

Panic Attack

By C. Jade Wyton

Becky Bloom falls asleep in class and awakes from a nightmare scared and confused. Her service animal in training, Don, quickly aims to comfort her.

Contains descriptions of self-harm, PTSD/panic attack, and unreality.

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Becky had been driving home from... somewhere.  
Somewhere out in the woods, where the trees grew tall and loomed down in dark shadows over the road.  
She couldn't remember why she had pulled over.  
Pulled over...?  
*No.*  
She opened her eyes, lifting her heavy head from the steering wheel.  
She'd *crashed*.  
Into a tree....  
A quiet *crunch* sounded from Becky's side, and she slowly turned to look back at the road.  
It was a man. Standing in the middle of the asphalt.  
He was too far away to make out....  
Becky dropped her head back down onto the wheel, letting out a groan.  
Her head was spinning.  
And the world was hazy.  
Everything was... *wrong*. But she wasn't sure *how* it was wrong.  
Another crunch, and Becky looked to her side.  
The man was standing just outside her passenger-side window now....  
Becky's heart began to pound as her eyes trailed up to his face.  
He had— *No face!*  
It was just a mess of viscous, oozing, white and black *sludge* that dripped down and splattered onto the passenger seat as he leant forward through the shattered window and reached for her.  
'No—' Becky cried, trying to move away from him. 'No— Don't touch me! Don't—'  
His burning-hot hand gripped her wrist and twisted it, and Becky fell backwards with a scream; her world suddenly different and bright and crowded.  
*Where was she?!*  
Someone grabbed her shoulder, and she let out another cry and lashed out at the blurry figure; slamming a fist into the side of their head before skittering backwards along the ground as far back as she could.  
'GET AWAY FROM ME!' she screamed. 'PLEASE! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! I DON'T KNOW YOU!'  
There was a great uproar of muffled sound and the scattering of blurry,

unclear figures as Becky let out another loud cry.

It was wrong!

It was wrong!

All of her senses were wrong!

Her wrist— He'd *broken* her *wrist*!

And she could *feel* it!

But she *couldn't* feel it!

Not how she was *supposed* to feel it!

It wasn't right!

It was supposed to *hurt*!

It was supposed! To hurt!

Becky felt another scream escape her, and she bit hard into her wrist.

The harsh tang of blood flooded her lips and sharp pain stung her skin.

*This!*

This was what it was supposed to feel like!

It was supposed to *hurt*!

Becky bit down harder, drawing more blood.

Then, there was a concerned honking sound, and she felt a weight land on her shoulder.

'Don?' she whimpered. '*Is that you?*'

Don gave another honk as his beak pecked at Becky's lips, worming its way between her mouth and her wrist and forcing her to stop biting herself.

'Don?' she repeated. 'What are you doing here?'

A honk, a groan, and Don hopped into Becky's lap and settled down, panting heavily.

Becky swallowed as Don did, and slowly put her hands on his back.

She was with Don.

So... nothing bad was happening to her.

*Was it?*

No. She was okay.

Don was here.

And he was calm.

He was calm.

'*Good boy,*' she whispered. '*Good boy. Thank you. What would I do without you?*'

'Becky?'

Becky looked up, and saw the concerned face of her teacher —Professor Crane— peering down at her.

'Professor?' Becky stared at him, her hands gently running over Don.

'Are you alright?' he asked, softly. 'What happened?'

'I... don't know?' Becky admitted. 'I think I had a panic attack, or a bad dream? Where am I?'

'You're in school,' Crane explained, softly, before gently reaching out and taking Becky by the arm. 'Is that blood— Ah.... What have you done to yourself?'

'I don't know,' Becky repeated.

'Malinka?' Crane leant back, and Becky finally realised where she was.

She was in homeroom.

In the corner of the room.  
Under a table.  
She... must have fallen asleep in class, and had a nightmare.  
She wasn't surprised. She'd barely been sleeping. And she remembered being *exhausted* at breakfast....

'Malinka?' Crane repeated. 'Could you please take Becky to the nurse?'

'Oh, yeah— Of course,' Malinka stepped forward from a crowd Becky had barely noticed was there, and crouched down beside Crane. 'Becky? Hey. You alright?'

Becky nodded.

'Is she okay?' Jareth's voice asked, and he tried to join Malinka by Crane's side. Becky could see Jareth had a forming bruise, just by his eye, and felt her heart squeeze tight.

*Had she done that to him?*

'I can take her to the nurse,' Jareth offered.

'No. You've left school grounds with her too many times for me to allow that,' Crane said, petting Jareth on the shoulder in an apologetic way. 'I asked Malinka for a reason.'

'Come on, Becky,' Malinka urged, offering her hand to Becky. 'You need to get that looked at....'

Becky took her friend's hand and let herself be pulled out from under the desk.

She felt like she was still dreaming as she looked around in a daze.  
It all seemed so hazy. Like her classmates were barely there.  
Becky's gaze trailed over the crowd before settling on Malinka.  
The tabaxi was holding her by the hand, guiding her to the door.

*Don?*

Becky dug her heels into the ground, turning to search for her mimic.

'Becky—'

'Don?' Becky asked the room.

A honk answered her and Don hurried towards her, the *plat-tap-plat* of his long, thin feet on the hard floor echoing in the silence.

He ran to her and, with a mighty leap, hooked himself around her outstretched arm.

'Good boy,' Becky said, softly, before looking back to Malinka and presenting her with Don. 'He's a good boy.'

'Yeah, he is,' Malinka agreed, carefully sliding an arm around Becky to lead her out of the room. 'Come on. Let's get you to the nurse.'

—END—

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