

Miserable

By C. Jade Wyton

Both Becky Bloom and her father have been absolutely miserable. There is a lot going on in both their lives; but at least they are able to find comfort in each other. Even if all they have the energy to do is lay on the couch and sulk together.

Contains portrayals of depression and mental illness.

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It had been a hard week. Since the camping trip she took with her friends over the weekend, where they had met a literal god who warned them of the end of the world, Becky had thought what little future was left was looking pretty bleak. Especially combined with Orson's predictions as he scried the future and saw death— Horror and death and pain and people being eaten alive by a swarm of crows.

How was she supposed to cope with that knowledge?

At least her friends had been nice. Even Katie hadn't teased her too much when she'd told her that the world was ending... she'd looked more concerned, than anything, when she'd realised Becky was serious.

Becky didn't think they *believed* her. Nobody seemed to believe her— Even Isa was doubtful, and seemed to think that what Becky had seen in the woods had been because she hadn't taken her medicine that night....

Becky shook the memory of the drow's concerned eyes from her mind and rolled over in bed.

The few times she'd mentioned what she'd learnt at the camping trip, outside of her friends and family, she'd been looked at like she was growing a second head.... Though people had been surprisingly nice about it. Nicer than she would have been to others about it, just a year ago— Nicer than she deserved, she thought.

Though, a lot of people had seemed to be *gentler* around her since her stay in Warm Water's Hospital. It was obvious they thought she'd lost her mind... and maybe she had. She couldn't deny something in her had changed, like a flick of a switch, and her head was suddenly a spiral of confusing ideas and new erratic thoughts.

But she knew what she'd seen in the woods that night was real. She knew it because Adam, Portia, Malinka, and Wendy had all seen it, too.

So she wasn't *completely* insane. She was only *a little bit* insane.

And a little bit insane was... okay to be?

Another sigh, and Becky rolled over again to grab her phone.

Everyone online was joking around and having a good time.... For the best, she thought. What was the point in moping and being miserable? If the world was ending, they might as well be having fun as it did, right?

Hm....

Becky could hear her dad throwing up again.

She felt like it was her fault; no matter how much he and Isa told her otherwise.

All this was because of how awful she'd been to him. She could barely recall a time she'd ever been nice to him. She was always snippy, and angry, and took out all of her hurt on him. And then he'd— He—

Becky felt her stomach turn as she remembered her conversation with Isa.

He'd applied for another job, just a little bit before she'd had her accident. Because he thought that... he thought she'd be better if he left again. Becky had been so unbearably awful to her father that he had looked into coming out of retirement, just so he could travel and get away from her....

It wasn't the wording Isa had used, but Becky knew that was the bluntest way of putting it. She had been such a disgusting person that her own father was trying to escape her....

Becky took a deep breath and tried to push the thought away as she traced the patterns on her bedsheet.

*No.... No. Isa said that wasn't it.... She'd said that it was because Ken had wanted what was best for her....*

It was hard to force herself to believe her father's reasoning.

But she wanted to trust him.

She *desperately* wanted to trust him. And believe the things that he told her.

But it was so, so hard to believe him over the awful voice in her head....

Especially when it was clear that she had been so horrible to him.

And the things she'd done lately hadn't exactly helped, had it?

A stray tear escaped Becky's eye, and she wiped it away.

She should have told him that she was writing to their relatives in Germany— But she hadn't expected such a kind response. She'd *hoped* for it, but she had been sure they were going to reject her and shun her away.... The acceptance she'd received was both exciting and terrifying. Especially when her dad had learnt about it, and been physically sick with worry before... suddenly becoming the calmest she had ever seen him before.

Those two days of absolute calm were *eerie*. Like he had looped all the way around and suddenly become a normal person.

It made her think of her clock, when she would catch it switching over to midnight.... From 23:59, to 00:00 in the blink of an eye.

A complete reset....

Ken gagged again, from somewhere down the hall, and Becky let out a breath.

Tomorrow was when he had his meeting with what could be his new boss— Mr Beast, did Isa call him? A terrifying man, from her description. And, with Ken's reaction to learning the week was almost over being to projectile vomit across the lounge, Becky only believed it more.

She took another deep breath.

She had to be on her *best* behaviour tomorrow, for her dad. She couldn't ruin this for him; he'd been working really, *really* hard for this....

And... and she couldn't mess it up. Even if... it meant....

Becky felt her breath come out of her in a tremble, and she blinked back more tears.

If her dad got this job it would mean he would have to travel again, wouldn't it? Even though things were better now, and they were getting along.... He might have to leave. And things would be like when she was a kid again—

The thought was too much, and Becky's sob finally escaped her as she sat up and covered her mouth in an attempt to keep herself from crying.

But it was too late.

The tears were coming.

And she'd ruined everything *again*.

She'd tried to fix it—her relationship with her father— but it was just too late! He was going to leave again, and leave her alone, just like he always did! And this time, it was her fault—

*Maybe it was always her fault.*

Maybe all those times her parents had travelled away was to escape her. Because she was always such a horrible, loud, mean, disobedient child!

The terrible thoughts beat their way into her brain and she felt herself struggling to breathe through her tears.

She was awful!

She was terrible!

She— She—

She needed to talk to someone— She needed to talk to someone, immediately; but as she heard Isa comforting her father and leading him downstairs, she knew that she couldn't go to them.

And she couldn't go to her friends, either. They were all so stressed from their own lives— She couldn't! She couldn't put *more* pressure on them!

The only person she could think to call was— Was—

Becky pulled out her phone and let it ring; sobbing loudly as it was quickly answered.

'Hello?'

'M-Mr G-Goodhuman? It's— It's Becky— Rebecca B-Bloom. I-I'm sorry I— I know it's a-a-after hours, but— But— But—' Becky cut off in a sob, and barely managed to take a breath in through her tears.

'I— Uh.... It's alright, what's happened?' Mr Goodhuman asked gently. 'Are you hurt? Are you safe?'

'I— I— I— I'm— I'm— I— I'm— I—'

'Rebecca, breathe,' Goodhuman instructed. 'Deep breath. In... out. Listen to me. Follow my lead. Deep breath in. Slowly.... And let it out.... There we go. In... and out.... And in... and out....'

Becky followed Goodhuman's instructions, breathing with him until the quiver in her chest faded and she could finally bring herself to stop crying.

'There we are,' Goodhuman mumbled. 'Now... Miss Bloom? Rebecca.... Are you alright? Are you hurt?'

'N... No,' Becky managed.

'Good, are you safe?' he asked. 'You're not somewhere dangerous?'

'No,' Becky managed, giving a loud sniff. 'I... I'm okay.'

'Good,' Goodhuman let out a relieved sigh. 'Can you breathe?'

'Mhm....'

'Good.... Now, what's happened?'

‘I’m a horrible person!’ Becky blurted. ‘I hurt everyone I love! Even when I don’t mean to. And everything keeps *happening* and building and building and there’s so much going on all the time, and there’s nobody I can talk to anymore, because they think I’m crazy! And the people who don’t think I’m crazy only don’t think I’m crazy because everything horrible is happening to them too, and I don’t know what to do! I can’t just stress them out more! They’re already stressed enough! Like with Malinka—’

Becky caught herself before she said it.

Malinka had talked about something with her family; it had only been brief, but she’d mentioned something about it being *unsafe* for her to leave the house on her own, and— And Becky saw how she always checked her surroundings, constantly. Like she thought someone was going to come out of nowhere and attack her— It was terrifying! And Becky felt so helpless!

She couldn’t help but let out another sob.

*She was so useless!*

‘Okay, deep breaths. Deep breaths....’

Becky followed Goodhuman’s instructions, feeling her heart start to slow as her breathing evened out.

‘What’s happening with Malinka?’

‘I-I can’t say,’ Becky answered. ‘It’s... private.’

‘Hm... it sounds like there is a lot going on.... Your appointment is soon,’ Goodhuman reminded her. ‘But do you think you’ll be okay until then? Do you need to come in sooner?’

‘I... I don’t know. Do I?’

‘Are you in any immediate danger, from yourself or others?’

*Was she?*

Becky paused for a moment.

Everything that was going on, it wasn’t *her* who was at risk, really.... It was everyone else, and she was supposed to protect them....

‘N.... No,’ Becky answered, though she knew she didn’t sound sure. ‘I don’t think so.’

‘Okay. That’s good. Now, if you’re sure you’re safe, I can put you on my cancellation list,’ Goodhuman said. ‘If someone else cancels, I can move your appointment up. Would you like that?’

‘Y.... Yes, please,’ Becky replied, wiping her eyes.

‘How do you feel, now?’

‘I...’ Becky hesitated, then sighed. ‘A little bit silly, actually... I’m sorry for calling you. I just panicked.... It was really stupid of me.’

‘Ah ah now, Rebecca,’ Goodhuman said gently. ‘What did we say about self-deprecatative language?’

‘Replace it with positive affirmation?’

‘There we go. So what do you think you should say, now?’

‘Um...’ Becky bit her lip as she thought. ‘Thank you. For listening. I appreciate it.’

‘Good,’ Goodhuman praised. ‘Now, I *do* have just one more question.’

‘Y.... Yes?’

‘How did you get my number?’ he asked. ‘This is my personal phone.’

'I... don't remember?' Becky answered, honestly. 'I just have it.'

'That's... hmm...' Goodhuman gave a tentative hum. 'Concerning. We will have to have a talk about this at your next appointment, yes?'

'Okay,' Becky sniffed. 'I'm sorry I... I can delete it, if you want....'

'That's probably best, yes,' Mr Goodhuman answered. 'Thank you.'

'Okay. Um.... I'll do that...' Becky promised.

'Thank you,' Goodhuman repeated. 'And, just so I know... what are you going to do once you hang up the phone?'

'I think I'll find Isa or my dad,' Becky said. 'And just... be near them.'

'I think that's a good idea,' Goodhuman told her. 'I'm going to hang up now, okay?'

'Okay,' Becky replied.

'You'll be alright?'

'Yeah, I think so.'

'Good. Okay.... Goodbye, Rebecca.'

'Goodbye, Mr Goodhuman....'

A moment passed before Goodhuman hung up the phone, and Becky was left laying in bed and letting out a very heavy breath.

She felt better.

But also felt stupid.

She'd been panicking over a lot of stupid things, lately.... There was so much more to freak out about; but it was... what? A mistake that she might have made when she was *six* that was making her break down?

*God, what was wrong with her?*

Becky let out a long, slow breath before heaving herself out of bed.

She had to go find Isa and her dad.

Dragging her feet, Becky slowly made her way through the hall. She glanced into her father's study and found it empty, before checking both of the also-empty bedrooms.

After confirming nobody was upstairs with her, she dragged herself down the stairs.

They felt so much longer than usual.... It was like every step was a whole mile long, and took so much more effort to get down....

But, eventually, she reached the end of them and found her way to the lounge room.

Her father was laying on the couch, his head resting in Isa's lap as she ran her fingers through his hair and spoke to him in a gentle, comforting tone.

*Squeak!*

A loud, wheezing squeak came from on top of Ken's chest and Becky realised the pillow that was sitting on him wasn't a pillow— But Mimi.

'*Ken feel better?*' Mimi chirped, squeaking the loud rubber steak again before dropping it onto Ken's chest and nosing it towards his face. '*Play with steak. Steak make happy.... Lick? Lick? Happy? No.... Still sad.... Lick lick. Be happy. Make better. Play with toy. Like this—*'

Mimi picked up the steak again and gave it another couple of squeaks, before edging forward and dropping it onto Ken's cheek; a large, visible glob of spit rolling off it and down to the man's nose.

Ken flinched, looking disgusted, before letting out a heavy sigh and muttering, 'Thank you, Mimi....'

'*Ken happy now?*' Mimi trilled, giving Ken's neck a lick that made him look very uncomfortable. '*Ken smile? No. Ken still sad. Mimi lick more. Make happy.*'

Becky felt herself giving a weak smile.

*Mimi was such a good girl....*

'*Mama?*' Mimi chirped as it sat up and looked at Becky, its body stiffening as it became alert. It was clear the mimic was sniffing the air as it watched Becky, and then it lit up happily, its entire body wiggling with joy. '*Mama!*'

Mimi leapt off Ken's chest and landed on the floor with a heavy *THWUMP*. It then scrambled to its feet and skittered over to Becky's side— Licking her face with messy, wet licks that tickled Becky into giggling.

'*Lick! Lick! Lick!*'

Mimi licked, and licked, and licked at Becky; its tongue pushing against her harder and harder until Becky fell over backwards in a heap and Mimi clambered on top of her and held her down—

*Wait....*

Why was Mimi so big?

Why was....

*Oh.*

Becky rolled onto her stomach to avoid Mimi's wet tongue, and managed to get a look at her hands

Ugh.

She was a raccoon.

She hadn't meant to do that!

'Alright, Mimi, that's enough. You're going to hurt her,' Isa half-scolded, half-laughed. 'Give her some space....'

'*Mama!*' Mimi chirped happily. '*Mimi loves Mama! Mimi would never hurt Mama! Never! Lick Mama! Lick— PUT MIMI DOWN! GROWL! WIGGLE! ESCAPE! SNARL!*'

'Don't snarl at me, young lady!' Isa scolded the mimic, lifting it up so it was eye level with her. 'What have I told you, hm!'

'*Oh, Mimi is sorry,*' Mimi gave a whine, and licked at Isa's thumb. '*Isa is in charge. Yes. Yes. Isa is the big alpha. Mimi listens to Isa. Always listens to Isa.*'

'*Same, though,*' Becky agreed, rolling to her feet and shaking herself out. She wandered to Isa's side and held up her hands; making a childish grabbing motion as she did.

Isa watched her for a moment before letting out a sigh. 'You want me to pick you up?'

Becky nodded.

'Okay,' Isa said, placing Mimi on her shoulder and reaching down to pick up the raccoon-shaped Becky.

'*Scarf!*' Mimi chirped, turning into a very pretty red-and-black scarf and wrapping loosely around Isa's neck. '*Lick!*'

'Alright,' Isa gave a grunt of effort as she hefted Becky into her arms and cradled her. 'Is this what you wanted?'

Becky nodded, then snuggled into Isa's chest.

‘Alright,’ Isa mumbled, making her way back to Ken and motioning for him to lift his head so she could sit back down.

Ken obliged her, letting her settle down comfortably before he rested his head in her lap again.

Becky felt Isa drop a hand from her back so she could continue petting Ken, and rolled to look at her father.

He looked miserable....

She thought she should be used to seeing him like this, given the past few years, but....

Becky flicked her tail down; brushing it over her father’s cheek.

‘Becky,’ Isa scolded, batting Becky’s tail away. ‘Leave him alone.’

But Becky saw her father give a weak smile, so she shifted again so she could brush her tail into his eyes.

The chuckle she received was tired, but it was still a chuckle, and it encouraged her to do it again.

And again.

And again.

Until Isa adjusted her grip on Becky and leant over to plop the girl on her father’s legs.

‘Aw,’ Becky gave a shrill chirp as Mimi was deposited beside her, and made another grabbing motion at Isa.

‘I told you to let him be,’ Isa gave her own laugh, and gently tapped Ken’s head to alert him she was about to move. ‘I need to put a load of washing on. You three keep each other company while I do.’

‘Fine,’ Becky sighed as Isa wandered away. She knew the drow couldn’t understand her, so she didn’t bother to argue....

‘Mama!’ Mimi gave a happy trill and nuzzled into Becky. ‘Hello! Mimi loves Mama!’

‘I love you too, Mimi,’ Becky giggled, pressing her nose into Mimi in a kiss.

Then she looked to her father, still seeming miserable, and licked her lips before clambering over him so she could settle herself into the curve of his arm. She pressed herself tight against him, burying her nose into his underarm, and let out a heavy sigh as he carefully rolled over and embraced her.

‘Hello, mon bébé,’ he said softly, running a hand over her ear. ‘Are you alright?’

‘I guess,’ Becky answered, glancing up to look at her dad. She opened her mouth to say something else but was cut off by the loud *SQUEAK* of Mimi’s rubber steak as the mimic grabbed its toy and scrambled over Ken’s side to join Becky under his arm.

*Squeak! Squeak! Squeak!*

‘Growl! Play! Happy!’ Mimi gave a playful growl before pressing the steak into Becky’s side. ‘Play! Play makes better!’

‘Shh,’ Becky gave Mimi a gentle pet between the eyes, and pushed the toy back. ‘I think Dad’s trying to sleep. We have to be quiet for him.’

‘Mimi can be quiet! Mimi is the best at being quiet!’ Mimi chirped, grabbing the toy and flinging it across the room. ‘NO TOY WHILE QUIET!’

It smacked into the wall with a loud *bap-SQUEAK*, before dropping to the

floor and bouncing with a quiet wheeze of the squeaker.

*'Mimi, shh,'* Becky reminded, softly, as she cast a glance to her father. *'Nap time....'*

*'Nap! Nap nap nap!'* Mimi chirped, skittering and scratching around for a moment before finding a comfortable place to lay besides Becky and settling down. *'Night night, Mama!'*

*'Night night, Mimi,'* Becky whispered. Then, she looked at her father as he smiled weakly down at her, before she stretched up to peck a kiss on his cheek. *'Night night, Dad....'*

*'Thanks, Becky,'* Ken said. *'I love you.'*

*'I love you, too.'*

—END—

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