

Don Was Here

By C. Jade Wyton

After the near-death of a friend, Becky Bloom is struggling with her mental health. She finds herself in the middle of a panic attack, which Isa can't seem to talk her out of. And so, when Becky's panic grows worse, it is up to Don to calm her down.

Contains descriptions of panic attacks and self-harm.

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Dead.

Dead.

He was dead.

Becky couldn't stop rocking back and forth. No matter how much Isa whispered to her that everything was going to be okay.

Because it wasn't going to be okay.

Nothing was ever going to be okay again.

Adam was dead.

And Becky couldn't save him.

It was her fault.

Guillmero had come back from the dead and murdered her friend, and it was her fault.

She hadn't stopped him.

She was *right on top* of Guillmero, but she just couldn't react fast enough.

Becky closed her eyes shut, and the image of Guillmero ripping Adam's bolts clean from his neck replayed in her mind, over and over and over.

The blood.

The wires.

The horrible sound Adam had made—

It made her sick to her stomach, and she clawed at her face.

She had to get the image out of her brain.

She couldn't *bear* the memory of seeing Adam die.

She had to dig it out.

*Dig it out like a splinter!*

But it was deep.

Deep.

Deep.

Deep in her head.

And she had to get through this *useless flesh* to get to it!

'Becky— Becky, stop!' Isa exclaimed, trying to grab her daughter's hands to hold them still. 'Please! *Stop!*'

No!

No she *couldn't!*

She had to forget!

She had to forget!

She had to dig down to her brain and rip out the memory!

*She couldn't take it anymore!*

'Adam!' was all she managed as Isa finally restrained her. 'Adam! Adam! Adam!'

'He's okay— *Becky!*' Isa yanked at Becky's hands as the girl tried to claw herself again. 'Adam is okay! Igor said he's okay.'

Becky didn't believe her.

If Adam was okay, then why hadn't she heard from him? It'd been almost two days!

It had been almost two days, and he hadn't answered his phone!

Last time he'd lost his bolts he'd answered his phone— And that was before he even knew her! That was before they were friends! Even back when they *didn't love each other*, he still picked up and told her he was okay!

So he was dead.

That was the only logical explanation for him not answering his phone and telling Becky that he was okay.

He was dead.

And it was her fault.

*Her fault.*

It was all her fault.

She hadn't been fast enough.

Or strong enough.

Or smart enough.

She'd tried.

She'd tried so hard.

But she just couldn't *do* anything.

She was useless!

Useless!

Useless!

She couldn't protect her friends!

She couldn't protect *anyone!*

She was useless!

'Becky!' Isa snapped, the fear in her voice rising as Becky pulled away and raked her nails over herself to draw blood. 'Stop it! *Stop it!*'

'Adam!' Becky cried. 'Adam! Adam! Adam!'

'Adam's okay—'

'LIAR!' Becky cried. 'You're lying! You're lying! You're lying!'

'I'm not lying—'

'You're *lying* to me!' Becky let out a sob. 'He's dead! He's dead! Adam's dead!'

'He's not!'

'He is! He is! He's dead! Adam's dead!'

'Becky, *listen* to me!' Isa took Becky by her cheeks, holding her tight so she could look into her eyes. 'Adam! Is! Okay!'

Becky heaved. Half sobbing, half almost-being-sick.

'Adam is okay,' Isa repeated, softer this time. 'He's alive. Igor said he's just resting. Okay?'

*'I don't believe you,'* Becky mumbled.

*'Why would I lie about that?'*

*'I don't know.'*

*'Becky, please! Trust me. Adam's— BECKY! NO!'*

Isa cut off with a cry as Becky yanked out of her grip and made for her bedroom door.

She stumbled out, ignoring her mimics as they yipped and trilled at her feet, and bolted for the stairs.

*'Becky!'* Isa cried, rushing after her. *'Stop— Ken! Stop her!'*

Becky saw her father out of the corner of her eye as he hurried out of his office, and she veered to the side as he reached out an arm to grab her.

His fingers *just* brushed Becky's arm as she slammed sideways into the wall and used it to propel herself forward with a burst of speed.

*'Becky!'* he cried.

*'Rebecca!'* Isa called.

*'Merp!'* Mimi trilled.

And then something gripped the back of Becky's belt and clung on tight.

She pushed forward with force, expecting the weight to be a hand holding her back, but found it didn't restrain her as she all but leapt down the stairs and almost took out the front door in her hurry to get outside.

*'BECKY!'* was the last shriek she heard, before she turned the streets corner and her family vanished.

She had to run.

Keep running!

Before they got the car and cut her off—

The park!

If she went through the park they'd have to go all the way around, and she could— Lose them!

Quickly!

Quickly!

Run!

*Run!*

R....

Run?

Becky slowed as her panic began to ebb.

Running had satisfied her fight or flight, and now her head was... starting to clear.

Why was she running from her parents?

She had... no idea.

Becky paused, and realised she had made it to about the middle of the park before her senses had come back.

Senses?

She didn't....

*Hm....*

She looked around, feeling herself swaying in her exhaustion as her eyes trailed over the people around her.

They looked... concerned?

Why would they be....

Something wet trailed slowly down the side of Becky's head, and she reached up to wipe it away.

Blood?

*Oh.*

That made sense.

No wonder everyone was staring at her.

A muffled honk sounded from Becky's back and she felt the weight that had gripped her belt begin to scale her. It climbed up and up until Don was resting on her shoulder and carefully licking the blood off her face. He gave a worried groan as he cleaned her, and Becky instinctively reached up to touch him.

*Don was here.*

*Don was calm.*

*Don was okay.*

*She was okay.*

Becky let out a long, slow breath.

*Don was okay.*

*She was okay.*

*Adam... was okay.*

Becky took in a breath.

*Isa had said Adam was okay.*

*Why would Isa lie to her?*

*Why would she think Isa would lie to her...?*

Becky let the breath out again.

*Don was okay.*

*She was okay.*

*Adam was okay.*

Don was okay.

She was okay.

Adam was okay.

Adam was okay.

Adam was okay—

'BECKY!' Isa practically tackled Becky, throwing her arms around her and gripping her tight. 'Oh, my god! Don't *do* that! Are you alright?! *Look at me!*'

Becky held Don tight so he didn't fall as Isa pulled away and gave her a shake.

'Don't you *ever* run off like that again!' Isa scolded. Her grip on Becky's arm was painfully firm; it was clear she was *not* about to let Becky pull away from her again. 'Look at me— Becky! Becky? Are you alright? Becky...?'

Slowly, Becky leant forward. Until she was leaning into Isa, her face buried in the drow's shoulder and her arms wrapped around her.

Isa let out her breath and Becky felt her relax as Ken finally caught up, his car keys falling from his pocket as he joined the hug from the side.

Don immediately leapt from Becky's shoulder and, with a horrible choking noise that sounded like loose change in a blender, tried to swallow Ken's keys.

'Don, *no!*' Becky exclaimed, making a grab for her mimic— Who bolted, stumbling clumsy circles around her parents before running towards the car and jumping into the wide-open driver's side door.

Becky followed him, clambering with him into the back seat as her parents hurried to take their places up front....

Don bounced back over Becky, dropping the keys into Isa's lap— And Becky heard a quiet *clu-choonk* sound as her father activated the car's child locks.

—END—

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