

Wildshape

By C. Jade Wyton

After spending a week as a dog, Becky Bloom is ready to accept her new life on four legs. That is, until, a more experienced druid comes to help her turn back into her usual self. But with her emotions out of control and a lack of self confidence; a panic attack makes it all go very wrong.

Contains descriptions of a panic attack.

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Becky was glad to be home, after her horrible stay at Mattel's house.

She'd barely cared that she'd been stuck as a dog for another day; she'd spent the entire time at home recovering from the ordeal curled up in her father's lap, snuggled into Mimi's side as it purred loudly and occasionally gave her a loving lick.

She'd felt like she could sleep for a month straight, her body was so tired and sore from all the stress she'd gone through. And she was pretty sure she'd eaten her body weight in Isa's homemade spaghetti (which, considering she currently only weighed four pounds, wasn't actually all that much for her).

It was good to be home. Even if she was going to be a dog for the rest of her life— She was at least glad she could be a dog here, where she was safe and loved.

Apparently Adam had picked up her things when he'd gone to the lake looking for her, so she had her phone back.... And even if she couldn't use it very well with her paws; she'd found pressing her tongue on the screen worked decently well, and so she'd managed to send Adam a very poorly-written thank you message.

*yahnk u asdam*

She had never been prouder of herself!

She had figured out a way to type—to communicate— while she was a dog!

Take *that*, opposable thumbs!

After texting Adam, she had made a post on Spellbook to address her disappearance.... It hadn't been a long one, but she hoped it would be enough to at least keep her friends happy....

*hjeY guyts*

*hadf a drûid accccvident*

*donnt wqàsnt to takkl abot it*

*bhye*

The post had been... well, she wouldn't call it a *mistake*, but immediately after school some of her friends had shown up unexpectedly to check on her, citing the post as their reason.

Katie had been horrified when Isa had answered the door with (what appeared to be) a dog in her arms— She'd screamed in fear, which had hurt Becky's feelings, before Marilyn had blurted out, in her husky bimbo way:

'Why do you have Mattel's dog?'

Which, of course, led to an uproar of questions from Ken and Isa, as Jareth

hadn't elaborated on where exactly he'd found Becky. He had, after a long and complicated attempt at communicating with her, taken the collar and tutu that Mattel had put on her and thrown them away; understanding and respecting Becky's request to keep where she had been a secret.

But obviously it wasn't meant to last.

Now everyone knew that Becky had been stuck with Mattel... and it was humiliating. Especially when Katie, cackling her head off, had gone to Mattel's Instagram and seen several of the photos Mattel had posted of "Chichi" in a dress.

Becky had decided she was too tired to deal with her friend, and had struggled out of Isa's arms and run up the stairs to hide under her bed.... And that was when Katie seemed to realise how serious things were.

They hadn't been able to fish her out from under the bed; that was Mimi's space, and they knew better than to stick their hands in there to grab anything or anyone out.... Especially after Mimi had climbed under with her.

Mimi had dropped a plush toy by Becky, chirping out that she would feel better if she chewed on it.

Mimi had been right, of course. Ripping the arm off the toy made her feel a hundred times better; and she finally emerged from under her bed to the friends who hadn't needed to leave and go home.

Now they were all sitting in the lounge, watching TV together.

Becky let out a sigh and rested her head on Jezzibeth's leg.

This wasn't so bad, was it? Being a dog. It wasn't the best, but she could... maybe... get used to it?

Her friends and family still all loved her. And even if the house was a little harder to navigate, Mimi was showing her all the easiest ways to get around with her little legs....

Becky looked over to the mimic, who was dancing playfully at Fuzzy and nipping at the fuzz on the top of his head.

*'Fuzzy!'* Mimi chirped, beginning to bob up and down. *'Mimi likes Fuzzy! Lick lick lick!'*

*'Mimi!'* Fuzzy replied, mimicking Mimi's bobbing. *'Sock!'*

*'Yeah, Mimi's a sock, isn't she?'* Adam chuckled.

*'Mimi is the best sock,'* Mimi sung. Then, there was a knock at the door, and Mimi gave a loud trill. *'DOOR! DOOR! DOOR!'*

*'Door! Door!'* Fuzzy echoed. *'Knock knock!'*

*'GROWL!'* Mimi growled. *'Mimi's house! Growl! Protect!'*

*'It's okay, Mimi,'* Becky barked. *'Isa's getting the door.'*

*'GROWL!'* Fuzzy shouted playfully, copying the growling sound Mimi made. *'GRRR!'*

*'Fuzzy, don't be rude,'* Adam chuckled, scooping the little robot up.

*'Ah!'* Isa gave a happy cry, and opened the door wide. *'Mr Hedgeson! Thank you for coming, I'm so glad you could make it!'*

Becky felt her ears stand up.

*The druid teacher?*

What was he doing here?

He couldn't be here for her, could he...?

It seemed like he was. When he came into the lounge and looked around, his

eyes fell on Becky and he looked sympathetic.

‘Ah, I see,’ he mumbled. ‘It seems like you haven’t been having such a good time, does it? First your powers going off from the stress at the formal, and now....’

Becky gave a groan. *‘You don’t know the half of it....’*

‘Tree!’ Mimi chirped in surprise. *‘Talking tree!’*

‘Talking tree!’ Fuzzy echoed. ‘Papa! Look! Talking tree!’

‘He’s a dryad,’ Adam corrected. *‘Dryad.’*

‘Dryad!’ Fuzzy echoed.

‘Stranger!’ Mimi growled. *‘Talking to Mama! No! No! Not allowed! Mama is tired! Mama is resting! Mimi bite stranger!’*

‘Mimi no!’ Becky cried— Too late.

‘Ow!’ Mr Hedgeson gasped as Mimi’s teeth sunk into his ankle, and he quickly shook the mimic off. ‘Um.... Miss Valstille? Are we able to....’

‘Oh, yes,’ Isa quickly scooped Mimi up, and hurried towards the stairs. ‘No biting, young lady! You know what has to happen when you bite guests. You have to go in the carrier.’

‘The carrier!’ Mimi cried. *‘Mimi has been bad?! Mimi was trying to be good! Oh. Oh. Mimi is sorry! Mimi is sorry!’*

‘You’re a good girl!’ Becky yipped after Mimi. *‘I know you were just trying to protect me! You’re a very good girl!’*

For a moment, Mr Hedgeson watched Becky. Then, he motioned to Becky’s friends. ‘May I sit down?’

‘Oh, of course,’ Marilyn quickly got to her feet so that Hedgeson could sit in her place beside Becky.

‘So...’ he started. ‘You can understand mimics?’

‘Yes?’ Becky replied. *‘I can speak with animals.’*

‘Mimics aren’t normal animals, though,’ Hedgeson said, simply. ‘They’re classed as monstrosities, not beasts.... Usually speak with animals doesn’t work on them.’

‘Really?’ Becky asked, feeling her tail give a little wag.

*Was being able to talk to Mimi something else? Something special?*

*Oh! That explained why it was so much harder than talking to other animals!*

‘It’s not unheard of, but it’s not common,’ Hedgeson told her. ‘You must have a very powerful connection to animals to be able to do it.’

*‘Is that why I’m stuck?’* Becky asked. *‘I tried to turn back! Like I looked up videos from druids talking about it. And I couldn’t find anything about getting stuck. They all said that sleeping or waiting a long time will work, but like... it didn’t!’*

‘I’m not sure why you’re stuck,’ Hedgeson answered. ‘It is *very* strange that you are. But given how your magic has been getting away from you... I’m not overly surprised that something’s gone wrong with a spell like this.’

*‘Adam warned me wildshape was too advanced,’* Becky admitted, laying her head back onto Jezzibeth and giving a sad sigh as Jezzibeth’s hand met her back. *‘I didn’t listen....’*

‘It’s not advanced,’ Hedgeson said softly. ‘It’s considered a beginner’s ability.’

Something you learn quite early on. But usually after you have a little bit more control of the basics.'

Becky let out another sigh. *'If... if I can't turn back, will Jareth have to break up with me?'*

Hedgeson seemed taken aback. 'Is... that what you're most worried about?'

*'Yeah, I mean.... I can handle being a dog. I think. Like. My friends still like me and stuff... but can Jareth still date me? Because I'm a dog. And that's usually illegal, isn't it? To date an animal? Or is it different, because I have a person brain?'*

Hedgeson looked like he wasn't sure how to answer. 'W.... Well... it's not going to matter whether it is or not. Because I'm going to help you turn back.'

Becky's tail gave a tentative wag as she perked up her ears. *'Alright.... How do I turn back?'*

Hedgeson motioned for Becky to sit up straight with him. 'First you need to relax,' he instructed. 'Think of yourself. Who you are. Ground yourself with that knowledge.'

Becky swallowed, feeling her tail fold around her as she shrunk down. *'I... I'm not sure that... I know how to do that....'*

'What do you mean?'

*'I mean I...'* Becky paused for a long moment, her eyes locked on her own paws as she tried to find the words to explain it. *'I'm not sure... that I know who I am.'*

'Ah...' a look of realisation passed over Hedgeson's face; as if Becky had just explained something to him very, very clearly. 'I see. I see.... Let's try anyway, alright? Here. I'll show you how it's done.'

*'Alright,'* Becky whined, watching the dryad as he took a deep breath.

'I am small,' he said aloud. 'I am humble. I am of the Earth.... I am another self....'

Becky felt her eyes go wide and her ears stand on end as Mr Hedgeson slowly began to shrink and change. He got smaller and smaller, until he was no bigger than she was; a hedgehog.

A very bushy, plant-like hedgehog.... But a hedgehog all the same.

Becky couldn't stop her tail from wagging back and forth in excitement as Mr Hedgeson shook himself out and turned to her.

*'And now, I am big,'* he said simply. *'I am big. I am me. I am a dryad. I am a person. I am myself again.'*

Becky's breath caught in her throat as Hedgeson began to grow and, in a matter of seconds, he was himself again.

*'Wow!'* Becky barked. *'Yes! That's it! That's what I've been trying to do! It hasn't been working but— But I think I was doing it wrong. Okay. Okay. I'll try— I'll try!'*

'Alright, deep breath,' Hedgeson reminded her. 'Relax your mind and body. And just let it happen....'

*'Big,'* Becky mumbled aloud. *'I am big. I am... big!'*

*Big....*

*Big....*

*Person....*

A bigger version of herself....

A bigger... version... of herself....

'Uh... is that meant to happen?' Marilyn's husky voice broke into Becky's thoughts.

'I don't think so,' Jezzibeth replied.

'Oh... no...' Adam mumbled. 'Mmm....'

'What?' Becky asked— And realised her voice was deeper, now. A deep, deep sound from a chest much stronger than her own.

'It's alright,' Mr Hedgeson comforted, though he sounded very unsure of himself. 'What... are you thinking about?'

Becky didn't like the sound of that question, so she opened her eyes and looked down at herself.

'No!' she cried, leaping off the couch and circling herself. '*No! This is worse! THIS IS WORSE!*'

She was a— A wolf!

She was a wolf!

A huge, scary, vicious beast!

*Oh, she could never go outside again! She'd be shot on the spot!*

'Oh— Oh my—'

Becky let out a cry and flopped to the floor; suddenly feeling much, much smaller.

'Is she a raccoon?' she heard Marilyn ask. 'She's so cute....'

Becky looked at her hands— And found them different yet again!

She let out a yelp and jumped; feeling herself change and writhe as her body shifted again and she sprinted across the floor; letting out a squirrel chitter as she instinctively leapt into Isa's arms.

'No! No! No!'

This was a mistake!

Isa held her for about five seconds before she was forced to drop the growing woman and step away from a flurry of flailing horse hooves.

'NO!' Becky whinnied. '*Help me!*'

'Calm down!' Mr Hedgeson exclaimed, hurrying to Becky's side as she shifted into a dog again. 'Rebecca, please—'

'*Help me!*' Becky cried; feeling herself changing again. '*I can't stop! I can't—*'

She was suddenly big again— And then small— And then big— And bigger! And then the smallest she'd ever been—

Horse—

Fox—

Wolf—

Cat—

Dog—

Rat—

Ferret—

'*Help me!*' Becky screamed as she writhed on the floor. '*Help me! Help me! Isa! Dad! Adam! Anyone! Help me!*'

Everyone was frozen in horror as Becky's body contorted with uncontrolled magic.

Fear gripped ever fibre of Becky's being as she transformed, again and again and again— And all she could do was shriek and flail and cry.

*'Help me!' she screamed. 'Someone help me!'*

*'Rebecca, calm down—'*

*'Tsa! Dad! Isa—'*

*'Please just calm down—'*

'DADDY!' it came out an actual word, that time; a very human scream that shook the whole room with the sound of Becky's fear before she cut off into a guttural howl and took the form of a wolf again.

And then a tight force gripped her around her neck and shoulders; squeezing her so firmly she couldn't move.

'I have you!' her father's voice cut through her cries. 'I'm here! I'm here! I have you!'

Becky let out heavy, laboured breaths as Ken held her close. She buried her head under his arm, and pushed tight against him, and whimpered and whined and panted as she tried to catch her breath.

*'Shh...'* Ken whispered. *'It's okay.... I'm here.... I'm here....'*

*'Dad—'* Becky whined. *'Dad, I'm scared. I'm so scared....'*

'It's okay, I'm here,' Ken repeated, brushing a hand through the thick fur around his daughter's neck. 'I will always, always be here for you....'

Becky couldn't stop trembling.

*Why did so much have to happen to her, all the time?*

A shaky breath escaped her, and her father's hand continued to run through her thick fur.

It was soft.

And comforting.

She couldn't seem to get close enough into her father's side. Even when she pushed into him, and felt him slide across the hardwood floor as he held her tight, she couldn't get close enough.

She took a deep breath and felt her heartbeat growing steady.

*Breathe....*

*She just needed to breathe....*

She felt her father kiss her head, between her ears, before tightening his grip and burying his face into her neck.

She liked this.

Being held.

It helped....

It was... her.

She needed it.

To be close to people.

She *liked* being close to people.

Just like... just like she liked bad movies.

And mimics.

And walks outside at night.

Good food.

And cheerleading....

And she liked Jareth.

And Adam.  
And Isa and Ken.  
And Mimi.  
Jezzibeth. Marilyn. Katie. Malinka. Portia....  
She loved her friends and her family.  
And flowers.  
And pink.  
And she liked plush toys.  
And creepy old vintage dolls....  
'There we are...' Hedgeson breathed. 'Ah— *Oh dear*—'  
Becky heard the teacher's gasp and opened her eyes, just in time to see her  
fluffy paws disappear into freckled hands.  
She was normal again! Normal and—  
Oh.  
She was— Oh, she was—  
'Naked!' Fuzzy's voice cheered loudly; triggering everyone in the room to all  
grab the closest suitable items to throw over Becky.  
Becky was too happy to care as she was buried in blankets and towels and  
cushions.  
*She was a person again!*

—END—

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