

Giggling Over Nothing

By C. Jade Wyton

A young Becky Bloom can't sleep, and is instead wandering the town when she finds a very cool looking rock. She wants to show this rock to one of her best friends; Jareth Slader. So she makes the walk to his house and spends the night with him, giggling over nothing.

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The air tonight was crisp and cool; a stark contrast to how warm the day had been.

It was *just* cold enough to feel like a bite against exposed skin... and Becky had forgotten her hoodie. Still, even with the sharp stinging feeling on her arms she didn't want to go home.

It had been a little over a year since she'd come back to Shadow Oaks, and things were finally starting to feel normal again... but the thought of being in her house right now made her sick to her stomach.

That was where her father was. And he didn't care about her.

She *knew* he didn't care, because she'd been testing him. And he'd failed every time.

She couldn't make him mad if she *tried*.

Everything awful she did was met with indifference. Or worse— He'd make *excuses* for her and try to justify all the rules she was breaking!

Didn't he care if she was a bad person? If she picked fights? Broke things? Failed school?

*Would he even care if she got hurt?*

Becky let out a sigh, and kicked a rock. It clattered away, bouncing on the uneven road before tumbling into the gutter and disappearing in the drain.

*Hm.... That was kinda fun.*

Becky kicked another rock, watching as it skidded across the road and vanished into the drain.

Then, another.

And another.

And another—

*Huh.*

Becky paused, mid-kick, and slowly lowered her foot back to the ground.

*That rock looked kinda funny.*

She bent down and picked up the rock— Crystal?

It was an opaque white crystal-like rock.... Some sort of quartz, maybe?

Either way, it was kind of cool.

Becky turned the quartz over in her hands, examining it slowly.

'Jareth would like this,' she said aloud. 'He would like, like this like, a lot.'

*Mm.*

Becky bit her tongue as she pocketed the quartz.

She was doing it, again.

Saying *like* too much....

But she couldn't *help* it! If she *didn't* say it, then her brain wouldn't have time to catch up to her mouth, and her words would get all jumbled. Just like they used to!

Becky kicked another rock into the drain.

She hated that her brain didn't work normal like other people's, and she had to find ways to make herself seem normal....

Another rock in the drain, and Becky started down the road.

She still wasn't ready to go back home.

But where else could she go?

She stuffed her hands in her pockets and felt the rock's rough, bumpy surface.

She could... maybe go give this to Jareth, now?

Would he be awake?

*Maaaybe...?*

If he wasn't, she could just leave the rock on his windowsill for him to find in the morning.

That would be a nice surprise, wouldn't it? He'd like that!

Becky felt herself grinning as she made her way down the darkened streets.

She could see her shadow stretching out in two directions at once as she reached the middle point between the street lights, and was reminded of a scary show that her mother had fallen asleep to, once.

Something about a library filled with aliens, and a doctor fighting them so they didn't eat everyone.... She didn't remember much; as soon as Barbra had woken up she'd turned it off and scolded Becky for sneaking into the lounge and watching adult TV.

All Becky remembered was that having two shadows meant you were going to get eaten to death— And she'd been terrified for years, every time she'd seen something making two shadows. Until Isa had explained the psychics of it to her.

Psychics of it?

Psychics....

*Physics!*

Isa had explained the *physics* of it, to her, and she'd felt a lot better.... Though, sometimes, Becky still got a little nervous when she saw she had two shadows. Even though she'd known for a long time that the show was all just fiction and make-believe.

*Ah!* She'd arrived at Jareth's house!

Now to get inside.... The front door was out of the question, wasn't it? If she used the front door then Jareth's parents were *sure* to hear her and make her go home....

So... the window?

Becky walked around to the side of the house and looked up to the second floor at the window she knew was attached to Jareth's room.

She was good at climbing. She could make that, easy!

Scanning the wall, Becky planned her way to Jareth's window.

If she used that garden rock she could jump and get ahold of that part of the wall....

A handhold there on the downspout....

A foothold there on that loose panel....

And then she could reach the sill.

*Perfect!*

Becky tapped her pocket, quickly making sure the rock she wanted to give Jareth was still there, before starting her way up.

Rock.... Wall.... Downspout.... Loose panel—

The panel buckled under Becky's weight and slipped out from underneath her foot, and she scrabbled for a hold on the side of the house before falling backwards into a pile of gardening tools.

It was the loudest sound she'd ever heard in her entire *life!*

And immediately, at least three different windows lit up— Including Jareth's own, which he shortly stuck his head out of so he could look down at Becky.

'Becky?!' he exclaimed. 'What are you *doing* here? It's...' his head disappeared for a moment, before returning. 'Two in the morning!'

'I found a rock!' Becky called back up, pulling the quartz stone out of her pocket and holding it up for Jareth to see. 'Look! It's for you!'

'Becky—' Jareth cut off with a groan that was *just* loud enough for Becky to hear, and he turned as his father's voice called out to him. 'Yeah— It's just— Yeah, Dad, it's Becky! She— I *dunno!* Should I.... Yeah! Okay! Becky? Dad says to go around to the front and he'll let you in.'

'Kay!' Becky called back.

Mr Slader was going to let her in? She hadn't expected that! She thought that, being so late, he'd tell her to go home....

*Hm, maybe he was going to call Isa to take her home,* Becky thought as she trailed around to the front door where Jareth's parents were both waiting for her. *She hoped not....*

'Becky, sweetheart, what are you doing here?' Mrs Slader asked with a sigh. 'Oh, look at you.... Are you alright? What happened?'

'I like, tried to climb up to Jareth's window and stuff but I, like, fell and stuff,' Becky answered, grimacing as her sentence came out full of filler-words. She bit her tongue, and then tried speak without them. 'But I'm... okay. I just landed on the hose. I knocked things down and stuff but like... I'm fine.'

'As long as you're not hurt,' Mr Slader gave Becky a gentle pet on the head, and ushered her inside. 'Come on. It's too late for you to be out on your own— What would Isa say?'

'She's not saying nothing because she's not gonna know I was— Because. *Ugh,*' Becky bit back the sentence, gritting her teeth as she glanced up at the two adults.

They watched her patiently as she tried again to get the words out but failed.

*Damn it!*

Becky took a deep breath.

She needed to slow down. Slow down.... Speak slower....

*The filler-words helped.*

She hated that they did, but... she had to use them, didn't she?

'Isa's, like, not going to say anything,' Becky said slowly. 'Because, like. You're not gonna, like, tell her.'

Mrs Slader's brow rose in amusement, and she cast her husband a humoured

look. 'I think we *are* going to tell her.'

'No,' Becky said, spotting Jareth and Benny out of the corner of her eye as they watched her from the stairs. 'You won't.'

'Yes,' Mr Slader chuckled. 'We will.'

'No, you won't,' Becky repeated.

'And why won't we?' asked Mrs Slader.

'Cos... uh...' Becky felt herself blushing as she looked at her feet. 'Um.... Snitches... get stitches?'

It was very, *very* clear that Mrs Slader was trying not to burst into a bout of laughter as she took a deep breath through her nose and set her jaw.

'*Mmhm*,' she managed, trying desperately to bite back her smile. 'Well... be that... as it may... we still have to tell Isa.'

'*Noooo!*' Becky whined, stomping her foot and throwing her arms down loudly against her sides.

'Yes,' Mrs Slader said. 'I'll call her now.... Boys? Why don't you keep Becky company until Isa comes to pick her up— *Benny!*'

Becky turned just in time to see Benny vanish up the stairs; obviously not wanting to be stuck with her for the night.

Jareth, on the other hand, seemed to lag for a moment. He stood dumbly for half a minute, watching up the stairs even after his brother had vanished. Then he looked back to Becky and his mother and sighed.

'Uh.... Alright, come on,' he said, holding out his hand for her. 'We can hang out in my room.'

'M'kay!' Becky chirped as she took Jareth's hand and let him lead her upstairs. 'Your room's, like, nice. Yeah!'

'Yeah,' Jareth gave a yawn as he stumbled through the house. 'So.... You said you found a rock you wanted to show me?'

'*Give* you!' Becky corrected, fishing through her pocket with her free hand until she found the quartz stone. 'Here!'

'Oh? Thanks,' Jareth took the stone, examining it curiously as he reached his bedroom door. 'What is this? Quartz?'

'I think so,' Becky nodded, following Jareth into his room and shutting the door behind them. 'I, like, found it on the road. It was all different from all the other rocks and stuff, so I like, picked it up cos I thought you'd, like, like it. And stuff.'

'It's pretty cool,' Jareth said, finally letting go of Becky's hand. He placed the rock on his desk, before scratching at the back of his head. 'Ugh. It's so late.... You know we have school tomorrow, right?'

'*You* have school tomorrow,' Becky retorted, sticking her nose in the air. '*I'm* not going!'

Jareth gave a heavy sigh and sat on the edge of his bed, rubbing at the sleep in his eyes. 'If you say so.'

Becky gave a huff and sat beside him. She fiddled with her own hands, picking at her nails, before echoing Jareth's sigh. 'Sorry. I've woken you up at a bad time, hm? Should have thought more about that.'

'It's alright,' he said. 'Friends are supposed to get on each others nerves, aren't they?'

‘Mhm!’ Becky gave a giggle, and wrapped her arms around her friend. ‘You’re a good friend. Like, really good.’

‘Thanks,’ Jareth said, his cheek darkening in a blush.

‘What’s that?’ Becky asked, poking at Jareth’s face.

‘Nothing,’ Jareth responded, his eyes darting up to the roof. ‘It’s just been a while since we hung out together. Just the two of us. I forgot how much you like to... *hug*.’

‘Hugs are good,’ said Becky, pressing closer into Jareth.

‘Sure,’ Jareth answered, keeping his gaze averted from Becky. Then, he gave another yawn and rubbed at his eyes again.

‘You can like, go back to sleep if you wanna,’ said Becky.

‘Eh. Mum said to keep you company,’ Jareth shrugged. ‘It’s no big deal.... I might lie down though,’ he stretched, then, pulling away from Becky and flopping over onto his back.

Becky watched as he gave a long, tired sigh, and then she flopped down beside him.

The pair eyed each other for a moment, before Becky edged closer to Jareth and tried to bury her face into his chest— Only for him to roll over so his back was facing her.

‘What?’ Becky blinked dumbly, before climbing onto Jareth’s side so she could peer over his shoulder at his face.

*He was... blushing again?*

‘What’s *wrong* with you!’ Becky asked, her voice a little more forceful than she meant it to be.

‘Nothing’s wrong with me!’ Jareth defended.

‘Then turn around and *hug* me!’ Becky let out a grunt of frustration, and flopped back over Jareth so she could bat at his face. ‘Stop being stupid.’

‘I’m not being stupid!’

‘Yes you are.’

‘No I’m *not*.’

‘Yeah!’ Becky whined. ‘You’re a big dumb.... *Stupid!* You’re a stupid face!’

‘What are you, five?’ Jareth scoffed a laugh. ‘Just call me a dickhead or something.’

‘Tête de noeud,’ Becky grunted. ‘You’re such a casse-couille!’

‘Casse-couille, huh?’ Jareth grinned. ‘What’s that one mean?’

‘It, like, means that you’re, like, a pain in the arse!’

‘Ooh, *I’m* the pain in the arse?’ Jareth asked, playfully. ‘Well, tell me who woke who, huh?’

Becky blew a raspberry, and tried to clamber on top of Jareth— Only to have him roll over, catching her with the back of his arm so he could push her under his back and lay on top of her; pinning her to the bed. She wiggled underneath him, trying to escape from under his weight, but couldn’t seem to get free.

‘Jareth!’ she whined.

‘*You* wanted to hug!’ Jareth joked. ‘I’m just doing it backwards.’

Becky gave an annoyed growl, before wrapping her arms around Jareth as best she could and squeezing tight in hopes of strangling him into letting her go.

But it just made him laugh even more.

Then, there was a knock on Jareth's bedroom door and Jareth quickly rolled off the bed and stood up.... Though Becky didn't let him go. Instead she clung to him as he stumbled towards the door, and wrapped her legs around his middle to try and stop herself slipping off his back.

Jareth opened his door to meet his mother; who took one look at the pair of teens and let out a laugh.

'Are you two alright?' she asked.

'We're fine,' said Jareth, hooking his arms underneath Becky's legs to lift her into a more comfortable position. 'What did Isa say?'

'Isa didn't pick up, so I left a message,' said Mrs Slader. 'I thought it might be easier on everyone if Beck just stayed the night. Your dad's downstairs setting up the couch for her to sleep on, now.'

'But the couch is *boring!*' Becky whined, tightening her grip on Jareth. 'Can't I just, like, sleep in here with Jareth? That's like, *way* more fun and stuff!'

'If I let you stay in here I doubt that you'd do any sleeping! You'll be up all night giggling over nothing!' Mrs Slader chuckled, crossing her arms and motioning towards the stairs with a flick of her head. 'C'mon, now. Let Jareth sleep.'

'Aw,' Becky let out a sigh and slipped from Jareth's back, trudging down the hall after Mrs Slader. 'Night, Jareth.'

'Night, Becky,' Jareth gave her a wave, then shut his door.

Becky followed Mrs Slader downstairs to the lounge, where Mr Slader was finishing laying out some blankets on the couch.

'There you are!' Mr Slader gave Becky a warm smile and pet his set-up proudly. 'All ready for you.'

'Thanks,' Becky returned the smile as she climbed under the covers. 'Are you like, gonna stay up?'

'I don't know,' Mr Slader's smile turned to an impish grin. 'Are you gonna try and sneak out?'

Becky's ear twitched as Mrs Slader laughed, and she shook her head. 'No,' she answered. 'I'll stay in the house.'

'Promise?'

'Promise.'

'Then we're going back to bed,' said Mr Slader, putting an arm around his wife and pausing. 'Do you need anything before we go?'

Becky shook her head.

'Alright, then. You get some sleep. We'll wake you in the morning for school.'

'*Ew!*' Becky grumbled, flopping down. Then she caught the serious look the two adults were giving her, and gave a cough. 'I mean... okay. Night.'

'Goodnight,' Mrs Slader shook her head, and she and her husband turned and headed for the stairs.

Becky listened as the couple made their way to their room, and she let out a long breath as the house went quiet.

Then she waited....

And waited....

Five minutes....

Ten....

Fifteen....

*That seemed like long enough!*

Becky rolled off the couch, pulling the blankets tight around herself and collecting the pillows she'd been given before hurrying up the stairs.

She glanced down the hall quickly, to make sure nobody else was up, before creeping towards Jareth's room and letting herself in.

Jareth immediately sat up in bed, his eyes wide as Becky shut the door.

'Becky you're meant to be downstairs—'

'Shh!' Becky shushed, hurrying over to put a finger on Jareth's lips. '*Don't be so loud! They'll hear you!*'

'Go back downstairs!' Jareth whispered back. '*You're going to get us in trouble! Hey— What are you doing?!*'

'I'm sleeping here,' Becky said, simply, dumping her bedding on top of Jareth.

'No you're not!' Jareth retorted, kicking her blankets onto the floor. '*You can sleep on the floor!*'

'No, the bed's more comfortable!' Becky argued, gathering her things and throwing them over the top of Jareth so they piled up against his wall. '*You can sleep on the floor if I bother you so much!*'

'It's *my* bed!'

'Shh!' Becky shushed Jareth again, and then began to clumsily make her way over the top of him to the wall side of the bed.

'Hey— No— Ugh, *ow!*' Jareth shoved Becky with his elbow, causing her to tumble sideways into the pile of bedding. '*Watch where you're putting your knee, dingus!*'

Becky blew a raspberry and pushed her way into the uneven heap of bedding so she could curl up.

'God, you're so annoying!' Jareth huffed, rolling over so Becky could see him roll his eyes.

'Friends are supposed to get on each other's nerves,' Becky parroted Jareth's earlier statement, and slipped her hand out of her blanket bundle so she could poke at Jareth playfully. '*Boop!*'

'Don't "boop" me!' Jareth scolded, obviously trying to be serious but failing as Becky poked him in the nose. '*Stop— Hah! Stop! You're gonna get us in trouble!*'

Becky giggled as Jareth batted her hand away, and then she settled down; snuggling into her blankets and pulling them up so all that was visible of her were her eyes. '*What you wanna, like, talk about?*'

'I wanna sleep, Beck!' Jareth chuckled. '*We have school tomorrow!*'

'You have school tomorrow!' Becky retorted before blowing another raspberry— And then she giggled some more, which turned into an ugly snort as she buried her face into her pillow.

'Shh! Shut up! Shut up!' Jareth echoed Becky's snort, and tried to muffle his snickering with his hand. '*You're gonna make me laugh!*'

'I'm not even saying anything funny!'

'You're laughing!'

'Only because you're laughing!'

'I'm only laughing because you're laughing!'

'You laughed first!'

*'I did not!'*

*'Yes you did!'*

*'Did not!'*

*'Did too!'*

*'Did not—'*

'Becky, back downstairs,' Mrs Slader's voice cut in as the door was pushed open. 'Didn't I say this would happen?'

'Uhhh— Becky is downstairs!' Becky lied, hiding in her blankets. 'There's no Beckys here!'

'Really, now?' Mrs Slader asked, a chuckle finding its way out of her. 'Well, if you're not Becky, then who are you?'

'I'm... a ghost?'

'Downstairs, Becky.'

Jareth snorted a laugh, and kicked Becky playfully. 'Idiot!'

—END—

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