

Late

By C. Jade Wyton

Young Becky Bloom is invited to a party hosted by her girlfriend's parents. It's an important party, and they're running late; much to their horror. They know Mattel's parents are going to be furious! And on top of that they know, in this high-class setting, that not everyone is going to be happy to see them together.

Contains descriptions of homophobia / queerphobia / racism / emotional abuse / physical abuse.

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It was a cool autumn night. Wind whispered through the trees, loosening several colourful leaves and sending them fluttering to the road; only to be thrown back up as a car turned into the crowded lot and cruised past parked car after parked car.

It turned into the first empty space it found, just close enough under a dim street light to leave a shadow, and shut off.

A few moments passed as the inhabitants shuffled around inside and then two girls—one freshly nineteen, one with a matching birthday due in only a few months—stepped out.

The older of the two, the passenger, quickly fussed with her reflection in the side view mirror before straightening up and adjusting the stuffing in her bra.

'Becky?' she called, the sweet note of her voice laced with an underlying anxiety. 'Becky, sweetheart, come here. Let me fix your hair.'

'Does it really need...' Becky trailed off as the other girl motioned her over. 'Uh... yes. Okay, Mattel. Sorry I— I know you're nervous.'

'Mmmhmp,' Mattel let out a sharp chirp, and began petting down Becky's hair and mumbling. 'Frizzy, frizzy.... Did you wash it, last night, like I said to?'

'Of course I did,' Becky said. 'I promised you I would.'

'Yes, of course, of course,' Mattel muttered quietly as she finished with Becky's hair. Then, she stepped back and examined her seriously. 'Hmm....'

'Good to go?' Becky asked with a nervous chuckle.

'Mmm,' Mattel gave a curt hum. 'I think so? Wait— Hold on, I— Ugh,' she sighed heavily, and pulled out her makeup case. 'Your freckles are showing. The ones on your shoulders. I didn't notice until we were under the light and I just— Hold still. Let me cover them up.'

Becky pulled away. 'Wait, I didn't think— Does it matter?'

'Oh, no— Not to *me*! You *know* not to me,' Mattel reassured. Then, she took in a breath that hissed through her teeth, and drawled slowly. 'But.... People here? My parents? Their friends? They'll *talk*. You know? They think they're *unsightly*.'

'Unsight...' Becky paused. 'You think they're unsightly?'

'No— No, no, no, no!' Mattel comforted. 'Not me! *I* don't think they look bad! They're... *quirky*. Like you— And my parents won't like that. So just— Just hold

still, okay?’

‘I’m not sure about this, Mattel,’ Becky muttered as her girlfriend began to dab concealer onto her shoulders. ‘Are you sure I should be here? Your parents didn’t sound very happy about me coming.’

‘*Becky*,’ Mattel sighed heavily, and shook her head. ‘Yes. You *need* to be here— They’re expecting you, now, and if you don’t show up there will be... problems. For me.’

Becky swallowed.

‘Don’t leave me to face them on my own, Beck,’ Mattel said. ‘I didn’t come out just for you to walk out on me when I need you.’

Becky let out a nervous murmur as Mattel lifted her arms to examine them— And another, as more concealer was applied. All the way up to the backs of her hands, until her skin looked smooth and blemish-free.

‘There we go,’ Mattel commented, putting her makeup away and readjusting the straps on Becky’s dress; tightening them until they dug in. ‘Much better.... Nothing for them to hone in on, now.’

‘I don’t know, Mattel, I’m really—’ Becky looked to the ground and tapped a foot anxiously. ‘I’m nervous.’

‘I know. I know you are but.... Be brave?’ Mattel asked, gently putting her hands around Becky’s waist and pulling her close. She gazed into Becky’s eyes for a moment before leaning down and touching their foreheads together. ‘For me?’

Becky swallowed. ‘O.... Okay.’

‘*Perfect*,’ Mattel gave a smile and spun on her heels, her dress trailing behind her. ‘Now, hurry up, Beck! We don’t want to be any later than we already are. My mother is already going to be furious!’

Becky hurried after Mattel, her heels clicking twice on the concrete path for every stride Mattel took.

She felt like she was being left behind, until Mattel paused at the door and glanced back at her. She pushed down the handle as Becky caught up— But then seemed to rethink it, and instead pulled her hands to Becky’s hair again.

‘*Look*,’ Mattel said, seriously. ‘Not everyone here is going to be happy to see you, okay? There are going to be comments about you. About us. And I *need* you to just— Grin and bear it. Just for tonight. Please. *Please* don’t lose your temper, Becky. Okay? Becky? Okay?’

‘Oka— Okay,’ Becky promised. ‘I won’t lose my temper, I promise.’

‘And don’t talk back— Just smile and agree with my parents, okay?’

‘I....’

‘Beck, please,’ Mattel begged, clasping Becky’s hands in her own tightly. ‘Smile and agree with whatever they say. Even if you don’t *really* agree. Just act like you do. Just for tonight? For me? Please.’

‘Okay,’ Becky swallowed. ‘Okay, I’ll— I’ll just. Agree with your parents.’

‘Good, good,’ Mattel bent down to peck Becky on the lips. ‘Thank you, Becky. Thank you.... Come on, let’s get inside.’

Becky didn’t have time to protest as she was grabbed by the arm and quickly pulled after Mattel.

‘Come on, hurry up,’ Mattel muttered. ‘We’re late! My parents are going to— Mother!’

The two girls froze as they rounded into a hall, and came face to face with Mattel's mother; Chloe-Anne Masters.

She glared at the pair with a judgemental look; allowing her eyes to trail Becky with poorly-hidden disgust.... And then, her eyes turned to bore into Mattel.

'You're *late*,' she finally stated, crossing her arms and stepping towards her daughter. 'You missed your father's speech. It's not a good look, for him, when his own daughter isn't present for his speeches.'

'Well— Uh—' Mattel gave a cough and shrunk away from her mother. 'I just— It was—'

'I-It was my fault, Mrs Masters,' Becky blurted. 'I wasn't... ready on time.'

'Was it, now?' Chloe hissed, turning on the girl.

Becky wondered if the lie had been worth it.... Then, she saw Mattel's relieved look and swallowed. 'Yes,' she said. 'I'm sorry, Mrs Masters. I... misread the time.'

'Hmp. Well. You always were near-illiterate,' Chloe gave a snort, her eyes narrowing to slits. 'Honestly, I'm surprised you even knew it was tonight.'

'I... I'm sorry,' Becky managed. 'I promise it won't happen again.'

'No, it won't,' said Chloe. Then, she paused to give Becky another distasteful look. 'This late, and you're still barely presentable.... I mean look at you! Frizzy hair. Uneven makeup. And...' Chloe's look turned from distasteful to cruel. 'Your breasts are just.... well, they're a bit *droopy*, don't you think?'

'What— Well, they're—' Becky was in shock. *Had she really just had that said that to her?!* She couldn't believe it! 'They're big, they're going to— With gravity a-and—'

'Nonsense!' Chloe waved a dismissive hand, and made her way behind Becky. 'I know a loose bra when I see one! You just have to give it a good pull!'

Before Becky could protest, she found her dress unzipped— And gasped as Mattel's mother tugged her bra painfully tight.

'That's—' Becky took a breath, and eyed Mattel. Her girlfriend was looking at her, pleading, and she remembered she'd promised not to argue. '*Better*,' she lied. 'Th.... Thank you, Mrs Masters.'

Chloe gave a nod, accompanied by a victorious grin, and zipped Becky's dress back up in a quick, almost vicious motion. Then, her hand met Becky's shoulder and the girl flinched. 'Yes, it is,' she said. 'Much more presentable.'

Then she flicked her hair back and smiled in a way that Becky could only describe as *sharp*. Sharp, disingenuous, and practiced.

'Come along, Mattel,' she said, turning to march down the hall. 'You can at least make a good impression on the guests at the afterparty.'

Mattel cast Becky a grimace before hurrying down the hall with her mother. And Becky trailed after them— Finding herself lagging behind as she struggled to catch her breath.

The straps of her bra were digging painfully into her shoulders, and the underwire felt like it was stabbing her in the ribs.

She needed to loosen it but... she wasn't sure she'd dare to.

The look Mrs Masters had given her had been almost *daring* her to disobey. An excuse to chide her....

Becky took as deep a breath she could manage and finally caught up at the door.

‘Now, I expect you two to behave... *appropriately*,’ Chloe warned. ‘Keep your hands to yourselves. Voices down. Don’t do *anything* to embarrass this family.’

‘Yes, Mother.’

‘Yes, Mrs Masters.’

‘Good,’ Chloe took her daughter by the arm and shoved her through the door. ‘In.’

Becky hurried after Mattel as quickly as she could; hanging close to her girlfriend as Chloe shut the door behind her and stalked away through the party.

Mattel took a breath and pushed back her hair, seemingly regaining her confidence as her mother vanished into the crowd. Then, she put an arm around Becky’s waist and wordlessly began to guide her through the forest of people.

She weaved effortlessly around people until—

‘Mattel, dear!’ a sickeningly cheerful voice called out. ‘Ah, there you are, my girl! I’ve been looking for you everywhere!’

‘Daddy!’ Mattel’s hand left Becky’s hip and she hurried to her father; throwing her arms around him and accepting his cheek-kiss. ‘I’m sorry I’m late.’

*So this was him*, Becky thought. *Carter Masters.... Mattel’s father....*

Becky had never actually met him in person before, unlike Mattel’s mother, but she thought he looked exactly like the pictures.

Then he looked over his daughter’s shoulder and Becky froze.

His look was as sharp and distrustful as Chloe’s had been— Or at least Becky had thought so. Because suddenly his eyes were softer than they’d seemed just moments before, and she found herself doubting what she’d seen.

*Maybe she’d just imagined it because she was so nervous....*

‘Rebecca Bloom!’ Carter chirped, stepping towards her with arms outstretched. He ignored the uncomfortable step she took back and embraced her, squeezing her tight and making her already difficult breathing twice as painful. ‘How are you? How’s your *father*? Did he come today?’

Carter released Becky and started looking around the room, as if expecting to see him nearby.

‘N.... No,’ Becky said. ‘Dad was... busy tonight.’

Another lie.

Her father wasn’t busy— He just hadn’t wanted to come.... He’d barely wanted *her* to go. Though he hadn’t had the guts to say it to her face; just to Isa, when he thought Becky wasn’t listening.

*A bad crowd*, he’d said....

‘Oh, that’s such a shame!’ Carter gave an exaggerated sigh. ‘Such a high-standing man. It would have been wonderful to have his support tonight.’

‘He’s, um, not really... one for parties.’

‘No? I hear he used to be!’

‘Yeeeah,’ Becky drawled. ‘Not since... uh.... Not since Mum....’

There was a moment of quiet, where Becky looked down to her feet and shuffled awkwardly, before a dawning look appeared on Carter’s face.

‘Oh! Oh.... Not since your mother...’ Carter’s voice dropped low. ‘Yes, yes. I understand.’

‘Yep,’ Becky coughed. She ran her tongue anxiously over her teeth as Chloe returned and stood beside her husband.

She stared Becky down, her arms tightly crossed, before nudging Carter.  
‘Well? You see what I mean about her?’

‘She seems fine,’ Carter dismissed. Then, when his wife started muttering in his ear he looked tired. ‘Yes— Yes—’ he hissed back, his voice as low as hers. ‘*I know— We’ll discuss it later, Chloe, not in public.*’

Becky’s heart sunk as the couple argued— Then, it sprang into her throat as they turned to her.

‘You know, Rebecca, I must be honest,’ said Carter, back to his cheerful self. ‘At first I wasn’t too happy to hear Mattel was dating another girl. But, looking at you? A fine young woman from a good family. I think I can make an exception, for you!’

Becky felt her heart sink again, right to the pit of her stomach in a sickening, heavy way.

*Exception?*

Chloe gave a snort. ‘Well, maybe you think *Rebecca* is acceptable...’ she paused to glance the girl over. ‘*I’d argue barely....* But dating a girl! Hmp! I mean what’s next? Dating an orc?’

‘*Chloe!*’ Carter motioned at his wife, and dropped his voice. ‘Please. Not so loud. We’re in *public.*’

‘Becky used to date Jareth Slader,’ Mattel offered her parents. ‘On and off before we got together.’

‘Did she *really?*’ Carter asked, his voice rising to match his brow as tutted and shook his head. ‘My my. What is the world coming to? A Bloom? Dating a *Slader?* Of all couples!’

Becky had to bite her tongue to keep herself from saying something; the Sladers had never been anything but wonderful to her during her and Jareth’s....

Well. It was never *officially* a relationship. But it had been important to them both.

‘Yes, well— You put a stop to *that* I hope?’ Chloe huffed. ‘And her little... *polyamorous* habit?’

Becky felt her ears burning as Mattel’s mother glared her down. *Her head was spinning from all this talk....* She tried to take a deep breath, to keep herself calm, and felt the underwire dig into her ribs as she did.

‘Yes, Mother,’ Mattel returned, rolling her eyes. ‘Becky and I spoke about it. She knows I’m not comfortable with it; and I trust her not to cheat on me.’

Becky felt Mattel’s hand squeeze hers and realised that... somewhere during the conversation Mattel had moved to stand beside her.

*She trusts me,* Becky used the thought to ground herself. *That’s why I’m doing this. For her. Deep breath. Deep—*

‘She behaves herself, now,’ Mattel commented. She gave a smile that was far too genuine for how uncomfortable the conversation was, and Becky felt her cheeks growing warm again. ‘I told her, me or him. And she picked *me.*’

‘Well, I suppose that counts for something,’ Carter gave a nod. ‘I do have concerns about you two, though. And I mean no offence when I say this, Rebecca.... But....’

‘But... what?’ Becky asked as Mattel heaved a sigh.

‘Well, my dear you, uh.... Well. I’m worried about how you two will be

provided for,' Carter said, carefully. 'Without a man to take care of you.... And, again, no offence, Rebecca, but you don't exactly have any *real skills*. I know your upbringing. I always figured you were going to make a man a very pretty trophy wife— But I'm just not sure how it's going to work with the two of you, in the long run.'

'Uh....'

'We'll make it work, Daddy,' said Mattel. 'Don't worry— We'll figure it out. Won't we, Becky?'

'Um, *yes?*' Becky heard her voice break, and cleared her throat. 'Yes. There are... options. Like um... we can... *hire someone?* To help around the house?'

'Oh, like that Isa that your father keeps around!' Carter gave a knowing nod. 'Yes, yes.... Ah. But. Another concern of mine.... How will you have children?'

'Childre....' Becky felt her head start to spin, again. 'Children?'

*She hadn't even considered children.*

'Yes,' said Carter, simply. 'Aren't you girls worried about being childless?'

'Um...' Becky felt like her entire body was submerged in ice water— Her chest tightening so bad she had to focus her energy on hiding her laboured breathing.

Children?

She hadn't even thought about children.

She'd... *never* thought about children.

Not about having them— Not even in general.

'And, well, I know that people say *adoption* is an option but,' Carter gave the girls a *look*. 'Well.... Is it, *really?*'

'Um... I mean.... I.... I need... the bathroom,' Becky lied, taking a step back. 'Excuse me?'

'Ah, yes, just that way,' Carter pointed to the back of the room, giving a dismissive nod.

As Becky backed away, Mattel cast her a glance that seemed half-pleading, half-annoyed.

*Don't leave me alone*, she seemed to say.

Becky tried to shoot back an apologetic look. *Sorry....*

Mattel rolled her eyes, before being distracted by her parents and giving an awkward laugh.

'We have options, Daddy—' she began, before she was out of earshot.

Becky felt terrible about leaving Mattel with her parents but— She just couldn't do this. She needed a minute. Just a minute. Just to wash her face and breathe.

*Occupied.*

Fuck.

She leant against the wall by the door.

Fucking *occupied....*

Okay. That was okay. It was a good excuse to take a little bit longer. She could just stand by the door and catch her breath.

Let her head stop spinning.

Stop thinking about Mr Carter, and his opinions on her....

*No kids.*

Becky gave a heavy sigh.

It was true. She and Mattel couldn't have kids together— Well. Not *biological* kids....

Did kids need to be biological?

Becky never really thought about it.

Adam was... technically not Victor or Igor's biological son.

Though, they *had* made him. Just... in a lab. With spare parts.

Hm....

And....

Well. Isa.

Becky knew Isa wasn't her mother —the drow had been very firm on that in her childhood— but it certainly *felt* like she was her mother.... More than Becky's *actual* mother had felt like her mother, sometimes.

Not that her mother was a bad person or anything— She just never did mother things. Like cooking, or cleaning, or feeding or bathing Becky. That was all Isa.

Becky's mother was sort of.... Useless, around the house.

Hm....

Well. Becky's father always said she took after her mother.

*Trophy wife.*

Carter hadn't intended it to be an insult (at least Becky didn't think so) but it still *stung* to hear.

Becky sighed.

At least her mother had *other skills* to keep her afloat.... While Becky couldn't think of *anything* she was good at— Besides being pretty, of course.... But....

She looked to her arms, coated in concealer, and wondered how much of her *pretty* was actually faked.

The way Mattel had rushed to cover up her freckles and fussed with her hair.... And the way Chloe had looked at her.... She was beginning to think the answer might be *a lot*.

Especially when she thought about her father's adamant discouraging of her from following in her mother's footsteps and becoming a model.

She was completely useless.

She let out another heavy sigh as she heard the toilet flush, and leant her head back against the wall.

Okay.

Just a few moments and she could retreat into the bathroom and get out of this crowded room. Just for a minute.

Okay. There was the hand dryer.

Okay.

Okay....

*Okay?*

It couldn't take *that* long for someone to dry their hands, could it?! What the hell were they doing—

The door opened and out stepped the toilet's occupant.

It was the mayor.

Mayor— Uh.... Becky couldn't remember his name.

Mayor.... Kenku?

*Mayor Kenku?! No!* Becky chided herself for being an idiot. *Why would that*

*be his name?!*

‘Almond?’

Becky almost jumped out of her skin when she realised Mayor Kenku had approached her, and had to quickly compose herself. ‘Mayor!’ she chuckled. Then, after a moment of hesitation, she accepted the single almond that had been offered to her and slipped it into her purse. ‘Oh. Thank you.’

Mayor Kenku gave a contented nod. Then, motioned to her face. ‘White as the moon,’ he said.

‘What?’

‘White as the moon,’ he repeated.

‘Me?’ Becky asked, motioning to herself as she remembered that Mayor Kenku was a... kenku. And that his speech was limited.

The mayor gave a nod, his strange black eyes staring into her in a way that made her skin crawl. ‘Need a nap?’

‘Nap? Oh, no, I’m fine,’ Becky lied. ‘Better than fine!’

Mayor Kenku gave her a curious look, cocking his head and staring, before reaching into his pocket and offering her two more almonds.

‘Oh, uh— Yes,’ Becky stammered, taking the nuts and putting them into her purse with the first. ‘Thank you. That’s very nice of you.’

Mayor Kenku gave another nod, and then took her by the hand; gently patting it as he did. ‘Nap,’ he said. ‘Peanuts.’

‘Peanuts,’ Becky repeated, trying to match his tone. She was grateful when he seemed happy with her response, giving a contented click of his beak before he wandered away.

For a moment Becky stood still against the wall. Then she realised the mayor had called her pale and thought maybe she should check her makeup. Add some blush or something?

Yeah. Good idea.

Becky quickly retreated into the bathroom, locking the door, and examined herself in the mirror.

Mayor Kenku was right; she was paler than usual. Though, that could have just been Mattel’s concealer being a different shade to hers....

Becky opened her purse and pulled out her makeup pallet and quickly added some colour to her cheeks.

It took a while to make it look natural, but when she was done she let out a proud hum and nodded to herself.

Then, she felt her bra dig in again and winced, attempting to adjust the underwire.

She didn’t dare undo it. She’d promised Mattel she would just go along with her parents for the night, no matter what sort of uncomfortable things they did.

*Mattel....*

Becky knew she should head back out to Mattel, but.... Instead she flipped the lid of the toilet down and sat on it, taking a moment to catch her breath.

This was all too much.

How these people *spoke!*

Did they even think before they opened their mouths?

She let out a deep breath and checked her phone.



*Ugh.*

Three more hours until the party was due to end; and Becky was sure Mattel and her weren't going to be allowed to leave until well after it was done.

At least she had this moment to prepare herself for the rest of it.... And reply to her texts.

She looked at the most recent one; from her friend Katie. And sighed.

**Katie:** Can't believe you're ditching me Becky

**Katie:** ITS THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

**Katie:** This is MOVIE NIGHT

**Katie:** AND IT WAS MY PICK TOO BITCH

**Katie:** Ruining a childhood tradition for a girl ☹️

**Katie:** I can't believe you're BETRAYING me like this

**Katie:** You slut

**Katie:** The new Blood Wolves movie is out and everything

**Katie:** I'm gonna send you SO MANY SPOILERS

**Katie:** AND I get to pick next month's movie too so fuck you

Becky rolled her eyes at Katie's texts, and chose to ignore them instead of replying.

Katie was always so overdramatic about the smallest things— Always had been, and Becky could assume she always would be.

It was one of the things she liked about her, honestly.

Instead, she decided to text another friend— Adam.

**Becky:** admm it fukin suks here

**Becky:** it so stuffy

**Becky:** i feel like i cant breath

**Adam:** that sucks i'm sorry

**Adam:** is there anything i can do to help?

**Becky:** kill me

**Adam:** i'm not doing that

**Becky:** pwease

**Adam:** NO.

**Becky:** it not hard just stomp on me wit ur big ass feet

**Adam:** becky i am not going to kill you

**Becky:** ugh ur useless

**Becky:** wats even the point of havning n ate feet friend if they cant squish u when u need them to

**Adam:** it can't be THAT bad becky

**Becky:** yea it is

**Becky:** i got called a TROFY WIFE

**Adam:** oof

**Becky:** like fiv mins in

**Becky:** im not trofy wife am i

**Becky:** im not useless am i

**Adam:** no you're not useless

**Becky:** im good at some things right

**Adam:** of course you are!

**Becky:** wat

**Adam:** what?

**Becky:** wat am i good at

There was a long moment where Adam didn't reply, and Becky felt her heart sinking.

He couldn't name anything she was good at, could he? She *was* useless! Carter had been right!

Carter had been—

**Adam:** you're really good at sports

**Adam:** and cheerleading and martial arts and stuff

**Becky:** no

**Becky:** i ment like useful stuff tho

**Adam:** you can sew

**Becky:** not good tho

**Adam:** ???

**Adam:** becky you have literally saved my LIFE with your sewing before

**Becky:** yea but ur dad always fixes u up more after

**Adam:** he double checks yeah because he's a DOCTOR but he doesn't usually re sew it or anything

**Adam:** like when my leg seam burst and you fixed me up he said that was fine and he didn't redo it

**Becky:** idk

**Adam:** becky why are you asking me this?

**Adam:** are you okay?

**Becky:** just thimking

**Adam:** about what??

**Becky:** idk how useless i am

**Becky:** im not useful

**Adam:** so what?

**Adam:** why do you need to be useful?

**Becky:** i just do

**Becky:** like if i married mattel u no

**Becky:** what would i even DO for her

**Becky:** im useless

**Adam:** your worth isn't measured by how useful you are to mattel

**Adam:** you're a good person

**Becky:** thats a lie an u no it

**Adam:** SIGH

**Adam:** it's not a lie but with the way you're acting right now it might as well be

**Becky:** sorry

**Becky:** im just a spoilt brat sorry

**Adam:** no you're not

**Becky:** carter was right i am just a spoilt trofy wife

**Adam:** stop putting yourself down

**Adam:** wait it was her DAD who said that??

**Becky:** yea

**Adam:** what the fuck

**Adam:** that's worse then i thought  
**Adam:** you gotta leave  
**Becky:** i cant i promised mattel i would stay  
**Adam:** make up an excuse  
**Becky:** im not doing that to her  
**Adam:** but she would do that to you  
**Becky:** ugh shut up  
**Becky:** wat ever  
**Becky:** im to dissy for this  
**Adam:** you feel dizzy??  
**Adam:** DIZZY  
**Adam:** BECKY if if you feel sick LEAVE  
**Becky:** no im fine  
**Becky:** having a hard time to breath is all  
**Becky:** im find  
**Adam:** what do you MEAN a hard time to breathe??  
**Adam:** becky i don't think you're fine  
**Becky:** i am  
**Becky:** i shuldnt have said any thing dw a bout it  
**Adam:** i'm calling isa  
**Becky:** don t call isa  
**Adam:** i'm calling her  
**Becky:** no  
**Becky:** mattel will be upset  
**Adam:** becky you can't BREATHE  
**Becky:** please dont call isa  
**Becky:** adam im fine  
**Becky:** dont  
**Becky:** adam  
**Adam:** she's coming to pick you up  
**Becky:** ADAM NO

A loud groan escaped Becky as she pressed her hands to her face. Then, she cursed loudly and sent back a flurry of angry face emojis to Adam— Who didn't reply further.

*Fucking hell!*

Why did he have to do this to her?!

She pushed herself off the toilet and began to pace, feeling her laboured breathing growing more difficult in her panic.

Isa couldn't just show up— This was an invitation only event! It would make Mattel's parents *furious!*

And then— Mattel would be—

Becky put her face in her hands again and tried to take a deep breath.

*Don't panic, she told herself. Don't freak out! Just breathe. Breathe!*

It was easier said than done, as she paced the bathroom.

Why— Why— *Why* had she mentioned how she was feeling to Adam?! She *knew* how he was! She *knew* he'd called Isa on her before when he thought she was in trouble!

Her underwire stabbed her with each laboured breath she took.  
She cursed again, and leant against the sink to try and stop the world around her from spinning— Not that it helped....

She couldn't even be *mad at Adam* because she knew he was only trying to help her.

But he didn't understand what it was like.

*He couldn't understand.*

He'd never had this sort of pressure put on him.

He was a *miracle*.

A medical marvel.

Becky loved Adam— He was like a brother to her. But he couldn't ever understand what she was going through.

Another curse, and she stared into her reflection in the bathroom mirror.

She was pale again. And her eyes were sunken in— Deep, dark bags were forming under them.

She looked like death.

She *felt* like death.

And everything was spinning and moving and changing colour.

She had to go home.

Adam was right.

She had to go home.

She *hated* that Adam was right!

How was she going to explain this to Mattel?

*Not even an hour into the party and she was already breaking her promise—*

She was only halfway through the thought when her knees gave out and she collapsed. She grappled at the sink for half a moment, knocking everything off of it with a loud clatter.

Then she woke up; her head in Mattel's lap as the women gently tapped her awake.

She could hear the sounds of the party in the other room— Muffled, but loud and ongoing.

'Oh my god, Becky?!' Mattel gave a gasp as Becky came to. 'Oh my god— You're okay! I was so worried!'

She leant down, pressing her lips against Becky's cheek.

'Mattel?' Becky asked, weakly.

She couldn't breathe.

*Why couldn't she breathe?*

'You passed out!' Mattel explained. 'And, like, you wouldn't wake up! I wanted to call an ambulance but Daddy said to wait and see if you woke up because—'

'WHERE IS REBECCA?!'

The screech sent the sounds of the party silent.

'Isa!' Carter's voice was clear, filled with an awkward fake-cheer. 'Isa we weren't expecting—'

'Cut the shit you *pompous bag of gas!*' Isa interrupted. 'Where is Rebecca?!'

'She's fine! She's fine!' Carter replied, keeping his falsely-sweet tone.

'I didn't ask you *how* she was!' Isa snapped viciously. 'I asked you *where!* And if you don't tell me right now I'll—'

‘Calm down— Calm down!’ Carter gave a laugh. ‘She’s in the bathroom. Mattel is with her— Please— Wait— Don’t—’

The bathroom door was practically kicked down as Isa burst in. She was trailed by Becky’s father, Ken— Who rushed to Becky’s side and knelt down with her.

‘You’re so pale—’ he said. ‘Isa! Look at her!’

‘*Right,*’ Isa growled, stepping close to Mattel. ‘Mattel. *Out.*’

‘Excuse me—’

‘Out!’ Isa snapped, grabbing the girl by her arm and yanking her up. ‘Don’t you have to be making a good impression for your father? You can’t do that in here, can you?! *Out!*’

Mattel didn’t argue as she was shoved out of the bathroom— She didn’t have time, before the door was slammed behind her.

Then suddenly Becky could breathe again, and she realised her father’s hands had silently been fixing her clothes.

She took a deep, deep breath, and felt the spinning in her head start to slow as Ken rubbed down her back firmly. It was comforting— And it helped her to breathe.

‘Becky?’ Isa asked, her voice suddenly gentle as she crouched beside the girl. ‘Are you alright? What happened?’

‘I— I don’t know,’ Becky responded. ‘I don’t... remember....’

Ken sighed, then, and pressed his face into Becky’s hair.

She felt a tear drip against her scalp and let out a groan before rolling away. She flopped onto the floor awkwardly for a moment before managing —with a lot of help— to get to her feet.

‘Easy.... Easy now,’ Isa muttered. ‘Come on. Let’s get you home.’

‘No— I promised Mattel—’

‘Mattel will understand,’ Isa said, though she didn’t sound like she believed it. ‘You need to get into bed as soon as you can. Come along, now. Come on.’

Becky didn’t argue; her head was still spinning too much for her to do anything but let herself be led out of the bathroom.

‘Ah, there! See? She’s fine—’ Carter started, but cut off when both Ken and Isa looked to him. ‘Ah... ahah. Maybe you should take her home. Get her in bed for an early night, hmm?’

‘Yes. We intend to,’ Isa growled. Then, her voice softened. ‘Come along, Becky. That’s it....’

They led her out to the car and were helping her into the front seat when Mattel rushed out of the building.

‘Becky? Becky—’ she hurried across the parking lot to the car and threw her arms around Becky. ‘Becky I’m so so sorry! Are you okay? You’re going to be okay, aren’t you?’

Becky gave a weak nod. ‘Yeah,’ she answered. ‘I’ll talk to you tomorrow, okay? Call me?’

‘Of course I will!’ Mattel said, planting a firm kiss on Becky’s cheek. ‘I will call you as *soon* as I can. You just feel better for me, okay?’

‘Okay,’ Becky responded— Feeling her heart wrench as Mattel was shooed away.

‘Alright, that’s enough,’ Isa huffed. ‘Back inside with you— Becky needs to go home. Now.’

‘Okay— Okay! I’m going!’ Mattel whined, taking several steps back before turning away and hurrying back to the party. She paused at the door to give Becky one last look before vanishing inside.

‘Bye,’ Becky muttered, even though she knew Mattel wouldn’t be able to hear her.

Isa climbed into the driver’s seat with a huff. ‘Let’s get you home.’

‘Mmm,’ Becky simply moaned in response. ‘Okay....’

The car turned on with a deep, low *hummmm* and Becky felt the comforting rumble and movement of the vehicle underneath her as Isa pulled out of the parking lot.

She couldn’t help but feel terrible.

Becky hadn’t meant to break her promise, but... here she was. Leaving Mattel on her own. Doing what her girlfriend had been terrified she’d do....

She’d have to make it up to her.

Somehow.

Whatever it took, she would.

—END—

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