’d lose my mind.... Well, lose it *again*. Which would suck, cos I’ve only just managed to find it.... Guess where I found it.’

‘What?’ Isa frowned, and took the piping bags from both Ken and Becky and put them away.

‘Guess where I found it,’ Becky repeated.

‘Where?’ Isa asked.

‘Under the couch.’

Ken gave a laugh, which turned into a cough as he choked on his mouthful of icing. Then, after Isa pet him on the back and he caught his breath, he reached out an arm and pulled his daughter close for a hug. ‘Alright,’ he chuckled, squeezing Becky tight. ‘We made cupcakes.... Now I think I need to sleep.’

Isa gave a nod of agreement and pecked a kiss on the side of Becky’s head. ‘Yes, I think your father and I should both try and get some rest. Don’t stay up too long, alright?’

‘Mhm. Love you, Ilhar... and you, Dad,’ Becky leant into the kiss, and then watched as her father and Isa both headed out of the room.

Isa wrapped her arm around Ken as they headed for the stairs— And Don trailed after them hurriedly, his thin little stick legs slipping on the smooth wooden floor as he tried to keep pace with the pair.

Don would try to get into her father’s room so it could sleep curled up at his feet again.... The creature had taken a real liking to Ken.

It had taken a real liking to *everyone* in the family.

Becky felt herself grinning as she scooped up Mimi to stop it following the others, drooping the mimic over her shoulders as it turned into a scarf and wrapped around her neck.

‘Good baby,’ she told it, scratching it along its side. ‘You’re such a good girl. How about we go sit on the couch, huh? See if anyone’s online to talk to?’

‘*Mrrrrpthh*,’ Mimi gave a chirp that ended in a raspberry and stuck its tongue in Becky’s ear.

‘Aw, Mimi! Stinky baby, no!’ Becky laughed, trying to move her head away from the mimic but failing. ‘Mimi, no, stop it! C’mon, girl!’

Becky stumbled through the dining room, into the lounge, and sat on the couch; tickling Mimi as she did to stop the mimic from licking her face.

Then, after Mimi nuzzled into her and settled down, Becky pulled out her phone and checked her messages. All eighty-seven of them.... With a solid sixty of those being from her aunt, Isabel.

Becky let out a heavy sigh as she checked what her aunt had said and found

that it was the usual lonely rambling that she received every night.

I really need to sign her up for Tinder or something, Becky thought to herself.

Though, from what she'd seen of her aunt, Becky figured that if she left her unsupervised while meeting strange men the woman would end up with a true-crime podcast about her....

After a moment of dealing with her private messages, Becky moved on to her social media; where she had another barrage of messages from her aunt.

After talking with her dad about Isabel last month, Becky hadn't seen any reason to *not* let her aunt follow her on social media.... *Now*, though, as she scrolled through the wall of likes and replies her aunt had left her, she was seeing plenty of reasons she shouldn't have given her that permission....

She was liking stuff from *two years ago*.

Becky shook her head.

At least Isabel hadn't *commented* on stuff older than a month. That was a small relief.... And even though she'd attempted to hold a conversation with a very, *very* confused Marilyn on one of Becky's selfies, she'd been polite about it.

Becky read the comments and chuckled.

She'd have to explain to her friend later who Isabel was.

'Hm...' Becky left her notifications and scrolled her feed; catching up with the news from her friends.

Hangout planning, art posts, selfies, venting....

A picture of Portia and Toast together?

Portia....

Becky bit her lip, reminded again of their time at the lake.

The spirit had given her that message. And Becky had completely *freaked* out about it....

She'd been rude, hadn't she?

'*Gods*,' Becky breathed. 'I should apologise.... Mimi, baby? You feel like coming for a walk with me?'

'*Phhhhpt!*' Mimi blew a raspberry and slid off Becky's neck; instead nestling comfortably into the couch cushions and letting out a quiet snore.

'You could have just said no,' Becky chuckled, pushing herself to her feet and pocketing her phone.

She had to say sorry. And thank the spirit for... *helping*? Her mother.

Was helping the right word?

Her mother had drowned herself in Shady Hollow's lake... but the spirit had talked about her pain, and trying to relieve it for her, and her mother *giving herself willingly*....

It hurt Becky's heart to think about, so she swallowed and tried not to.

She should give the spirit something to say thank you.

Something nice....

'Hm...' Becky scratched at her chin. 'What sort of thing would a lake spirit like?'

Fish food?

Becky almost punched herself in the head at the sheer stupidity of the thought.

Though— *Food* of some sort wasn't a bad idea. That was a normal gift, wasn't

it?

Becky wandered into the kitchen and looked around.

Then she saw the cupcakes, only half of them decorated, and smiled to herself.
She could ice one especially for the spirit!

~~~~~

Becky had ended up icing two cupcakes for the spirit. Both of them blue, with poorly-written “thank you” in green (or so Becky *thought* the “thakn you” message read on the second). She’d drawn some little fish on them, to make them feel special, and then put them in a container and carried them through the woods.

She’d made two because halfway through icing the first one she realised she wasn’t sure how to actually give them to the spirit.

Was she supposed to throw it into the lake, where it might get soggy but the spirit could read it? Or was she supposed to leave it on the shore, where it would stay dry and in-tact but may be harder for the spirit to find?

Unsure, she’d decided to do both. Just in case.

Becky took a deep breath as she reached the lake and slipped off her shoes and socks. Then, she took a step into the ice-cold water and felt a shiver course through her entire body; making her teeth chatter and the hair on her arms stand on-end.

*‘Deep breath, you can do this,’* Becky whispered to herself, before taking several more steps, until the water was up to her knees.

The lake was beautiful, tonight. Not a cloud in the sky, and the lights of town too far away to disturb the starlight that shone down to reflect on the mirroring surface of the water....

Becky cleared her throat.

‘Uh.... Hello?’ Becky tried, loudly. There was no response— But that wasn’t surprising. ‘Um... ahem. Uh, so.... I don’t know if you can hear me, Mrs— Miss...? Shady Hollow. But, um.... I know that I didn’t exactly handle seeing you... *all that well*. I’m sorry about... screaming. But it was just a shock. To see you come out of the water, looking like my mum. When she’s been dead for so long. But uh.... Now that I’ve had time to think, I realise I was really rude. So I uh. I just wanted to say thank you, for passing on her message? It was a good message to get. And it means a lot to know that Mum loved me. And *how* much she loved me.... So, um.... I brought you these,’ Becky held up the container, presenting it to the lake, before taking off its lid and pulling out one of the cupcakes.

She hesitantly threw it a towards the centre of the lake, listening as it *splooped* into its surface and disturbed the beautiful reflection of the stars.

‘I’m not sure if you can take it off the shore, or if I have to throw it into the lake for you. So I’m doing both, just in case,’ Becky commented, retreating a few steps so she was able to place the container on the shore of the lake. ‘Even if, uh.... Even if I don’t know if you *like* cupcakes or not. Or, if you... can actually eat *at all*. But uh. Yeah. They’re for you. As a thank you gift. So, um... if you *can* eat, I hope you enjoy them. If you can’t eat.... Sorry. I hope you at least find them pretty.’

For a moment, Becky stood in the cold water; the silence looming uncomfortably over her as she licked her lips and tapped her sides.

‘Uh... anyway. I’m going to go now,’ Becky said, retreating out of the lake again. ‘Um... bye? H-Have a good night.’

Becky quickly retrieved her shoes and hurried away from the lake; only stopping when it was completely out of sight before she let out a long breath and sat down to put them back on.

*That was pathetic*, Becky scolded herself. Then, she hesitated. *Now what?* She was out in the woods on her own, with nothing to do....

*Hm....*

Maybe she could call a friend?

Yeah!

She could call a friend, and they could go cause some havoc in town! It was pretty frosty, tonight. Maybe they could go around and write rude words on car windscreens?

But who did she know who stayed up late? Who would *also* be into spontaneous-but-harmless vandalism?

‘Ah!’ Becky gave an happy exclamation and pulled out her phone; dialing the *perfect* candidate.

*Ringin....*

*Ringin....*

*Ringin—*

‘Nyg.... Hello?’ mumbled a tired-sounding voice.

‘*Hiiiiiii* Portia!’ Becky chirped. ‘Are you awake?’

‘I am *now*,’ Portia grumbled. ‘What is it, bimbo-breath?’

‘I was wondering if you wanted to hang out?’ Becky offered.

‘At...’ Portia paused, and Becky heard her moving around. ‘Fucking *four in the morning*?’

‘Yeah! I was thinking we could draw rude things in the frost on people’s cars.’

Portia let out a long groan and sniffed. ‘Ugh, fine. Yeah. Whatever. Where do I meet you?’

—END—

If you enjoyed reading, please consider supporting me and my work at  
cjadewyton.com