

Badger
the
Mystical Mutt
and the Barking Boogie



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For Donald McKinney

Chapter One

“Ewwwww!” winced Badger the Mystical Mutt, burying his nose in his neckerchief.

“What a pong!”

It was a half past elevenses and all was not well in the lane ... or in Badger’s tummy.

“Not long now till toast time,” he said, patting his gurgling stomach. “Once I crack my famous smell-removing spell, we can have our morning snack, and all will be well again.”

Most mornings, Badger’s job was bird-poo patrol. He had to watch his Big Folk’s clean washing on the clothes line, and be alert and ready to bark away the birds with their low-flying poos. But today, even the birds had decided to migrate early, to escape the vile stench of the lane. And now, before he could enjoy his higgledy-piggledy tower of

toast, his Big Folk had given him a far bigger task — to get rid of the smell in the lane. An unexplained smell ... a mystery stink ... a stench of the very worst kind.



To make matters worse, his latest smell-removing spell didn't appear to be working very well.

He held his breath and tried again.

*“Charcoal rocks and mouldy old socks,
Cardamom seeds and corn that pops,
Mix up together in a cardboard box,
Take this stink and make it stop!”*

He stood back and waited ... and waited. His tummy rumbled, the charcoal crumbled, and still nothing happened. He sniffed the air around him nervously. Then his nose wrinkled in horror as he caught an even bigger whiff of the whiffiest kind.

“How can this be?” wondered Badger, scratching his head. “I followed the spell to the letter, but it's got worse not better.”

Just then he heard a loud hammering noise in the lane. He trotted to the end of his garden and peered through the crack in the fence. There in front of him, on the fence opposite, was a freshly pinned poster.

The official-looking notice read:

ATTENTION!

OWING TO A PONG OF THE PONGIEST KIND, THE PONG POLICE WILL CLOSE THE LANE AT NOON TODAY FOR STINK ASSESSMENT AND REMOVAL. THE PONG POLICE WILL SPRAY THE AREA WITH ANTI-PONG POISON. NO ONE MUST ENTER THE LANE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

“Goodness!” thought Badger. “I could have fixed this without the Pong Police getting involved. I’m almost there with my smell-removing spell.”

Suddenly, he heard a hullabaloo in the distance. He looked down the lane and saw the gang, led by Dodgy Dave, thundering towards him in a cloud of dust.

“Uh-oh! Who are they after today?” he wondered.

As they hurtled past him, Badger turned to go back to his spell and heard a tiny voice shouting after the gang:

“Dodgy Dave! Dodgy Dave! Wait, please! I just want to speak to you.”

“Leave us alone. You stink!” shouted Dodgy Dave.

“I’m getting the Pong Police on to you,” warned Snif.

“If you get any nearer, I’ll keel over,” whimpered Lennie.



“Go away pooperscoopersmellysnooper!” yelled Pickle, running faster.

“I’ve just had my breakfast. I can’t bear it!” yelled Pogo Paws, zooming ahead.

Badger watched as leaves swirled and bin lids rattled. Suddenly, the smallest dog he had ever seen went flying past him in a blur.

“Well, that makes a change. I’ve never seen that before; the gang on the run with someone chasing *them!*”

Badger’s eyes watered as the rotten



air stung his nostrils. He shook his head, thinking, “If I can sort this spell before noon, I could save the lane from closure. And get my toast!”

He padded back to the spot where his ingredients lay. Sparkles of light twinkled around him as he repeated the spell.

*“Charcoal rocks and mouldy old socks,
Cardamom seeds and corn that pops ...”*

His tummy rumbled loudly again. “Ah,” he thought. “Maybe I need my higgledy-piggledy tower of toast before the spell will actually work.”

Even through the smelly yuckiness, Badger’s nose twitched as he picked up the familiar scent of a freshly made toastie somewhere very close. Then, he heard the plinkety plonk tune of the local bakery van.

“Right on time,” he smiled, as he untied his famous red-spotted neckerchief and spoke to it seriously.

“Chief, I have a job for you. Float, float, float away. Find some toast to make my day.”

Badger sat back confidently and awaited

his snack. 'Chief always came back with the goods and had never let him down yet.

At the bottom of his garden, a pair of beautiful blue eyes peered brightly through the crack in the fence as Badger stretched out, licking his lips. The sun cast a shadow on his sundial showing a quarter to noon. Suddenly, his nose pinched, the smell was getting even more icky.

“Yuck! I hope 'Chief hurries back. I'll have to finish the spell before noon or the Pong Police will close the lane.”

Right on cue, 'Chief drifted over the fence and hovered above Badger's nose.

“Yummity yum yum yum, must get this toast into my tum, then my magic can be done!” Badger drooled, feeling very pleased with himself. 'Chief wrapped itself back around his neck and knotted neatly.

As Badger munched into the delicious cheese toastie, the blue eyes at the bottom of the garden widened and watched in wonder. The tiny dog that had been chasing Dodgy Dave and his gang skipped through

the crack in the fence and marched up to Badger.

“Ahem!” she coughed slightly.

Badger stopped mid-munch and looked around him, unable to see where the noise had come from, but the air reeked worse than before. He thought no more of it and finished the last bite of his toastie. It was time to get back to work on his spell.

A loud *prffffff* sounded nearby. Badger looked around him again, but still couldn't see what had caused the noise. He shook his head and got back to work.

Shuffling the ingredients, he rubbed two small twigs together vigorously.

*“Charcoal rocks and mouldy old socks,
Cardamom seeds and corn that pops,*



and the Barking Boogie

*Mix up together in a cardboard box,
Take this stink and make it stop!"*

As the twigs sparked and the clock struck noon, he heard another cough, an even louder *prfffffft*, a big bang ... and everything went black.