



## The Badger of Blackberry Lane

By assid a

Rio and Lily, two tiny chihuahuas,  
loved their big backyard. They chased  
buzzing bees and wrestled with  
crunchy autumn leaves right up to the  
old stone wall that separated their yard  
from the quiet cemetery next door.



One afternoon, a shadow slipped through a broken board in the back fence. It was Slink, a coyote with sly, hungry eyes. He saw the two little dogs playing and his tummy rumbled.



Rio and Lily stopped their game. Their happy barks turned into frightened yelps. The coyote crept closer, a low growl rumbling in his chest. The little dogs huddled together, trembling by the stone wall.



On the other side of the wall,  
something stirred. Rocco the honey  
badger was just waking up from his  
nap. The yelps and growls disturbed his  
peace. He wasn't big, but he was brave,  
and he did not like bullies.



"What's all this racket?" Rocco grumbled. He scrambled over the wall and dropped into the yard with a soft thump. He saw the big coyote cornering the two terrified chihuahuas and his eyes narrowed.



Slink the coyote sneered. "Look what we have here," he growled. "A little badger. Go away before you get hurt." He took another step toward Rio and Lily.



But Rocco wasn't scared. Honey badgers are never scared. He puffed out his chest, let out a ferocious hiss, and charged straight at the coyote!



Slink was shocked! He expected the little creature to run, not fight. Rocco was a whirlwind of fury, nipping and clawing. The coyote yelped in surprise. This was no ordinary badger!



With a final, terrified howl, Slink turned and fled. He squeezed back through the broken fence and disappeared, wanting nothing more to do with the fiercest little animal he had ever met.



Rio and Lily couldn't believe it. Their grumpy neighbor had saved them! Rio ran over, wagging his tail and giving Rocco a grateful lick on the cheek.



Lily danced around them, barking happily. Rocco just grunted, but they knew it was a happy grunt. He was their hero from the other side of the wall, and their very best friend.