

So, one day Furball came to Benny and said, “Benny, Camille and I have been thinking about raising a family of our own. We need to find the other coyotes and be a part of their pack as well. “

Benny was sad and looked at the two coyotes and said, “I wish you all the best in your life but please come back and visit me one day. I will be in this burrow for as long as I live. “

Both Camille and Furball walked up to Benny and gave him a big hug, especially Furball. He put his arms around Benny’s neck and gave him a hard squeeze and told him he would miss him very much. Then, both coyotes scampered off into the night and disappeared through the Grove of oak trees in search of Camille’s family.

Now Benny was alone again, and without the company of Furball. He was fully grown and was a ferocious animal to deal with in the forest. Most of the other predators in the woods knew this and stayed away from the badger when he was hunting.

One day, as Benny searched for food, he smelled a different scent in the air. It seemed to be coming from a fallen oak tree on the other side of a small clearing. He silently approached the tree and climbed to the top of the log, ready to pounce on whatever was on the other side. But as he prepared to jump, he realized it was another badger. It was a small animal and seemed to be having a problem breathing. Benny slid off the log and approached the badger who was lying on its side. He realized immediately that the smaller badger was a female and looked as if it had not eaten in several days.

Benny scurried back to his burrow where he had some food stored and quickly brought it back to the female badger. She seemed to smell the food and began to eat it slowly. At first, she just lay there after eating food, but then slowly rolled over onto her feet. She looked up at the large badger, and with a weak smile said “thank you very much for the food. I didn’t know there were any other badgers that lived around here. I lost my way and have been travelling for several days far away from my home. I thought I was going to die laying here.”

She then turned in and said, “thanks again for the help. I do appreciate the food, but I must find my parents. They have gone off somewhere, and I don’t know where to look!”

“That’s what happened to me when my parents left when I was just a young badger! I had to find my way for food and shelter and have survived for a couple of seasons on my own.”

He was pleased to have found another badger that he could talk to and maybe be a part of his family. He motioned for her to follow him to a small pond, which had recently formed from the recent rainfall. She drank for a while, and then with her paws, washed her face and body in the cool water.

Looking back at Benny, she said, “My name is Beatrice, but my parents always call me Bea before they left me! What’s your name?”

“I’m Benny, and it’s very nice to meet you. I wonder if you would like to stay in my burrow. Then when you are stronger, we can decide what you want to do about your parents. There’s plenty of room, because when I was younger, I met a coyote and he and I shared this burrow. As he and I grew, we needed to make the area bigger. So, we became good friends and lived together for a long time. ”

“You became friends with a coyote?” She exclaimed, “They can be dangerous if they hunt together in a pack! I have heard them howling at the full moon and it scares me to hear that sound.”

“Well, he’s not here any longer since he found a mate several months ago when a pack of coyotes tried to attack us. Then some men tried to shoot them and scared them off but one of the small females was left behind after she hit a branch and was unconscious. So, we dragged her into our burrow that night where she slept until the morning. My friend’s name is Furball And the young female coyote’s is called Camille. They became very close and soon left me to find her friends. “

Bea smiled and said, “Yes, I’d like very much to go to your burrow because I’ve slept beside this log for two days now. I want to be safe and secure, and next to another badger!”

The two badgers walked slowly in the direction of the burrow. But Bea was still weak and had to take it slowly. They soon arrived at the entrance, and Bea smiled as she looked at the extensive work Benny had done to provide a comfortable and secure home. She smiled and looked at Benny happily.

She immediately slid down the hall and found a very comfortable spot among the dry leaves and said, “Benny thank you very much for saving my life and for sharing your home with me tonight” she then drifted off to sleep.

Benny sat across from her and watched her sleep. Perhaps this might be the mate that he’s been waiting for all this time. Benny fell asleep, and but found himself being awakened in the early afternoon by Bea because she was getting hungry again.

Benny smiled and said “You will have to wait till evening and then we’ll sneak across the pasture to a garden by the farmhouse on the other side of the pasture. I hope you like carrots, he said, with a smile!”

The sun had gone down for a couple of hours, and darkness completely enveloped the woods and the pasture beyond as they approached the garden. Benny said quietly, “you must be careful here because the man in the house has a gun and he will shoot at us if he finds us in the garden. So, we must take a few vegetables and carry them back under the fence and back to our burrow to eat. “

Bea nodded that she understood, and the two of them slid under the barbwire fence and made their way to the carrots. Benny realized it had been a while since he had been back to the garden and the carrots are fully grown now. He motioned to Bea to just take one and he would take another. Then they would leave the garden quietly. They slipped under the fence rather awkwardly and dragged the large carrots behind them.

Little did they know that the young girl in the farmhouse saw them sneaking away, and smiled broadly, knowing that her badger had found a friend. In two days, it would be the weekend and she would pack another picnic lunch and go back to her spot under the oak tree. She could hardly wait to see the two of them together and tease them out of their burrow for a bite of sandwich or a piece of fruit.

Saturday came and the sun was shining brightly in the blue sky with small, puffy clouds that seemed to be suspended in space. Mary approached her mother and said she wanted to have another picnic in the woods like before.

As before, her mother packed an orange, and a nice sandwich for her picnic lunch, but Mary insisted that her mother put a small sandwich in the basket for her doll Monica. Her mother smiled at Mary and followed her wishes for her favorite doll. She then told her to be careful, but knew that her daughter was very resourceful, and would not get into trouble. Her mother also knew she could watch her daughter to make sure she was safe.

Mary arrived at the tree and set her doll up against the tree and then laid out her picnic lunch. It wasn’t long before Benny could smell the food that was laid out on the blanket. He remembered the first time that Furball met the girl and she fed them. He wondered if the same would be true for him.

Slowly, he stuck his head out of the burrow and at first the young girl was afraid because the badger was quite large now. Benny bowed his head respectfully and she seemed to understand that the badger would not hurt her. She took a piece of her sandwich and threw it in the general direction of Benny. He looked at the food, and then the girl and back at the food again. He slowly crept out of the burrow and grabbed it with his long paws and scurried back into the depths of the burrow.

He smiled at Bea and gave her a piece of meat wrapped in bread. She smelled it and smiled and then ate it quickly. It was the first time she had eaten food that was made by a human. It was very tasty and filled her stomach.

“That was really good, Benny!” She exclaimed. “Does she come here often?”

“Not regularly, but when she does, she always leaves us some food to eat”

When they had finished, Benny went up to the entrance of the burrow and saw that the young girl had packed up her lunch basket and started back across the pasture. But as he looked back at the tree where she had been sitting, there was an orange and a small sandwich left behind. He smiled and quickly ran to the tree and gathered the leftover food for himself and Bea.

Benny was pleased that the girl would come to the tree again after Furball left and that he could share the food with Bea. He hoped that Bea would one day become his mate for life. After they had stored the food for later, Benny climbed on top of the old oak log and peered across the pasture as the girl skipped home through the tall grass. He smiled and thought she was a wonderful human that he could trust.

As he watched, however, he noticed the pasture grass moving as if an animal was following her. Benny ran higher up the log and could see the top of a coyote tail as it moved stealthily through the tall grass. He realized the coyote was stalking Mary. He ran down the log and headed across the pasture as fast as he could to attack the coyote and save Mary.

Mary was not aware of the danger that was behind her, but Benny knew he had to stop the coyote from harming the young girl. As he approached the girl, he could see the coyote on the pathway getting ready to pounce on her. He charged through the tall pasture grass and emitted a fearsome growl that scared the girl and alerted the coyote there was trouble behind him.

The badger has very sharp teeth but so does the coyote. The difference is the badger’s skin is very thick and the hair matted down was a defensive system from most animals’ attacks. Benny lunged at the coyote and knocked him to the ground and bit deeply into its leg and cut its sides with his sharp claws. The Coyote tried to bite the badger, but it could not break through the skin. The coyote realized it was beaten and rolled over in the grass, and broke free from Benny’s grasp. It ran quickly back to the woods as Benny watched it leave.

The young girl screamed and ran towards the house as fast as she could and yelled for her mother. Benny could see the older woman in the house as she ran out the door towards her daughter. She picked Mary up and ran to the safety of the house. Benny noticed that Mary had dropped her doll when she ran, and it lay in the grass in front of him. He gently picked it up in its jaws and walked slowly towards the house. He was

fearful that he might be shot for coming close to the home, but he had to bring the doll back to the girl.

At first, Mary thought the badger was going to eat her doll, but her mother calmed her and said to watch and wait.

“Let’s wait and see what the badger does honey. He doesn’t look like he is going to hurt Monica.” Her mother said, as they watched from the window.

With tears in her eyes for her beloved doll, she watched as the badger placed the doll against the fence post in a seated position. It was just like the girl had done at the tree in the woods. Benny then turned and ran back through the grass to his home. He had an interesting story to tell Bea, who was waiting in the burrow for him.

Six few months had passed, and Bea gave birth to their son who they named Anthony. He was a cute little badger in the beginning but after a few weeks he was crawling all over the burrow and tearing into things and digging his own tunnel just for fun. Both Benny and Bea enjoyed watching the young badger learning some of the skills necessary for his later life. Feeding him was a chore however, since Benny had to do all the hunting and bring home food for Bea and Tony. One day he noticed honeybees flying past when he was far away from his normal hunting area. He tried to follow them but couldn’t find the beehive. He vowed that he would come back another day to look for it.

A few days later Benny returned to the area where he had seen the bees and followed them as they approached a hollowed-out log on the forest floor. Surely that had to be the spot for the beehive. He began scratching around the base of the old log and soon there were 100s of bees buzzing around the badger trying to sting him. They needed to keep him away from the hive. But badgers have such thick skin and coarse hair covering it that the bees are not able to sting any part of the badger. Benny opened the log with his powerful front paws and could see the interior of the hive with the honeycombs and more importantly the larvae, or bee eggs, which were his favorite. He ate the larvae and when he was full, he decided to break off part of a honeycomb and bring it back to Bea and Tony.

When he arrived at the front of the burrow, he called out to Bea and Tony to come out to see the surprise he brought them. “This is honey I found in a log”, he said with a proud smile. “You will like this very much!”

Bea was thrilled to have the honey and Tony was excited to have such a sweet treat as he licked the honey off the waxy honeycomb. After he finished, he chewed the waxy material and made a mess in the burrow. It was so bad that Benny had to redo the entrance to remove the wax and sticky honey that was on the ground.

Smiling, both Bea and Benny laid down while watching Tony digging another tunnel just for fun. Soon, though, Tony became weary and settled down next to his mother and fell fast asleep. And so, it went for the badger family; hunting at night and sleeping most of the day. Occasionally Benny would wonder whatever happened to his old friend Furball. It had been a long time since they were together and he missed his old friend.

In another part of the forest, a couple of miles away, Furball and Camille had joined other coyotes with friends and family. He wondered also what had happened to Benny and thought about someday he would travel back to the old burrow to see if he was still there. But for now, though, the pups were young and couldn't travel, so they stayed with the group and hunted for food together.

Many months passed and his family had grown, and the pack of coyotes was larger which made hunting for food more difficult. Furball remembered how he and Benny worked as a team to catch prey with the badger digging and the coyote waiting for the animal to come out. They were great together and he really missed his old friend. One day there was a fight over food that he had caught for his family. It was ripped away from him by two larger male coyotes. That night he talked to Camille, and they decided to go out on their own and maybe even see if they could find Benny.

As the rest of the pack slept, Furball, Camille and their three pups slipped away and headed towards the area where Benny and the coyote had first lived. They had to stay hidden during the day because farmers didn't like coyotes and might shoot them.

It was a long way to go to the old area where both Benny and Furball had grown up. The pups, however, complained about the distance but at least kept the pace. It had grown very dark now and the forest seemed to close in on them as they walked along the path. Soon they came to a stream that Furball remembered was close to the old Burrow. He was pleased that he had been able to at least find this part of the forest and knew that they were close to their old burrow.

Soon they arrived at the burrow only to find it was empty. "I don't know where my friend the badger is, but at least we can sleep here for the night and look around again tomorrow. "

Everyone was tired from the long trek through the dark and scary forest, so they used his old home to spend the night where they could get much-needed rest. Furball went to the entrance of the burrow and wondered where Benny might have gone.

The next evening there was a full moon and Furball drifted outside the burrow and howled at the bright, yellow orb in the sky just as he had done with the other coyotes. He recalled Benny telling him that if he wanted to howl at night to go somewhere else and do it! It would disturb the other small animals that they were hunting. He laughed to himself thinking of Benny, when suddenly there was a crashing sound coming through the brush next to the log and there was Benny in all his glory!

At first the two animals stared at each other, and then, in a rush, hugged each other and rejoiced that they had found themselves together again.

“You’re all grown up Furball!” Benny exclaimed.

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“Yes, of course, and better yet, that coyote we found a long time ago by the Camille? Well, she’s now my mate and we pups that are six months old. They hunt with but I still have to do all the work!” He said proud smile.

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“Furball; that’s great and I have a mate Her name is Bea, and I have a young badger Anthony. He’s not quite ready for the nightly hunting but should be ready soon. I take him with me to show him how to do things and he’s a fast learner.” Benny proudly said as he looked towards the bushes where his family had hidden. He motioned for Bea and Anthony to come out to meet Furball.

“This is my family and I want to meet yours too, Furball. Are they close by?”

“I left them in our old burrow when I came out to see the moon and howl a little bit. I’ll run back and get them!”



Furball scurried off and within a few minutes Benny and his family were surrounded by coyotes, big and small. Anthony had never seen a coyote and hid behind his mother. But one of the young pups trotted over to sniff the young badger. Anthony reared back and showed his young, but sharp teeth and claws hidden under the fur of his front paws. The young coyote jumped back and ran into one of his sisters who had followed him over to see what he was doing.

“Come here and meet each other,” Benny said to everyone. “Your father and I lived together for a long time and hunted almost every night for food as a team. Maybe you all can become a team when you’re a little older?”

After a few minutes of getting acquainted, they began playing and rolling in the dirt and into the bushes giggling and laughing. Furball and Benny and their mates sat and watched their young offspring and smiled at each other.

Benny finally said. “Furball, why don’t you stay close by, and we can hunt together again and teach our youngsters to do the same. Our old burrow seems to fit your family and if not, I will help you make it even bigger?”

Benny, that’s a great idea but let me talk to Camille about it. You know we have left our pack forever, and I can’t think of anyone I would rather be around than you!”

And so it went; the badgers and coyotes lived close to each other; totally different animals but with a common purpose to raise their families in peace and harmony. They were loving neighbors and living with nature in the area they called Bearberry Pass!

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What did Camille and Furball do with Benny one night?
2. What kind of animal did Benny find one day in the woods?
3. What did Benny get for the young badger out of his burrow?
4. What was the name of the badger Benny had found?
5. What did Bea do when she first got to the burrow?
6. What did the two badgers take from the garden?
7. Who saw them as they snuck away from the garden?
8. When Mary had another picnic, what did she give to Benny?
9. When Mary left the picnic, what animal was stalking her?
10. What did Benny do when he saw the tail moving through the pasture grass?
11. What did Mary drop as she ran to the house away from the coyote?
12. What did Benny do with the doll and what was Mary's reaction when she saw the doll in the badger's mouth?
13. What is the name of the baby badger and what did they call him?
14. What did Benny bring back to the burrow for Bea and Tony?
15. Who came back to see Benny along with his family?
16. What did Furball do that awakened Benny and what did Benny do?
17. What finally happened with the two families when they got together at Bearberry Pass?

QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS

1. What did Camille and Furball do with Benny one night?

They said goodbye to Benny and gave him a hug and left to find Camille's family

2. What kind of animal did Benny find one day in the woods?

He found another badger

3. What did Benny get for the young badger out of his burrow?

Benny ran back to the burrow and brought her food

4. What was the name of the badger Benny had found?

Her name was Beatrice

5. What did Bea do when she first got to the burrow?

She found a soft place and fell asleep

6. What did the two badgers take from the garden?

They took large carrots.

7. Who saw them as they snuck away from the garden?

Mary saw them leave the garden.

8. When Mary had another picnic, what did she give to Benny?

She gave him a large sandwich

9. When Mary left the picnic, what animal was stalking her?

There was a large coyote that stalked her

10. What did Benny do when he saw the tail moving through the pasture grass?

He immediately rushed into the pasture and attacked the coyote.

11. What did Mary drop as she ran to the house away from the coyote?

She dropped her doll Monica

12. What did Benny do with the doll and what was Mary's reaction when she saw the doll in the badger's mouth?

He placed the doll alongside a fencepost and Mary was so afraid that he was going to eat her doll

13. What is the name of the baby badger and what did they call him?

Anthony was his name but they called him Tony

14. What did Benny bring back to the burrow for Bea and Tony?

Benny found a beehive and brought back a honeycomb for Bea and Tony

15. Who came back to see Benny along with his family?

Furball came back to see Benny because he missed him very much.

16. What did Furball do that awakened Benny and what did Benny do?

Furball howled at the full moon and it awakened Benny who came crashing out of the brush.

17. What finally happened with the two families when they got together at Bearberry Pass?

They lived happily ever after as friends in Bearberry Pass.