

Fox's Dancing Journey

A THOUGHTBOX STORY



It was Saturday night and time for the weekly woodland dance. Fox always looked forward to Saturdays as she just loved to dance! Her very favourite dance was one that all the folk from the Hollow knew – it was called *Jiving Paws*. Fox knew that everybody would be dancing the *Jiving Paws* dance this evening as it was everybody's favourite dance!

When Fox arrived into the clearing, all of her friends from the hollow were there, dancing happily to their favourite tunes. The full moon was shining down like a disco ball and the music was turned up really loudly.



Fox bounded into the middle of the dancefloor and joined the rest of her friends in five rounds of *Living Paws* without stopping! They danced and danced and danced all night long, everybody shaking their paws and grinning from ear to ear.

Eventually it was time for bed. Exhausted from all of their dancing, the animals headed back home to the hollow to get some sleep. But as they got closer to home, they noticed a strange smell and started to see clouds of black smoke billowing up into the air.



They hurried back to their neighbourhood as fast as they could and couldn't quite believe what they saw when they arrived. Instead of the cosy copse of trees where they all used to live, there was just a bare, empty space.

All of the trees had disappeared and all that remained in the hollow were smouldering piles of ash. Every single tree and every single home had been burned to a cinder.

The creatures stood in shock and disbelief. Everything had gone and their homes and their belongings had all burned to the ground.



Fox raced across the hollow to her home and quickly burrowed back into her den. Its contents had been destroyed, just like the rest of the hollow but as she was turning to leave, she caught sight of a few treasures lying in the charred remains - a picture of her family and her lucky pebble. That was all that was left of home. She quickly put them into a bag and headed back out to the hollow where the rest of the creatures were gathered.

Fox noticed that the fire was still burning nearby and seemed to be spreading - it was not safe for them to stay, and so they agreed to leave quickly and head off to find somewhere safe to rest and a new place to call home.



All of the creatures hurriedly packed up anything that they could find in the smoky remains and prepared themselves for a long journey to find somewhere new to live. They said one final goodbye to the hollow and headed swiftly off out of the forest in search of a new home.



The Hollow-folk walked for hours and hours, trying to get far enough away from the raging fire until it was safe for them to stop. Eventually they heard a noise in the distance, it sounded like the sound of singing and laughter and made them feel hopeful – maybe this was a safe place to rest?

Fox and her best friend Badger ran on ahead to take a look, but as they got closer they noticed a large sign hanging on a tree:



Fox and Badger looked at each other, feeling anxious. They were so very tired and so very hungry and desperately wanted to stop, but they both agreed that they would not be welcome in that place. And so they returned to the rest of the group and carried on walking.

One whole night and one whole day passed before they reached a beautiful looking copse. It seemed very familiar as it reminded them of their old home. As they got closer and closer, feeling hopeful that they might have finally found somewhere safe to live, a figure appeared in the distance, its large eyes shining in the twilight.



As the figure got closer and closer, they started to make out its long muscular legs, its large strong body and its two majestic-looking antlers: it was a stag. As he approached the band of weary travellers, he stood up very tall, stuck out his jaw and grunted loudly at the group:

“Keep walking, keep walking- we don’t have room for newcomers to stay here. Keep walking, you’re not welcome here.”

Fox’s eyes fill with tears when she realised that, once again, they were not welcome and they were still not safe. Resigned and rejected, she lowered her head and joined the rest of the weary group as they turned the other way and kept on walking.



After several more hours of exhausted walking, the Hollow-folk climbed a really, really steep hill. When they eventually got to the top, they noticed a tiny little light shining in the distance.

As they got closer they started to hear the sound of music and singing – there was a party happening in a clearing in the middle of the woods! The creatures hesitated for a moment, uncertain as to whether to keep going as they didn't want to feel unwelcome again.

Suddenly a figure popped out from behind a bush. It was Hare. “Greetings friends,” said Hare, hoppily, “you must be here for the party! Come and join us, the dancing is just about to start.”



Fox stepped forward nervously and said, “Actually, we don’t live here, we’ve come from far away. Are you sure we are welcome here?”

“Of course, we love welcoming new people into our home. Where are you all from?”

“We used to live far and away, down in the hollow. However, we don’t have a home any more, our houses were destroyed in a great fire and we are searching for a new place to live,” said Fox, feeling tears well up in her eyes as she remembered the homes that they had all lost.

“That is so awful,” said Hare, looking kindly at the group, “I couldn’t bear to lose my home, it would make me feel so sad.”



And then Hare thought for a moment, her whiskers twitching. “Maybe you could live here with us?” she said with a smile, looking around the group of weary travellers, “we’d love to welcome you to join our hilltop community...”

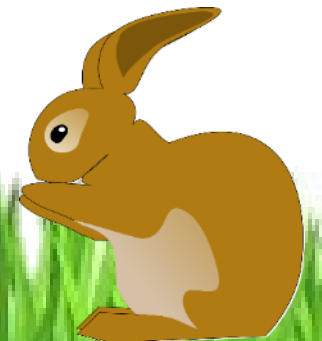
Fox couldn’t quite believe what she was hearing. After all of the unwelcoming encounters they had had, it was hard to believe that they might have *finally* found somewhere safe to stay. She looked around the group and saw smiles on everyone’s faces!

“Come and have some food before the dancing starts, you must be hungry and there’s plenty for us all to share,” said Hare, hopping her way to the top of the hill to join the rest of the Hilltop folk.



The weary group followed Hare into the clearing and were so surprised by what they saw – it was a copse just like where they used to live! Yet when they looked more closely, they realised that everything was somehow slightly different to what they were used to. The food looked rather strange, the drinks were very unusual and the music just didn't sound like anything they'd ever heard before. Fox started to wonder whether it was a good idea to stay – maybe they didn't belong here after all...

Whilst the tired animals were eating and drinking, Hare hopped over to some of her friends that also lived in the clearing to tell them about the new visitors and to ask if it was OK for them to stay.



The animals all looked at each other. Was there enough space for them to stay? Would there be enough food to share around? Would there be enough places for them to build their homes? They talked quietly together, some of the animals muttering quietly to one another. Suddenly, three of them stepped forward:

“I am happy to let them stay,” said Squirrel, “but I am a little unsure because they don’t look like us.”

“They don’t sound like us either,” said Woodpecker, also looking a little anxious.

“And I bet they don’t move like us,” hissed Snake, uncoiling his long body from around the tree.

“That’s ok,” said Hare, “we don’t all need to be the same! I don’t look like you, Squirrel, and I don’t sound like you Woodpecker and I don’t move like you, Snake, but we all live well together, don’t we?”



And with that, Hare hopped towards the dancefloor and signalled for the music to start and the dancing to begin.

As soon as the music started playing, Fox's feet start tapping and her paws started twitching. She just couldn't resist – dancing was her very favourite thing no matter where she was!

Pretty soon the dancefloor was buzzing. The Hollow-folk started waving their paws in the air, dancing in unison to the *Living Paws* routine that they all knew and loved. As Fox looked around the dancefloor, she noticed that the Hilltop-Folk were all happily stomping their feet on the ground in unison but not moving their paws at all.

Fox looked at Hare and said, "I've never seen anyone dance like you before...that looks fun!" At the same time, Hare looked at Fox and said, "And I've never seen anyone dance like you before...that looks fun!"



And so Fox started stomping her feet to the music just like the Hilltop-folk, and Hare started waving her paws to the beat like the Hollow-folk. Pretty soon all of the Hollow-folk had joined Fox in the stomping dance, and all of the Hilltop-Folk had joined Hare in the *Jiving Paws* and everyone was grinning from ear to ear.“

This is great!” hissed Snake, swirling his coils around and around!

“What a dance!” chirped Woodpecker, flapping his wings to the beat!

“What funky moves!” squealed Squirrel, jiving happily to the music.



Nowadays Saturdays on the Hilltop are the most exciting days of the week because it is the day that everyone comes together to dance!

The dancing always begins with the *Stomping Strut* – the local dance of the Hilltop-folk, and then moves onto the *Living Paws*, which the Hollow-folk soon taught to all of the locals. And then everyone comes together for their very favourite dance, which is when they all stomp their feet and wave their paws at the same time, with everyone dancing together!

THE END

