

# Road Safety

## By C. Jade Wyton

*Becky Bloom has been living in the woods with her deer friends. She's been surviving, though she's still miserable. They go to cross a road and— One of them is almost hit! So Becky decides that it's time to teach her friends about road safety.*

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It was a beautiful late-evening, with stars just starting to speckle the fading sky, but Becky could barely bring herself to enjoy it. She felt terrible. And tired. And guilty.

Tenderhoof had returned to the herd after delivering Becky's message to Jareth, and Becky was already regretting it.

She shouldn't have done it like that.

It was the equivalent of leaving an angry phone message, really....

Jareth at least deserved to hear what Becky had to say in *person*.... But it was too late, now. The message had been delivered and Becky couldn't take it back.

She'd been too scared to ask Tenderhoof for Jareth's reaction; but by the look the doe gave her, she could assume it hadn't been a good one....

Becky sighed, and mindlessly followed the herd through the thick brush.

Then, her hoof touched hard, cracked asphalt, and she looked up.

*They were at a road....*

Instinctively, Becky paused to check both ways as the rest of the girls continued without a care. The road was clear, so she crossed with them....

And then Grass Sway paused, looking back.

'Where's Twig Snout?' she asked, softly.

'I think she may have been distracted by the lavender patch,' answered Tenderhoof, sniffing at the air. 'She's not too far behind. Give her a minute to close the distance.'

'Typical Twig Snout,' mumbled a doe in the back of the herd.

'Scatterbrained as ever.'

Becky tapped a hoof anxiously as she waited for her lagging herd-mate, and slowly approached the edge of the road.

She could hear some sort of vehicle approaching, and fast.

*Twig snout, where are you—*

'Wait for me!' cried a voice, and Twig snout dashed out onto the road—

Just in time to be caught in the headlights of a truck as it came around the road's bend.

Becky felt her heart leap to her throat as a loud horn sounded and Twig Snout froze.

'LOOK OUT!' Becky cried, breaking from the treeline and, with a burst of adrenaline-induced magic, scooped Twig Snout into her arms and tumbled to the other side of the road.

The truck braked harder as Becky dashed in front of it, its tires screeching

loudly, before coming to a stop.

The man inside stuck his head out the window and stared with wide eyes as Becky gently placed the doe down on the ground and examined her arms.

She'd turned into a bear.

'Are you okay?' she asked Twig Snout.

'I'm... ooh, hah, yeah,' Twig Snout shook herself out. 'That was *very* scary!'

'Mm,' Becky gave a low hum, and looked back to the man in the truck.

He was still staring, so Becky gave him an awkward wave— And then a thumbs up.

Then, she quickly looked both ways before ushering Twig Snout back across the road to join the rest of the herd.

'That was a close one,' she said to the doe. 'Oh, my god! I thought you were going to get hit!'

'It *would* be Twig Snout, who got hit, wouldn't it?' said another doe (Morning Speckles was her name) as she affectionately licked Twig Snout on the cheek. 'Try and stay closer to the herd next time.'

'And look both ways before crossing the road!' Becky added, humoured.

Twig Snout flicked an ear, curiously. 'Is that something you people *do*?'

'What— Yes? Of course it is!' Becky reeled back in surprise. 'Do you *not*?'

'No,' Twig Snout answered— Her voice echoed by Morning Speckles, Grass Sway, and Tenderhoof.

'What! Spring Dancer, back me up!' Becky exclaimed. 'You check before you cross, right?'

Spring Dancer folded her ears back in confusion, and Becky was stuck looking from doe to doe with her mouth agape.

'You mean you don't know the *basics* of how to cross the road?!' she gasped. 'Oh, my god! That's, like! Totally not safe!'

'Roads are never safe,' said Tenderhoof.

'Well— Yeah, I *def* agree with that but, like! You gotta at least know how to make yourself *safer*!' Becky pressed, turning around and making back towards the road. 'Wait, wait! Come here. I'll show you!'

Becky pushed through the bushes to the edge of the road; stopping just before her claws met the asphalt and looking side to side.

The truck was still there, just starting to pull away; though it stopped again when the man caught sight of Becky.

Becky offered him another wave —hopefully more polite, and less awkward than the last one— before motioning for the deer to join her.

'Come on!' she said. 'I'll show you how to cross *properly*, okay?'

'Are you sure about this?' Twig Snout asked, joining Becky by the road and giving it a tentative sniff. 'We usually try to avoid roads as much as possible. It seems... a little odd to want to hang around one this long.'

'Yeah, but like— It's like swimming!' Becky said. 'It's *super* important to know how to do, cos even if you, like, don't like to jump in lakes and stuff, you gotta be ready in case you fall in while drinking! You know?'

The herd cast glances between themselves as they all joined Becky.

'I don't think we do, no,' Tenderhoof admitted. 'But. We trust you.'

'Naw, thanks!' Becky chirped. Then, she tried to make herself serious. 'Okay,

so. Like. When you want to cross, you *always* stop at least two steps back from the road. Like I am, now. See?’

The deer all looked at Becky’s feet— And Twig Snout took a step back so she was in line with Becky’s toes.

‘Perfect!’ Becky nodded. ‘Now. Once you’re standing here, you have to check the road for safety. You look both ways, one at a time, to make sure there’s no cars coming.’

Becky looked left, then right, to make her point; Twig Snout mimicking her motions with enthusiasm.

The other deer were more half-hearted at copying Becky’s motions, but did so anyway.

‘There’s that truck, right there,’ Spring Dancer pointed out. ‘Does that count?’

‘It is rather close, isn’t it?’ agreed Grass Sway. ‘Why has it stopped?’

‘I dunno, I guess he’s curious about us,’ said Becky. ‘Lots of people like to watch the wildlife! It helps them feel like they’re a part of nature.’

‘As long as he’s not a hunter...’ Morning Speckles mumbled.

‘Nah... hey. Wanna see if I can make him honk his horn?’

‘Honk his horn?’ a doe echoed, confused. ‘You mean make that horridly loud noise they always make?’

‘Yeah!’ Becky chirped. ‘Look! Look, I’ll make the motion for him to do it now!’

Becky waved again at the man who was peering out his truck window— And then pumped her fist slowly, indicating for him to pull on his truck’s horn.

He just stared.

‘Aw, come on!’ Becky laughed, changing her motion to a more classic car-honking one. ‘*Honk!* Honk for me! C’mon!’

Slowly, as if in a daze, the driver pulled his head back into his truck....

The deer all bolted backwards at the sound of the horn, and Becky clapped her claws in joy.

‘It’s alright!’ Becky exclaimed. ‘It won’t hurt you!’

The deer approached the road again, though Becky noticed they hung back behind her more than before.

‘Okay, come look,’ Becky motioned for the herd to stand at her side. ‘Look left. Look right.... And see how there’s a bend right there? That means you need to be *extra* careful, so that nothing comes out from behind it suddenly. So you want to listen that way as well as look, and that’s also the side you want to look at last.’

‘That’s so smart!’ said Twig Snout. ‘However did you come up with that?’

‘Isa taught me,’ said Becky; checking the road again. ‘Okay! So. Nothing’s coming, so we can cross.’

‘Okay!’ Twig Snout said enthusiastically, following Becky across the road at a trot. ‘Like this?’

‘Yeah, like that!’ Becky confirmed, leading the herd. ‘Now, I go at a normal pace. I don’t run, and I don’t stop until I’m on the other side.... Here.’

‘Wow!’ Twig Snout beamed.

‘Hm,’ Grass Sway echoed with a low grunt. ‘Why walk instead of run? Wouldn’t getting across as fast as possible be safest?’

‘Yeah, but like, you don’t wanna trip!’ Becky explained. ‘Okay. Everyone here? Good! We can cross again— Wait!’

Becky held up a arm to stop Twig Snout from walking out onto the road.

‘Oh!’ Twig Snout gave a gasp and stepped back. ‘Right.... Look *left*.... Look *right*.... Is that a car? I think that’s a car! What do I do?!’

‘Don’t panic!’ Becky exclaimed, gently placing her claw on Twig Snout’s back. ‘You’re not on the road, so they won’t hit you. Just wait right where you are for them to pass....’

The herd all watched with baited breath as the car passed them. But then it slowed as it reached the truck, pulling up just behind it, and the woman inside climbed out—

*‘Hey! Is everything alright? Do you need any help—’*

*‘Stay in your car!’* the truck driver exclaimed, pointing towards the herd. *‘There’s, a— Uh....’*

*‘Oh my god!’* the woman gasped as she spotted Becky, and quickly climbed back into her vehicle.

Becky saw her peering through the back window, and gave her a friendly wave.

‘They’re scared of you,’ Morning Speckles observed.

‘Well. I *am* a bear!’ Becky chuckled. ‘Bears are very scary!’

‘Yes,’ Spring Dancer agreed.

‘We should keep moving,’ Tenderhoof pointed out. ‘We don’t want to stop too many people, now, do we? I’m sure they have places to be before it gets any darker.... Just like us.’

‘Oh, yes, Tenderhoof,’ Becky gave an obedient nod, and quickly checked the road. ‘Nothing to the left. Nothing to the right. Nothing either side— We can go!’

Becky led the deer confidently across the road, herding them into the bushes on the other side before turning to look back at the two drivers who stared at her.

Slowly, the truck driver raised his hand, and gave her a timid wave.

And Becky happily waved back, before disappearing into the woods.

—END—

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