

# Hole

By C. Jade Wyton

*Becky Bloom is only six years old, but determined to sneak out of the house and into the woods. So she waits until her caregiver, Isa, is asleep, and then makes her way through the woods and to a hole that she's been slowly digging over time. She is, however, discovered by one of the local park rangers.*

***Contains depictions of mental illness.***

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Becky was getting *really* good at climbing the tree by her bedroom window. She knew all the little nooks and crannies, now. The weakest branches, and the strongest. The creaky branches, and the silent ones....

'Stay, Mimi,' she whispered, petting her mimic on the top of its head and giving it a chewy treat. 'Your job to make it sure Isa doesn't find the bed's not me! Yeah?'

Mimi gave a confident chirp before accepting the treat and scuttling over to its basket.

'Good girl,' Becky told it, before carefully shutting the window behind her and slipping down to the ground.

She was glad that Mimi had finally stopped trying to escape the house alongside her since that one time it had gotten out— It had been determined to go *everywhere* with Becky, after that incident. And while Becky had taken Mimi most places in its carrier, Becky was too nervous to bring the mimic with her to the woods.

Not because the woods were bad; but because Mimi was very skittish, and if it got lost in the *woods* instead of in town she might never see it again! And she didn't want to ever imagine what that would be like.

Becky landed silently on her feet in the tall grass by the house and froze, listening out for the sounds of adults.

*Nothing. Isa must have gone to bed early.*

It was perfect!

'Awesome perfection, yeah yeah!' Becky said to herself, before hurrying across the yard and onto the street. 'Quiet night. Got 'em all to be in bed. Yep. All asleep. All quiet. Easy walking tonight!'

With an excited skip, Becky began to make her way down the street.

The walk into the woods didn't take long. Only two cars passed her as she wandered through the quiet town, and they were easy enough to hide from behind the bins that lined the road waiting to be picked up in the morning. She knew she had to be careful, though. She was only six, and if someone saw a six year old on the road at night they would call the police and she'd be taken home. And she didn't want to go home— She wanted to go to the woods!

So she kept her eyes peeled for adults, and made sure to stay near fences and trees that she could use to hide.

Becky thought herself lucky to have not been seen even once; and once she was in the woods, hidden within the trees, she felt her skin begin to prickle with excitement.

Isa was never going to find her, now! Never! She had done it, and gotten to the woods again! Where she could run and scream and play how she wanted, without being disturbed.

She tugged at her shirt, then, pulling it away and discarding it by a tree. Then, her shoes. And her socks. And her scrunchie. And then her pants.

Becky then stood tall and proud and completely naked with her hands on her hips and a wide smile on her face.

Out here she didn't have to wear clothes— She could be *comfortable* and take them all off! And nobody was going to get her in trouble for it!

*And she could run!*

Becky felt herself fill with excitement as she took a deep breath— And started sprinting through the underbrush.

*She was free!*

She was free, and running, and *screaming!*

Screaming at the top of her lungs and running up the secret hidden trail she knew!

She leapt over rocks and forced her way through bushes, until she broke out of the woods at the lake.

*Shady Hollow*, her mother called it.

It was the most beautiful spot in the entire woods, Becky thought. Especially at night, when the stars reflected off its surface and you couldn't tell which way was up and which way was down!

It was extra beautiful tonight. There were no clouds, and it was nice and brisk and chill; which helped to cool Becky down, after so much running.

She stared at the stars and moon, both in the sky and reflected on the lake, before feeling something well up strong in her chest. It was uncontrollable— The urge! The urge to— To—

Becky ran forward, leaping up and onto a tall flat rock and throwing her head back to the sky as she let out a loud howl.

She sung with a voice much clearer than she spoke, before turning and leaping into the lake.

The water was freezing, but in the best way possible.

It stung her skin like static and made her feel twice as awake as she did before. And when she pulled herself up onto the shore on the other side, she was trembling with so much excitement that she had to roll in the mud to calm herself down.

The mud stuck thick and heavy on her skin like half-dried body paint, and Becky felt very, very proud of herself.

So proud, that she thought she might go and find her hill-hole!

Yes! Oh *yes!*

Her hill-hole!

The proudest thing she had ever made; a hole dug sideways into a very steep hill, like a rabbit burrow! Only she used sticks and branches from fallen trees to make the walls stronger, so that they didn't fall in on her.

She would go find it, and continue digging it even deeper!

Becky leapt to her feet, and started in the direction she knew that very special hill was.

It was through heavy foliage, she knew. And not very easy to get to.... If it was easy, then adults would go there and find her hole, and she would be forced to stop digging it....

But, no matter how hard it was to get to, she was going to go there tonight and keep digging.

Leafs and twigs caught in the mud on Becky's skin, sticking to her body and tangling in her hair. But she didn't bother to brush them away as she pressed through the bushes.

It was a longer walk to her hill-hole from the lake than it was from her house to the woods. But that was okay; Becky knew she didn't have to worry about hiding from anyone out here! Not at this time of night.

All she had to worry about was not scaring the animals that were asleep, because she didn't want to be rude to them....

'AH!'

There it was! Her hill! And hidden in the long grass— Her hole!

Becky felt herself break into another run.

'HAH!'

It was exactly as she'd left it! Twice as deep as she was tall, and only *just* tall enough for her to climb into on her hands and knees!

'Yes, oh yes! Time for that perfect!' Becky blurted, bouncing in place and flapping her arms wide with joy. 'Gonna make it all deep deep deeper! Big deep! All the way through! To the other side! Uh-huh! Yep! Yep! Digging all the way through!'

Becky was so excited that she had to jump in place. And jump and jump! And then she let out another howl, which she ended with a shrill scream—

Which was interrupted by the sound of a dog barking and a woman calling out.

'Hello? Is someone there? Are you— Are you alright?'

Becky gave a gasp and covered her mouth.

Oh, no! Oh no! Someone else was here?!

'Uh-oh!' Becky cried, dropping onto all fours and scampering into her hole like an animal; just in time to avoid the large, thin-and-fluffy dog that hurried over and stuck its head inside to sniff at her.

It was a borzoi, Becky recognised. Her neighbour had one, but in a different colour....

'Lays? What is it, boy?' a woman's voice called after it.

The dog, Lays, let out a bark and laid down at the entrance to the hole; its head still half-inside as it stared at Becky with its weird long face.

'Okay, okay boy. Back up. Let me see. Let me see....'

The dog shuffled backwards obediently, and Becky saw hoofed feet appear at the entrance to her hole. Satyr hooves. That were then followed by satyr knees as the woman crouched down— And then her face, as she peered in at Becky.

A sharp light swung inside, shining into Becky's eyes and making her cover herself with an arm and fold back her ears in disgust.

‘Oh, good god!’ the satyr exclaimed, reeling back for a moment. ‘Ooh... oh, dear.... Who is that? Who are you?’

Becky hissed instead of answering, pressing herself as deep back into the hole as she could. She recognised this woman. This was Mrs Addison Cleverheart. She was a ranger in the station, and the mother of one of the girls in the grade below Becky.... She’d caught Becky a few times when she’d snuck out at night before— But never when she was *this* deep into the woods. Becky wondered what she was doing all the way out here....

‘Hmm...’ Addison reached a hand into the hole, and made a gentle motion. ‘Come here, hon. Come on out.... I won’t hurt you. I’m a ranger, see? It’s my job to get you home—’

Becky let out a loud snarl, and aimed a bite at Addison’s hand. Then, when the satyr withdrew her hand, Becky let out a victorious chorus of barks and yips.

‘My hole!’ Becky exclaimed. ‘I’m a fox! *Ka! Ka ka ka ka!* Get out! My hole! I’m a big fox and I bite! I bite you good and the big bites hurt! Yes, oh, yes! Biting with my teeth! My sharp sharp teeth!’

‘Oh *no*,’ Addison made a face, and stood back up; her sigh followed by the sound of radio static. ‘Hey, it’s Addison. I have a situation out here. The Bloom girl’s snuck out again and she’s... definitely *not* going to cooperate with me. She’s dug a hole or... tunnel or something.... I’m trying to get her out but she’s in pretty deep. Looks like she’s been working on this for a while.’

Mumbled static returned through the radio that Becky couldn’t understand a word of, but it made Addison nod and sigh again.

‘Yeah, she seems fine,’ Addison replied. ‘Just filthy. Call Isa’vanna, right? Let her know what’s going on and that I’ll be bringing Rebecca home as soon as I can.’

Becky gave a growl as Addison mentioned Isa, and twisted around furiously. ‘NAH!’ she barked, backing up again as the satyr crouched back down. ‘Go away! My hole! You aren’t good in my hole! Too big! Too big for you! *GRR! GRRRR!*’

‘Come on, Rebecca, that’s... enough,’ Addison’s brow furrowed as she shone her torch into the hole again. ‘Oh, what have you done to yourself?’

Becky didn’t reply; instead choosing simply to bark and snarl as Addison reached her hand into the hole again.

Becky aimed another bite at the woman but missed— And Addison took the opportunity to grab Becky tightly by the shoulder and yank her towards the front of the hole.

‘Come on— Come on, Rebecca, you need to go home.’

‘No! Leave me alone!’ Becky snapped, going again for Addison’s hand. She sunk her teeth in, though the ranger held her firm and didn’t let go. ‘AH! LET GO! LET GO! ME! OF! LEAVE! ME! *LEAVE ME!*’

‘I am *not* leaving you in a *hole!*’ Addison exclaimed, managing to pull Becky out the rest of the way and get a firmer grip on her. She hefted Becky to her feet and then— ‘Rebecca!’ she cried, her eyes widening as she looked the girl over. ‘Where are your *clothes?!*’

‘Don’t need ‘em!’ Becky growled back, stomping her foot. ‘I’m a wolf and fox! Gotta be wild animals! Yes! Yes! Being one! And living here! My hole! My hill! My woods!’

Addison stared for a long, long moment. Then she pulled off her jacket and threw it over Becky. 'I'm taking you home.'

'NO!' Becky exclaimed, making to run but feeling the satyr's hand close around her wrist. 'NO! NO! NO! LET GO! FIGHT YOU! YES I WILL! GRR!'

Becky dug her heels into the ground, trying to tug out of the adult's grip. But the satyr held firm. And then, when Becky collapsed and flopped on the ground in her attempt to break free, Addison simply hefted a sigh and picked the girl up, holding her firmly in her arms and walking in the direction of town.

'Oh *no*,' Becky whined, finally giving up and going limp. 'Isa's gonna be real mad at me! Real *real* mad!'

—END—

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