

Barnaby Digs Deep

A Thistledown Lane story · Series 2 · Episode 2



It was a bright, crisp morning on Thistledown Lane,
and Lilly the squirrel had been very, very busy.

“It’s here somewhere. I know it’s here somewhere,” said Lilly.

“Lilly, what are you looking for?” asked Bramble.



“My acorn! My biggest, best, most beautiful acorn. I buried it for the winter, and now I can’t find it,” said Lilly.

“Did you put a little stone on top? Like we said?” asked Moss.

“I did! I put a little stone right on top, so I’d remember,” said Lilly.



And Bramble and Moss looked along the lane. There was a little stone by the gate. And a little stone by the wall. And a little stone under the hedge, and another one, and another one.

“Lilly... there are a LOT of little stones,” said Moss.

“Oh, acorns and conkers,” said Lilly.

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“Never mind. Where were you when
you buried it?” asked Bramble.
“Somewhere between here... and the woods. I think,” said Lilly.
“Then let’s start at the woods,” said Bramble.

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So off they went, up the lane and into the woods. But when they got there, something very strange was going on. There were holes. Little round holes, all over the woodland floor.

“Who made all these?” asked Moss.

And then, from behind a tree, came a snuffling, and a scraping, and a little cloud of earth, and out popped a stripy black-and-white face with a very muddy nose.

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“Oh! Hello. I didn’t see you there. I was snuffling,” said Barnaby.

“Eww. Look at him. He’s all muddy and messy. I bet he’s not very nice,” said Lilly.

It was only a little thing to say. But Barnaby heard it, and his ears went down, and he picked up his spade and hurried away into the trees.

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“Lilly…” said Moss.

“I didn’t mean it. It just came out. Did it sound very unkind?” asked Lilly.

“A little bit,” said Bramble.



“Then we have to go after him,” said Lilly.



So they followed the snuffly footprints out of the trees, to a big grassy bank. And in the bank there wasn't just one doorway. There were lots of them.

"Look at all those doors! Who lives in a house with all those doors?" asked Moss.

And then, out of the biggest doorway, came a great big bundle of dry grass and old bracken, walking backwards. Underneath it was Barnaby.



“Oh. It’s you again,” said Barnaby.

“Hello. I’m Bramble. This is Moss, and this is Lilly,” said Bramble.

“I’m Barnaby. Barnaby Badger. This is my sett. That’s what a badger’s house is called,” said Barnaby.



“It’s ever so big,” said Moss.

“Barnaby… why are you throwing your bed outside?” asked Lilly.

“I’m not throwing it away. I’m airing it. Old bedding gets damp underground. So you drag it out into the sunshine, and you shake it, and you fetch nice fresh grass to go back in. Then it’s cosy and dry for the winter,” said Barnaby.

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“Like putting your blanket on the line,” said Moss.

“Just like that,” said Barnaby.

And then Barnaby showed them his sett. A long tunnel, and a room for sleeping, and a room for the winter, and a room for his collection of shiny pebbles, and a little room that was just for being quiet in.



“You dug all of this? By yourself?” asked Lilly.

“Badgers are good at digging. It’s the one thing I’m good at. I’m not good at being tidy,” said Barnaby.



“Barnaby, Lilly’s lost something. Her best acorn. She buried it, and now she can’t find it anywhere,” said Bramble.

“Lost something under the ground? Well, why didn’t you say? I’m the best finder-under-the-ground there is. I can smell things, right through the earth,” said Barnaby.

“You’d help me? Even after…” said Lilly.



“Even after. Come on. Dig, dig, diggity!” said Barnaby.

So back they all went, down from the bank and along to the lane, with Barnaby snuffling in front, nose down, all the way.



Barnaby sniffed by the gate. Barnaby sniffed by the wall. Barnaby sniffed under the hedge, and then he stopped. And his nose went twitch, twitch, twitch.

“Here. It’s right here. Ready?” asked Barnaby.

“Ready!” said Moss.



“Dig, dig, diggity!” said Barnaby.

And everybody joined in. Dig, dig, diggity! And the earth went flying,
and there was mud on Barnaby’s nose, and mud on Moss’s tail,
and a little bit of mud on Lilly’s beret, and nobody minded at all.

And there, under the little stone, was the biggest, best,
most beautiful acorn in the whole of Thistledown Lane.



“My acorn! Barnaby, you found it!” said Lilly.

“Barnaby, I’m sorry I said you were muddy and messy. That was unkind. You’re the nicest, cleverest badger I ever met.”

“That’s alright. I am a bit muddy. But thank you for saying sorry. Nobody’s ever come back to say sorry before,” said Barnaby.

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“And now we’re ALL a bit muddy,” said Moss.

“Then we’re all badgers today,” said Barnaby.

And Lilly decided that this time, she would bury her acorn somewhere she could never forget.



“Barnaby... could I keep it in your pebble room? Just for the winter?” asked Lilly.

“It would be the best thing in it,” said Barnaby.



“You can’t tell who someone is just by looking at them. Even if they’re a bit muddy. Everybody’s good at something. You just have to stay long enough to find out,” said Bramble.

And that’s how a muddy little badger became the best friend-under-the-ground on Thistledown Lane.

Thistledown Lane

The lesson: **Don’t judge someone by how they look. Everybody is good at something.**

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