

Praise for *Badgers Are GO!*



‘We love this book! These delightful and bonkers badgers had us laughing out loud! Hilarious details in Susannah Lloyd’s rumbunctious text and Nici Gregory’s drawings burst with adorable warmth’



Philip Reeve & Sarah McIntyre,

Adventuremice co-authors



‘It is an awesome book. I love it.

The author made it soooo funny!’ Riley, age 8

‘I love it because it makes me laugh’ Cengiz, age 9

‘I definitely recommend this book. It is funny, interesting and fun all in one! The pictures are great’

Isabelle, age 8 ½



‘Exciting and full of chaos!’ Isla, age 9

‘I love the pictures, they made me laugh’ Charlie, age 9

‘It is super-funny!’ Izzy, age 8



Badgers Are GO!
is a
DAVID FICKLING BOOK

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illustrated by Nici GREGORY

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David Fickling Books



SL: To Zachary, without whom this book would not exist.

And to James and Meggie, who believed in badgers.

NC: This one is for my own set of heroic badgers,
Major Colin and Wing Commanders Georgie and Lottie
XXX



CLASSIFIED

TOP SECRET

What-ho, young badgers!

I mean, you are all definitely badgers, aren't you?

Of course you are. Righto. Jolly good show.

Just thought I ought to check . . .

Because this IS TOP-SECRET INFORMATION,
by Jove!

We can't risk this book falling into *human* hands,
can we?

Much better for the humans *not* to know. I mean to say, it would come as rather a SHOCK, wouldn't it?

So, if you are not a badger, please do not read on. This book is strictly NOT for *your* eyes.

Kindly put it down and run along there, thank you.

Off you go then. Put it down. DOWN.

There's a good chap.



Nothing to see here.

Nothing . . . at . . . all . . .



Toodle-oo!



Phew. Well, that ought to have thrown them off the scent, as it were. You never can be too careful, you know.

So now we are sure we are alone, I might as well start by telling you about ol' Lulu.

You know, Lulu Whifferton-Rear? You don't? Well, goodness – now, let me see . . . where to begin?

CHAPTER ONE

Now, of course, back then, Lulu was just a *little* badger, minding her own little badgery business, scampering about the woodland glades in the fresh spring air, sniffing the flowers, munching on beetles and snoozing to the sweet sound of birdsong.

Of course she was! It is what every young badger should do.

How she loved to close her eyes and doze underneath the old weeping willow, dabbling her paws in the babbling stream, her snout buried in the soft, warm fur of her tummy and her head in the clouds, daydreaming.

Little did she know, those hazy days were coming to an end.

Because a letter was just about to arrive, floating



swiftly and purposefully down through the woodland glade where Lulu lay, dreaming a dream. The sort of dream with more beetle and clotted-cream puddings than you could shake a stick at. And Lulu didn't need to shake a stick at them anyway, because she was so busy eating them all up.

The letter landed and Lulu woke with a start, and the puddings fizzled clean away.

She sat up, rubbed her eyes, and took the letter in her paw.

Dear Miss Lulu Whifferton-Rear,
You! Yes, YOU, you frisky and frivolous young
badger!

No more gadding about for you.
You have a glorious and industrious future!
There is work to be done! And it will be
your job to do it!

We will make a dashed fine pilot out of you,
if it's the last thing we do!

Because it is high time you began your
TOP-SECRET MISSION, don't you think?

Of course you do.

What-ho!

Needless to say, this came as quite a shock to little Lulu.

‘Oh my!’ she gasped. Well – wouldn’t you? It isn’t every day a badger gets a letter like that.

‘Me? A pilot?’ she whispered to herself, looking around at the dappled sunbeams of the glade.

The birds softly tweeted, high up in the trees. The stream gently babbled its way along. A bee hummed a little hum as it ambled past her ear.

Something else was buzzing too, higher up. It was

a plane, flying high in the sky.

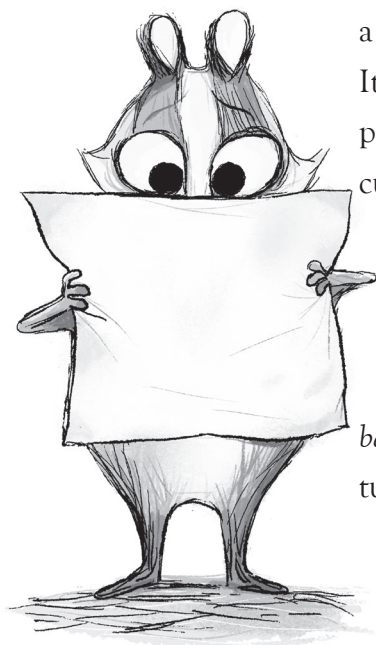
It was doing loop-the-loops, puffing out a trail of white curls across the blue.

Flying up and up and up.

Down and down and down.

Round and round.

‘They can’t mean me. I’m a badger!’ Lulu murmured. She turned the letter over carefully.



YES, WE DO MEAN YOU!
Please report to The Rumpington Academy of
Badgering, 1st Division, at 0600 hours precisely,
Monday morning.

And that is an order!

Signed . . . Major Musty Rumpington
PS BADGERS ARE GO!

Lulu peered down at her reflection in the stream. There she was, just a fluffy little badger, with a muddy snout and badly combed whiskers. She searched for a reflection of the aeroplane in the ripples of the water, but it had disappeared from view, like one of her dreams. She wondered to herself if, perhaps, she could have imagined it all.

Lulu blinked a few more times and looked at the letter again, just to be sure. No, it did *seem* to be real. **0600 hours precisely, Monday morning.** it said.

‘Oh dear! That’s tomorrow!’ she gasped.

But there was simply no going back now, was there?

CHAPTER TWO

And so it was that Lulu, trembly of paw and apprehensive of whisker, gave up her frivolous ways and arrived at the Rumpington Academy of Badgering, 1st Division.

On Monday morning at 0600 hours, *precisely*. Or thereabouts.

Pushing past the brambles, she found it: a small door set into the earth between two oak trees, shrouded by mist.



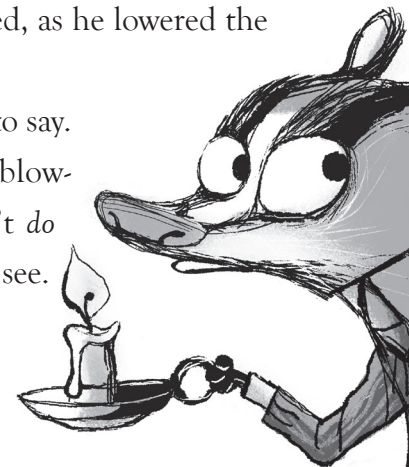
She gulped, breathed in deeply, and knocked.

After a small pause, the door began to inch open, and a furtive-looking badger appeared. He glanced quickly about from left to right, sniffed the air, and ducked his head back down, beckoning Lulu in after him.

‘Hurry, please,’ he whispered, as he lowered the door above them.

‘I wondered-’ Lulu started to say.

‘Shhh!’ he hissed, almost blowing out his candle. ‘We don’t do wondering here – no time, you see.’



And *do* try not to squeak *quite* so loudly when we are near the surface. Someone might . . . *hear you.*'

'Sorry,' she whispered back, not at all sure what sort of a someone he might have in mind. 'But-'

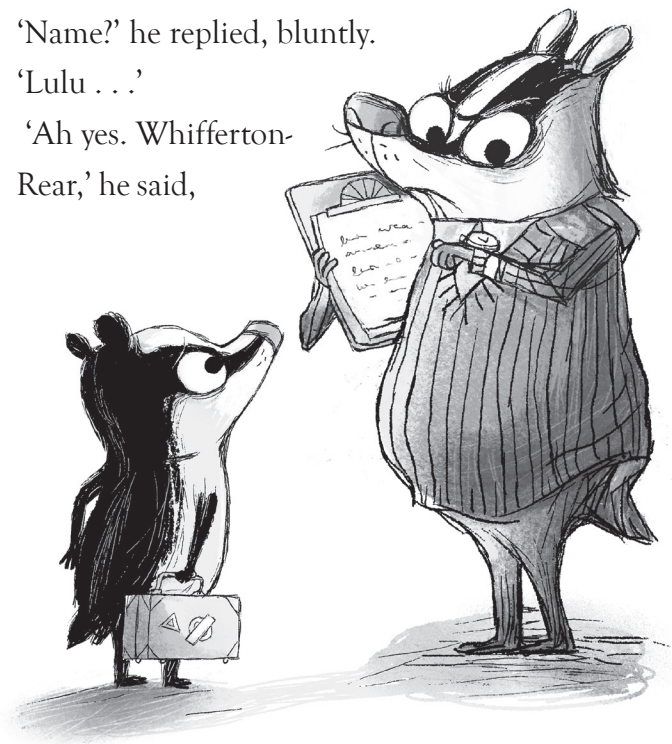
'No "buts" either, I'm afraid,' he said, scanning the names on his clipboard. 'Not in keeping with the famous badger spirit, is it?'

'Famous badger spirit?' said Lulu, baffled.

'Name?' he replied, bluntly.

'Lulu . . .'

'Ah yes. Whifferton-Rear,' he said,



reaching the end of his list. 'Check. You are *somewhat* late. We were expecting you,' he glanced at his watch, 'at 0600 hours, precisely.'

'But it is six o'clock, isn't it?' whispered Lulu. 'Or . . . thereabouts?'

'It is 0600 hours and *half a minute*,' replied the badger, 'if we are being precise about it, which we generally *are* here, as a rule. This way, please.' He turned and scampered off down a long, dark burrow, his candle flickering as he went.

Lulu followed as fast as her paws would take her, trying hard not to trip over.

Down and down they went, into the earth.

The familiar underground smell of wet tree roots and mulchy leaves soon faded. There were other, newer, sharper smells wafting up the tunnel. Strange sorts of smells that caught in Lulu's snout and made it wrinkle. The thick, dark smell of ink, the tickle of chalk dust and laundry starch, and the sour smell of engine oil.

The badger stopped abruptly as the tunnel came to an end, so that Lulu piled up behind him and fell backwards onto her rump.



He stepped back a few paces and frowned at her in the dim candlelight.

‘Oh dear,’ he said. ‘You *are* a little on the small side, aren’t you?’ He took out a tape measure from his pocket and began to measure her as she got back on her paws again.

‘I am?’ said Lulu.

‘It’s all standard issue, you see,’ said the badger.

‘I see,’ Lulu repeated, although, of course, she didn’t. None of this was making any sense at all.

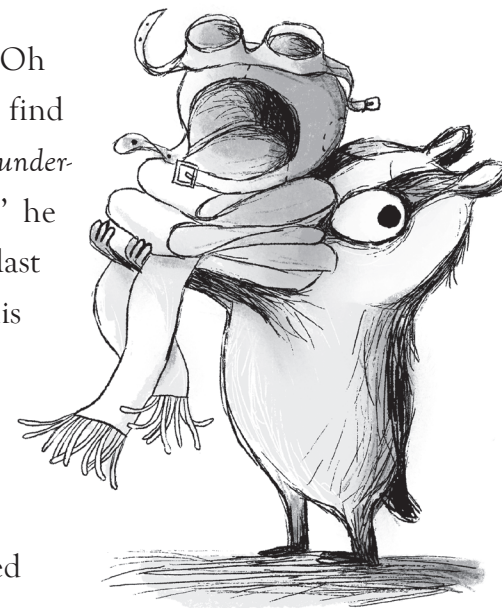
‘Paws out, please. Helmet, check. Goggles, check. Scarf, check,’ he said, ticking his clipboard briskly as he placed each item into Lulu’s outstretched paws.

‘Is this for the . . . you know . . . the aeroplanes?’ she asked.

‘Aeroplanes? Oh no, I think you’ll find this is a strictly *underground operation*,’ he said, ticking the last item neatly off his list. ‘Right . . . Ready?’

And without waiting for an answer, he leaned over and pulled on an old tree root sticking out of the wall of the burrow.

There was a sudden whoosh of air, and the burrow was filled with a dazzling flood of light. Lulu tried

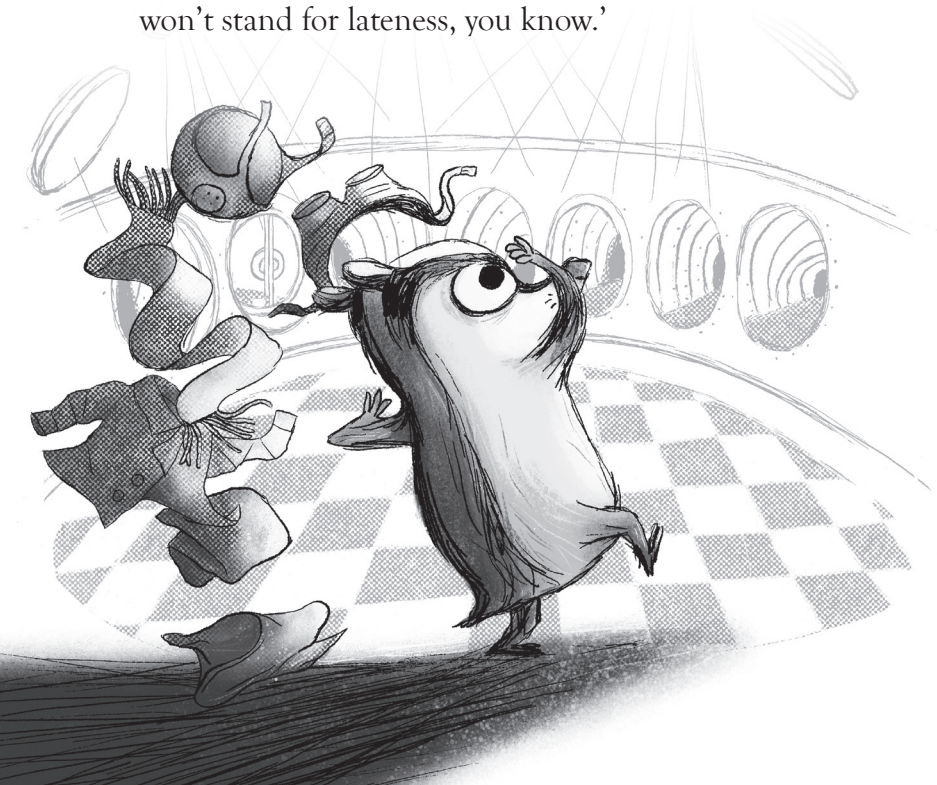


to shield her eyes with her paw, and in the process scattered her uniform on the floor.

‘After you,’ said the badger. ‘Chop, chop!’

She stepped forwards, blinking, into the light.

‘Your dormitory is in the third tunnel to your left, ninth exit on the right. But *do* hurry now,’ he added. ‘Elementary Badgering will begin in half an hour, precisely. It won’t do to be late. The Major simply won’t stand for lateness, you know.’



CHAPTER THREE

Lulu was unpacking her pyjamas in the dormitory when another badger came trotting in, pulling a very large trunk behind him, marked **‘TUCK’**. Never had she seen such a pleasingly stout young badger. Round as a football but twice as bristly, with eyes as eager and bright as shiny black buttons. It was such a relief to see a friendly face.

‘Hullo there! Wilfred C. Crumblepaw at your service,’ he said, shaking her vigorously by the paw. ‘But you can call me Wilf.’

‘Hello, Wilf. I’m Lulu,’ said Lulu.

