

Mimi's Escape

By C. Jade Wyton

Becky is asleep and Mimi is too restless to lay down with her. Mimi wants to play! But... Mimi is out of toys.... Mimi is bored. Mimi wants to go outside! That is- Until Mimi actually manages to get outside, and finds that outside there are mean cats, and scary yelling people, and a tabaxi with a loud stick! Now Mimi just wants to go home. But Mimi is lost, and doesn't know where to go.... Thank goodness there are lots of things to hide under, and a big mother mimic, and children with sausages.

Contains some descriptions of self-harm

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It had been a long, tiring day for Becky and Mimi.

The young pair had been allowed in the backyard together under the supervision of Becky's mother, Barbra, and had enjoyed the sunshine for several hours before Becky had tired herself out attempting to climb the tree by her bedroom window.

Now Becky lay in a pile of bean bags; half-finished colouring pages and broken crayons scattered across the floor as she cuddled under her blanket and napped.

While Becky slept, Mimi growled and ripped at one of its toys; shaking the plush viciously and throwing cotton fluff into the air.

The creature was still restless and very full of energy.... And now, as it finished de-stuffing the owlbear plush, it was out of things to destroy.

It sniffed around the bedroom, eating a few crayons as it went, before snuffling into Becky to try and wake her.

When Becky gave a whimper and rolled over, Mimi realised she didn't want to play and instead the mimic gave its girl an affectionate lick on the ear and shuffled away to eat another crayon.

There had to be *something* for Mimi to do.

*Ahah!*

The creature gave a chirp as it remembered one of its toys downstairs; a rubber steak with a very loud squeaker!

It never got the chance to destroy that thing— Someone always got too annoyed at it before it could, and would switch it out for a quieter toy.

Mimi moved into the hall and took one of its favourite forms (a pillow with spider legs) before scuttling down the stairs.

Then it saw the front door.... Wide open!

Oh, wonderful! Outside!

Outside was fun!

Outside was its favourite place!

Outside was where *bugs* were!

A chirp, and it started towards the open door— Only to be scooped up by

Barbra and held at arm's length as it writhed and screamed.

'*Eugh,*' Barbra muttered, carrying the creature into the lounge with her. 'Spiders.... *Spiders*. Why does everyone in this house have such a passion for *spiders*? Is it an elf thing or what?'

Mimi let out another angry cry.

'Calm down, shh, *shush,*' Barbra gave a heavy sigh and searched the floor, and then the bookshelves, desperately. 'I'll get you a toy— Toy toy toy.... Oh, for fu.... ISA! Is the steak the only toy Mimi has left?'

'Yes, ma'am!' Isa called from the direction of the kitchen. 'I was going to take Becky to pick out some more, tomorrow!'

'*Mm...* Alright. Thank you!' Barbra gave a heavy sigh and retrieved the rubber steak. '*God, I hate this noisy thing....* Hey, Mimi— Mimi! Look!'

The sudden change in Barbra's voice to a high, happy tone got the mimic's attention— And it let out a chirp as the woman began to squeak the toy.

'You want the toy? You want the toy!' Barbra exclaimed, gently dropping Mimi to the floor and waving the steak around enticingly. 'No outside! Good toy! Loud toy! Squeak squeak!'

*Chirp chirp!*

'Go get it!' Barbra said as she threw the toy across the lounge. 'Get the steak!'

Mimi didn't need any more encouragement. It launched itself across the floor at top speed and began furiously attacking its steak; filling the house with loud squeaking and snarling.

'*Eeuhhh,*' Barbra groaned, giving a visible shiver. 'Spider legs. Gross— Ken? Ken!'

Her attention was drawn by her husband coming into the house, his arms laden with fabric.

'*Ken!*'

'*Hm?* What— Oh!' he smiled when he saw his wife. 'Barbra! What's—'

'You left the door open,' Barbra interrupted. 'And Mimi almost—'

'Oh, it's fine, Mimi's upstairs!' said Ken.

Barbra just pursed her lips and raised her brow, at that, giving Ken a minute.

He stared at her for about half of it before seeming to notice the sounds of the play-mauling behind her and nodding. 'Ah— I see. She's *not* upstairs anymore.'

'She is not.'

'Sorry,' Ken muttered, readjusting the fabric.

'Don't be sorry,' Barbra said, firmly. 'Shut the door behind you.'

'Right, good idea!' Ken said, quickly kicking the door shut with his foot and heading upstairs.

Barbra gave a heavy sigh and shook her head before heading into the kitchen, presumably to speak with Isa.

But Mimi didn't care about what she was doing once she was out of the room. No, no.

Mimi had its rubber steak!

The special, rare toy!

And it was going to *rip it into a billion little pieces*.

A loud, savage snarl filled the house, followed by a fast-paced *bap-SQUEAK-bap-SQUEAK-bap-SQUEAK* as Mimi began shaking the toy and

bashing it against the floor.

It was a tough toy.

Mimi had to give it that!

The last time it had had a toy this tough to kill was in the Other House, where it was born— Accidentally, it had overheard. After its mimic mama had gotten out.

The Other People had told Becky's parents that Mimi was a year old, and that its papa was from a breeder— Oh, but Mimi knew. Mimi *knew* the secret. Mimi's mimic mama had told it.

Mimi had only been three months old, and its papa was a paint can in a construction zone!

It was a thrill to know the secret; to be so naughty.

It was how it had known being naughty was so much fun!

Mimi gave the steak another hard shake; accidentally launching it across the room and quickly scrambling after it.

Mimi was much happier here, in Mimi's House, with Mama Becky and her family. Even if it had gotten sick on the long, endless plane-ride from the Other House to here, Mimi was happy that it had been chosen to come here over any of its siblings.... It thought that its life was like a fun adventure!

And it was always excited to make more adventure....

'Yes, yes—' Ken's voice floated in from the hall, and Mimi looked up to watch the man as he talked on the phone. 'Yes. No. Yes— Oh, really I thought— Yes. I can do that. Right....'

It was a very one sided conversation, Mimi thought as it dropped the steak and hurried over to Ken's side.

He didn't notice Mimi, even when it was in plain sight; much to Mimi's delight. So the mimic quickly changed into one of Becky's shoes and tried not to falter when it felt Ken trip on it.

'*Oh, Becky!* Sorry— Yes, just— My daughter's left her things out, sorry,' Ken muttered into the phone as he picked Mimi up and placed it on the shoe rack— Seemingly oblivious that the shoe it had turned into already had a pair. 'Uh, yes. Yes, you can put him on. *Ah, bonjour Jac. Uh— Oui. Oui.... Non, Jac. Oui.*'

Mimi watched playfully as Ken paced the hall, muttering in French— Before he made to go outside.

He was halfway through opening the door when he paused. 'Pardon? Oh, oui. *Désolé je peux faire ça— Pardon, désolé.*'

Ken turned, then, and hurried upstairs; apologising the whole way and....

Leaving the door ajar.

Mimi felt itself trembling when it noticed.

Outside....

Outside was right *there*.

It could go outside and play.

How entertaining!

How fun!

Oh! Oh!

Mimi couldn't resist any longer, and quickly sprouted itself some legs and bolted for the door.

Then past the door! Off the porch, and into the grass in the front yard!  
It gave a cheerful chirp when it realised the grass was still unmowed.  
Unmowed grass was the best grass! Because unmowed grass had lots of tasty  
treats hidden in it— Like crickets, and worms, and (Mimi’s mouth watered)  
sometimes unmowed grass had *mice*.

But, oh! Mimi had to be quiet, to find mice!

Quiet, quiet quiet....

And not a bright pink shoe; Mimi knew mice didn’t like those. Plus, if one of  
Becky’s parents saw it they would bring it inside— And Mimi’s playtime would  
end.

So instead, Mimi turned into a ball, and slowly rolled through the grass.

Mimi took its time, moving slow and sniffing as it went.

It would find a spot. Yes. The perfect spot. And then it would sit and wait for a  
mouse to walk over.

Yes.

That is what Mimi would do!

*Bap.*

Something got in Mimi’s way, and Mimi gave a little growl as it looked down  
to the sprinkler.

What a pain!

What a pain!

Mimi opened its mouth wide and gripped the sprinkler, giving it an angry  
shake before biting down and down and over the hose that connected to it.

*Bite bite bite!*

Water began to leak out of the holes Mimi left in the hose, and the mimic felt  
satisfied enough with itself to continue on.

It couldn’t seem to find a good place, however. Nothing *smelt* right. Nothing  
had that lingering tasty smell that told Mimi mice liked to walk around here....

Then, Mimi came to a big plant and looked up.

It was a hedge. Big and tall, with a flat top and a gap at the bottom big enough  
for a shirt-shaped Mimi to squeeze underneath.

It came out somewhere it had never been before and gave a curious trill.

This was the Sunrise Side House.

Mimi recognised the Sunrise Side House from when it would follow Isa into  
Ken and Barbra’s room and look out the window at the rising sun while she  
cleaned.

It looked very different up close.

Mimi didn’t like it, much.

The short, well-kept lawn meant there would be no bugs or mice or other  
hidden treats.... The only things of interest were a little garden gnome (which,  
upon inspection, fell over and shattered) and a pink critter stuck in the air on the  
end of a long stick.

*Flamingo*, Mimi recalled the picture that had been in one of Becky’s books,  
and gave a chirp. Then it made a loud, playful trill.

Flamingos didn’t live at Mimi’s home! No!

They lived in the Big Flamingo Place! Becky’s book had said so when Isa had  
read it to her!

So this— This must be—

Another mimic!

Mimi gave a playful growl.

A friend to play with!

Mimi butted the pole of the flamingo to try to get its attention and, when it didn't respond, Mimi let out a chirp.

The flamingo stayed still.

Mimi bounced up and down, before gripping the bottom of the flamingo's post in its teeth and yanking it to the ground.

Mimi scuttled to the body of the flamingo and, still trying to get its attention, gave it a nip. When there was no response, it bit the flamingo harder; denting the thin plastic body and puncturing several holes into the curve of the wing.

A frustrated growl escaped Mimi as it realised the flamingo was *just* a lawn decoration and not another mimic, and it skittered away through the hedge and onto the road.

Then a loud shriek sounded— And Mimi recognised it as Becky. The girl's upset cry sent a wave of panic through the mimic and it quickly turned into the closest object it could see; a strange, wooden board with four wheels and rough-textured top.

'*THE DOOR!*' Becky's voice screamed from somewhere nearby. '*THE DOOR THE DOOR THE DOOR THE DOOR—*'

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Mimi hadn't moved all day. It had been too scared.

Everything had been loud and crowded and big, and everyone in the street but Becky had seemed to suddenly be outside, shouting and searching and making too many loud and scary noises.

Mimi just wanted Becky— It could hear her wailing for it to come home for hours, but its entire body felt too paralysed to move as strangers stomped around it.

It wanted to move. It really did. But something deep and ancient and wise had gripped it; telling it to stay still.

Stay hidden.

Stay *safe*.

It was instinct, it knew it.

And it was too strong to fight— Even now, as the street grew quiet and the sun began to set on the horizon... Mimi couldn't seem to move.

Or make a sound.

All it could do was sit. Sit and wait for its heart to slow down.

But as more loud voices approached, it thought that wouldn't be anytime soon.

'I can't believe you!' the voice snapped— And Mimi recognised it as Barbra. 'I told you! I *told* you! To shut! The fucking! Door!'

'I was *busy!*' Ken's voice retorted. 'I got distracted! Jac was—'

'*Jac!*' Barbra interrupted with a dramatic deepening of her voice. 'Ooh, *Jac!* It was *Jac* on the phone! I'm so glad it was *Jac* and you listen to *Jac* and not to

me—‘

‘He is my *boss*, Barbra!’ Ken’s voice rose, sending a chill through Mimi. ‘And I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but *unlike you* I actually have to put *effort* into what I do—‘

‘*Excuse me—‘*

‘I’m not exactly *top of the food chain!* I don’t have the same *connections* you do! I didn’t fucking *inherit* my fame!’

‘Don’t— Don’t you *dare!*’ Barbra hissed, her feet finally coming into view of the mimic as she turned to scold her husband. ‘Don’t you *dare* try and turn this around on me! This is *your fault!* I told you Mimi was downstairs! I told you to shut the door! And you *didn’t listen to me!* Like! Fucking! Always! You fucking *ignored* me! And now—‘ Barbra made a wide, terrifying motion that made Mimi stiffen even more. ‘Becky is having a fucking *meltdown!* You know how much that stupid thing means to her!’

‘I. Didn’t. Mean. To. Let. Her. Out!’ each word was a vicious growl. ‘I. Was. Trying. To. Not. Get. *Fired!*’

‘Well I’m so glad your *job* means more to you than *your daughter!*’ Barbra growled back.

‘Comment oses-tu! Non!’ Ken shot back. ‘Non- Comment osez-vous! J’aime Rebecca plus que tout! Comment oses-tu!’

‘Évidemment pas plus que tu aimes embrasser le cul de Jac!’

‘Voulez-vous que je démissionne?!’ Ken snapped, pulling out his phone— And Mimi could smell the change in his sweat, and hear the subtle difference in his voice.... He was on the verge of tears. Barely holding them back. ‘Parce que je vais arrêter tout de suite si ça prouve à quel point j’aime—‘

‘Don’t quit your fucking job!’ Barbra snatched Ken’s phone from him. ‘That won’t fix what you’ve done!’

‘*Non!*’ Ken’s voice broke. ‘J’ai besoin de faire quelque chose! Je ne sais plus quoi faire pour te rendre heureux!’

‘Just *find Mimi!* Ken— Don’t—‘ Barbra hesitated, reeling back when her husband burst into tears and dropped to his knees. She seemed to deflate, then, her voice growing soft as she took a step towards him and ran a hand through his hair. ‘Ken.... Don’t cry, Ken I— Please. I’m sorry. I shouldn’t yell....’

Ken tried to stop crying; but it took a long while before he was finally able to take a proper breath.

‘Ken?’

He wiped his eyes, and let Barbra help him to his feet, and then shook his head and rubbed the bridge of his nose in frustration. ‘I’m sorry. I am. Please. I am. I didn’t mean for this to happen. I promise. It was an accident.’

Barbra gave a nod, and took Ken’s hand before turning and continuing down the street. ‘Come on. We’re wasting time.... Mimi? Mimi! Pspspsp....’

Mimi tried to chirp to them as they walked away; it tried to get up and run after them— But no matter how much it wanted to move or scream, its fear kept it silent and still.

And then they were gone, and Mimi still couldn’t move....

Slowly the sun began to set, orange and pink on the horizon, and it wasn’t long before the street was enveloped in darkness.

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Something was sniffing Mimi's side, but Mimi was too scared to look.

Whatever was sniffing Mimi was bigger than it was— Not by much, but it loomed over the mimic as it examined it.

It had whiskers. And fur. And made a familiar noise that put Mimi on edge. It sounded like a cat.

Suspiciously, like the big tabby cat that Mimi would tease through the lounge room window.

Mimi hoped it wasn't the big tabby.

The big tabby was mean. And had told Mimi if it ever found the mimic out of its house and alone....

Mimi tensed, trying to keep its form firm.

But then the cat let out a growl; it knew who Mimi was.

Mimi hissed back and shifted into the biggest form it could—a big plush gryphon— but it didn't matter as the tabby leapt onto Mimi's back and began clawing at the creature.

Mimi let out a shriek as the cat's teeth dug into its side, and tried to shake it off— But was instead pinned down and savaged.

The cat yowled victoriously and kicked at Mimi with its hind claws; raking deep scores into the mimic's side, before sinking its teeth in again.

'Hey— HEY!' a voice cried as the pair were bathed in sudden bright yellow light. A man had opened his front door and was rushing out. 'AH! HEY! NO! GET OFF HER! GET!'

He clapped his hands together and the tabby let out a yowl and bolted away— And Mimi did the same in the opposite direction.

It scuttled away as fast as it could, rushing past house after house after house; ignoring the large, scary, hand-clapping man who'd called its name.

Mimi kept running, all the way to the end of the street and around the corner— And around another corner— And into a large, grassy place it had never been before.

It looked like a "park" from one of Becky's tv shows. But Mimi wasn't sure— It bolted towards the first thing that looked somewhat familiar, a wooden bench, and hid underneath it.

It froze, then, taking the form of another ball— And only when it was sure it was safe did it let itself relax....

Its entire body hurt. But especially sore were the bleeding, oozing marks from the cat.

It had never felt pain like this before— It had rarely ever felt pain at all.

The most it could ever recall was the vet and its vaccinations— And the one time that it'd tripped Ken over and he'd dropped his heavy duffel bag of cloth on top of it.

But this....

This was *agony*.

The scratches the cat had left in its flesh were deep, and dirty, and stung like nothing it had ever experienced before.

It could taste its own blood as it licked at them... and the taste wasn't sweet like the chicken blood soaked treats that Becky would give it when it was learning a new trick— It was sour, like the batteries it had chewed out of the TV remote.

It gave a whine and shuffled deeper into the long grass; all of its thoughts on Becky.

It wanted her to find it, and take it home, and give it kisses and a bath and tuck it under her arm to nap with her.

A dog barked in the distance, and Mimi gave another whine; freezing in place for a moment before relaxing again.

*Home.*

Mimi wanted to go home.

Outside wasn't so much fun, anymore.

Not without Becky there.

Another whine.

*Home. Home. Scared.... Tired.... Lonely....*

Mimi slowly crept out from under the bench.

Home was somewhere... *that way?*

It wasn't sure; but sitting still before hadn't helped it get home.... It had only made it easier for the cat to get at it. And Mimi didn't like that— So Mimi wasn't going to sit and wait again.

Mimi was going to look for Becky.

Very, very carefully, Mimi edged out of hiding and made its way across the park.

It took the way that it thought was home; though all houses looked so alike.... Especially in the dark, nothing looked the same as during the day....

Maybe *this* house was Mimi's house? The light was on in the window. Maybe Becky was still awake and waiting for it to come home!

Mimi's pace increased as it scuttled across the lawn and clambered to the window and peered inside.

*No.*

Mimi realised this wasn't its home. This was someone else's home—

A cat appeared in the window, sniffing curiously, and Mimi let out a panicked cry and dropped into the grass.

It froze for half a second before hearing the front door open and seeing a woman step out; the cat at her heels.

The pair approached Mimi cautiously, and Mimi felt its heart leap.

*No!*

*No no no!*

*Move! Run! Flee!*

Mimi tried to fight off the instinct to stay still.

Staying still meant the cat would get at it! And then there would be more claws! More teeth!

*No!*

Mimi had to run.

And Mimi did.

Mimi bolted again, frightening both the woman and her cat, and didn't stop until it turned a corner and was met with trees and bushes instead of buildings—



It let out a shriek.  
This was the edge of town!  
The edge!  
Where all the *big* and *wild* animals lived!  
It knew about the edge of town!  
It had heard Becky's mama tell her to *never ever* go out of town *ever!* Or she would get hurt!

Mimi spun around and fled back into the streets.  
It quickly took cover in an alleyway and hid behind a very large dumpster.  
It was shivering in the cold night air— And Mimi realised it was that time, right before morning, when the temperature dropped as low as it would go and Becky would wake up in a confused and clumsy state and fumble for her extra blanket.

Mimi wanted nothing more, right now, than to cuddle up with Becky under that blanket and purr the girl back to sleep.

A mournful whine escaped Mimi— And the dumpster beside it gave a groan and shifted.

Mimi let out a squeak and retreated; backing itself tight in the corner as the huge *thing* moved and turned and opened its eyes.

It scanned the alley for a moment before giving a loud and powerful *snuff* that almost knocked Mimi down.

Then, it let out a low rumble and its lid lifted to reveal sharp teeth and a large, wet tongue.

Mimi trembled in place as it stared at the humongous mimic before it.... Then Mimi went completely stiff as the big mimic's tongue approached it.

It expected to be bitten or grabbed, and braced itself for pain— But instead, the little creature received an affectionate lick.

The lick was followed by a deep, motherly trill. And then several smaller chirps sounded from the garbage around it, which moved and shifted towards Mimi.

Mimi let out its own little chirp as it was surrounded by other mimics— Though its voice was very different from their own.

It was hard to understand them, but Mimi thought it knew what they were saying.

*Sibling?*

*New?*

*Sibling?*

*Friend?*

*Happy?*

*Hurt?*

*Sibling?*

*Cold?*

Even the chirps Mimi didn't understand, it knew came from curiosity and affection.

These mimics were small, like Mimi was. And if Mimi tried to mimic their dull, tarnished colours and dented forms....

It looked like it was one of the brood.

The little mimics chirped happily:

*Such skill!*

*More than one form!*

*Fast at transforming!*

*So good at it!*

Mimi felt proud of itself as the others bounced around it excitedly, singing their praises.

Then, Mimi heard the big mimic give another groan as it settled down awkwardly and exposed its underside.

The chirps from the other mimics were clear, now;

*Food!*

*Dinner!*

*Snack!*

*Yum!*

Mimi was curious. It couldn't smell any dinner....

But then, as the mimics began tonguing at their mother's underside, Mimi realised they were drinking milk.

These were babies!

Mimi was older than these babies.

Mimi was *two!*

And Mimi didn't drink milk.

Mimi ate chicken.

And pork.

And beef.

Maybe Mimi wasn't as big as Big Mimic, but Mimi was almost an *adult*.

Almost....

The big mimic gave a low groan as it eyed Mimi; inviting the smaller mimic to drink.

But Mimi didn't want to....

An affectionate lick, though, encouraged Mimi to at least snuggle into its warm side.

Mimi closed its eyes as it felt the large creature begin to purr; and felt itself dozing off.

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It had been two days since Mimi had been taken in by Big Mimic. Mimi's wounds were healing, but still red and sore to touch, and they made it hard to play with the brood.

Mimi thought that Big Mimic knew that it wasn't a baby; Mimi had hunted a mouse, after all. And when Mimi had missed that rat, Big Mimic had slammed a foot down onto it to kill it for Mimi....

The rat had been very flat, after being under Big Mimic's foot. But Mimi was too hungry to be picky.

It wasn't used to eating so little.

And it wasn't used to coughing up pellets of fur and bone, either— Becky always gave Mimi the *best* cuts of meat. The tastiest ones that were easiest on its

stomach.

Mimi wondered what Big Mimic ate.

It didn't think it had seen Big Mimic eat at all, since it had joined the brood....

Mimi nuzzled into Big Mimic's side and gave an affectionate chirp.

Big Mimic responded with a purr.... And then a low, warning groan as it slowly rose to its feet and glanced to a door by the alley's entrance.

Mimi was wondering what Big Mimic could see when it gave another groan and all of its brood quickly gathered in front of it— Mimi instinctively followed suit, and let out a squeak as it was scooped up by Big Mimic's tongue and pulled into its mouth; held tight and safely hidden from whatever danger it had seen.

Mimi was curious, though, as it felt Big Mimic freeze.... And slowly wiggled and rose up enough to peek out between its teeth.

There was a tabaxi man. Covered in meat scraps and carrying two large, black garbage bags.

A sniff from Mimi— And the mimic thought he smelled like Isa did when she would come home from the meat place— The “butchers.”

Was this tabaxi from the “butchers” place?

He looked up, then— His eyes narrowing when he saw Big Mimic.

He looked from Big Mimic to the real dumpster that sat beside it, and then dropped his bags and retreated slowly out of the alley and through the door Big Mimic had been glaring at.

Mimi gave a chirp— He was gone!

But Big Mimic responded with a growl.

He wasn't gone....

And he wasn't; he returned shortly with a long, strange-looking stick. Which he pointed up into the air and—

BANG!

It was the loudest sound Mimi had ever heard, and it sent Big Mimic sprinting full speed out of the alley.

The tabaxi was thrown off his feet as Big Mimic fled, and he let out a loud string of language Mimi had only ever heard before when it was shouted at Ken through his phone.

The babies around Mimi all gave terrified cries as Big Mimic ran through the streets— Their squeaks matching the screams of the townsfolk who all leapt out of Big Mimic's way.

Big Mimic was much faster than Mimi had expected. And before the little mimic even knew what was going on, it found itself being carried out into the woods; and felt Big Mimic transform around it into....

Mimi peeked out of Big Mimic's mouth.

Big Mimic had turned into a huge stick.

Mimi thought it knew the word for that.... A uh... uh....

Log!

Mimi couldn't help but feel proud of itself.

Though, it was short lived pride as Big Mimic gave a concerned rumble; and all of its babies gave fearful whines in response.

Mimi chirped back confidently, and the babies all looked at it in awe.

Not scared?

They all chirped.

Mimi not scared?

Mimi felt the pride come back.

Mimi hadn't been scared *at all!*

Wondered chirps sounded all around and Big Mimic gave a groan that was half-relieved, half-humoured, before opening its mouth and carefully spitting its brood into the long grass.

They all bounced around in their garbage forms before Big Mimic gave another groan and tapped a rock with its foot; instructing its children to take a new form.

It took the little mimics a while to figure out how to be rocks. Though Mimi thought it was easy, and did its best to help show them.

Wrong colour.

Wrong shape.

Good shape!

Good colour!

No! Rocks don't have legs!

Eventually they got the hang of it, and all began to bounce around Big Mimic to show what they had done.

Big Mimic gave a proud rumble and then —when a loud police siren sounded from town— began slowly shuffling deeper into the woods.

All of the brood obediently followed... except for Mimi.

Mimi hung back, not wanting to lose sight of town.

Becky.... Becky was in town.

And this was already so far away from Becky....

And the further Mimi went away from town, the further it knew it would be away from Becky.

A low rumble, and Mimi looked up to Big Mimic; who was waiting patiently for it to follow.

Big Mimic was nice. And made mama sounds but—

Big Mimic was not Mimi's mama.

Becky was Mimi's mama.

And Mimi wanted to go home.

Mimi gave a whine, and backed away slowly, glancing into town and shifting into a bright pink pillow.

Big Mimic understood.

It approached Mimi slowly, and gave a gentle trill. Then a loving lick and a nuzzle.

Goodbye.

Mimi returned the lick before scampering off back towards town.

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Mimi had been careful, after getting back to town. It had to be as sneaky as possible to avoid being seen.

It had managed to get pretty far it thought. And had only been seen once or twice!

Pretty far.... But still not home....

Mimi gave a sniff, trying to pick up any kind of familiar scent— And caught something on the wind.

Meat.

Cooking meat!

All different sorts of meat!

How curious.

How interesting.

How... *tasty*....

Mimi's stomach rumbled, and its mouth watered, and it couldn't resist following the smell.

It followed it all the way to a fence; and sniffed around the bottom until it found a hole big enough to squeeze through.

*There!*

It could see the source of the smell! Four orcs stood in their backyard— No, now it was three, as one went back into the house.

*Three* orcs stood in their backyard. The largest one packing up a grill, and the two smaller ones eating sausages and pushing each other around playfully.

Mimi knew what these two small ones were; these were children. Just like Becky was!

The mimic knew that children weren't scary. Children were friends. Children were where pats came from. Where soft pillows to sleep on came from. Where tickles along the seam came from. And hugs and toys and treats and— It's mouth watered as it remembered children were where *dinner* came from.

And these children had dinner.

Mimi quickly looked around and, spotting a freshly-filled clothes line, took the form of one of the items— It didn't quite know what it had turned into, exactly, but it was some sort of clothes....

Slowly, Mimi scooted towards the children.

The pair jumped around; one hitting at the other and trying to knock the hat off his head.

'Jareth stop!' the boy giggled. 'You're gonna make me drop my sausage!'

The other boy just stuck his tongue out, and made another swipe.

'Jareth! Leave Benny alone!' called the man. 'Let him eat!'

'Yeah!' Benny teased— Before seeing Mimi and freezing. 'Huh? What the?'

Mimi didn't stop shuffling along as Jareth followed his brother's gaze.

'Uh—' Jareth stepped back. 'Dad?'

'Yeah sport?'

'There's... a pair of underwear on the ground.'

'It's moving,' Benny chimed in.

'Moving?' their father replied, and Mimi realised now that it recognised him.

This was *Mr Slader*. Isa had once had him over to discuss some sort of household repairs; which he'd done in return for a pot of beef stew....

Mimi's heart jumped.

Oh!

Oh!

This must mean that Mimi was close to home!

But, oh.... Mimi was still so hungry....

‘What do you mean *moving?*’

‘Like a slug!’ Benny called back. ‘It’s coming closer! What do I do?’

‘Hold on—’

Mimi let out a sudden scream, and lunged at Benny; who squealed and dropped his food as he bolted to Mr Slader.

He was quickly followed by Jareth, who didn’t scream but still dropped his food and ran to his father to hide behind him.

It didn’t bother the mimic that the two boys had bolted; they were just like Becky’s friend, Katie.

Becky’s friend Katie always tried to keep away from Mimi, even when all Mimi wanted was cuddles.

She wasn’t an alpha like Mimi or Becky or Isa were.... She was an omega. Like Ken. For walking all over! And Mimi could take what it wanted from her.

These boys must have been omegas, too.

‘Let me see, let me see,’ Mr Slader comforted his sons, and dropped the heavy barbecue in its place under the shelter before following them to the grass. ‘Ah— That’s a mimic! Looks small.... Oh— Hold on— *Honey?*’

Mimi looked up from the remains of the sausages and tensed as Mr Slader yelled towards the kitchen window.

‘*Yeah?*’ the voice of Mrs Slader yelled back.

‘Didn’t Otto say something about a kid losing a mimic!’

‘Yeah!’ was the reply. ‘The Bloom girl!’

‘Think we found it!’ Mr Slader yelled back, before turning to his sons. ‘Alright, then, boys. Today you’re going to learn a little bit about communal responsibility.... You are going to take this little scrap back to its owner.’

‘What?!’ Benny shouted.

His cry spooked Mimi, who quickly turned into a belt and crumpled unmoving onto the ground in its poorly-chosen disguise.

‘You’re going to catch this little guy, and help out a neighbour,’ said Mr Slader. ‘Because it’s the right thing to do.’

‘Aw,’ Jareth whined. ‘But Dad why should *we*—’

‘*Because it’s the right thing to do,*’ Mr Slader repeated, firmly. ‘And maybe one day you’ll need help, too, and little Miss Bloom will remember how nice you were to her and return the favour.’

‘Well...’ Jareth looked to the belt. ‘How do we catch it?’

‘Just walk over and pick it up; it shouldn’t be a problem,’ Mr Slader instructed. ‘Mimics are ambush predators. They don’t tend to bolt.... Go on, now. Go get it.’

Slowly, Jareth edged out from behind his father, and towards the mimic.

Mimi watched carefully as Jareth approached.... And it changed its mind.

This boy was an alpha.

Not the other boy who hid behind the bigger man and whimpered— He was still an omega. But *this* boy, with the determined look and hunting stance. He was most *definitely* an alpha. Maybe not as big an alpha as the man... but still big enough to be dangerous.

Mimi let out a warning growl.

It didn't want another fight, like with the cat.

Jareth hesitated, and looked at his father— Who gave an encouraging nod.

Jareth turned back to Mimi, then, and it gave him another warning growl as he leant closer....

He made a grab for the mimic; who shrieked and bolted past him towards the house.

It crammed itself under the back steps and hid as Mr Slader let out a loud laugh.

'Welp!' chuckled Mr Slader. 'Guess I was wrong! This one's a bolter! Sorry, Jareth— Come here,' Mr Slader headed to his son and gently brushed him down. 'Gave you a fright, huh? You look like you've seen a ghost!'

Jareth gave a nod as his father gave him a firm pat on the back. 'Sorry, Dad. I thought I had it....'

'Ah, s'alright, you did your best,' he said. 'Benny! Grab another sausage, right? A raw one is fine— See if you can't lure that thing back out!'

Benny looked faint, but did as he was told.

*Food....*

Mimi could smell the meat.

Food, held by the *omega* boy....

It could take him, it was sure.

Slowly, Mimi edged towards the smell. It found itself at the edge of its hiding place, and hesitated as Benny retreated back a step to Jareth's side. He was still holding the sausage out for Mimi.

Holding it out?

Oh....

It was a gift....

These boys were *feeding* Mimi....

They were accepting its dominance!

Mimi scooted out from under the house and crept towards the pair, edging along the ground in a motion eerily like an inch-worm. Its tongue poked out of its belt-loop, and it slowly raised itself up like a snake about to strike.... And then it lunged at the sausage in Benny's hand, causing the boy to let out a shriek and run to his chuckling father.

Just like the omega he was!

'Jareth!' called Mr Slader as he pet Benny on the head. 'Grab it!'

Mimi was too busy mauling the sausage to notice Jareth hadn't followed his brother back to his father— Luckily, as the boy had hesitated for a moment to stare at the hungry creature.

'Jareth!'

Jareth snapped to attention and jumped at Mimi; taking it around what he thought might be its neck and lifting it into the air.

Mimi let out a shriek and began to flail in his grasp; wiggling and squirming until it began to slide through his hands.

It had been caught!

Oh! Oh!

It couldn't be caught!

No!

‘Hold it firm!’ his father laughed. ‘Don’t let it get away now!’

‘I don’t wanna hurt it!’ Jareth shouted back, struggling with the creature. ‘I don’t want to— OW! Ow! Dad! It’s biting me!’

*Take that!* Mimi thought, sinking its teeth into the boy’s hand. *Bite! Snarl! Growl! Bite and bite! CHOMP!*

‘They do that!’ Mr Slader chuckled, putting down his beer and starting towards his son. ‘Don’t worry, a thing that size won’t get through skin like yours.’

‘It still hurts,’ Jareth winced and held up his hand; Mimi was now firmly clamped onto his palm, growling and shaking itself around.

‘Hah, it’ll toughen you up,’ said Mr Slader, reaching for the mimic and holding it just under its mouth.

Mimi let out a snarl, which was muffled through Jareth’s hand, as a warning for the big man to let it go— Though he just laughed and ignored it.

‘Hmm.... It’s really got a grip on you, don’t it?’

‘Get it off!’ Jareth complained, the fear in his voice making Mimi prickle with pride.

It was scaring another alpha!

Oh! Happy days!

It was even more of an alpha than it had thought it was!

Maybe it was even more alpha than Isa was!

It would have to test that, when it found its way home....

‘Alright, alright,’ Mr Slader gave a humoured snort, and carefully wedged a finger between the mimic’s jaws. ‘Okay, slowly now. Don’t want to hurt it.’

‘It’s hurting *me!*’ Jareth whined as his father tried to leverage the mimic off his hand. ‘Get it off!’

‘Aw, jeez, it’s clamped on tight,’ Mr Slader released Mimi— Who gave a happy gurgle and lifted itself up onto Jareth’s arm; turning into a large sock and wrapping tightly around his wrist.

Jareth let out a fearful cry and tried to shake the creature off, stumbling backwards and tripping over his bike as he did.

Mimi only gripped tighter as the boy hit the ground, and tried to swallow his hand whole.

*Bite! Dominate! Alpha! Alpha! Bite!*

‘DAD!’

‘Calm down!’ Mr Slader laughed. ‘Ah, Jareth. You’re fine.’

‘No! No I’m not!’ Jareth cried. ‘Get it off! It’s eating me! *It’s eating me!*’

*Chomp! Dominate!*

‘Benny!’ Mr Slader rubbed his chin, and tried not to grin too widely at his son. ‘Go get a pillowcase from your mother, would you?’

‘Yes, Dad!’ Benny replied, rushing into the house.

‘Alright, relax,’ Mr Slader said, gently taking his son by the arm and lifting him to get a look at Mimi. ‘They can smell fear, you know.’

‘They can?!’ Jareth’s voice broke; much to Mimi’s delight.

Mr Slader let out a chuckle. ‘Yep. It’s trying to assert its dominance over you, and if you let it know you’re scared it’s gonna keep bullying you! Stand up for yourself. Tell it to stop.’

‘B-But it’s an animal!’ stammered Jareth.



‘It’s a pet,’ said his father. ‘It probably recognises a few commands.... Try “no” or “let go.” And be firm when you say it. Show it who’s boss.’

‘O.... Okay...’ Jareth swallowed. Then, he cleared his throat. ‘N-No. *No.*’

Mimi let out a playful growl, and Jareth flinched.

‘Try again— Ah, thank you Benny,’ Mr Slader took the pillowcase that was offered to him and pulled it open like a shopping bag. ‘Say, *let go.*’

‘Let go,’ Jareth repeated. Then, he took a deep breath and spoke with a surprising firmness. ‘Let. *Go.*’

Mimi gave a gurgle, recognising his alpha tone. He was done playing, and was getting annoyed....

After a moment of hesitation, Mimi decided it was best to release Jareth and dropped to the ground. It made to slither away but instead let out a surprised squeak as Mr Slader quickly grabbed it and stuffed it in the pillowcase.

‘There we are,’ he said proudly. ‘Look at that! We got it! Hey, look at what you two boys did! Good work!’

Jareth and Benny both gave sheepish smiles as their dad pet them each on the back in turn— And then the pair leapt back as Mimi gave a strangled scream.

*RELEASE!*

*Scream! Escape! Flail! Claw! Bite! Scratch!*

*RELEASE!*

‘Is it okay?’ Jareth asked.

‘Yeah, just throwing a tantrum,’ said Mr Slader. ‘I don’t think the spoilt little rat is used to getting in trouble.... You boys wanna take it back to its girl, now?’

‘No,’ Benny muttered, much to his father’s amusement.

‘Fair enough,’ he chuckled. ‘But if you do, I’ll give you ten dollars.’

‘Hmm....’

‘Each.’

The boys’ faces lit up.

‘Ah, there we go. That’s the incentive you boys needed,’ Mr Slader chuckled, and held out the pillowcase to Jareth. ‘Hold the end here tight, okay? Do *not* let this thing get out again. Yeah?’

Jareth nodded and took the bag from his father. He held the end firmly before slinging it over his shoulder.

Mimi let out an unhappy cry as it was hefted around and began to flail; and though Jareth flinched, he didn’t let it go.

*Release! Release!*

*Flail! Scream!*

‘Okay, so this thing doesn’t live too far,’ Mr Slader said, pointing down the road. ‘You go up to the park. Take a left and head to where all the big houses are, yeah? It’s got no fence, a white mail box out front, messy lawn, and the house is painted yellow and white.... Think you can find it?’

‘Yep,’ said Jareth, proudly, as he stuck out his chest. ‘We got this. Right, Benny?’

Benny shrugged. ‘I guess.’

‘That’s my boys!’ Mr Slader said proudly. ‘Go on, you responsible, tough little men! Give that girl back her pet!’

‘Yes, Dad!’

‘Okay, Dad.’

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Mimi refused to stop screaming the entire time it was carried.
The audacity of these two boys! The absolute *audacity!*
Stuffing an alpha like Mimi into a pillowcase and carrying it around! And to not even put Mimi in a *clean* pillowcase, but a pillowcase with a damp patch that smelt like orange soda!

How dare they treat Mimi this way!

Mimi let out a snarl, and flailed some more.

Angry! Mad! Rage! Bite! Flail!

Mimi would do it all until they released it!

It had to get out and find Becky, after all!

How *dare* these boys prevent Mimi’s search!

Mimi heard the boys knock on a door and let out a strangled, angry hiss of protest.

Wherever they had taken it, it was not going to behave!

The door was opened, and Mimi went silent as it heard a familiar voice.

‘Hello, boys,’ it was *Isa’s* voice! ‘You’re... Benny and Jareth Slader, correct? Is something the matter?’

Mimi felt itself hefted off Jareth’s back and suspended in the air.

‘Dad said this is yours,’ he said.

The bag was hurriedly taken from the boy and opened, and as soon as the bright light of outside hit Mimi it saw—

It saw *Isa!*

A happy chirp escaped it as it leapt out of the bag and wrapped around *Isa’s* face and neck; licking furiously.

Isa! Isa! Isa!

Home! Happy! Isa! Love!

Home! Home! Home!

Mimi was trembling as it was pried off of the drow’s face and held against her chest in a tight hug.

It was home!

‘Oh, thank god!’ *Isa* breathed. ‘We were so worried— Thank you! Thank you both— Please come in! Come in! I’ll grab you boys something to eat but— Let me just take her upstairs first! Where was she? How did she get so hurt?! Oh, Mimi...’

‘Um,’ Jareth closed the door behind himself and Benny before hurrying after *Isa*. ‘We don’t know how she got beat up, we just found her.’

‘She was in our backyard,’ said Benny.

‘And she bit me.’

‘And stole our lunch.’

‘Yeah. Then Dad said to bring her back here.’

‘Oh boys, I’m so sorry—’ *Isa* was cut off as a loud wail filled the house. ‘Oh, Becky—’

Mimi wiggled in *Isa’s* grip as it was carried up the stairs.

Becky! Becky! Becky was right there! Becky was so close!

It had to get to Becky!

‘NO!’ Becky’s shriek filled the house.

‘Becky, please—’ Barbra’s voice sobbed back. ‘Please! We’ll find her! I promise! Just eat something— Anything, Becky, please!’

‘NO!’ Becky shrieked again. ‘NO! NO! NOOOOOOOO-AAAAAHHHHHH!’

It was ear-piercing, and everyone who heard it flinched and folded down their ears —Benny even lifted his hands to cover his— but Mimi just trembled with excitement and began to flail.

Becky! Becky! Becky! It was Becky!

‘Becky, please!’ Barbra’s voice cried again. ‘Stop! Please! You’re going to hurt yourself!’

Isa quickly opened the door— Just in time for Becky to shriek again.

She tugged at her hair. And bashed her fists into the side of her head. And then let out another scream.

‘Rebecca, enough!’ Isa said, firmly, and the girl cut off mid-shout.

She settled instead for whimpering and rocking back and forth; yanking her hair over her face as she did. ‘Mimi,’ she muttered, ignoring her mother’s comforting hand on her back. ‘Mimi. Mimi. Mimi.’

Mimi let out a loud chirp when it heard its name, and finally managed to escape Isa’s grasp.

Becky!

Becky gasped and let go of herself— Turning to Mimi and reaching out her hands in a grabbing motion.

Mimi ran faster when it saw the state of its girl.

Her eyes were red and swollen from crying and the skin under her nose was flaking. She had bruises and cuts all over her face and arms and hands from scratching at herself— And her hair was a tangled, frizzy mess.

Pain!

Mimi realised it with a jolt of horror.

Becky was in pain!

Mimi let out a scream and leapt onto the bed; pressing itself into Becky and licking at all of her sores.

Lick! Better! Lick better! Help! Pain!

Becky!

‘Mimi!’ she exclaimed, embracing her pet tightly. ‘Mimi! Mimi!’

‘Oh, thank god,’ Barbra breathed, wiping her own swollen eyes and turning to Isa. ‘Where was she?’

‘The boys found her,’ Isa motioned to Jareth and Benny, who gave timid nods. ‘She got into their yard and they brought her back.’

‘Thank you,’ Barbra let out a long breath and stumbled to her feet. ‘Thank you both so much! You have no idea how grateful we are!’

‘Hurt!’ Becky gasped. ‘Mimi! Mimi’s hurt! Mum! Isa! Mimi’s hurt!’

Barbra ran back to her daughter and quickly quietened her down again. ‘We’ll call the vet,’ Barbra promised. ‘And they’ll make Mimi better, okay? Mimi’s alright. They’re just scratches. She’ll be alright. She’s home now. We’ll take her to the doctor, okay—’

Becky let out a loud sob and hugged Mimi tighter. *'Love you!'*

Mimi let out a chirp, and nuzzled into Becky's neck. Then, it shifted, taking the form of a scarf, and wrapped around Becky so it could lick at her cheeks.

For a moment everyone stayed quiet; giving Becky a minute to wipe her eyes and compose herself.

And then, Isa stepped forward.

'Say thank you to the boys, Rebecca,' Isa reminded her gently.

Becky sniffed, wiping her nose on her sleeve, and slowly stood up out of bed. She stumbled over to the boys and wordlessly hugged Jareth; who went stiff and looked uncomfortable.

'Ew!' Benny exclaimed, stepping away from his brother. 'Cooties!'

'No— Rebecca—' Isa gently peeled the girl off Jareth, taking her a pace back and holding her steady. 'Use your words. Words, Becky. Remember?'

Becky wiped her eyes, and flapped her hands against her sides.

'I know. I know you're feeling a lot right now,' Isa comforted. 'But you *need* to thank these two boys. They brought Mimi back. That deserves a thank you.'

Becky sniffed and nodded. But she didn't speak.

'I'm so sorry,' Barbra sighed, crouching by her daughter and wiping the girl's eyes and nose with a tissue. 'She's not usually like this. She was just so worried.... Thank you both very much.'

'S'alright,' Jareth shrugged. 'Is she gonna be okay?'

'She'll be fine,' said Isa. 'Hey, Becky? Do you want something to eat?'

Becky gave a weak nod.

'Okay,' Isa wrapped her arms around the girl and hefted her up; hooking her against a hip. 'Come on. We'll get you something to eat.... Boys? Would you like something too?'

'Yes,' Benny answered with no hesitation.

'Alright, come on,' Isa motioned for them to follow her as she made her way to the kitchen.

She sat the trio down at the table, and made them some biscuits and sandwiches, and put down some cans of soda for them, too.

But most exciting was the bowl of mince meat— Which Mimi gobbled down with loud enthusiasm.

Becky leant over the table as Mimi ate and dragged the huge bottle of juice towards herself. She unscrewed the lid and angled it down and— Flinched as Isa took it from her.

'Cup, Becky,' Isa muttered, filling the cup beside the girl. 'In a cup....'

Becky gave a nod, but as soon as the drow turned away she was back at the bottle; downing half of it in one go before it was taken away from her again.

'Okay, that's enough,' Isa told her. 'Make sure to eat something, too.... I'm going to go make sure your mother's alright, okay?'

Becky nodded as Isa stepped out of the dining room— And then she pointed to the mark on Jareth's hand.

'Mimi bit you?' she asked.

Jareth nodded.

'Sorry,' said Becky. She took Jareth's hand and pulled it to her lips; pecking a kiss on the sore-looking marks.

'Ew,' Benny muttered as Jareth pulled his hand away.

Jareth frowned and wiped his hand on his pants before slowly replacing it on the table. 'It's fine,' he said. 'It didn't even hurt.'

Mimi looked up at him.

What a lie! This boy was a liar!

The thought was short lived, however, as someone came in the front door.

'Barbra! Barbra?' Ken's voice called through the house. 'Where is she? How is she? You said she was hurt but how badly— Ah! There! Mimi! Oh, she's not too bad, is she! Just hungry.'

Ken offered his daughter a relieved smile and reached to stroke Mimi along its seam.... But Becky gave an animalistic snarl, aiming a bite at her father's hand and barely missing before flashing her teeth at him threateningly.

'You let her out!'

'Becky—'

'You let her out!' Becky repeated, angrily. 'You left the door open!'

'I'm so sorry, mon bébé! I didn't mean to, I was on the phone and—'

Becky snarled again, cutting off Ken's excuse— And Mimi quickly mimicked Becky's anger.

Snarl! Growl!

'Rebecca!' Isa snapped, returning to the room. 'Do *not* take that tone with your father!'

Becky let out a high pitch wail, which cut short as Isa scolded her again.

'Rebecca!'

'Um,' Jareth's voice was meek as he slowly slid off his chair. 'Maybe... we should go home.'

'But I wanna stay and eat,' Benny whispered to his brother.

'No, *we gotta go!*' Jareth replied, grabbing Benny by the arm and pulling him off his chair. 'Th... Thank you very much for the food, Miss Isa.'

'Thank *you,*' Isa replied, quickly gathering up a handful of sandwiches and giving them to Benny. 'Get home safely, okay? And tell your father we said thank you.'

Benny nodded and took the food before trailing after his brother.

Obediently, like the omega he was!

Once they were out the door it didn't matter, though.

Mimi gave a playful growl and abandoned the last of its meal to turn and continue licking at Becky's face.

Nothing outside mattered anymore.

Mimi was home!

—END—

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