

# Night Watch

By C. Jade Wyton

*Becky Bloom doesn't want to go to sleep. She's had terrible nightmares all week. So, instead, she heads out into town to try and do some good; make up for all the years of terrible things she's done.*

***Contains mentions of violence and trauma.***

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Becky didn't want to sleep.

She'd had nightmares every single night this week. And tonight she just... couldn't bring herself to lay down and suffer through them again.

All she seemed able to do was sit at the end of her bed and stare at her old cheerleader baton.

Something so simple. From a time that shouldn't have felt so long ago.

*Just a few years ago....*

Becky examined the surface, running her hand along the notches she'd scratched into the baton and filled in with nail polish.

Three yellow lines, for noses she'd broken.

Five pink, for times she'd gone out on the field and joined in a fight between the teams.

Two green, for when she'd deliberately knocked over the cheerleading tower and successfully blamed it on Madilynne....

It hurt how simple things felt back then.

Becky let out a long sigh and stood up, making her way to her bedside table and searching it for her makeup box.

She took out her nail file and two bottles of nail polish, and scratched in a new set of notches.

*Two red lines, for the two people she'd killed.*

*And seven blue ones, for each time she'd fought to save someone.*

The incident with Romero attacking her friends, Zombi and the music festival, Portia in the drug den, the vampires at the formal, Danny Hitchcock's kidnapping, the cult who took Malinka, and Guillmero targeting Jezzibeth....

*Wow.*

It was no wonder she was so stressed. That was... an incident every month since the start of the school year!

Yikes....

She waited a moment for the nail polish to dry before slipping the baton into her bag of holding and making for the window.

If she wasn't going to sleep, she might as well go out and do something productive.

It was 12:05, so... she was still allowed to worry about the town's safety.

She could go keep an eye out for things that seemed off or wrong. Like some sort of... neighbourhood watch.

But not like the town's *actual* neighbourhood watch, who just gossiped and sat on their butts all night.

She would go out and *patrol* and *help* people and *prevent* things from happening.

Becky's feet hit the ground with a light *thwump*, and she scanned the window under her own quickly to make sure she hadn't made enough noise to alert anyone to her leaving.

She could see that someone was awake; a few windows down there was a flickering light.

The TV, most likely.... She'd have to sneak past the lounge room window *carefully*....

Quietly, ducking her head so she'd be harder to see, Becky began to sneak by the window.

It was her father, with Don perched comfortably on his shoulder as he watched....

Becky let out a sigh.

*He was watching the fireplace app.*

At the sound of Becky's sigh, Don's head turned backwards and he watched Becky curiously.

Becky made a quick motion, telling the mimic to be quiet— But he let out a chirp, which got Ken's attention.

'Hm? Don? What is it?'

Ken started to turn, and Becky held her breath....

Then Don stood to attention, and gave Becky the smartest, most knowing look she'd ever seen on the animal before.

He flopped off Ken's shoulder with a loud honk and landed on the floor with an audible thump.

It was the distraction Becky needed. As Ken hurriedly reached down to help Don, Becky ran the rest of the way past the window and into the street.

*Thanks, Don*, she thought to herself as she adjusted her mask and pulled her mimic hoodie tight around herself. *She'd have to spoil him tomorrow.*

Becky let out a long, relieved breath and headed for the park.

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It had been a little over an hour, and Becky thought that coming out into town had been a *very* good idea.

It was garbage day tomorrow. Which meant there was a lot of animal activity, at least.

Crows had pulled rubbish out of overfilled bins, so she'd picked that up. As well as the bin that had been completely knocked over and spilled onto the road. And there was a raccoon that had gotten trapped in a dumpster— She'd given him a hand getting out.

And she'd untangled a bat from some garden netting. And moved a kid's bike out of the road and onto the sidewalk. And moved away some sticks and leaf-litter that had gathered at the bottom of the curb-cut by the preschool.

She wasn't sure if anyone would actually *notice* the little things she'd been

doing all night, but that was okay. She wasn't looking for thanks; she was fixing things just to know that things would be a little easier for someone else, tomorrow.

Nothing seemed too wrong, though. Which was a relief.

After everything that had been happening in town, and the looming threat of more to come, Becky thought it was good to see that things were still mostly-normal. Even if only for a little while.

She might come out again tomorrow; there was a set of stairs that's bottom step could use a good *whack* back into place to make it more stable. But she didn't have anything to whack it with, tonight.

She could also—

*Ooh, lemons!*

Becky's ears twitched as she came to a bowl of lemons sitting by someone's front gate. They had a sign saying they were *free*, too!

Becky picked up one of the lemons, examining it carefully.

It was a good-looking lemon!

*Don't mind if I do...* she thought, slipping it into her bag. *Hmm....*

Becky paused for a moment, hesitating to zip up her bag.

She should say thank you, somehow. Shouldn't she?

Hm... ah! She had a sharpie! She could use that, and write on the sign saying "free"!

And that's just what she did; she wrote "Thank U!" on the sign, with a little heart next to it. Just so the person who left the lemons out knew they were appreciated.

Becky put her hands in her pockets as she quickly hurried on from the free lemons, and looked around.

Ah! She knew where she was. She was near Jezzibeth's house—

*Jezzibeth.*

Her heart sunk as she thought about her friend and all of the drama that had happened to her this month.

It wasn't fair; Jezzibeth was the kindest, sweetest, most loving person she knew, and she didn't deserve *anything* that had happened to her. She really didn't.....

Becky took a deep breath and paused.

*Hold on.*

Wait a minute.

What was the time?

Becky checked her phone.

1:50am.

Ah. That was okay, then.

It wasn't two yet.

She still had ten more minutes to be miserable.

Where was she, again?

*Right!*

Jezzibeth didn't deserve *anything* that had happened to her! Jezzibeth was the kindest, sweetest, and most loving person Becky had ever met! And it wasn't fair that Guillmero had gone out of his way to hurt her like that!

Guillmero had gone out of his way to hurt a *lot* of people.  
And then... Becky had gone out of her way to hurt *him*....  
But she didn't really feel like she had a choice, did she?  
Guillmero was doing so much harm....  
Malinka had said it was the adrenaline that got them through the fight.  
And Becky wasn't surprised. She knew about adrenaline; she'd practically *lived* for it, just a few years ago. It was like a miracle drug....  
Becky sighed.  
It was good to know she wasn't the only one who felt like this.  
She hated knowing Malinka was having a hard time, too, but it was a relief to know she wasn't completely alone.  
She should probably check in on the girls and Adam, too....  
After all, it was a horrible feeling. Having to kill to survive.  
She wouldn't wish that sort of horror on *anyone*....  
But times were getting harder, and it seemed that violence was inevitable.  
So... she would take that burden for herself.  
She would protect this town.  
And the people in it.  
And she would do what needed to be done so that they didn't have to.  
Ugh, another bin knocked over!  
Becky bent down, straightening the bin, and began to pick up the rubbish that had spilled out—  
Headlights shone brightly behind Becky and she flinched as a car pulled up just behind her.  
'Rebecca?' called a familiar voice, and Becky whirled around to see Officer Jackie with his head out the window. 'Rebecca, what are you doing out here?' he asked. 'Please— Don't run! I just want to talk.'  
Becky took a step towards his car, opening her mouth... but nothing came out.  
*I'm fine, just on a walk.*  
She tried to force the words out. But all that came out was a squeak.  
Jackie's eyes softened, then, and he leant over and opened the passenger side door. 'Come on,' he said, gently. 'It's alright. I'll take you home. Save you some walking, hm?'  
Slowly, hesitantly, Becky climbed into the car with Jackie.  
'There we go,' he mumbled, offering her a friendly nod and some hand sanitiser. 'Are you alright?'  
Becky returned Jackie's nod, and rubbed the sanitiser into her hands.  
She was *mostly* fine.  
'You weren't running off to try and live in the woods again, were you?' he asked, his concern clear in his voice.  
Becky shook her head.  
'Just out on another night walk, then?'  
Becky gave a nod.  
'It's not safe to be out on your own, Rebecca,' he told her, sighing and starting the car slowly down the road. 'You know that.'  
The tires ground against the wet asphalt with a sound that sent a tingle up Becky's back as she gave a loud huff, and turned away.

Of *course* she knew it was dangerous.  
That's *why* she was out here.  
'Rebecca,' Jackie groaned. 'Rebecca, look at me.'  
Becky didn't. She just stared out the car window at the passing streetlights and crossed her arms to pout.  
Jackie didn't understand.  
He *couldn't* understand!  
She was trying to keep people safe, just like— Just... like he was.  
Maybe he *would* understand?  
'*Hmm*,' Jackie gave a tired sigh as Becky finally turned to him; a pitiful look on her face. 'You know you're not in trouble, right? You haven't done anything wrong. I'm just worried about you.'  
*Hadn't done anything wrong?*  
Jackie had *no* idea.  
She'd *killed* a man.  
Surely that was wrong. Even if it was while protecting people....  
'Is everything alright?' Jackie pushed. 'I know a lot has been going on with you and your friends. Portia's been stressed out, as well.... I just want to help. You know you can come to me for help, right?'  
Slowly, Becky nodded.  
'You know I'm not your enemy?'  
*She knew.*  
'Good, good....'  
Jackie went quiet, then, as he turned the car around and headed back the way he'd come.  
All Becky could do was watch the clock.  
1:59....  
2:00.  
*Okay. No more being miserable for tonight.*  
Becky took a long, deep breath and let it out.  
It was time to be a normal girl again.  
'You alright?' Jackie asked.  
'*Yeah*,' Becky managed, her voice weak and croaky as she finally found it again. 'It's two.'  
'So it is,' said Jackie. 'And on a school night, no less. You should have been in bed *hours* ago. You're going to have a hard time focusing, tomorrow.'  
Becky blew a raspberry, and went back to staring out the window.  
'You know...' Jackie started, eyeing Becky with a weak smile. 'It's strange to be driving with you in the front seat. Usually you're kicking and screaming and telling me where I can go in all sorts of colourful ways.... You're not usually so quiet. It's...' his smile fell. 'A little concerning, actually. Are you doing alright?'  
'I can call you a slut if you like,' Becky joked, offering her own tired grin. 'But I'm not sure I have the energy to scream and kick, tonight. It's been a busy month.'  
'So I've heard...' Jackie gave Becky a sympathetic look, before his smile returned. 'So. Are *you* the person who's been picking up everyone's bins?'  
Becky shrugged.

‘That’s not like you at all,’ he chuckled, removing a hand from the steering wheel to give Becky a friendly poke. ‘Usually you’re being an absolute pest, aren’t you? Switching people’s mail and writing rude words on lamp posts!’

‘I still do that, sometimes,’ Becky admitted, ignoring Jackie’s playful gesture and turning back to the window. ‘Well... maybe. Maybe not. I think it’s about time I grew up.’

Jackie’s smile fell again, into a very soft, worried look as he watched Becky carefully.

He didn’t say anything for a moment.

And neither did Becky.

Not until he turned into her street and let out a long sigh.

‘Rebecca.... You’re too young to force yourself to grow up,’ he said, simply. ‘And, now, don’t get me wrong— I could definitely get used to this “adult Rebecca” picking up litter and *not* throwing milkshakes at me when I drive past her.... But only if adult Rebecca is also *happy* Rebecca.’

‘I... I think adult Rebecca could be happier than any other Rebecca’s ever been,’ Becky answered, genuinely. ‘With some work.’

‘You think so?’ he asked, slowing to a stop just outside Becky’s house.

‘Yeah,’ Becky gave a light chuckle.

Jackie echoed Becky’s laugh, and undid his seatbelt. ‘Come on,’ he said, climbing out of the car. ‘I’ll walk you to the door.... It looks like your parents are waiting for you.’

‘Shit— Are they?!’ Becky cast a glance out the car window to her house... sinking into her chair when she saw the front door open and Isa and Ken came out to watch her with concern and disappointment. ‘*Mm! Fuck! I’m not here!*’

‘Well. That’s *very* adult, isn’t it?’ Jackie’s laugh grew heartier, and he stood up straight to call across the yard. ‘Miss Valstille. Mr Bloom! Everything’s alright! Rebecca’s not in any trouble tonight. Quite the opposite, actually! She’s been doing good things, and just needed a lift home.... Come on, Rebecca.’

The disappointment slowly faded from Isa’s face as Jackie urged Becky out of his car and walked with her to the door. She held out a hand as the girl approached her, reaching up to brush Becky’s hair out of her eyes when she got close enough.

‘You look *exhausted*,’ Isa said to her daughter. ‘Where have you *been* all night? I was worried.’

Becky didn’t answer. She just wrapped her arms around Isa and buried her face in her shoulder, letting out a long, exhausted sigh.

‘*Ooh*, okay,’ Isa mumbled, putting her own arms around Becky. ‘Okay. Let’s get you inside— Thank you, Jackie.’

‘It’s alright,’ Jackie tipped his hat politely. ‘You all get some sleep.’

—END—

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