

October 25th, 2019

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October 25th, 2019.... A full day in the life of Becky Bloom as she struggles with school, outbursts of anger, and feelings of social inadequacy.

Contains descriptions of bullying, racism, violence, drinking, and vomiting.

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‘Becky, time to get up!’ Isa’s voice cut through the cold Autumn air as she threw open the bedroom door and marched in, her dark cover-all glasses hiding her eyes from the morning sun. ‘It’s Friday. Just one more day of school and you can have the weekend to yourself! How does that sound, hm?’

Becky gave an annoyed groan in response, hugging her very warm teddy bear tighter and rolling over.

‘Up!’ Isa’s voice ordered as the curtains were pulled open; and the teddy bear in Becky’s arms gave a chirp and leapt up, running over to nip playfully at the drow’s heel. ‘See? Mimi has the right idea! Up, Becky!’

Becky rolled over again and buried her head under her pile of pillows.

‘Rebecca!’ Isa scolded, tugging off the girl’s blankets and discarding them to the floor. ‘Get up!’

Becky gave another groan as the chill air hit her, and she curled up to protest it.

‘Rebecca,’ Isa’s voice grew low and warning, and the woman flicked the pillows off Becky one by one; ignoring the girl’s protests as the sunlight shone in her face. ‘I’m not going to tell you again. Get up. Get ready for school.’

‘Mmmm...’ Becky gave an annoyed groan and very, very slowly rolled over to face her caretaker. ‘I don’t *want* to go to school....’

‘Well, that’s too bad,’ Isa gave a shrug and picked up the mimic that was still running around her feet. ‘Mimi? Give me a hand?’

‘Mrip!’ the teddy bear gave a happy chirp before it was gently thrown onto Becky’s head; where it started skittering around on spider-like legs and worming its tongue into the girl’s ear.

‘EUGH!’ Becky shot up, trying to peel her pet off her cheek as she did. ‘Mimi! Get your tongue *out* of there! Stop— Hah! Stop! That *tickles!*’

‘Good girls,’ Isa grinned, petting both Mimi and then Becky in turn.

‘Isa!’ Becky whined, pushing the drow’s hand away. ‘Don’t do that! I’m not a kid anymore!’

‘You’re not? Hm, well. Then I wonder why I’m in here waking you, if you’re not a kid! Because I’ve never had to wake your father up like this and *he’s* an adult,’ Isa joked. Then, she motioned for Becky to get up. ‘Get dressed and then come downstairs for breakfast. I’m about to put on some sausages and toast.’

Becky heaved a sigh as Isa made for the door, Mimi at her heels again, and swung her legs out of bed. ‘Fine! Whatever, Isa....’

‘Don’t get huffy with me!’ Isa called over her shoulder. ‘Just get ready to go!’  
Becky, upon being told not to be huffy, huffed very loudly. ‘What-*EVER*!’  
Isa didn’t reply; seemingly unbothered by Becky’s childish retort.

Which really annoyed Becky; she’d wanted a reaction so she could continue arguing and make herself late for school.... But Isa was too smart for that, so Becky had to get out of bed and get ready.

She took her time picking her outfit for the day, and then even *more* time doing her makeup.... But Isa had been smart and gotten her up with plenty of time to spare....

*Ugh*, Becky slammed her bedroom door behind her and stormed down the stairs, determined to be in a bad mood even though she knew she had no real reason to be mad. *Isa was so annoying!*

Isa was annoying! And school was annoying! And life was annoying!

Becky huffed her way all the way into the dining room, where she practically threw herself into the seat next to her father and crossed her arms; slamming her elbows down furiously onto the table.

Ken jumped, fumbling with his newspaper and turning off the radio beside him.

‘Becky, mon bébé! Are you alright?’

‘Yeah I’m *fine*, Dad,’ Becky grumbled sarcastically.

‘Oh, mon ange, what’s wrong—’

‘I said I’m fine!’ she snapped, all but growling at her father as she scowled at him. ‘So just— Like— Back off!’

He averted his gaze, looking back down at his paper to avoid meeting Becky’s eye.

‘Becky, be nice to your father!’ Isa called from the kitchen. ‘You can huff around for attention *or* you can demand to be left alone; but you cannot do *both*!’

Becky just snorted and turned away, continuing to pout childishly as Isa came out of the kitchen with their breakfasts.

‘Ken, here’s yours,’ she said, gently, placing one of the plates on the table.

‘Oh!’ Ken gave a surprised chuckle. ‘You’ve turned it into a smiley face! That’s very creative! Becky, look at what Isa has done!’

Becky ignored her father, scowling as Isa stepped over to her.

‘As for you, little miss temper tantrum...’ Isa put down a very angry looking plate of food. ‘A frown.’

The angry-eyebrows made of bacon that sat on Becky’s plate were *just* silly enough to pull a laugh out of Becky— Though she tried hard to keep it in.

‘Ah! There we go! That’s what I was hoping for,’ Isa poked Becky in the side, making her unable to contain her giggle. ‘What has gotten *into* you today, hm?’

‘I dunno,’ Becky answered, batting Isa’s hand away and trying (but mostly failing) to take on a sulky tone. ‘I’m just, like, not *feeling* today. You know?’

‘Hm, I know,’ Isa pecked a kiss on the side of Becky’s head. ‘But that’s no excuse to be mean to your father. You should apologise.’

Becky grimaced.

*She didn’t want to apologise....*

But when Isa pet her shoulder firmly, she knew she had no choice.

‘Sorry... Dad....’

'It's alright, mon trésor,' Ken said, giving Becky an affectionate smile.  
'Ugh....'

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Isa hadn't let Becky walk to school.

Becky had been annoyed about that; but Isa's justification had been inarguable.

'*Last time you promised me you'd walk to school, I found you voice chatting with a boy!*' she'd said.

And Becky had shot back that it was just Adam. To which Isa had shot back that it was "just" a school day....

So Becky wasn't able to trick Isa twice, and now she was stuck in first period.
Ugh.

Isa totally didn't have to walk her to the door and humiliate her like that.

She would have come to school *eventually*.... After first period was over.

English. She hated English class.

It always made her feel so stupid.

Mr Du Plang always commented on the way she talked, saying it wasn't grammatically correct, or whatever— But it wasn't *her* fault she talked like this! She'd learnt a long time ago that this was the only way she *could* talk! But everyone was always on her back about it!

Everyone but her friends.

Becky gave a huff and flicked at the corner of her book's page, fraying it along its edge.

She was usually fine with being stupid. It was easier than being smart. Mostly, anyway.... She didn't *need* to be smart, with how pretty she was! But the way that Mr Du Plang treated her just because she didn't speak in a way he liked? It made her furious.

'Rebecca, can you please read the next paragraph?'

Fuck.

She had no idea what page they were on.

She'd lost track ages ago!

And of course Du Plang was asking her to read, *now*, with that look on his face that said he *knew* she hadn't been paying attention and was trying to embarrass her....

UGH!

Fine. If he was going to pick a fight and poke the hornet's nest....

'Why *should* I?' Becky asked, slamming her book shut dramatically.

Now she had an excuse to ask what page they'd been up to.

'Because everyone has been reading a page out loud, and now it's your turn,' Du Plang replied, simply.

'But I don't *like* this book,' Becky huffed. 'It *sucks*. I don't *need* to read about elf saviour-ism! Especially when the author's, like, an elf woman using racial slurs for effect or whatever. Like! If I wanted to, like, read about someone hurling slurs, I could just, like, pick up a newspaper and read about the mayoral elections!'

‘That’s a... fascinating take you have, Becky,’ Du Plang said, so calmly Becky found herself hesitating.

Du Plang was looking at her with a look she’d never seen him give her before; like she’d said something that he had genuinely found interesting.

Had she... actually made some sort of statement with her opinion?

She’d only been half-paying attention to the book— But she knew enough about it to know that she didn’t like it. And she also knew enough to know *why* she didn’t like it.... Especially since they’d watched the movie version of it last week.

Was she.... Was she *allowed* to say her *actual* opinion on the book, instead of what everyone else said her opinion was *supposed* to be...?

That changed... *a lot*....

‘Do you have any further analysis on this “elf saviour-ism” comment?’ Du Plang asked, curiously.

‘I... uh,’ Becky sat up straight, still stunned by Du Plang’s interest in actually *engaging* with her. ‘It’s... well. It’s like. The author has her own intention with the book. Which was like. Not terrible and stuff. Like she had *good* intentions. But like. She didn’t write it *right*, you know? And it just adds to the problem.’

‘Go on....’

‘I guess I just don’t like reading about something my friends have to live in real life written like it’s supposed to be entertaining or something?’ Becky said. ‘Like. Especially since its like, written from the perspective of someone who’s only ever watched it from the outside and never like, actually lived it? And it’s like. I know *I’ve* never lived it either so it’s really like ironic for me to comment on or whatever, but I can like, *see* that she hasn’t even seen this stuff happen to people she knows personally like I have cos she’s like, writing her stuff to be *comfortable* for the oppressors to read, so that we can like, remove ourselves from our feelings of guilt about what we might do without realising we’re doing it? Like the racism that’s so built into our brains that we don’t even *think* about it! The book is like, making out racism as this like. Big evil thing that you can fight because only super nasty evil people are racist and all racists *choose* to be racist or whatever, instead of it being like. Uh— The word? The world is like. System-ated?’

‘Systematic?’ Du Plang offered.

‘Yeah!’ Becky answered. ‘A systematic thing that we like, sub-consciously act on without even *knowing* we’re acting on it! And like. The book is like. Trying to comfort us and make us think that as long as we don’t like, *know* that we’re doing bad things that makes it okay! Like she’s doing that instead of being completely accurate to the actual real stuff that happens and stuff. Like the experience? That like orcs like go through and stuff? She’s left out a lot of the stuff and, like, stuff, cos she hasn’t seen it first-hand or actually properly cared about it beyond a like, “oh no I made someone feel bad and now *I* feel bad too” thing or whatever.’

Becky looked up at Du Plang, now, and saw he was nodding along intently; clearly very interested in what she had to say.

He seemed as surprised that she had something to say, as she was surprised he was willing to listen....

‘Like, okay— Like,’ Becky made a wide hand motion. ‘Okay. Like. It’d be like if I wrote a book like this about, like, what racism and stuff orcs go through just

because I'm friends with orcs and stuff! Like. I've seen them go through stuff but I can't write how they feel because like, it's how *they* feel not how *I* feel and it's like, not my place to say how they feel! Cos like. I'm an *elf*. And like. I have privileges over them and can't like, get that nuance or whatever its called and stuff. Also it's like boardering on, like, weird fetish territory? Because like, *my* people are the oppressors and it would be kind of fucked up if I decided that like, Jareth couldn't stand up for himself or whatever and I had to look after him and hold his hand through his own like, life experiences and stuff. And like— When you, like— If you— You— Have to like— You gotta—'

Du Plang waited patiently as Becky stumbled; even motioning for the class to quiet down as they began to murmur. Which really surprised her.

'Like— *Okay*,' she took a deep breath. 'With the book. When like you look at it in like, uh. I think the word is *context*? Like. On its own the book seems *fine*. Like it's *just* about an elf falling in love and helping an orc out, but like— It's not! It's a bigger thing that adds to the bigger problem. Like. Elf saviour-ism is the plot of like. *So* much gross fetish porn. And I mean like— Both literal porn and like. Inspiration porn. Because like the book shares like, heaps of stuff with the gross stuff, and it makes it hard to read. And like I just think it's *really* gross for an elf to write a book where orcs can't save themselves and need us to save them, instead of being empowered by their own means. Like. It's one thing to write a book where there's like some racism and your characters don't like it because like, yeah. *Duh!* But it's another thing to, like, focus your entire plot on bigotry that like, *comes from* your people instead of being *inflicted on* your people... you know?'

The room was quiet as Becky finished, and she felt all her classmates watching her.

She'd *never* engaged this much in school before, let alone in *English* class. She'd always been so terrified of being judged....

But Du Plang had given her the chance to talk about her opinion— Her opinion on something she actually *kind of knew about*, for once, and it had all just sort of slipped out of her.

Becky swallowed as Du Plang watched her seriously. His narrowed eyes scanning her for a long, quiet moment....

'That's a *very* interesting analysis of the book,' he finally said, shifting through the papers on his desk and beginning to write in red pen on one of the worksheets he had been grading. 'It's clear you have some strong opinions on this topic.'

'Well, yeah. *Duh*,' Becky answered; not sure what else to say. 'It's, like, important or whatever.'

'*Mhm*,' Du Plang hummed, still writing on the worksheet. 'It's definitely an interesting thought about the book's original intended purpose and how it can be compared against modern interpretations and contexts.... Class? I'd like you all to take a few minutes to quietly discuss this amongst yourselves. Whether you agree or disagree with Rebecca's statements, and why. Becky? Could you come up here? I'd like to speak with you. Bring your chair.'

Ah....

Becky's stomach dropped.

She *was* in trouble....

Slowly, taking her time and dragging her seat behind her, Becky made her way to Du Plang's desk and sat down heavily.

Alright, she thought. Go on. Tell me off for talking back. I'm ready.

'I'm very proud of you for sharing your analysis,' Du Plang said, softly, taking Becky completely off-guard. 'You really surprised me with that. I've never seen you show so much passion for your work before.'

Becky just shrugged. 'It's just like, whatever, I guess.'

'Mm,' Du Plang gave a low hum of acknowledgment, before he finally finished what he was writing and handed it to Becky. 'Here. I'm going to need a signature on this, from either your father or Isa'vanna.'

'Why?' Becky asked, snatching the paper.

'Acknowledgement of change of grade,' he said, simply.

Becky's brow furrowed, at that, and she looked down at the worksheet.

He'd changed her grading from an F to a C+, and written a note about it....

"Grade updated for the verbal analysis she presented in class. She has strong opinions that show an understanding of the topic and themes in the book, and how she connects these themes to real-life situations.

She discussed her opinion on the author's intended social commentary and why she feels the book is not an accurate representation of the topic. Also showed an interesting amount of self-awareness I have not seen from her previously.

Presentation could have been clearer. Verbal English skills still need improvement. Would love to see this opinion expanded on in writing."

Becky stared at the paper in surprise.

A C+?

That was... the highest grade she had *ever* gotten in English! In her entire *life*!

It was almost a shame it was on a blank worksheet that just had her name and "THIS BOOK SUCKS BUTT" written on it....

'I'm looking forward to seeing more work like this from you in future,' Mr Du Plang said. 'If you're interested in extra credit, you could do an essay on—'

'Ew, gross, *no!* I'm not doing *extra* work!' Becky scowled, grabbing her chair and returning to her desk. 'An essay? Yeah right! Get real, old man!'

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C+.

Becky had gotten a C+.

Becky had never gotten a C+ on her grades before. Let alone in *English*.

This was....

She didn't *want* to feel good about it.

She'd, like, made her entire *personality* based around not caring about things like school!

*But....*

For some reason, Becky couldn't seem to bear to crumple up Mr Du Plang's comment and throw it away.

So she did the only thing she could think to set her mind at ease, and took a photo of her grade to send to Adam.

Because Adam was always honest with her, and always made sense.

**Becky:** adam r u c this shit?

**Becky:** ""self-awareness"" lol wat dose that even MEAN

**Adam:** whoa a c+??

**Becky:** ye ikr HWOA

**Adam:** good work becky!

**Becky:** du plan is on drugs or smthng

**Adam:** beck it sounds like you did a good job

**Becky:** no i didnt

**Becky:** i was lichrally just casing problims in class and talkin g bak and saying the book SUKKED

**Adam:** by the sounds of those comments it looks like you understood what you were talking about haha

**Becky:** and then hee caled it a "verbal analisis" or sum shit

**Becky:** no i didnt

**Adam:** i mean if you explained WHY you thought it sucked then that's literally what a verbal analysis is

**Becky:** EW so u r saying i did WORK???

**Becky:** 4 FRE???

**Adam:** beck

**Becky:** i need 2 wash my HANDS i feel DIRT Y

**Adam:** you're allowed to be proud of yourself

**Becky:** no im not

**Adam:** becky

**Becky:** im NOT proud of my self

**Adam:** if you're not proud of your grade then why did you message me to show me?

**Becky:** idk shut up

**Becky:** im not proud of my self

**Adam:** : ) you're a terrible liar

**Becky:** shut it

**Adam:** you did a GOOD JOB

**Becky:** shut

**Adam:** and now you're excited because you're SMART

**Becky:** ewwww!!!!

**Adam:** you're a nerd like me now

**Becky:** no

**Adam:** yesssss

**Adam:** admit it becky you're excited!

Becky let out her breath, leaning on her open locker's shelf and looking back to her grade.

A C+.

She'd gotten a C+.

She, a D-average student, had gotten a C+....

She looked back to her phone.

**Becky:** do u think dad will b proud?

**Adam:** yeah he absolutely will!

**Becky:** ye?

**Adam:** yeah!! you did a good job!

**Becky:** ye!! i DID do a good job!!

**Adam:** hell yeah you did!

Becky was beaming now, as she unzipped her bag and put her worksheet in it; carefully slipping it between two books so it didn't get damaged.

She'd get her dad to sign it, and he'd read the comment, and he'd be so proud of her!

He'd be so, so proud of her!

Becky turned, slamming her locker door shut behind her, and started down the hall.

Maybe today was actually going to be a good day—

One of Becky's classmates turned away from his own locker, too busy reading to notice Becky as he walked straight into her, almost knocking her down.

She managed to stay upright, but she dropped her phone; which hit the ground with a loud *thwak!*

'Baloney! *Fuck!*' Becky exclaimed, shouldering her classmate away and retrieving her phone from the floor. 'Watch where you're going—'

She cut off when she saw her phone's shattered screen.

*It's fine*, she told herself, taking a deep breath. *It's not too bad. You can still have a good day. Phone screens can be fixed. Phone screens can be....*

Becky pressed the home-screen button on her phone, taking another deep breath when it didn't back turn on.

The side-button didn't do anything, either....

'You broke my phone,' Becky said, trying to keep her voice even as she very, very slowly turned to her tabaxi classmate.

Baloney stayed silent; as he always did. Though he looked *terrified*.

'You *broke* my *phone!*' Becky snapped, loudly, drawing the attention of everyone else in the hall. 'You broke my fucking phone, you fucking blaireau!'

Baloney let out a mowl, and looked around desperately as Becky stepped towards him.

'Don't fucking *meow* at me!' she shouted, grabbing Baloney by his robes and slamming him into the locker. 'Merde inutile!'

Baloney let out another terrified meow as he was slammed against the hard metal lockers; which only made Becky angrier.

'What did I *just* fucking say?! HUH?! I am going to rip every bone in your damn *body* out!' she shrieked, punching Baloney in the stomach and then raising her fist again. 'They'll put your skeleton on display in the fucking *science* room while the rest of your sorry meat sack is ground into fucking *stew* for the cafeteria—'

'Becky! Becky *no!* Stop!'

Before Becky could land her next hit, Jezabeth threw herself in front of Baloney; blocking him off from Becky.

It took all of Becky's effort to redirect her punch from her friend's face into the locker beside her.

'Jezabeth?! I almost *punched* you!' Becky exclaimed. 'What the hell are you—'

'Enough, Becky!' Jezabeth quickly took Becky by the hand, pushing her fist



down. 'Oh, dear. No, Becky. It's alright, now— Deep breath! Let's calm down before we do something *else* we can't take back, okay?'

Becky felt her jaw trembling and tensed it, taking a deep, deep breath under Jezzibeth's instruction. She released Baloney's robe and took a step back, still breathing slow and deep.

'Baloney, honey— Sorry! You know she didn't mean it?' Jezzibeth said, quickly helping the tabaxi to his feet. 'You know how she is. Are you alright? Oh, no— *Becky!* Deep breath. Shh. That's right, now. You're sorry, aren't you Becky? You really should apologise....'

Slowly, Becky met eyes with Baloney. She shuffled uncomfortably before twitching her lip and folding down her ears.

'Mmmm... *yeah. Sorry,*' she mumbled, almost inaudibly.

'There we are,' Jezzibeth sighed. 'Better?'

'I guess...' Becky glared at Baloney as he backed away. 'As long as he learns to *watch* where he's *GOING!*'

Baloney ran off when Becky snapped at him, and Becky instinctively stepped forward to give chase— But Jezzibeth held her back.

'Becky! Becky, no!' Jezzibeth scolded. 'You're better than that!'

'No I'm *not*—'

'Come on,' Jezzibeth wrapped her arm around Becky and turned her, leading her away down the hall. 'We're going to be late for Math.'

'Ugh, *Math.*'

'If we're not late we can sit together and I'll help you with your work. Okay?'

'Ugh, *fine,*' Becky huffed, crossing her arms and letting Jezzibeth guide her to class. 'Whatever....'

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Becky had been in a foul mood since recess.

She'd spent half the lesson pulling out her broken phone under the desk just to frown at it; and the other half trying not to shout at Jezzibeth as she explained some sort of algebra to Becky.

Ugh, algebra.

Because that's *all* numbers needed... to be turned into *letters* for *no reason!*

Jezzibeth tapped Becky's shoulder to get the girl's attention, and Becky snorted and looked back at their work.

'Okay. So... the equation is done,' Jezzibeth said, gently. 'What is x?'

Becky blew a raspberry as "x" switched places with "y" in the notes Jezzibeth had made on the side of their work, before she leant back and pretended not to care.

'The only x I care about is the film rating,' she said, nonchalantly.

'Becky!' Jezzibeth sighed. 'Come on. Don't say that. You can do this.'

'No I can't.'

'Yes, you can.'

'Ugh, I'm surprised you even, like, bother with me,' Becky grumbled, miserably. 'You're supposed to be, like. Smart or whatever. Why do you even *try* to get me to do this shit? You could have, like, finished all your work by now if

you weren't trying to make me do stuff I didn't want to do!

'You're my friend, Becky,' Jezzibeth sighed, giving Becky an affectionate flick under the chin. 'I don't want you to fail.'

'What if *I* want me to fail?' Becky asked with a scoff. 'Ever think about that? What if I don't *want* to pass class?!

The look Jezzibeth gave her made her heart wrench sideways, and Becky crossed her arms and turned her entire body away so she didn't have to see the hurt in her friend's eyes.

But it backfired; because she ended up looking directly at Adam, who heaved his own sigh and shook his head at her.

UGH!

Becky turned back to Jezzibeth, keeping her head ducked down like a pet that was about to be scolded.

'Becky...' Jezzibeth's hand lay softly against Becky's cheek, and she turned her friends gaze up.

'I'm sorry,' Becky mumbled.

'I know.'

'I'm just... not in a good mood,' Becky rubbed her arms. 'I don't mean to take it out on you.'

'No harm done,' Jezzibeth reassured. 'I just really worry about you, sometimes.'

'*Eeeh*,' Becky scrunched up her face and gave a disgusted scoff. 'You and everyone else.'

Another heavy sigh, and Jezzibeth's hands fell into her lap. 'Hey, so.... I'm doing some community service at the church after school. If you don't have anything to do maybe you could join? I think getting involved with the community might be good for you.'

'Ugh, the *church*?' Becky scoffed again. 'I'm like. Number *one* on their sinner's list! I think if I went to do community service with you, it would like, end up with me strapped to the alter being water-boarded with the holy water as like, a form of attempted exorcism.'

'They won't try to exorcise you, Becky,' a hint of a smile worked its way to Jezzibeth's lips at her friend's dramatic suggestion. 'At most they'll ask you not to swear.'

'Same difference!' Becky huffed, much to her friend's amusement.

Jezzibeth gave a giggle, and then slid her workbook towards Becky. 'Come on. I've already done the hard part for you. All you need to do is write the answer down.'

'*Bleh....*'

'Becky.'

'Ugh, fine, whatever!'

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Third period was history class, one of the classes Becky was actually half-good at.

Everything in the textbooks always had pictures next to it, and Becky was

good at remembering things related to pictures.

It was especially helpful that Professor Crane seemed to *get* that about her—Unlike all her other teachers, Crane actually *let* her take her time on things.

Something about the way he taught her was just... different to the other teachers. She couldn't put her finger on it, but it was like he was willing to work *with* her, instead of trying to fight her at every turn.

Usually she got D+'s in history, instead of D's and D-'s. Sometimes a C- would slip in if she was allowed to work in a group project.

And her go-to during group projects was to cling to the Slader brothers like a wad of gum in someone's hair.

Distracting, and tasteless, and impossible to pull away.

And right now she was planted firmly between them, vying with the textbook for both of their attention.

Every time one of them looked away from their work for even a *moment*, Becky was pulling on their arm and trying to convince them to turn to her.

And it would work, though just for a moment. Then they would be back to fact-checking their textbooks.

Something about their father telling them to buckle down on their work, or... *something*.

Becky heaved a sigh, before grinning and scooting up to Benny's side. She pulled herself up so she could plop her head on his shoulder and, when he eyed her, she pecked a kiss on his cheek.

Her message was clear:

*Pay attention to me!*

Benny blushed, deep and dark, and he bit his lip as he cast a glance at Jareth.

Becky didn't understand the look he gave his brother; but she quickly found herself spun around in her seat until she was facing him.

Which suited her just fine, as she leant on *him* now, and grinned up at him with a cheeky look.

Jareth went red as Becky's lips met his own.

'Becky,' Jareth chuckled, pulling away. 'I'm trying to work.'

'And I'm *bored*,' Becky whined, leaning in to kiss Jareth again.

'Miss Bloom, I'm going to have to ask you to refrain from that sort of behaviour,' Professor Crane's voice called over the class; though he didn't look up from his grading. 'Or I'll have to move you to another seat.'

Becky blew a raspberry in response, and flopped back limply in her seat.... Where she sat for all of thirty seconds before clinging to Jareth's side again and desperately trying to get his attention.

Jareth snickered and waved his hand playfully, half-heartedly mumbling for Becky to let him work.

But Becky wasn't haven't it; she pressed her face into his cheek and giggled at him, trying to draw *all* of his attention to herself.

'Ooh, you wanna work, huh?' she teased. 'You wanna be a big brainiac? Be really smart? You wanna get A's in all your classes and do extra curricular activities, you big *nerd*?'

Jareth snorted a laugh, before he caved and turned to peck a kiss on her lips.

'You know I don't *want* to work,' he said, gently. 'But I *have* to.'

Becky blew another raspberry, before leaning in for another kiss.

‘Rebecca, leave him alone,’ Professor Crane warned. ‘You don’t have to do your work, but don’t stop others from finishing their own.’

Becky gave another huff and sat back in her chair properly again.

She tapped her feet on the floor, then fiddled with the empty worksheet in front of her. She answered one of the questions— Two of the questions.... Three of the... questions....

She bumped her foot into Jareth’s own, eliciting a chuckle from him before leaning into his side and closing his textbook.

‘Becky—’ he bit his lip, obviously trying not to laugh at Becky’s attention-seeking behaviour, and reopened his book. ‘Stop, come on. You *always* do this, and *I* always get in trouble for it! Dad’ll be so mad at me if my grades drop again!’

‘But I’m *bored!*’ Becky gave a groan, grabbing Jareth by his jacket and tugging on him childishly. ‘Jareth. *Jareth!*’

‘Rebecca!’ Professor Crane called. ‘Pick up your things and come sit up front.’

‘What— *No!*’ Becky whined.

‘I gave you plenty of warning,’ Crane told her. ‘But you didn’t listen. Come and take a seat at the front, please.’

Becky gave a huff, planting herself firmer in her chair and crossing her arms.

‘Rebecca, don’t make me ask you again.’

‘C’mon, baby girl,’ Jareth shouldered Becky, before leaning in close and speaking softly; ‘*If you get detention, we won’t be able to hang out at lunch.*’

Another huff, and Becky gathered her things and rose to her feet.

Jareth was right, and she hated that he was right. Because she wanted to spend time with him *now*. But she also didn’t want to *not* spend time with him at lunch....

‘Just there, next to Joe,’ Crane motioned to an empty seat next to a very plain-looking half-elf named Joe Averi.

Joe looked a little less than thrilled for Becky to be sitting next to him— Not that Becky could blame him. He was a very nice, quiet guy. And Becky had accidentally side-swiped him with her shenanigans more than once. Quite literally, in some cases.

He was one of those rare types of boys who looked cuter *without* bruises on his face.

‘What’s up, virgin?’ she greeted, resting her elbow on the table, and her head on her hand.

‘Hey... Becky,’ Joe shuffled nervously in his seat.

*Hm.*

Becky eyed him for a moment.

He was under her, socially. Though not by much.... And from what she’d seen of him, he was really nice....

Maybe... she could talk to him?

The idea of talking to someone on a lower rung of the school’s social ladder was a little bit nerve-wracking, but....

*Talking to Adam was always so much fun.*

Maybe she could try something like that, again, and make a new friend?

‘So, Joe. How you been?’

‘Uh... okay, I guess.’

‘Cool. I like your new hoodie. It suits you.’

‘Thanks?’ Joe swallowed. ‘Uh... your jacket’s cute.’

‘Thanks. My dad made it. Where’d you get yours—’

‘*Bloom*,’ Professor Crane’s tone was one of warning as he put aside the paper he was grading and took another from his pile.

‘*What?*’ Becky huffed, rolling her eyes and scowling. ‘I’m being *nice*!’

‘Let him work.’

‘*Ugh*,’ Becky turned away from Joe, pouting, and opened her textbook so she could flick through the pictures. ‘Whatever....’

God, she couldn’t even be *nice* to her classmates without getting in trouble?! She was *complimenting* him!

Stupid Crane....

Stupid... *everything*.

Becky closed her textbook again and heaved a sigh. She watched Joe from the corner of her eye and saw that, while he was currently working on his history project, he’d left his sketchbook open to a very complicated-looking technical drawing.

‘What’s that?’ she asked, hooking the ring-binding of Joe’s sketchbook in her pinkie and pulling it towards herself. ‘Did you draw this yourself?’

‘Uh—’ Joe quickly pulled the sketchbook back, and swallowed. ‘Y-Yeah. It’s a... technical drawing?’

‘Yeah, I can see *that*!’ Becky snapped, rolling her eyes. ‘But a technical drawing of *what*?’

‘Becky, let Joe work.’

‘*Ugh*!’ Becky slouched in her chair now, dramatically looking away and huffing as Joe went back to his work.

She sat, arms crossed, for at least four minutes before letting out a sigh and looking around.

She was still so, *so* bored....

She needed something to do....

Something to—

*Hm*.

Joe’s hair was sticking up, at the back.

It didn’t look good— Like. At all!

And he probably didn’t even realise it needed to be fixed....

*Ugh*.

She couldn’t let him walk around like that! She had to fix it for him.

It wouldn’t be hard, all she had to do was....

Joe froze, wide-eyed, as Becky’s hand met his hair. ‘*Uuuuh, ah... wha....*’

‘You have this *one* curl that won’t stay down,’ Becky mumbled, flattening the same patch twice and narrowing her eyes when it flicked back up. ‘Hm. Sit still.’

‘Why—’ Joe cut off as Becky fluffed up the back of his hair. ‘*Mmm...!*’

‘Okay, now look at me,’ Becky ordered.

Hesitantly Joe obeyed, and Becky fluffed up his fringe; curling a finger through it to shape it right.

‘There,’ she gave him a grin. ‘Now you’re cute!’

Joe flinched as Becky flicked him on the nose.

‘God though, you’re always *such* a mess,’ Becky shook her head, scrunching up her nose. ‘You really need to take better care of yourself. You know you’re *never* going to get a boyfriend if you don’t, like, look after yourself!’

Joe’s eyes widened, and he opened his mouth to respond— But was cut off by Crane.

‘Rebecca! Go sit in the hall, please.’

‘UGH!’

~~~~~

Somehow, Becky had managed to complete her entire worksheet after being allowed back into history class.

At first she’d stood in the hallway bored and annoyed. She seriously considered just walking away and ditching the rest of class. If she had been sent out by any *other* teacher, she would have been so furious she would have just walked away and left the school entirely— But... she’d thought about how Professor Crane was the only teacher who still trusted her to go to the bathroom halfway through class, and thought better of it.

That was a privilege she didn’t want to lose.

So she’d done some cartwheels. And then some handstands. And then some push-ups. Just to keep herself occupied.

And then after she’d moved around a bit she didn’t feel quite so restless, and she was able to sit down and meditate for a little while until Crane had poked his head out to check on her.

He’d let her sit next to the Slader brothers again. Which was surprisingly nice of him. And it was even nicer that he hadn’t given her detention so that she could keep sitting with them at lunch.

Or, in the case of Jareth— *On* him.

Becky had planted herself firmly on Jareth’s knee, and was revelling that he had his arm around her. Even if he was distracted by his other friends; shouting across the cafeteria and making rude hand gestures—

‘C’mon, Jareth!’ Cackle, a dark-furred gnoll girl, called loudly. ‘Put your squeeze down and get over here!’

Becky felt Jareth’s grip on her tighten, and she could tell he was torn. His friends were all but *killing* each other today and it was clear he wanted to join in the fun.

So Becky tapped at his arm, signalling for him to let her go, and then slipped off his lap onto the bench beside him.

‘Go on,’ Becky grinned, nudging Jareth away. ‘You can go— But you better *win*! Or else you’re spending Saturday night *alone*.’

‘Hah!’ Jareth’s cheeks went red as he pet Becky on the head. ‘I’ll bring you back some teeth, shall I?’

‘Mmmhm!’ Becky hummed, shooing Jareth off towards his friends. ‘Go on, get nice and bruised up for me!’

‘HAH! Freaks,’ a laugh sounded from Becky’s side, and she turned to punch

Katie hard in the shoulder. 'OW! Fuck off, you slut!'

Becky just grinned wickedly back, and pulled her half-finished lunch towards herself. 'Ugh, hot dogs. Gross.'

'I thought you liked hot dogs?' Marilyn turned from her conversation with Jezzibeth and leant on the table. 'You always get them when we go out.'

'I like hot dogs that are *cooked good*,' Becky retorted. 'Like with cheese and proper sauce. This is just... *wet-ish meat* inside some stale bread.'

Jezzibeth gave Becky a nod of agreement as Katie let out another laugh.

'Honestly I'm surprised you don't just swallow it *whole*!' she teased. 'With all the dicks you suck, it shouldn't be too hard to choke down a sausage that size—'

Becky slammed her fist into Katie's shoulder again, causing Jezzibeth to flinch (and Marilyn to... not notice as she played mindlessly with her sleeve).

The noise Katie made was almost inhuman. And it was quickly followed up by her own fist being slammed down onto Becky's thigh.

Becky took a deep breath. And held it for a moment. Then made a noise very similar to Katie's own as she doubled over in pain.

'Becky! Katie!' Jezzibeth gasped. 'Oh, no— Not again— Don't do this *again*!'

The two fighty girls both took deep breaths, eyeing each other... before breaking out into snickers.

'We're fine, Jezz,' Becky said, waving a dismissive hand. 'We're just playing around. Right?'

'Hah, maybe *you're* playing around. But I'm dead serious!' Katie grinned. 'I bet that you could swallow that hot dog whole, if you tried.'

'Oh...' Jezzibeth looked queasy at the suggestion.

'And why the *fuck* would I *try* to swallow it whole?' Becky scoffed.

'I dunno,' Katie shrugged. 'Morbid curiosity?'

There was a moment of quiet between the girls, only broken by the sound of Jareth and his friends play-fighting on the other side of the cafeteria....

Becky gave a hum and a nod, turning to her tray and removing the hot dog from its bun. 'Hm. Actually yeah. Now I'm curious if I can actually do it.'

'*Becky*—' Jezzibeth put her face in her hands; trying not to look as Becky threw her head back, but seemingly unable to fully look away.

'YES, *DO IT*!' Katie shouted, slamming her hands on the table and cheering on her friend. 'C'MON!'

It went down even easier than Becky was expecting, and she threw up her hands in victory. 'Holy *fuck*!' she exclaimed. 'Guess who just got a new party trick?! Me, bitches! *ME*!'

'*I think I'm going to ill*,' Jezzibeth mumbled, finally averting her gaze to the floor.

'WOO!' Katie cheered, leaping to her feet and slapping Becky on the back. 'You fucking *slut*!'

'Yeah I am!' Becky cackled. 'Oh, and I can fit my whole *fist* in my mouth, too! Look! Look!'

It took very little effort for Becky to fit her fist into her mouth— But then, as soon as it was in there, she was hit with an *overwhelming* feeling of self-consciousness.

She was being weird.

And everyone was watching.

She had to be normal.

Be normal.

Normal.

Oh god— Quickly! Stop being weird!

Becky pulled her fist from her mouth and cleared her throat, trying to act like everything was fine as she turned back to her plate and started eating her empty bun.

Just. Be normal, she told herself. Act like that was a normal thing to do, and maybe you can trick everything into thinking it was....

Becky was suddenly feeling very, very small.

Everyone was still watching her— Especially the boys.

And so was that girl, Mattel Masters. And her friends, too. The *most* normal and *most* popular girls in the whole school were *staring right at her*.

And they looked... perplexed.

Becky thought she was going to be sick, and not from the entire unchewed hot dog that sat in her stomach....

But then Mattel laughed. A genuine laugh. And she gave Becky a humoured-but-friendly smile before turning back to her friends.

Becky felt a lot less sick, after that.

Mattel's smile was really pretty....

She'd never noticed just *how* pretty it was, before now—

Katie's hand met Becky's shoulder, and she was pulled from her thoughts and back to her friends.

'I think Jareth liked what he just saw!' Katie joked.

'Oof,' Becky covered her mouth. '*Jareth* saw that?!'

'Aw, don't look so upset, Beck,' Katie laughed. 'Of all the things he's seen you swallow over the years, at least this was actually *food* and not a frog!'

'Or a rock,' Jezzibeth commented, shaking her head.

'Or mud!'

'Or paper.'

'Or vacuum lint!'

'Or feathers.'

'Or that dead lizard you found!'

'Shh!' Becky shushed her friends. 'Guys, come *on!* That was all a *long* time ago! I don't just put random things in my mouth anymore! *Well*. Maybe like. Berries from the woods and stuff. But not like, *weird* stuff!'

'Becky ate vacuum lint?' Marilyn asked, finally escaping the empty abyss of her own head and joining the conversation. 'When?'

'Oh, god, when *was* that?' Katie tapped her chin. 'She was in second... maybe third grade? Oh, no, yeah! Third grade, cos that was right before your fight with Wendy!'

Becky felt her heart sink.

Don't remind me. That was when everything started going wrong.... she thought, turning away from her friends and watching as one of her goblin classmates (a dweeby little thing called *Miltoast*) headed towards the vending machine.

She tuned out her friends' teasing as she watched the goblin struggle to reach high enough to insert his money and use the keypad.

God, he was so pathetic that it was kind of sad.

Poor thing.

The machine's corkscrew mechanism spun, then, bringing Toast's drink right to the edge of the drop and... stopping short; the can hanging precariously onto the very end of the spiral.

The boy's oversized ears drooped even more than usual and he let out a sigh and turned to walk away.

He looked so, so pathetic.

God, it was *unbearable!*

'Hey, short-stack!' Becky called out, and before she knew what she was doing she had stood up and was making her way over to the vending machine. 'That fucking thing take your change, huh?'

Toast blushed, pulling his ears tight around himself as at least half the cafeteria turned to look at the pair.

'I'm so *sick* of that useless thing! This school needs to get shit that *works!*' Becky blurted, storming over. She pushed past Toast, almost knocking him down, and gave the machine a mighty *KICK* in the side.

It spun to life and dropped Toast's drink; which Becky retrieved and threw to the goblin. Though he fumbled the catch and it hit him in the side of the head with a heavy *thud*.

'Oh, man, Toast! You're as useless as the vending machine!' she joked, making to walk past him back to her table.

And as she did, she raised her fist and he flinched; letting out a cry and lifting his hand to protect himself.

'Hah! Loser. That's two for flinching,' Becky cackled, planting two hard punches into the goblin's shoulder and grinning when he rubbed it and whimpered. 'Aw, grow some balls, you weenie! You're *fine!* Anyway, enjoy your drink. Hope it's not too shaken up for you!'

'Th... thanks?'

~~~~~

Fourth period was the easiest class for Becky to participate in.

P.E.

She actually *liked* P.E.

Not only did it let her move around and not involve any reading, but all of her friends were in the same P.E class.

Though currently, as teams were being picked for their dodgeball game, it looked like they were being split up.

Jareth and Benny had been inevitably separated; as soon as one was picked the other was scooped up. And for good reason— There had only been *one* time the Slader boys ended up on the same team, and they had *flattened* the rest of the class.

Becky pressed into Benny's side, grinning up at him. 'Hey.'

'Hey,' Benny chuckled. 'Not flirting with Jareth anymore?'

‘Hmm.... He’s all the way over there,’ Becky shrugged, turning to her friend and giving him a silly little wave. ‘And you’re right here. It’s a no-brainer, really.’

‘Slut,’ Benny joked.

‘Oh come on you *love* it—‘

Becky was cut off by their teacher telling them to take their places in opposite sides of the gym.

*Uuuuugh.*

Roadkill Romero was bitching again.

Something about not wanting to participate or having a note or whatever....

Annoying.

But *fine*.

If he didn’t want to be a part of this then Becky was happy to get his useless self out early—

The whistle blew, and the gym sprang to life.

Becky was the first at the balls, which resulted in Katie playfully shouting out some sex joke or another (Becky was too busy focusing to pay attention). She reeled her arm back, winding up a throw.... And launched the ball with an over-arm directly into Romero’s gut.

Even though he’d been standing at the back of the court, it hit him with a *lot* of force. He’d clearly not been expecting to be hit so soon, either; because the noise he made was one of surprise.

Surprise and pain....

It wasn’t even four seconds into the game and the teacher had to blow her whistle again because Romero collapsed face-down on the floor, wheezing and struggling for breath.

Becky winced.

She hadn’t meant to hit him *that* hard.

‘You think he’ll be okay?’ she asked Adam as he walked passed her.

Adam gave a hesitant shrug.

Well... at least the teacher was letting him sit out, now.

‘Bloom, watch your overhand!’ the teacher demanded. ‘This is a game, not a warzone.’

‘Yeah, whatever, sorry!’ Becky frowned as she was scolded. She’d only hit Romero as hard as she hit everyone else; it wasn’t *her* fault he was such a wimp!

The whistle blew again and the game restarted; with just as much violence as before, as Becky saw poor Nikki Nettlewick quite literally *disappear* into the cascade of balls that were thrown at her.

Then there was a horrible *CRACK*ing sound, and Becky saw Jareth had gotten Benny square in the chest with a hard throw at close range— Not that Benny seemed to notice; Jareth may have thrown with the force of a medieval catapult, but Benny was built like an actual war tank. He just rubbed his chest like it was a minor inconvenience and headed for the sidelines.

Then, Jareth grabbed another ball and aimed it for J.T Falcon... who went down like a sack of potatoes.

He grabbed another two balls, one of which Jareth threw at Adam— But Becky jumped between, smacking the ball away with her own and spinning around to face Jareth as he hesitated throwing the other at her.

‘Hey babe!’ she exclaimed, before launching her ball and smacking him full-force in the stomach.

There was a chorus of “*oooooh!*”s and teasing laughter from the bench as Jareth stumbled back in surprise.

‘Cold!’ Benny shouted. ‘Oh, *SO* cold! HAH! How’s it feel, Jareth! How’s it—’

Becky spun around, refusing to let herself get distracted as another ball came for her and Adam. She caught it easily, turning and launching it at a classmate and getting two out in one motion.

And then Adam blocked a ball from her back; scooping it up and doing the same.

‘WOO! Go off, baseball boy!’ Becky cheered, punching Adam playfully as she passed him and hurried to the other side of the gym to face-off with Katie....

Which was a mistake, as Katie fought with *force*, and Becky fumbled her catch and was sent to the bench.

‘EAT SHIT!’ Katie shouted at her.

‘Language, Mossward!’ the teacher snapped.

Becky couldn’t help but laugh as she took her place with her other out teammates.

It wouldn’t be too long before she was cycled back in; Adam was catching balls faster than the other team could throw them!

They always made the mistake of thinking that, because he was big, he was a good target.

‘Psh,’ Becky heard a scoff to her left, and eyed the girl who sat down next to her. It was *Madilynne*. Another of the cheerleaders who had decided that she (for some reason or another) didn’t like Becky.

She was always trying to pick a fight. Which, of course, Becky was *more than happy* to oblige....

‘Wow, you’re really *staring* at Adam,’ Madilynne scoffed. ‘And right after you defend him over Jareth? What. You like him or something?’

‘He’s the best player in the school,’ Becky grumbled back, not taking her eyes off her friend. *And one of my best friends....* ‘I’d have to be *stupid* to let Jareth just get him out like that!’

‘You *are* stupid,’ Madilynne sniffed.

‘And you’re a cunt,’ Becky retorted, coolly.

‘Ugh,’ Madilynne rolled her eyes, and scowled. ‘Honestly, you’re such a whore. I *wouldn’t* put it past you to fuck a reborn!’

‘What the *hell* do you mean by that?!’ Becky snapped, sitting up straight and turning to glare at Madilynne.

What did she think was wrong with reborns?!

Sure, Adam wasn’t her *type*— But that had nothing to do with his *race*!

How— Dare she?! How *dare* she talk about Adam like that?!

Like he wasn’t a *whole person* worthy of love?!

Becky set her jaw; *but she couldn’t say anything*.

Nobody knew they were friends.

He was one of the most unpopular kids in school (for some reason she didn’t get— He was perfectly nice, in her opinion!) and she couldn’t risk being open about their friendship and losing the reputation she’d worked so hard to build.

'No response?' Madilynne gloated.

'Don't... call me a whore,' Becky said, slowly. Though it wasn't what she actually *wanted* to say. She wanted to say "*eat shit and die, you fucking cunt. Adam's a great guy!*"

But that would make things harder. And more complicated. And she couldn't deal with that.

She just couldn't *deal* with that!

God, something in the back of Becky's mind was screaming about some sort of irony, but she was too furious to put her finger on it.

Something, somehow... she was being a hypocrite somehow. She could *feel* it. But she had *no idea how*.

And she didn't have time to think on it as Madilynne stood up and turned to her, looking furiously in her eyes and saying, loud and slow; '*Whore.*'

Then, everything happened so fast.

Becky's fist met the side of Madilynne's jaw.

And then Madilynne's foot met her own.

Someone screamed.

Becky kicked Madilynne in the crotch.

The teacher yelled but went ignored as Madilynne shoved Becky back and she tripped.

Benny caught Becky, stopping her from hitting the floor and backing away as she pushed herself out of his arms. Clearly he had seen her in enough fights to know not to try and hold her back.

Madilynne kicked at Becky again, who dodged and grabbed her foot, tugging her to the floor and leaping onto her back to pin her down.

'WHORE!' Madilynne screamed as Becky straddled her, squeezing her thigh tight around the girl's middle and gripping her hair in her fists like she was attempting to ride horse.

Then, she started slamming Madilynne's face into the ground.

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

'REBECCA! GET OFF HER!' the teacher shouted; taking a fearful step back instead of approaching. 'STOP IT!'

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

'REBECCA, STOP!'

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

'W-Wendy! Go get the principal! *Now! Hurry!*'

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

SLAM!

‘DON’T! YOU! EVER! CALL! ME! A! WHORE! AGAIN!’ Becky gave Madilynne’s face one last hard SLAM into the gymnasium floor before she released the girl’s hair and stood up; brushing her own out of her eyes.

‘R-Rebecca—’ the teacher began.

‘I know. Detention. *Whatever.*’

~~~~~

Becky had sat in Principal Bates’ office for at least twenty minutes as they’d tried to contact her father. And then it had taken another thirty until he’d shown up.

Now she was huffing and listening as Ken argued with Bates, trying to defend her repeatedly slamming another student’s face into the floor.

God.

Why couldn’t he just *get angry at her* like a *normal* dad would?!

She’d beaten someone up, for fuck’s sake! He should have been *fuming* at her!

But, instead, he was saying that the teacher should have been paying more attention?! That she should have intervened before it got physical?!

UGH!

Isa wouldn’t have let her get away with this.

Why couldn’t he be more like Isa, and just *yell* at her?!

But *nooooo*.

She couldn’t do any wrong in his eyes. For some fucking reason.

Idiot....

She was literally sitting here with *someone else’s blood on her face* while Principal Bates threatened to *expel* her.

‘It’s just one incident after the other!’ Bates exclaimed. ‘And, now, I don’t *want* to expel her. I know if I do she’s got no other options, and it’s just going to cause her more problems in the long term but— But I have to consider the *safety* of our other students! She can’t keep reacting with violence— Do you know *how many* students she’s been in fights with today?!’

Ken let out a breath and shook his head.

‘Five.’

‘What?! No I *haven’t!*’ Becky exclaimed. ‘Name them!’

‘Baloney,’ Principal Bates retorted, counting on his fingers. ‘Katie, Miltoast, Romero, Madilynne.’

‘Hey— *No!*’ Becky slammed a hand on the desk, rising to her feet furiously. ‘That’s not fair! Baloney *broke* my phone! And Katie and I were just messing around— And I was being *nice* to Toast! He was just being a *baby* about it! And I didn’t *mean* to hurt Romero, I was *playing the game the teacher made us play!* It’s not *my* fault that *she* didn’t let him sit out!’

‘And I heard that you were touching another student’s hair without their consent!’ Bates shot back.

‘You mean Joe? I was *fixing* it for him!’ Becky defended, her voice rising. ‘It looked *bad* and I was *helping* him!’

‘It is not your *right* to tell other students how to dress!’

‘Oh, but *you* can tell *me* how to dress?! That’s not *fair*!’

‘Yes!’ Bates exclaimed. ‘It is fair! I’m your *teacher*!’

‘THAT’S STUPID!’ Becky snapped, picking up Bates’ name plague and launching it through the window, shattering the glass and causing both her father and the principal to flinch. ‘*You’re* stupid! This whole stupid *school* is stupid! I *hate* it here! You *should* expel me! Then we’d *both* be happier!’

‘Non— Becky, bébé, shh— Calm down,’ Ken quickly joined his daughter standing up, and placed a hand on her shoulder. ‘It is okay. I will pay for the window and—’

‘Don’t *touch* me!’ Becky growled, yanking away from her father. ‘And stop telling me it’s okay! You don’t know *anything*!’

‘Becky...’ Ken looked hurt as he withdrew his hand. ‘Uh. I’m sorry. Master Bates? I think it might be best if I took Becky home.’

Both Becky and Principal Bates paused, staring at Ken for a long moment.

‘I’m... sorry? What did you just call me?’ Principal Bates asked, slowly.

‘Master Bates?’ Ken repeated, simply; not seeming to understand what exactly had caused the other man pause. ‘As in... headmaster? Of the school. Yes? You are the headmaster. And your name is Bates? Therefore... Master Bates?’

The sheer force of laugh that escaped Becky had her on her *knees*.

‘MASTER BATES!’ she exclaimed, tears in her eyes as she struggled to breathe. ‘MASTER! BATES! YOUR NAME! IS MASTER! BATES!’

Principal Bates just put a face in his hand and took a deep breath. ‘Mr Bloom? I highly suggest that you consider sending Becky to an anger management program. Because if this behaviour continues I won’t have much of a choice but to expel her.’

Becky was still too busy laughing to be upset at the suggestion that she had anger issues.

Master Bates!

What a *shitty* name!

Oh, he was *never* going to live this one down— Not once she told Katie about it!

‘I’ll... consider it,’ Ken said, slowly, as he pulled his daughter off the floor and ushered her towards the door. ‘Thank you for the suggestion, Master Bates.’

MASTER BATES!

‘Please— Call me *Principal* Bates,’ Bates sighed. ‘I’ll invoice you for the window... is your email address the same as last time?’

‘Yes, it is,’ Ken said over his shoulder. He then shut the door behind him before Bates could call him back, and began herding his daughter into the parking lot.

Becky was too focused on trying to breathe for her to argue as Ken pulled on her seatbelt and started the drive home.

She couldn’t stop laughing for a good five minutes... and even after that, she was still snickering under her breath.

Then, her father let out long sigh. ‘Bébé? What happened today? What is *your* side of the story in all of this?’

‘What?’

‘You said Baloney broke your phone,’ Ken said. ‘Did he not get in trouble for

that? What happened? I want to hear it from you.'

'Baloney... ugh,' Becky let out her own sigh. 'He wasn't paying attention, and walked into me. And I dropped my phone and it stopped working. I may have... overreacted. And punched him.'

'Ah.... And Toast?'

'I *helped* him!' Becky exclaimed. 'The vending machine ate his money, so I got his drink out for him! I don't know *what* they think I did wrong to *him*!'

'I see,' Ken nodded. 'Katie, I can guess you were just punching each other for fun?'

'Yeah. The usual.'

'Yes, oui. And Romero was during...?'

'Dodgeball,' Becky huffed.

'Ah, say no more. That was not on you— His mother does not want him playing sports. He should have had a note!'

'He *did* have a note!' Becky exclaimed. 'But the teacher made him join in *anyway*! I was just trying to get him out early so he wouldn't stand around bitching or whatever.'

'So you were trying to help him?'

'Eh. Help is a *strong* word,' Becky made a face. 'I was trying to shut him up.'

'Fair. His father used to talk all the time, too,' Ken shrugged. 'If I had the chance to knock him unconscious, I think I would have, too.'

Becky huffed again. *He didn't have to lie to her to make her feel better.*

'And Madilynne? What did she do?'

'She called me a whore,' Becky snorted.

'Yes. Master Bates said that.... But what did she *actually* do?' Ken asked, much to Becky's surprise.

'Huh?'

'You've never gotten in a fight that bad over being called a whore,' Ken said.

'So she must have said something else. What was it?'

'She... insulted Adam,' Becky admitted.

'Ah,' Ken gave a slow now. 'And you were defending him?'

Becky shrugged. 'Probably. I dunno. I guess so.'

'Mm,' Ken sighed. 'Is there... anything else I should know about?'

'Uh. Professor Crane made me sit in the hall,' Becky admitted. Then, she gave her father a nervous smile. 'And I... got a... C plus in English.'

'C plus?! In *English*?!' Ken exclaimed— And Becky's face fell into a scowl.

He didn't have to sound so surprised at the idea of her achieving something....

'Oh— That is *very* good! What for?'

'I, like, *argued* with the teacher?' Becky recalled, feeling what little pride she'd had over her grade fading at her father's patronising reaction. 'About why I didn't like the book we're reading. Apparently it showed him that I "*understood the content*" or something.... He updated his grade on the worksheet he gave the class last lesson, and wants you to sign it.'

'Ah! Of course I can!' Ken beamed. 'But I would like it back! I want to hang it up!'

Ugh.

Becky crossed her arms and looked out the window at the houses passing them by.

He could just *say* it was a childish thing to be happy about. He didn't have to treat her like she was a kid to make his point!

'Yeah, sure, whatever.'

~~~~~

The drive home with her father had *sucked*, but it still didn't suck as much as Isa's reaction when she came back from grocery shopping and found Becky laying on the couch.

She was *furious* at the girl. And even Ken's beaming about the good grade she'd gotten hadn't stopped the drow from giving her an hour-long lecture.

Ugh.

She had been so mad that Ken had suggested she go out for the night and relax— See her movie early. Tonight, instead of tomorrow.

Isa had been hesitant, of course. But with some gentle prodding she had eventually caved and headed out to Warm Waters to relax. And Becky had overheard her and Ken talking about something *else* that had happened today, and had felt bad.

She wasn't the only one having a hard time, it sounded like....

Luckily she'd managed to catch Isa at the car and give her a tight hug. And the drow had kissed her hair and told her that it was alright; it was just one of those days.... Tomorrow would be better.

Becky wasn't sure she believed that.

Tomorrow would probably suck, too....

That thought had occupied her mind for the entire evening, spiking her anxieties up and up until her father had gone into his study to work and she'd swiped two bottles of wine and headed out into the woods to drink.

And drink, she had done.

She was about halfway through the first bottle when she'd started feeling... queasy.

*Very* queasy.

Queasy enough that the only way she could think to make the world stop dancing around her was to lay face-down with her head in a hole and let out a long, low groan so she could echolocate like a bat and keep her brain from doing a thousand flips inside her own head.

That was how the rangers found her; moaning and groaning with her head in a hole and only one shoe.

They'd confiscated her drinks (even though she'd complained and told them that they were *stealing* from her!) and sat her down while they called her father— Who didn't pick up.

Thirty minutes of calling him lead to nothing, so they'd contacted the police to come and take her home.

Apparently Officer Jackie had volunteered....

Becky scowled at him from her place in the back of his car.

He probably did it to be *smug* at her. Because they had a *history* together.



*Ugh....* She'd show him....

'You're *stupid!*' Becky grumbled, leaning forward and rattling at the wire between them. 'Taking me *home....* Dad's not gonna yell at me, you know.... He *never* yells at me!'

'I'm just trying to keep you safe,' said Jackie. 'Whether or not your father punishes you for this is not my business.'

Becky blew a raspberry and slammed her hands onto the wire again. 'There's no *point* in taking me home! Cos Mum's...' her voice dropped into a miserable tone, and her eyes slowly fell to the floor. 'Mum can't yell at me anymore. There's nobody to control me anymore! *Nobody to keep me in control....*'

Jackie let out a sigh as Becky coughed up a burp of vomit onto his car's floor.

'I...' Becky felt tears in her eyes. 'I miss her....'

'I know,' Jackie said, softly.

A quiet moment passed where Becky felt very, *very* queasy again, and had to hold onto her own head to stop it spinning.

Then, she looked up again; still gripping her head so she could balance herself properly. 'You and I—' she hiccuped. 'We're... we're both going to *hell*. Me cos I'm... I'm a very evil little girl who can't behave herself... and you cos you're a *cop*. And Mum always said cops were an... an institutional... they... they held up the power structures of.... Mum said cops all belong in *hell*.'

'She never did like me,' Jackie agreed, simply.

'You always say... you always say you're gonna keep me safe... but you won't be keeping me safe when we're stuck in *hell* together!'

'I'll certainly be trying,' Jackie said.

Becky gave a loud huff and lay back, resting her head on the car's window.

'Officer Jackie?'

'Yes, Rebecca?'

'I... love you.'

'Do you now?'

'In a hateful way.'

'Hm. I see.'

'Thank you for caring, but also... fuck you.'

She thought she heard Jackie chuckle.

'Hey...' she leant forward again, pressing her face against the wire. 'Can I tell you a secret?'

'Go ahead.'

'I'm drunk.'

'Ah.'

'I stole... two bottles of wine from my dad. And now I'm drunk. And in a cop car. And he's not gonna care.'

'He *will* care,' Jackie reassured.

'Nuh-*UH!*' Becky grumbled. 'He's gonna— You know what he's gonna say? He's gonna say; "*That's okay. I'm not mad, mon bébé. Sleep it off.*" And then I'm gonna go to bed! And he's gonna go to bed! And Isa's gonna come home from her movie, and Dad's not gonna tell her you brought me home! She's just gonna smell it on me in the morning and look at me with that disappointed look she always looks at me with. And she's going to call me *Rebecca* instead of *Becky*, so that I

know she's mad at me. And—'

Becky cut off as she was sick again; this time throwing up through the wire and into the front of Jackie's car.

'Ugh.... Sorry,' she mumbled, flopping back.

'That's alright...' Jackie said, slowly, examining the vomit she'd heaved onto his dashboard. 'Hm.... Have you eaten, Rebecca?'

'Not since... school ended.... I skipped dinner.'

'You skipped dinner to go drinking?'

'Mmhm.'

Jackie gave a heavy sigh and pulled over. He went through his glove compartment for a moment before getting out of his car and walking around to Becky's seat.

Becky felt the door open and almost fell out; steadying herself just in time and looking up to see Jackie offering her a box of tissues and a pack of dry, plain biscuits.

'Eat something and clean yourself up,' he told her.

Slowly, Becky took them both from him and did as she was told.

The biscuits settled her stomach and she felt the world slowing down around her as she wiped her sick off herself....

Though she struggled with her face, and Jackie had to help her.

'I know I can't stop you from doing this sort of thing,' he said seriously, wiping the sick out of Becky's nose. 'So, next time you sneak out to drink, promise me you'll at least eat something first?'

'Mm... okay....'

'Thank you,' Jackie stood up, then, and shut the car door so he could head back around to the driver's side. He climbed in and started driving again, a little bit slower than before.

Becky was grateful for Jackie's care. It helped, and she didn't throw up again.... Though, as they pulled up outside her house, it *did* make her feel like she was going to cry.

*Why did the cops care about her more than her own father...?*

'You are my only consistency,' she mumbled as Jackie opened the door. Then, when he lent in to try and help her to her feet, she threw her arms around him and squeezed him in a tight hug. 'I hope you *die*....'

'That's not very nice now, is it?' Jackie asked simply, lifting Becky up and attempting to peel her off himself.

'Mm... No.... I'm sorry...' Becky sighed, releasing Jackie and looking to the ground. 'You're always trying so hard to be nice to me.... Thank you....'

She leant in to peck a kiss on Jackie's cheek— And he pulled away from her, blocking her with a hand as his eyes widened.

'No! No. Rebecca. That's *not* appropriate.'

'But I'm *French*!' Becky blurted, swaying dangerously.

'Still not okay,' Jackie said, putting a hand on her arm to hold her steady. 'You don't kiss adults.'

'You don't kiss adults!' Becky retorted childishly.

'Adults are the *only* people I kiss.'

'You're being, like, so rude right now,' Becky huffed. 'When I was in France, la

bise was a *thing*! And it meant you were my *friend*! But if you don't want to be friends with me then *fine*!

'As much as I'd love to be your friend, Rebecca, you know I can't be,' Jackie said, guiding Becky through her front yard. He let her lean on him, keeping her steady as he walked her to the door. 'I'm an authoritative figure in your life. I have power over you, and it wouldn't be fair on you to call that a friendship.'

'You're so smart,' Becky sniffed, wrapping her arm around Jackie and almost pulling him down in her attempt to hug him again. 'Can you make Dad mad at me? He needs to be mad at me.'

'I'll do my best,' Jackie promised, knocking on the door.

There was no answer.

So he knocked again; raising his brow as there was a loud *thud* from the direction of the lounge.

Ken had tripped on the coffee table again, and it took him a moment to get to the door.

Slowly, Ken peeked out; heaving a sigh when he saw his daughter and Jackie.

'Oh, again?' he asked, opening the door wide and reaching for his daughter.

'What did you do, now?'

'She was in the woods drinking,' Jackie said. 'On her own.'

'Oh, no...' Ken shook his head and gently took Becky by the arm. 'It's been a hard day.... That's okay. Come on, mon bébé. I'm not mad. Sleep it off, hm? Let's get you to—'

'NO!' Becky screeched, throwing off her father's hands and instead clinging to Jackie.

He'd said *exactly* what she knew he'd say!

He'd dismissed her *exactly* like she knew he would!

And she was going to give him a piece of her *mind* about it!

'Leave me *alone*, Dad! You *suck*!'

'Becky—'

'I hate you!' Becky cried. 'I hate you! I *hate* you!'

She spat at her father's face; loud and violently to make her point.

Ken flinched as it hit its mark, and froze.

Becky felt her heart beating hard and fast as the two men she was with stood in shock.

Yes!

Yes!

*That* should get something out of him!

*React*!

There was a long, long moment of silence as Becky's words hung in the air....

And then Ken swallowed, and wiped his face on his sleeve, and let out a tired sigh.

'*That's okay*,' he said, softly, as he took his daughter by the arm and led her towards the stairs. 'Come. Let's get you to bed.... Isa will be upset if she sees you like this.'

*Dammit*....

Dammit, dammit, *dammit*!

He really didn't care!

He didn't give a *shit*!  
Why wouldn't he get *angry*?!  
'Thank you for bringing her home, officer,' Ken threw over his shoulder. 'I will handle her from here.'  
'Good luck,' Jackie offered, closing the door behind him.  
And with him went all of Becky's fight.  
She *tried* to resist her father. She *tried* to complain, and struggle, and pull out of his grip... but she just... *couldn't*.  
She was too tired.  
So, defeated, she let Ken take her to her room and lay her in bed.  
'You must be freezing,' he said, gently, pulling up her blanket.  
'No! I'm not cold!' Becky lied, pushing her blanket off again and rolling over in a huff. 'Leave me *alone*!'  
For once, Ken didn't need to be told twice.  
Becky heard her bedroom door shut quietly behind her father as he crept out, and she scowled at herself.  
*He really gave up on her that easy, huh?*  
He didn't push, even though it was clear she was lying?  
He really didn't care about her....  
*Click.*  
A low rumble and a *whoosh* of air sounded from the vent above her, and she felt her room begin to warm up as the heater powered on.

—END—

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