

# The Coming Calamity

By C. Jade Wyton

*Ken Bloom spent all night worrying about his daughter. She'd been sending photos of a very questionable-looking party she had gone to. And then, when she comes home with a terrifying creature from the woods and starts going on again about the end of the world, Ken doesn't think he's going to be able to handle it....*

***Contains mentions of disaster, mental illness, and violence.***

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Ken had been worried about Becky all night.

He'd been pacing around the house from the moment Mimi had run downstairs to bite at his ankles. He'd heard his daughter shout from the driveway that she was heading out to a party (at *nine* at night! Who *left* the house at nine?!), and then rushed for his phone when he'd heard the notification that signalled his daughter had sent a message to the family group chat.

It was a selfie of her surrounded by some *very* questionable-looking people, that make Ken's worry double.

And then she'd sent the second selfie, with what was clearly *three different warlock patrons* standing behind her conversing, and his worry had turned to anxiety.

And then the third selfie with a terrifyingly huge, black-gnarled tree as the backdrop, and Ken had needed to sit down with his face in his hands for at least half an hour to recover.

The fourth selfie was a photo she took with her arms around some random patron; of whom had a disproportionately large smile that reminded him *far* too much of LaBette.

God, he hoped Becky hadn't been inspired to meet these creatures because of his meeting with that fucking *horrid* woman....

Though, from what he could tell, she'd spent the night with one of her deer friends and his... *father*?

Becky had introduced them as her friend Stick and *his father*, Erkling.... Though Ken couldn't really see the resemblance.

Stick? Ken could handle Stick. He was a scraggly, one-antlered buck that was currently sitting awkwardly next to him as Isa and Erkling conversed at the dining room table....

Erkling; the terrifying God Of The Deer who looked like a shrink-wrapped corpse straight out of a horror movie.

Its elongated fingers, its taunt off-colour skin.... The way it devoured the entire pot of Becky's leftover spaghetti like it hadn't eaten in week (but, from the several ripped-up bags of Doritos that Isa had found pulled from the garbage outside earlier, Ken guessed it had eaten right before Becky had left).... It all made Ken feel very uncomfortable, and all he could do was sit in the lounge

room, his arm draped over the nervous, trembling buck to comfort it while they both listened into the other room as Isa and Erkling discussed very serious things.

An unfathomable creature of great size and power was coming.

It was going to try and destroy the town.

And all of the things Becky had been through— The incident at music festival, the demons with mind-altering powers, meeting the Blessed's god Hastur— *The end of the world*.

All of it was real.

And Becky was right.

Ken almost didn't want to believe it.

It should have been a good thing: his daughter wasn't crazy! At least not... *that* crazy.

But it made him want to be *sick*.

All the dangers Becky had described to him were *real*. And she'd been facing it all on her own, while people thought she was just being crazy and delusional.

While *he'd* thought she was just being....

*God, he was an awful father.*

No wonder she'd hated him for so long!

His phone beeped, and he glanced down at it.

Becky had posted in the family chat, asking Marta for advice on how to keep the animals safe during a natural disaster....

At least she was keeping it *slightly* vague. But he wished she hadn't mentioned a disaster where Isabel was going to see it; the photos of the warlock party were already likely to have the woman going off. He wasn't looking forward to the mess that would happen in the morning....

Morning....

God, the morning was so close....

Ken rose to his feet, and looked around the lounge room.

His lounge room.

In his house.

In this town.

This town that was doomed to be destroyed—

Ken took in a trembling breath, and stumbled to the wall; beginning to pull down the photos of his family that he had hung throughout the years and pile them carefully together on the coffee table.

They couldn't stay here.

*They couldn't stay here!*

The town was going to be *destroyed*!

They had to leave! He had to get his family out! He had to get his *daughter to safety*—

Ken's ear twitched as he heard Becky hurrying downstairs, her pets at her heels.

'Becky!' Ken exclaimed, in unison with Stick's own bellow.

'Dad!' Becky echoed, almost running into her father as he moved to embrace her. 'I have to talk to the erkling about how to get the other druids to help to prepare the wildlife, in case they need to evacuate! We need to figure out how far

this damage is going to go into the woods— How far we need to move everyone, to keep them safe! And— And! Like! It's almost birthing season for the deer, and a lot of stuff like birds are already nesting in preparation for April and— And we have to get everyone to safety, so we can fight this thing—'

'*Becky!*' Ken cut his daughter off, grabbing her by her shoulders as she tried to pass him and turning her to face him. 'Becky, what are you saying?! Can you *hear* yourself?! *Fight* this thing?! What do you *mean* fight this thing?! No— Becky. Listen! Listen to me. *We're leaving.*'

Becky paused, hesitating for a long, long moment, before finally managing; 'What?'

'We're leaving,' Ken repeated, slowly. 'We can't stay here, Becky. We *can't!* If the end of the world is coming we *have* to leave. *Immediately!*'

Becky stared at her father with surprise. As if she thought *he* was the one talking nonsense.

'Becky, we *can't* stay here,' Ken pushed. 'Go upstairs. Pack your things. *Now.* We are leaving.'

Becky still just stared, and it was clear she couldn't believe what she'd heard....

And then Ken's heart twisted as his daughter gave him a very familiar, very hurtful glare.

'You want me to *run away?*' she asked, slowly, her distain at the idea clear.

Ken's breath caught in his throat, and he swallowed. 'I want to *protect you....*'

Becky's expression softened, though only a little, as she averted her gaze and looked to the floor.

'Becky. Becky, please—'

'I'm not leaving, Dad,' Becky said, her voice both firm and sad. 'I *can't* leave unless everyone else has gotten out safely first— And... there are people who aren't *able* to leave. People without the resources to move away.... Animals who can't find new territories.... Patrons bound to the town and its borders—'

'That's *not* your responsibility, Becky!' Ken exclaimed, giving his daughter a shake.

'It *is!*' Becky argued. 'Look— Dad. *You* can leave if you want to! *You* can run away if you're scared! But this town is my *home!* It's the only place I've ever felt I really, *truly belong.* And I'm *not* leaving it to be wiped away like it means *nothing*— Because it doesn't mean nothing! It means *everything!* I don't— I don't care that Shadow Oaks is some stupid, backwater, forgotten town that's falling apart at the seams! It's my *home*, Dad! It's my— It's my *comfortable jacket!* It's my *same shirt every day!* It's all of my good memories! And it's all of my safe foods! And it's all of the people I've ever known and loved! And I *won't. Leave. Them.*'

'Becky...' Ken trailed off as a defiant look found its way to his daughter's face.

It was a look he hadn't seen in a long, long time. But he knew it meant there was no talking her out of this. That she wasn't going to budge. That she would fight him on this, no matter what he said to try and talk sense into her....

Ken felt a long trembling breath escape him as he took his daughter's hands and squeezed them tight. 'Becky, please. You're all I have.'

Becky squeezed his hands back, her defiance turning to sympathy, before a voice spoke from the direction of the dining room.

‘Your daughter is a very brave druid,’ Erkling said, and Ken whirled around to see him in the kitchen doorway, licking his fingers of chip flavouring. ‘She heard the creature’s heartbeat and felt the terror it instilled into the hearts of the warlocks and my fellow patrons— And yet, she is still more willing to stay and look after the town than some of *them* are.... Her and those friends of hers were rather outspoken, at the meeting— Especially that Malinka girl....’

Ken felt queazy as Erkling made a beckoning motion and Stick stumbled over to him. He briefly fussed with the buck’s face; brushing down its fur and wiping goop from his eyes as he spoke comforting words in a language Ken couldn’t comprehend.

Then, as Erkling straightened Stick’s bow-tie collar, he addressed Becky; though he didn’t look at her.

‘Becky?’ he asked, gently.

‘Yes?’ Becky responded, matching his tone.

‘I have a very important spell I would like to teach you,’ Erkling said. ‘Your magic has gotten strong enough for you to learn it, but....’

‘But?’

‘It is going to scare you,’ said Erkling.

Becky swallowed, and Ken wondered if he should say something to comfort her.... But then Erkling looked to her, and continued;

‘You once told me you were worried your hands were weapons,’ Erkling said, taking Becky’s hands and turning them palm-up. ‘Things that could only kill and hurt and maim. But your powers are beautiful. And they exist to bring life into this world.... Your laughter makes flowers bloom, and your touch cures infection. You can make diseased food turn fresh, and dirty water clean. And, if you practice... you can learn to reverse death.’

Ken felt his skin crawl. And he could see by the look on Isa’s face, and the visible shiver that went up his daughter’s body, that they both felt the same terrified feeling he did.

‘I can teach you to bring back creatures that have died,’ Erkling said. ‘Though the window to keep their souls bound to their bodies is... very short. A minute, at most. But... sometimes a minute is all you need.’

‘Does... the magic have a name?’ Becky asked, nervously.

‘Revivify,’ Erkling said, simply.

‘Revivify,’ Becky repeated. ‘I don’t think I’ve heard of that, before....’

Erkling slowly nodded, before releasing Becky’s hands. ‘Are you tired?’

Becky shook her head.

‘Come with me, then,’ Erkling sighed. ‘The sooner you know this, the better.... We’ll start with something small.... A rat, or a mouse. Whichever I catch first.’

—END—

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