

The Necklace

By C. Jade Wyton

Becky Bloom has only recently returned home from a year in France. Life hasn't been easy, even since getting back, and while struggling with her emotions sneaks out for the night. However, things go very wrong when a wild crow steals her mother's necklace.

Contains mentions of grief, and depictions of animal abuse and child neglect.

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When Ken had told Becky that she was going home, she'd thought that things would get better.

That things would feel good and normal again....

But it didn't. Everything was somehow *worse*.

The year she'd spent away had made things... tense. Between her and her friends.

She was happy to see them, and they were happy to see her. Of course *that* was true. But she felt like she'd missed... everything.

Becky would sit with her friends and they'd all talk together. And they'd bring up something that had happened while she was away and she would feel left out. So she wouldn't talk. And the conversation would continue onto things she'd missed, or jokes she didn't get, or people she didn't know.... And then someone would notice she was quiet, and sad, and being left out— So they'd be the good friends they were and try to get her to join in. But they'd do it by asking her questions about her time away. And then her answers... they were either miserable, or obviously a lie. And it made everything worse than when she was quiet.

It hadn't even been two full months since she got back, but she could barely stand to see her friends anymore. It was all just too much.

And on top of it all, she was having trouble putting words in order again. It was like she'd forgotten how, after so long with nobody to speak with but her father and the very (*VERY*) few coworkers of his that spoke english.... Now everything she said came out weird, and stilted, and just didn't sound right or natural anymore....

*Katie had made fun of her for it.*

Becky heaved a sigh and fiddled with the necklace she'd stolen from her parents' room.

It had been her mother's favourite.

Made from real silver, with a line of heart-shaped rubies inset within intricate spirals. Apparently it had been the very first gift Becky's father had ever gotten her. And she'd loved it.

Becky thought it was hideous. Too expensive and fragile and clean for her liking. But it had been her mother's. And it was something she'd seen on around

her neck almost every time she visited.

It felt like a part of her.

And that was exactly why Becky had taken it before heading out.

It was still pretty early; usually Becky waited until at least past one before climbing out her window. But it was just her father watching her tonight. He'd given Isa the night off and, though Isa had been hesitant to leave the two of them home alone, Ken had convinced her to go and see a movie to relax.... And Becky knew it was the perfect night to sneak away. She knew her father wasn't going to notice her leaving.

He'd barely noticed her at all for an entire year, after all. And that was when she'd shared a one-room hotel with him. All she had to do to keep him at bay here was leave her door open a crack and put on YouTube autoplay; he'd then be convinced she was in bed and would avoid even *walking past* her bedroom door in fear of disturbing her.

It was foolproof. She'd been out for almost three hours, now, and the only message she'd received was from Isa, asking her to remind her father to lock the back door before he went to bed (and, with a quick lie and a photo of her father taken the day before, Isa suspected nothing).

Becky's phone vibrated and she looked down at to check the notification; it was a calendar alert, saying that it was midnight and "tomorrow" (*technically* tomorrow, as it was now officially Friday) she was going out with Jezzibeth.

Midnight....

Isa would probably be home, soon.

Becky fondled the ruby necklace, again, running a finger over the polished red surface.

She should probably go back before Isa checked up on her—

A flash of black swooped down from nowhere, and Becky felt the ruby tugged from her hand; the thin silver chain it hung on snapping off her neck as it took to the sky and landed in a nearby tree.

'HEY!' Becky shrieked, turning to watch the crow that had robbed her. 'NO! NOT YOURS!'

The crow gave a happy caw, and hopped from branch to branch, up and up, until it was sitting near the very top of the trunk.

*Hop. Hop. Hop!*

Becky let out a long breath from her nose, and put her hands on her hips as she watched the crow hop over to a nook in the tree and deposit the necklace.

It then turned to her, and gave another caw.

'Give that back,' Becky said, firmly. 'That's not yours.'

Another caw, and the crow hopped back and forth happily.

'If you don't give that back, I'm going to climb up there and get it,' Becky warned.

*Caw! Caw!*

*Hop hop hop!*

'Alright, you're asking for it!' Becky growled, making her way over to the tree. She examined its thick trunk, marred with rough peeling bark, and slipped off her shoes.

'Hey!' a voice called from nearby, and Becky spun around until she found the

source of it. A woman, standing in the front door of the house that the tree belonged to, who had obviously heard her shout. 'Hey, you leave that bird alone! You're old enough to know the law; don't go causing problems with the crows!'

'It stole from me!' Becky growled, stomping her foot. 'If it didn't want a problem, it shouldn't have *made* one!'

'If it stole from you, whatever it took is *gone*,' said the woman, seriously. 'Just forget about it and go home. It's not worth it. Believe me.'

'Oh, va te faire foutre! Putain!' Becky hissed, turning back to the tree and leaping into it. She scrabbled up its side, ignoring the shouts from the woman as she threatened to call the police and hurried back into her house.

*It was a stupid law*, Becky thought as she reached the nook. *That she couldn't take back something that was stolen! Wasn't stealing a crime, too? Why could a bird get away with that, but she couldn't get away with this?*

A screech from the crow, who swooped at her hair; and she batted at it with her free hand.

'Get lost!' Becky hissed. 'I said— OKAY! That's *it*!'

The half-elf wrapped her legs firmly around the branch the crow had been sitting on —squeezing it with her thighs as tight as she could so she didn't fall—and reached out, grabbing the bird in mid-air and slamming it down onto the branch to pin it.

She heard a scream from below, looking down to see the woman drop her phone in shock.

Becky just scoffed as she took the animal's beak in one hand, and pressed its body and wings down with another. Not enough to hurt it; but enough to hold it still and stop it from biting her.

'I like to think of myself as a patient person!' she snapped at the animal. 'But you are *pushing* your luck! That is *not* yours to take! It belonged to someone *very important* to me, and I am taking it back whether you like it or not! *Do you hear me?!*'

The crow wiggled in her grasp, giving an annoyed, muffled caw, before going still; its only movement the heavy rise and fall of its chest as it breathed.

'Yeah. That's what I *thought*,' Becky growled, loosening her grip until the bird was able to pull away.

Even though she'd just had it pinned, it showed no fear of her. Instead, it stood tall and hopped around on the branch, fluffing up in annoyance and giving an angry cry. Then, it pecked at her hand— And she flicked it in the beak to warn it away.

'I'm not scared of you,' she told it as it pecked at her again. 'Not like the *rest* of the town. And I'm not going to let you push me around! That necklace belonged to my *mum*. It was her favourite one, and I'm not letting you have it!'

Becky shooed the crow away a hop before she turned to the hole in the tree, reaching in and feeling around for the necklace.

*Fabric. Sticks. A shoe....*

She ignored the animal as it pecked at her hip and screamed.

And she ignored the small crowd of adults that was forming at the base of the tree and scolding her; she could barely hear them, they were so far down....

*Leafs.... Coins.... Belt buckle....*

*Something... wet. But not slimy....*

*The necklace!*

‘Hah!’ Becky pulled the necklace out, victoriously, and held it up to examine it.

The stones were okay; though the chain had snapped.... She wasn’t sure it was going to be fixable. The metal was so thin, and intricate, and fragile. And now... bent.

Even if she *did* bend it back again, there was no way her father wouldn’t notice the damage.

*He would be furious with her.*

‘Look what you’ve done to it!’ Becky snapped, turning back to the crow and holding out the necklace to it. ‘You’ve broken it! It was one of the most important things that Mum had before she died, and now you’ve broken it! I hope you’re happy with yourself! You’ve spoiled a good memory.’

The crow gave an angry caw and tried to snatch the necklace again, but Becky buffeted it away with the back of her other hand.

‘Why am I even bothering to explain this to you?’ Becky gave a heavy sigh and stuffed the necklace into her pocket, much to the bird’s displeasure. ‘You don’t understand what I’m talking about.... You’re just a bird. You’ve never lost anyone you loved.’

Suddenly, the crow paused.... Then, much to Becky’s surprise, it backed away; laying its feathers flat and clicking its beak.

It was still very clearly annoyed. But as it looked up at her, Becky wondered for a moment if it actually *did* understand what she meant.

‘Hm...’ she gave a low hum, thinking hard.

The bird had stolen from her, but....

Becky reached up to her fringe, and unclipped a little bedazzled hair clip. It wasn’t as expensive as the necklace had been, but it was still *very* shiny.

‘Here,’ Becky said, holding the clip out to the bird. ‘Peace offering?’

Slowly, the bird edged towards Becky. It pecked at the clip in her hand before taking it and hopping back and forth, fluffing up again.

‘There,’ Becky huffed. ‘Now we’re both angry, but neither of us loses.’

The bird didn’t acknowledge her; instead it adjusted its grip of the hair clip and hopped from one branch to the next and back.

‘Are we done?’ Becky asked the crow.

The crow gave a muffled caw that sounded almost agreeable.

‘Okay. I’m going to leave, then,’ Becky told it, turning and getting ahold of the trunk of the tree. ‘But I want you to think long and hard about what you’ve done, and how your actions can hurt others. Do you understand?’

It was clear the crow didn’t. It was far too distracted by the hair clip.

‘Hmp,’ Becky scoffed, beginning to slide down the side of the tree.

She could hear the adults below her arguing and grumbling, and knew she was going to be in trouble....

Though, she was glad there was *so many* adults down there. At least twenty.

If it was just the *one* adult she would have been worried— Because one adult alone was much more likely to do something stupid or mean. But when there was *more* than one adult they would try and act rational and normal to impress each other. And the more adults there were, the more likely it was that no-one would

do *anything at all*.

Just like that story she'd been told in school a few years ago, about the murder where no-one called the police because they all thought someone else would do it first....

Becky's feet touched the ground and the adults all stepped backwards as she turned to them and frowned.

*She was right.*

Nobody wanted to be the one to punish someone else's child. No matter how angry they were at her— Nobody wanted to be the one to step forward and do it. Not in front of a crowd.

Becky gave a sniff, pushing the hair from her eyes, and turned to walk away.

Nobody followed her, and she felt victorious as she made towards the street....

She was only about halfway out of the yard when Officer Jackie pulled up in his car, and Becky swore loudly.

'Zut! Enculé de ta mere!'

Jackie met her eye, and she saw him mouth something very similar in English, followed by him putting his hand on his face and sighing heavily.

*It was the first time they'd seen each other since she got back*, Becky realised. *He mustn't have known she was in town again.*

What a nasty surprise for him.

'Alright— Rebecca! Young lady!' Jackie called, opening the car door and climbing out. 'If I'm remembering right, you're supposed to be in bed at nine.'

'So?' Becky scoffed, putting her hands on her hips and frowning.

The adults were all chattering behind her furiously, calling out over the top of each other about Becky "bothering the crow"— And it was very clear that Officer Jackie wanted to avoid getting close enough to fully engage them.

'Get in the car,' Jackie said, firmly. '*Please* don't make this more difficult than it has to be. *Please*, Rebecca.'

Becky didn't move.

'*Rebecca*,' he warned. 'Do you have any idea how serious a crime you've just committed? I'll ask you nicely one more time. Please. Get in the car. Don't be difficult again. *Please*.'

Becky didn't move. She and Jackie just stared each other down.

They both ignored the angry crowd that continued to argue amongst themselves, and looked dead in each other's eyes... waiting for the other to make their move....

Then, Becky turned to bolt, and Jackie lunged forward at her—

He was *just* fast enough to catch her before she made it over the neighbouring hedge, and he scooped the wiggling girl into his arms.

'NO!' Becky shouted, struggling in his grip. 'Let me go! Connard! Putain! *Piece of shit whore motherfucker!*'

'Ah, you've learnt to swear now?' Jackie heaved a sigh. 'That's... *hmm*.'

'I'll end your *life!*' Becky growled as she was hefted into the back of the police car and locked inside. She banged on the window, following Jackie as he walked around the car to the driver's seat. 'You ugly bitch! Chien moche!'

Jackie didn't say anything as he climbed into his seat and started the car; but Becky continued to swear and curse at him, slamming her hands into the metal

cage between them.

She went through every bad word and phrase she knew, both in English and in French, before twisting in her seat and firmly kicking at the cage.

‘Bitch! Putain! Shit! Connard! Zut! Cunt—’

‘*Enough*, Rebecca,’ Jackie snapped; though he honestly sounded more exhausted than angry. ‘Rebecca, *please!* I’m not trying to be your enemy, here!’

‘Then let me go!’ Becky snapped.

‘I can’t do that,’ Jackie said. ‘You’re underage. I *have* to leave you with a guardian.... I’m taking you home.’

Becky let out an unhappy cry and kicked the cage again. Right behind Jackie’s head.

‘Stop that!’ he scolded. ‘You’re lucky I’m not taking you to the station! Do you have *any* idea how serious this is?’

Becky frowned, falling quiet, before shifting in her seat and pouting. ‘No,’ she mumbled. ‘I don’t. It was just a bird. And *it* started it....’

‘It was a *crow*,’ Jackie corrected. ‘Crows, here, they—’ he took a deep breath, and let it out slowly. ‘Rebecca.... We have laws about the crows for a reason.’

‘*What* reason?’ Becky asked bitterly. ‘What’s going to happen if I make the crows mad? Nothing! That’s what.’

‘No, not nothing,’ Jackie answered simply, and shook his head. He seemed... hesitant, as he sighed and thought deeply. ‘You’re.... You’re too young to hear about it, just yet. But you’ll learn more as you get older— The crows own this town. We’re only here by their good graces. We all learnt that a *long* time ago.’

Becky didn’t get it; though she could tell by Jackie’s tone that he was very, *very* serious....

*Maybe she had been wrong to fight the crow.*

‘I don’t understand,’ Becky said, honestly, her tone softer than it had been all night.

‘Just... trust me, okay?’ Jackie sighed. ‘It’s my job to keep you *safe*. That’s my main goal, here. Not to make you mad. Not to stop you having fun.... I’m just trying to keep you, and everyone else in town, *safe*. Okay?’

Becky hesitated for a long moment. She could hear how much Jackie meant what he said. He was so serious it was almost scary....

‘Rebecca? Do you understand?’

‘*Mhm*,’ Becky mumbled. Then, she shrunk into her seat as she recognised the street they turned onto. *Her street*. ‘You can just drop me off here—’

‘You *know* I have to walk you to the door,’ Jackie huffed.

‘But— But—’ Becky felt her blood run cold, as she remembered what had happened to her mother’s necklace. ‘Dad’s going to be so mad at me!’

‘Good,’ Jackie mumbled. ‘He *should* be.’

‘*Mm!*’ Becky gave a disgruntled groan and started tugging on the door handle. It didn’t open. Not until Jackie opened it himself and took Becky by the arm.

‘Come on, Rebecca,’ he said. ‘Let’s get you inside.’

‘I don’t *wanna!*’ Becky argued; though she didn’t fight Jackie as he led her up the front steps and rang the doorbell.

No answer, so Jackie rang again, the sing-song ding sounding loud through the silent night.

Nothing.

‘Hm. The lights are all off...’ Jackie mumbled. ‘Were you left home alone?’

‘No,’ Becky answered. ‘When Mum’s not home we usually leave the lights off, cos Isa’s sensitive to them, and me and Dad and her all have darkvision anyway.’

Jackie winced as Becky mentioned her mother, but didn’t say anything as he turned back to the door and gave a very firm knock.

Mimi let out a shriek and began noisily running up and down the hall.

Becky heard Isa’s voice, then, yelling out for Ken. It sounded like she was in her bathroom; probably in the bath....

More silence.

Jackie gave another knock, and Isa yelled again. Then something inside banged and crashed— Sounding suspiciously like Becky’s father tripping on the coffee table.

‘I’ve got it! I’ve got it!’ he exclaimed, his voice approaching the door. ‘Mimi, stay! Upstairs, girl! No— No! Ah! Upstai— Do not bite! Upstairs! Go! Go!’

It was easy to hear that the mimic wasn’t following Ken’s orders as it scratched at the front door and whined. Then the mimic went quiet, and the door opened, and Becky saw her father had wrangled it into a very awkward hold.

And then her father saw her, held firmly by the arm by Officer Jackie, and let out a long, deep sigh as his shoulders sagged. He had a tired air about him— The same one he’d had for the past four-or-so years... though tonight he seemed *especially* exhausted. Which just made Becky feel even *more* guilty for what was about to happen.

‘Is there a problem, Officer?’

‘I’m afraid so, yes,’ said Jackie. ‘A rather serious one.... May I come in?’

‘Of course,’ Ken gave a nod, and stepped to the side to let Jackie and Becky enter the house. ‘Becky, are you alright, ma choupette?’

‘*Fine*,’ Becky huffed, not meeting her father’s eye.

*She was still mad at him for making her leave home for so long....*

‘You have leafs in your hair,’ he mumbled, reaching out to tenderly brush away the foliage Becky had accidentally collected— Though he retreated as Becky slapped his hand away, and turned his attention to Jackie. ‘I don’t believe we’ve met.... Not properly. I’m Kenneth Bloom.’

‘Yes, I assumed,’ Jackie replied, giving Ken a curt nod and handshake. ‘I’m sorry about Barbra.’

‘Mm, yes, she was much better at dealing with... *this*,’ Ken shuffled uncomfortably, and wiped his hand on his pants (something Becky knew was *very* rude) before averting his gaze. ‘What has happened? Nobody’s been hurt, have they?’

‘No, nobody’s hurt,’ Jackie confirmed, finally releasing Becky’s arm.

‘Ah, then whatever it is can’t be *that* bad,’ Ken sighed, letting Mimi jump out of his arms. ‘With the way you were talking, I thought maybe there had been an accident or a fight.... Whatever she’s done can’t be so bad. We’ll pay for any damages and call it a night, yes?’

Jackie didn’t look impressed by Ken’s dismissal and crossed his arms; though he didn’t say anything as he cast Becky a quick, almost *understanding* look. Like everything he’d ever wondered about her had just been explained.... ‘I got a call

saying that she was up a forty-foot tree, wrestling with a crow over a... what was it, Becky?’

Becky ignored Officer Jackie’s question. Instead, she picked up Mimi and hurriedly tried to slip past the adults to the stairs.

‘Rebecca!’

‘Oh, no. Let her go, she must be tired.’

‘*Mr Bloom that’s not—*’

Becky gasped when she saw Isa coming down the stairs, her hair still damp from her bath, and quickly retreated to hide behind Officer Jackie.

The officer placed a gentle hand on her shoulder and held her close; somehow both comforting *and* firm as he followed her gaze to the drow.

‘Ken? Who was at the— *Oh, my god...*’ the disappointment in Isa’s voice was clear as she rubbed her temples. ‘Rebecca, I was out for *one* night....’

‘Mm,’ Becky hummed, looking firmly at the floor. ‘*Sorry.*’

‘Ah, Isa,’ Jackie gave the woman a nod. ‘It’s been a while.... You look well. I’m so sorry to see you under these circumstances.’

‘What’s happened?’ Isa sighed.

‘She was bothering the crows,’ Jackie said, simply.

‘Rebecca—’

‘No!’ Becky exclaimed. ‘It was only *one* crow! And it *started* it!’

Isa let out a very slow breath as she narrowed her eyes at the girl. ‘Did it, now? What exactly did it do?’

‘It stole from me!’ Becky explained.

‘What did it steal?’

Becky didn’t respond.

She *couldn’t* respond....

*They’d be so mad at her....*

‘What was it that you had, Rebecca?’ Jackie asked again, petting the girl’s hair. ‘Come, now. Tell us.’

‘Whatever it took from you, I’ll replace it,’ Ken reassured, crouching down to take his daughters hands.

Becky shook her head and pulled away from her father.

*He couldn’t replace it. It was irreplaceable....*

‘Rebecca,’ Isa warned. ‘Answer us.’

Becky flinched at Isa’s scolding, and slowly... very slowly... reached into her pocket and pulled out her mother’s necklace.

Isa gasped; putting a hand over her mouth and turning away in her shock.

Ken just stared, his eyes wide, as Becky held out the broken necklace to him.

‘What is that?’ Officer Jackie asked, leaning over to try and get a look at it. ‘That’s not yours, is it— Who does that belong to?’

‘It was Barbra’s,’ Isa sighed, not looking back as she shook her head in disbelief.

‘*Oh...*’ Jackie backed away, his lips pressing into a thin line. ‘I see....’

‘It broke when the crow took it,’ Becky said, her voice small and weak as her father’s trembling hands took the necklace from her. ‘I know you’re gonna be really mad at me. I’m sorry.’

Ken took a deep breath, and then calmly handed the necklace to Isa.



‘Come on, Becky,’ he said gently, taking Becky by the hand. ‘It’s late. Let’s get you into bed.’

*What?* Becky blinked. ‘You’re not mad at me?’

‘No,’ Ken said, softly. ‘Not at all.’

*He... he really wasn’t angry at her?*

But she’d— She’d just been brought home by the police. And she was covered in dirt and leafs. And— And she’d ruined her mother’s favourite necklace!

How *couldn’t* he be mad at her?!

*She was mad at herself!*

‘Ken—’ Isa started.

‘It’s fine, Isa,’ Ken said, waving a dismissive hand. ‘Excuse me, for a minute, officer. I really think it would be best for Becky to go to bed, before we continue talking. She has school in the morning.’

Jackie just sighed and nodded; though he didn’t look like he agreed.... And Becky was just too stunned to stop her father from leading her away.

She let herself be taken all the way up the stairs to her room, and sat in bed quietly as her father kissed her forehead.

‘You’re... you’re *really* not mad at me?’ she asked. ‘Not about the crows?’

Ken shook his head, and pulled Becky’s blanket over her.

‘Not even about the necklace?’

He shook his head again, and then gave her another kiss. ‘I have to go back downstairs, now. Okay? Try and get some sleep.’

Becky couldn’t believe what she was hearing. And as her father walked out of the room, she felt her skin begin to crawl with guilt.

*He wasn’t angry with her?*

Not even a little bit?

Not for *anything* she’d just done?

Didn’t he care that she was out so late?

Didn’t he care that she could have gotten hurt?

Didn’t he care that she’d *destroyed* her mother’s *favourite* necklace?

Didn’t he care *at all*?!

—END—

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