

Favourite Couch

By C. Jade Wyton

Barbra Bloom is expecting a furniture delivery, and has spend all day preparing for it. However, even after cleaning the room and wrangling the family's pet into its carrier, there is still one major issue.... Her daughter, Becky, learns of the change that is happening and has a complete meltdown.

Contains descriptions of an autistic meltdown.

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Barbra had spent most of the day preparing for the furniture delivery.

She knew she only had a small window to finish cleaning the lounge and move the old couches out of the way.... Becky would be home from school, soon. And once she was she'd be tearing around with Mimi and making a mess, as usual.

*Ah, right. Mimi!*

Barbra would have to make sure it was in its carrier before the delivery got here. For its own safety, *and* the safety of whoever delivered their furniture. Because that thing *loved* to bite....

'Mimi!' Barbra called, retrieving the mimic's carrier from the corner of the room and placing it on the coffee table. 'Come here, girl! *Pspspsp*!'

'*Mrrrrp?*' Mimi's voice chirped from the bookshelf, and one of the books slowly wiggled out from its place on a lower shelf. It flopped over onto its side before slowly sprouting eight long, hairy, black spider legs and twitching life into them one at a time.

*Ugh.*

Barbra wished Isa was home to do this.... She hated touching those disgusting legs. The little hook-like toes dug into her skin and way they moved made her feel *sick* to watch.

'Mimi! Good girl, come here,' Barbra called, clicking her fingers and smacking her lips to make a kissing sound. 'Come here. Good girl....'

Slowly, Mimi climbed off the shelf and cautiously stumbled towards Barbra; who swallowed down her disgust and tried not to look at the creature's legs as they moved, each pair independent from the others.

Then, Mimi froze, its little blue eyes locking onto the carrier.

'Come here!' Barbra cooed. 'Come on!'

It took one slow, cautious step sideways.

'*Mimi*,' Barbra warned.

'*Brrp*,' Mimi gave a chirp, and lowered its front half; changing into a pillow as it playfully wiggled its rump in the air.

'Don't. You. Dare.'

'*Trrp*!' Mimi gave another chirp and bolted.

'*MIMI!*' Barbra shouted, taking chase around the room. 'Mimi you *naughty* thing! Get back here *right now!*'

Mimi did not do as it was told.

It bounded around the room, running literal circles around Barbra as it chirped playfully.

‘Mimi! You have to go in your carrier!’ Barbra snapped. ‘Bad girl! *Naughty!*’

Mimi let out a loud, joyful squeal and leapt up at the coffee table; knocking several things off before being scooped up and held firmly at arm’s length.

‘Bad girl!’ Barbra scolded, turning to the creature’s carrier. ‘That was very naughty!’

Mimi gave a playful growl, baring its teeth as it aimed a bite at Barbra’s wrist— And Barbra felt her voice rise as she gave the mimic a quick shake to deter it.

‘DO NOT!’ she snarled, furiously.

Mimi immediately pulled back and shrunk into itself, its legs vanishing into its pillow-like form as it gave a nervous gurgle and fell still.

All Barbra could do was snort.

God, she *hated* this thing.

It was creepy. And slimy. And it had far too many legs— And, on top of that, it was always so poorly behaved! No matter how much training it went through or what methods they used, they couldn’t get it to do a *thing* it was told!

If it wasn’t for Becky, she would have rehomed it as soon as she learnt she’d been given an untrainable, half-feral mutt.

But... Becky loved this stupid thing.

Which meant that she was stuck with it.

Probably for the rest of her life, with the way her daughter cared for it.

Barbra sighed as Mimi licked at her hand. It was an “appeasement behaviour,” Becky had explained once. Which meant Mimi understood that it had done wrong and was in trouble.

‘Alright,’ Barbra said, gently, and adjusted her grip on the mimic so she could massage her thumb between its eyes. ‘That’s better. That’s the attitude I want from you.’

Mimi gave a low purr and, slowly, began to reform its legs and relax.

‘There we are,’ Barbra gave a flat sniff, and put Mimi into its carrier. ‘Are we still friends?’

‘*Mrrreep!*’ Mimi chirped cheerfully; seeming to have already forgotten how much trouble it was in as it spun around three times and settled into the pile of chewed-up toys that lined the carrier’s bottom. ‘*Brup.*’

‘Alright,’ Barbra sighed. She gave the mimic a quick pet before closing the carrier door and moving it to the kitchen; out of the way of the expected delivery. ‘Take a nap or something, okay? I’ll let you back out as soon as everything’s finished being moved around.’

Mimi gave a beep of confirmation, so Barbra rose to her feet and washed her hands.

*Ugly little rat*, she thought, checking the shelf of treats her daughter kept for the animal. *Hm. Out of chews... will have to get some more.*

The sound of a car door slamming out front drew Barbra’s attention, and she headed for the hall to meet her husband and daughter as they came in.

Becky threw her bag down in a huff, mumbling something about not being allowed to throw sand at Jareth during recess, as Ken struggled to undo his

shoes.

'You can use the garage, you know,' Barbra said, crouching down and pecking a kiss on Ken's cheek before reaching for his laces.

'The noise is too much, and it was a very... stimulating ride home,' he responded, leaning back as Becky let out a loud grumble and undid her own shoes. 'I need new shoes. J'ai eu tort. Je ne suis pas prêt pour ça.'

'Plus vous les utiliserez, plus vous vous y habituerez,' Barbra said, simply. 'Plus you made that deal with Becky. If she has to wear lace-ups for school, you'll wear lace-ups, too.'

'I am regretting that,' Ken chuckled, smiling over his wife at his daughter as her name got her attention. 'Ma douce fille, remember to put them on the rack.'

'MMM!' Becky let out an angry groan and threw her shoes furiously onto the shoe rack. 'Hate 'em! Hate! Stupid! Dad hates 'em too! What's point of 'em?! Nobody likes! Shoes! Stupid, stupid. Ugly. Throw 'em away! Yep! Throw 'em all the way out!'

'We're not throwing out your shoes,' Barbra said, calmly, placing her husband's shoes beside her daughter's. 'And the point of them is to protect your feet from sharp things on the ground.'

'Stupid rule. Dirt's soft,' Becky grumbled. 'Dirt's nice in the toes. Feels good. Yep. Dirt feels good.'

'But rocks aren't soft, are they?' Barbra said, simply. 'And neither is glass. And both those things get hidden in dirt, don't they?'

'Mm!' Becky gave a grunt of displeasure, and stomped her foot.

Then there was a knock on the door and Barbra quickly stood to answer it; greeting the older tabaxi who stood outside warmly.

'Oh, hello! You're here for the delivery, right?' she asked, noting the clear *Finn's Furniture* embroidered on her breast pocket. 'Please come in— Becky, love, I'm going to need you to back up and be careful!'

'Why!' Becky huffed loudly, much to the amusement of the tabaxi.

'Because I don't want you to get stepped on and squashed by a big heavy couch,' Barbra said, simply.

'Squashed?!' Becky gasped, running to her father's side and tugging on his pants. 'Dad! I'm will be squashed all flat! Like in cartoons! No! Don't want that! Help!'

'You'll be fine, mon bébé ange,' Ken reassured, guiding his daughter from the hall. 'Just stay with me and step to the side. Good girl.'

'Thank you, just this way,' Barbra motioned towards the lounge as two more delivery women, an orc and a bugbear, carried in one of the new chairs.

'What's that!' Becky exclaimed, and Barbra felt her daughter on her own leg now. 'Chairs! Big old chairs!'

'Big *new* chairs,' Barbra corrected, leading Becky into the lounge so she could examine the couch as it was put down. 'What do you think?'

'Shiny,' Becky observed, poking at the leather. She gave it a sniff and gagged. 'Bad! Bad smell! Eugh! Why smell! What is it!'

'It's leather,' Barbra told her. 'Much easier to clean than those fabric couches, when *someone* gives Mimi a bone to chew.'

Becky wiggled as her mother affectionately tapped her on the nose. 'Making

Isa easier, huh?’

‘Exactly, making Isa’s job *much* easier,’ Barbra said warmly. ‘So make sure to say bye-bye to the old ones before they go.’

‘Bye-bye?!’ Becky gasped, her eyes going wide. ‘What you do to mean bye-bye?!’

‘We’re getting rid of the old chairs,’ Barbra said, simply. ‘They’re hard to clean, and now we have new ones.’

‘But I sit on those!’ Becky cried, pointing at the old couches. ‘They smell! They smell is right! All smells on the couch are mine!’

‘The new couches will start to smell better as we use them,’ Barbra promised, taking her daughter by the shoulder and guiding her out of the way of the delivery people as they brought in the second chair. ‘You’ll see.’

‘No!’ Becky shouted, stomping her foot and causing Mimi to let out a cry from the kitchen. ‘No! Chair! Chair! Smell! Room! That room! That chair is smells in the room with the roof and the floor is the floor is the room and the chair is in the room and it feels wrong! It’s wrong! It’s wrong! It’s wrong! It’s wrong!’

‘Becky, I don’t know what you’re saying,’ Barbra felt herself frowning as her daughter gibbered loudly. ‘Becky— Rebecca! Calm down. Stop yelling.’

‘NO!’ Becky threw her arms down against her sides, and backed away from her mother— Accidentally bumping into the orc woman. ‘I have to yell! Have to yell all loud!’

‘No you don’t—’

‘You’re not *listening!*’

‘I’m *trying* to listen!’ Barbra snapped back, matching her daughter’s anger. ‘But you’re not using words—’

‘Becky is using every word she knows!’ Becky cried at her mother.

‘*I don’t doubt it,*’ Barbra mumbled. ‘You’re not using words *properly!*’ she finished, pulling her daughter out of the way again. She took her by the shoulders, then, and crouched down to speak with her on her level. ‘Rebecca, *shush*. You’re upset. I know. Okay? I’m listening. You’re upset, and you don’t want this change. But it’s too late, now. The change is happening. And you’ll just have to get used to it.’

The scream that escaped Becky rattled the windows; as did the scream that echoed from the mimic in the kitchen.

‘REBECCA!’ Barbra snapped back. ‘Do *not* scream at me!’

‘But you’re won’t listen to me!’

‘I *am*, Rebecca!’ Barbra exclaimed, exasperated. ‘I *am* listening to you!’

‘No! You’re won’t!’

‘Yes! I am!’

‘NO!’

‘Becky—’

‘YOU’RE HURTING ME!’ Becky shouted, lunging forward and wrapping her arms tight around her mother. ‘Stop *hurting* me!’

Barbra cast a glance to the delivery driver, who gave her a sympathetic look.

‘I’m not hurting you,’ Barbra said, gently. ‘I’ve barely touched you.’

‘Yeah y’are,’ Becky mumbled. ‘All in my little heart, it’s hurting. All in my *heart!*’

'You mean your feelings?' Barbra sighed. 'I'm hurting your *feelings*?'

'Mhm.'

'Well, I'm sorry,' Barbra said. 'But there's just nothing I can do about that. I don't mean to hurt your feelings, but I'm trying to make sure that you have somewhere nice and clean and safe to live. Do you understand?'

'No,' Becky whined. 'Uhm... I mean. Yes. But no. You love me?'

'I do love you, yes.'

'You love me lots.'

'Yes.'

'You love me, but you're hurting me,' Becky sniffed. 'That's it that I don't understand. Nope. Don't get it!'

'That's just the way it is sometimes, isn't it?' Barbra pecked a kiss on the top of her daughter's head. 'Sometimes we hurt people without meaning to. I'm sorry that I've hurt you. I really am, okay? I promise I didn't mean to.'

'I want to cry.'

'That's okay,' said Barbra. 'You can cry.'

'Can I sit on old chairs to cry?'

'Yeah, that's okay,' Barbra nodded, picking up her daughter and gently placing her on the old couch. 'You've had a big day, haven't you?'

'Mhm,' Becky wiped her eyes and nodded. 'Big and bad. All of the day. From when I got up and slipped all over the floor, to now I'm losing my favourite couch.'

'I'm sorry it's been such a bad day,' Barbra sighed. 'Tomorrow will be better, okay? I promise.'

'Mm,' Becky gave a miserable groan, and flopped over. 'Gonna cry now.'

'Okay. You do that.'

'Uh, Barbra?' Ken's voice squeaked from the hall. 'May I... *te parler en privé*?''

'Oui,' Barbra nodded. 'Becky, will you stay on the couch until I come back?'

'Mhm,' Becky mumbled.

'Be nice to the delivery women, okay?'

'Mhm.'

'No yelling at them or getting under their feet?'

'*Promise*,' Becky mumbled.

'Thank you,' Barbra pecked a kiss on her daughter's cheek, and then hurried to join her husband in the other room. 'Ken?'

'I am worried about how Becky is feeling about this change,' Ken blurted. 'She is in a lot of distress, *et ça m'inquiète beaucoup*.'

'I know, I know,' Barbra took her husband's hands and gave them a comforting squeeze. 'But it will pass. She will get used to the change, and she'll learn to enjoy the new couches as much as she did the old ones.'

'I... do not know about that,' Ken sighed. 'Back when I was her age, I had a very similar experience, getting a new bed, and it was very terrible. It was all new, and scratchy, and different in the worst ways. I was very upset to be losing the bed that I found comfort in before I was used to the new one.'

'But you got over it eventually?' Barbra asked. 'Surely you did?'

'*Ehhmm*,' Ken's lips drew into a thin, pensive line, and he winced. 'Non. Not really. It was hard, *mon chéri*. I was not ready to let go. And it was pulled away

from me. And then, even when I grew used to the new smells and textures of my new bed. Every time I felt that mattress, I remembered the pain that it had put me through and I could not sleep.... I think Becky may be brisé de la même manière que moi. And I do not want her to lose something she finds comfort in when it is so hard for her to find it already.'

'You're... you're not broken,' Barbra let out a long, heavy sigh. 'Neither of you are.'

'But we are not the same as you,' Ken said, softly. 'We work différemment.'

'That's... *true*,' Barbra reluctantly agreed. 'I just wish I knew she'd react this way *before* we got the new chairs. We don't have room for both sets.'

'Yes, I know,' Ken's brow furrowed tight. 'But we must remember how it feels to be so young. She must feel like she has non control of n'importe quoi. Things are all much bigger to her than to us. And she does not have a say in what happens to her own home. Si elle est vraiment comme moi, elle passe la moitié de sa journée terrifiée.'

Barbra rested her head on her husband's chest and let him embrace her.

*Ken was right.*

This was Becky's house as much as their own— And, when it came down to it, she would be spending much more time in it than they both would.... She needed it to feel like a safe, comfortable place to be....

'What if we let her choose one of the chairs to keep?' Ken suggested. 'Let her feel like she has *some* control of what's happening to her? She can keep something familiar to help make the change feel safer. That may work. And then, when she is *ready*, we can get rid of it?'

'Okay that's... a compromise I can work with,' Barbra pulled away and fixed her hair. 'Just *one* of the chairs, though. We can make room for *one*.'

'Oui, one,' Ken agreed, gently running a finger over Barbra's cheek. 'Thank you, mon amour, for listening. I do not always know the best way to do things. But I know about this. Je sais ce que c'est quand le monde est trop grand pour être géré.'

'You're a good father, Ken,' Barbra gave her husband a smile. Then her face fell. 'I should apologise for snapping at her, shouldn't I?'

'That might be good, yes,' Ken agreed.

'Alright, come on,' Barbra motioned for Ken to follow her as she headed back to the lounge. 'You can help me explain things to her, huh?'

'Bien sûr ma chère,' Ken agreed.

'Ah! Mrs Bloom,' the tabaxi woman gave her a wave as she returned to the lounge. 'Perfect timing. We've finished up here. I just need your signature.'

'Oh, yes. Of course,' Barbra quickly took the clipboard she was offered, and scribbled her signature in the box. 'Thank you so much. Have a good day.'

'You too,' the tabaxi gave a warm smile. 'And good luck with the little one.'

'Thank you,' Barbra waved goodbye, waiting until the tabaxi had shut the front door behind them before she approached her sobbing daughter. 'Becky, honey?'

Becky took in a big breath, and rolled over so she could sit up and look at her parents.

'Mon bébé, are you ready to stop crying?' Ken asked, softly, taking a seat next

to his daughter.

Becky shook her head, sniffing loudly and wiping her eyes.

‘That is okay,’ Ken said. ‘But your mother and I. We would like to speak with you, oui? Are you able to speak?’

Becky shook her head.

‘Are you able to listen?’ Barbra tried.

Slowly, Becky nodded.

‘Okay, thank you,’ Barbra sighed, sitting on her daughter’s other side and putting an arm around her. ‘Becky, honey. I’m sorry for snapping at you earlier. I shouldn’t have yelled back at you. That was wrong of me.’

‘*S’okay*,’ Becky mumbled, resting her head against her mother. ‘Sorry for screaming. I know it makes Dad’s brain sore.’

‘It’s alright, mon bébé,’ Ken reassured. ‘I understand.’

‘Now, your father and I just had a talk about the situation we’re in,’ said Barbra. ‘And we agreed that you can choose *one* of the chairs to keep. Okay? You can pick one of the old chairs, and we’ll make room for it for you, okay?’

‘Really?’ Becky’s ears twitched up. ‘You mean it? I can pick one?’

‘Yes,’ Barbra said. ‘Which one do you want to keep?’

Becky’s brow furrowed in deep, deep thought and she put a hand to her chin. ‘I have to think about this,’ she said, firmly. ‘Where’s Mimi? I need to ask her opinion on this.’

‘She’s in the kitchen,’ Barbra said. ‘I put her away because the door was going to be open, but you can let her out now.’

‘Okay, I will,’ said Becky. ‘And I will think very hard. Is it okay if I think until tomorrow?’

‘Yeah, tomorrow is fine,’ said Barbra. ‘Let me know when you’ve decided, okay?’

‘Okay,’ Becky nodded, and slipped off the couch to head to the kitchen. ‘Mimi? Mimi! Hi girl. Good girl.’

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