

# The Girl and the Blue Badger



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Lily loved rainy days best of all. She pulled on her mustard yellow raincoat, laced up her green rubber boots, and grabbed her small brown satchel. The air smelled like wet leaves and fresh mud. Puddles sparkled all along the path, and Lily splashed right through every single one. Rainy days always felt like the start of something secret.



Behind the old oak tree, something small and bright was hiding. Lily stopped. A ball of sky blue fur peeked out from the roots. It was a badger, but not like any badger she had ever seen. Its fur glowed softly, and white stripes ran down its face. Tiny dark eyes sparkled like stars. It wore a little grass satchel and a leaf behind one ear.



"Hello," said Lily softly, kneeling down. The blue badger tilted its head and gave a cheerful chirp. It patted its grass satchel, which held a glowing pebble. Then it turned and scampered a few steps away, looking back as if to say, "Follow me!" Lily hesitated. A glowing blue badger was not an everyday thing. But her curiosity was bigger than her worry.



The badger led her to a hollow beneath a tangle of roots. It pushed aside some ferns and showed her a narrow tunnel. Cool air drifted up, carrying a sweet, sparkly smell. "Is it safe?" Lily whispered. The badger nodded and gave a tiny thumbs-up with one stubby paw. Lily took a deep breath and crawled in after her new friend.



The tunnel sloped down and down, growing wider as they went. Lily's green rubber boots echoed softly on the smooth stone. The blue badger trotted ahead, its fur lighting the way like a little lantern. "What's your name?" Lily asked. The badger chirped twice, then patted its chest. "Bim?" Lily guessed. Bim nodded happily and did a little spin.



At last the tunnel opened into a huge cave, and Lily gasped. The whole underground garden glowed! Stones of pink, green, and gold sparkled from every wall. Mushrooms shone like tiny lamps, and a stream of silver water bubbled past. "Oh, Bim," Lily breathed. "This is the most wonderful place I have ever seen." Bim puffed out his chest, looking very proud.



Bim showed Lily how the glowing stones grew warmer when you held them. He picked up a small purple one and placed it gently in her palm. It felt like a warm egg. Lily laughed with delight. "It tickles!" she said. Bim giggled, a funny chittering sound, and his fluffy tail shimmered. Together they gathered a little pile of glowing stones to look at.



But then Lily noticed something. Bim's glowing fur was flickering, growing dimmer and dimmer. He yawned a big, shaky yawn and sat down. "Are you okay?" Lily asked. Bim pointed to his glowing pebble, which had lost its shine. He looked worried. Lily felt a flutter of concern. Maybe her new friend needed help.



"Do you need more light?" Lily asked. Bim nodded and pointed to a dark corner of the garden. "You want me to go in there?" Lily said, her voice small. It looked very shadowy. She bit her lip. But Bim looked so tired, and his little eyes were so kind. Lily straightened her raincoat. "Okay," she said. "I'll be brave. Let's go together."



In the dark corner, Lily found a cluster of pale stones hiding under a ledge. They were cold and dull. "Is this what you need?" she asked. Bim's eyes went wide. He nodded and gently touched one stone. Nothing happened. "Maybe they need something warm," Lily said. She remembered how her hands had warmed the purple stone. She rubbed her palms together.



Lily held the pale stones in her warm hands and breathed on them softly. Slowly, they began to glow, first pink, then bright gold. Bim's fur sparkled back to life! He bounced up and did a happy dance, his fluffy tail shimmering. Then he reached into his grass satchel and pulled out the little glowing pebble. He pressed it into Lily's hand as a gift.



Lily looked at the pebble, then at Bim. "You're giving this to me?" she asked. Bim nodded and chirped warmly. Lily felt a happy glow inside her chest. "Thank you," she said. "But I have something for you too." She opened her brown satchel and took out a shiny red button she had found on the path. Bim's eyes sparkled like stars.



Bim fastened the red button to his grass satchel and spun around to show it off. Then he led Lily to a cozy nook where soft moss grew like a cushion. They sat together, sharing the warm light of the stones. Lily told Bim about her rainy walks, and Bim chattered about his garden. They laughed and laughed. It felt like they had been friends forever.



When it was time to go, Bim walked Lily back through the tunnel. "Will I see you again?" Lily asked. Bim nodded and patted his satchel, where the glowing pebble used to be. Then he pointed to the red button. Lily understood. "You'll come find me," she said. Bim chirped and waved one stubby paw. Lily waved back, her heart full.



Lily climbed out into the drizzle, her green boots squelching on the wet grass. The world looked the same, but everything felt different. She touched the glowing pebble in her pocket. It was warm and bright. She thought about Bim's sky blue fur and his kind, sparkly eyes. He was not scary at all. He was the best surprise she had ever met.



From that day on, Lily always watched for her blue friend. Sometimes she found a tiny leaf on her windowsill or a shiny stone on the path. Each one was a little hello from Bim. And every time it rained, Lily smiled and pulled on her mustard yellow raincoat. She knew that appearances can be surprising, and kindness is the brightest glow of all.