

Beast's Lair

#BabsMcClaneFoughtBack
Competition Winner 2023

by

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The towering, ominous, wooden gate stood before Babs McClane, and she knew exactly what was on the other side. She could not only smell it, but she could hear its clawed feet padding back and forth, still some distance away.

Once again, Cheryl had brought her on a quest to this place. Keeping their own dwelling safe from intruders – whether it was potential enemies walking past the front window, or winged creatures invading the back garden – was a tough job by itself, but there were real monsters out there that needed to be kept at bay. It was a dangerous world, and Cheryl couldn't possibly handle it by herself. That was undoubtedly why she had brought Babs into her life in the first place.

Today, they had once again evaded the speeding metal terrors of the Striped Crossing, and passed through the dark Trail of Trees - where wicked grey gremlins with bushy tails watched from above - so that Babs could have another showdown with the Beast that dwelled here, and ensure he was kept in his place. Her heart was beating faster already; she was confident in her own strength, but the Beast was a powerful adversary.

There were new footsteps, closer this time, and a clunking sound from the other side of the gate.

Babs stretched. She tensed. She had already cocked her leg and defiantly left her mark on the potted plant by the driveway. She was ready.

The gate opened.

The Beast's keeper stood on the other side, but Babs only gave her the briefest of glances before her attention turned to...him. He was still halfway

across the garden – but, unfortunately, Babs hadn't caught him off guard. His head and tail were raised, and he was looking straight at her. The breeze, no doubt carrying Babs's own scent straight towards him, made his long golden fur ripple along his enormous body.

If Babs made a mistake here, she was quite possibly going to be eaten for breakfast. There was no time for subtlety. As the Beast lowered his head and front paws to the ground, his eyes gleaming feverishly and his tail swaying back and forth like a serpent, Babs launched her attack.

She charged across the grass like a rocket, and with a leap, she was upon him, trying to find a good purchase with her jaws in the thick fur. But the Beast quickly recovered from the sudden onslaught. Snorting through his nose, he tossed its huge head and sent Babs tumbling onto her back. Before she could regain her footing, her opponent was upon her, jaws open, trying to pin her down.

But with all the strength and ferocity of her wolfish ancestors behind her, Babs McClane fought back. She swatted fearlessly at the Beast's nose with her paws; this only seemed to give him a moment's pause, but it was enough for Babs to reach up and try to grab his ear. Her needle teeth closed on thin air as he dodged; however, Babs now had an opening to push herself out from beneath him and flip herself back onto her paws.

With a bold growl, she jumped forward once more, and this time her aim was true, as she snatched hold of the Beast's ear flap.

The Beast suddenly seemed to realise that he had once again met his match, as he rolled over onto his back, pawing at the air as if begging for mercy. But Babs would show him none: releasing his ear, she pressed her paws into his belly, pinning him down, reaching to grab his jowls.

'Babs, calm down!' came a voice.

Babs glanced up at the humans, fully intent upon continuing the battle – until she saw the woman who served as the Beast's keeper approaching,

crouching down and reaching into her pocket. It was a gesture that Babs, even in her short life, had already become very familiar with.

Deciding that she had made her point for the moment, she jumped off the Beast and hurried over to the keeper. She eagerly received the treat that was offered, followed by an affectionate rub on her head.

‘You all right, Charlie?’ said the keeper, looking toward the Beast. ‘Is she getting too big and fierce for you?’

Babs looked back to see the Beast – or ‘Charlie’, as the humans seemed to prefer calling him – getting to his feet and shaking himself before approaching. Babs tensed for another attack, but he simply began sniffing under her tail.

Well, as long as he understood who was in charge, she supposed she could permit that. What mattered right now was whether the keeper was going to give her more treats.

To her disappointment, however, the keeper got up and turned back toward Cheryl. ‘She’s coming along very nicely.’

‘Oh yeah, I can’t believe how fast she’s growing,’ said Cheryl. ‘And she’s got even more energy, too. There’s not much besides a play date that can tire her out right now!’

Play dates? Was that really what Cheryl wanted to call them? Babs huffed to herself. Adventures like this were serious business! All right, so perhaps she knew deep down that the Beast wasn’t really all that dangerous, but it was still very important to be a responsible dog and make sure that...

Oh, was that a new toy over there? She had better go and inspect it.
