

Mac and Cheese

By C. Jade Wyton

Becky Bloom, still recovering from a very traumatic month where far too much has happened in a short amount of time, decides she wants to try and make herself lunch. She has never cooked before, but she is confident that with the power of internet tutorials she can put something together.

Contains depictions of self-deprecation.

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Becky was still reeling from the horrible experience of being stuck as a dog. Even now, three days after turning back, she was still finding herself barely able to function.

The day after she'd turned back she'd stayed home from school. But then, she'd been bored and lonely and restless; so she'd gone to school the next day.

But then everyone had been asking where she'd been, and if she was okay, and she'd just felt tired, and ill, and irritable. So she'd called Isa to take her home halfway through the day.

And now, she was skipping again today.

She hadn't wanted to stay home, which was weird to say given her usual attempts to escape school.... But she had really, genuinely wanted to be with her friends. Not stuck at home again. But she just... needed a few more days to recover from everything.

*It sucked.*

And now she was hungry, and bored, and Isa wasn't home, and she didn't feel like any of the leftovers they had....

Becky gave a sigh and shut the fridge. Then immediately opened it again like she was expecting something different.

But it was all the same food....

Hm.... What did she want?

*Cheese.*

She wanted cheese.

She pulled out the bag of grated cheese and, quickly listening out to confirm that Isa *was*, in fact, still out and not at home to scold her, ate a handful.

*Eh....*

She didn't want cheese like this.

She wanted melted cheese.

So she put some in a bowl, and microwaved it for half a minute. And then she realised that *no, no...* that *also* wasn't what she was feeling like.

She wanted cheese cooked *properly*.

With pasta.

*Mac and cheese!*

She wanted mac and cheese!

But... Isa wasn't home to make it for her....

Becky heaved a sigh and opened the fridge to put the cheese away.

*It really sucked that she didn't know how to cook.*

There were so many times that she wanted to eat something specific, but didn't want to ask for it.

It sure would be nice to be able to just be able to do it all herself....

*Hm.*

Becky paused, the fridge door still open, as she had a thought.

Up until recently she hadn't known how to draw. But then she'd learnt how. She'd asked her father to teach her....

Maybe she could ask Isa to teach her how to cook, sometime?

It didn't help for now, obviously. She couldn't ask Isa *now*, while she wasn't home.... But she could ask Isa when she got back, and start learning how to cook for next time she was hungry.

Yeah!

*Or....*

Becky's hand slowly found its way into her pocket, and she pulled out her phone.

She'd taught herself how to use magic by looking it up on the internet. Nobody had helped her with that except for YouTube and EasyDruidTutorials4You.com....

Maybe she could do the same with cooking?

Becky opened up her YouTube app and tried a search:

*how make mac and cheese*

Oh, there were so many results!

Becky felt herself light up.

There were at least, like, *fifty* of them!

Carefully selecting a video with the word "simple" in the title, Becky watched it through once, then propped her phone up on Isa's cookbook holder and started the video again.

Cheese, milk, and pasta.

There was *no* way she could get this wrong!

'Okay,' Becky said to herself, retrieving a small pot and all of the ingredients she needed. 'So... boil the pasta in milk. I can do that....'

*She could do this!*

Becky added a handful of pasta and a cup of milk to the pot and started cooking it on a... *medium* heat?

What the hell was a "medium heat?"

Did that mean she used the... medium sized burner on the stove?

She turned it on. All the way on, maybe?

*Oh— God!*

That dial made the flame change size?!

'Uh.... Maybe *that* is what medium heat is?!' Becky guessed as she turned the dial midway. 'That seems... right....'

'Becky?'

Becky jumped as her father's voice spoke from the kitchen entrance, and she whirled around to see Ken as he slowly crept in.

'Becky?' he repeated. 'Mon chou? What are you doing?'

'Making mac and cheese!' Becky beamed, lifting up the wooden spoon she'd

been using to stir and grinning widely. 'I'm using a tutorial I found online!'

'Oh, that's— That's wonderful!' Ken's confusion turned to pride, and he passed her to the fridge. 'Let me know how it goes!'

'I will!' Becky replied cheerfully. 'What are you eating?'

'Melon,' he answered, holding up a container of cantaloupe that Isa had chopped earlier that morning. 'Isa just called me, telling me she would be home late and that I had to eat something, so.... Melon it is.'

'Enjoy,' Becky giggled at her father, and then looked back to the food she was preparing. *Was it supposed to be this wet, still?*

'You too,' Ken said gently before retreating out of the kitchen and disappearing upstairs.

Becky couldn't help but grin after him. She was so happy her and her father had been mending their relationship. It was so much better —so much more fun— to put the effort into getting along with him.

*Hmm....*

This didn't seem right....

The pasta was almost ready, but the milk was still very... not like in the video.

Maybe she just needed to add the cheese?

She added it; but after a while realised it wasn't helping.

Everything was just... *liquid*.

She cooked it for at least ten minutes more than what was recommended before realising that it wasn't going to thicken....

She gave a heavy sigh and turned off the stove.

'I really cocked that up, didn't I?' she said to herself. Then she giggled. 'Heheh. Cock. Hmm....'

What was she supposed to do with this messed up mac and cheese?

She couldn't put it in the bin. It was mostly liquid and if the bag ripped it would go *everywhere*.

And she couldn't pour it down the sink; it was cheese and milk and chunky pasta. It could really mess up the pipes....

And it was too hot to go in the fridge....

'Uh... maybe I'll... just...' Becky picked up the pot and moved it to the far burner at the very back of the stove. 'Leave it here until Isa gets back....'

She was still *really* hungry, though....

'Hmm.... What else is there to cook?' Becky said aloud to herself, looking through the cupboards. 'Easier than mac and cheese.... Ooh! Rice!'

Rice was easy, wasn't it?

Jareth had made it for her like, a hundred times! And all it involved was adding water and rice to a pot!

Becky got out one of the other pots, and opened the bag of rice....

*Why was the rice so hard?*

Was rice meant to be hard before it was cooked?

Huh....

Weird.

She realised she'd never actually *touched* uncooked rice before and....

Oooh.... Oh that felt nice.

She stuck her entire hand in the bag of rice, and let the cool, hard rice run

through her fingers.

It was like sand, but not grainy and gross!

*Focus!*

Becky shook her head, removing her arm from the bag and scooping a cup of rice to add to the pot.

*Easy first step.*

Now she just had to add some water! And she wasn't going to make the same mistake she did with the pasta! She would add *less* liquid to this.

Half a cup!

She smiled to herself, proudly, and turned on the stove.

Then she paused.

*How long were you meant to cook rice for?*

'Well... pasta only takes ten minutes, right?' Becky said to herself, setting a timer on her phone. 'So... ten minutes?'

By the time her timer went off, it was clear to Becky she had done something very, *very* wrong.

The rice was crunchy, still. Even though all the water was gone. And the bottom of it was burnt to the pot.

Ugh.

She'd messed up *rice*!

And she was too scared to scrape it off the bottom of the pot, in case she damaged Isa's good cookware!

'Damn it!' Becky cursed, putting the failed rice next to the failed mac and cheese. 'Okay. Okay. What's quick and easy? Easier than rice? *Uh-pah-pah....*'

Becky looked around the kitchen, her eyes trailing all of Isa's equipment, before she saw the toaster.

'HAH!'

There was *no* way she could mess up toast!

Becky grabbed some bread, and put it in the toaster.

And then she waited.

And waited.

And waited.

And then when the toast finally popped out—as black as coal—she let out a defeated cry and crumpled to the floor.

That was *it*!

That was the last straw!

She was finally broken!

*The food had won!*

'Useless!' she yelled at herself, pressing her face into the kitchen tiles as tears welled in her eyes. 'You're *useless*! You're a stupid, useless bimbo and you can't do *anything* right! You're dumb! And stupid! And useless!' Becky bashed her fist into the tiles and felt herself begin to sob. 'You're going to die alone in a hole in the woods, you *useless whore*! You! Useless! WHORE!'

'B.... Baby? Are you alright? What's wrong?'

Becky gasped and sat up; looking across the room to see her boyfriend standing by the door. 'J-Jareth?! I—I— Uh....'

Jareth looked around the room. His eyes moved from Becky, to the burnt

toast, to the two pots of failed food, before falling back on Becky.

Becky quickly wiped her eyes and tried to compose herself.

*This was such a stupid thing to cry over— She couldn't let Jareth see her like this!*

'I-I-I-I wa-was j-just—' she could barely get the words out. 'I-I was trying to—I was trying to—'

Jareth made his way over to Becky and sat down beside her; taking her hand as he did and pulling her close.

'It's alright, baby girl,' he said, softly. 'Come here.... Tell me everything.'

'I was just *hungry*,' Becky whined, burying her face into Jareth's chest. 'I thought I could make something! I even looked up how to do it online, but I got everything wrong. I tried to make mac and cheese, but it was all runny! And then I tried to make rice, but it was crunchy! And then— Then— Then the *toast*—' she cut off in a hideous sob that was so violent it made her gasp for air. 'The *toast*, Jareth! Toast is supposed to be *easy*! All you have to do is push a button!'

'Aw, Becky,' Jareth breathed into her hair. 'It's okay. It just sounds like the toaster was on too high a setting.'

'Toasters— Have— Settings?!' Becky sobbed.

'Yeah,' Jareth answered, simply. 'Yeah... they do....'

'*I didn't know that!*' she cried, her voice breaking.

'It's okay,' Jareth comforted, running a hand over Becky's back. '*Shh*.... It's okay.'

Becky felt herself starting to calm down and, after a few minutes, she was able to sniff back the last of her tears. She let Jareth hold her for a moment, until her breathing evened out and she was able to stop crying. Then she pulled away and sat up.

'Alright.... You feeling better?' Jareth asked.

'*Yeah*,' Becky nodded. 'Sorry. That was a really dumb thing to cry about....'

'No,' Jareth reassured her. 'No it wasn't. You've had a hard month. That's all. It's okay to cry.'

Becky gave another nod and wiped her eyes again. '*Mmm*.... Why.... What are you doing here?'

'I was trying to surprise you,' Jareth let out a half-hearted chuckle and reached into his jacket's pocket. 'I uh.... I got you this.'

Becky gave one last sniff as a small, rabbit-shaped plush toy was placed carefully into her lap. '*I love it*,' she squeaked, in a voice so pitiful it almost made her burst into tears again.

'I thought you would,' Jareth said, brushing a stray hair from Becky's face. 'You alright?'

'Yeah.'

'You sure?'

'Yeah....'

'You need some help cleaning up?'

'*Yeah*....'

—END—

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