

BEAST MAGE
MANA BEASTS BOOK ONE

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Legal

Beast Mage: Mana Beasts Book One

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Description

A young man is transported to a strange land of magical beast companions.

Kellen Lars may be the most unremarkable person on Earth. In the mana-enchanted land of Oras, he could become a legend.

After his little sister vanishes before his eyes, Kellen awakens in another realm inhabited by mythical creatures and people who shape the very forces of nature. These are the Beastcallers, wielders of elemental magics who ascend alongside their beast companions.

In search of his sister, Kellen explores a savage new world full of magical storms, animal demi-gods and warring tribes. Just surviving isn't an option. If he ever wants to see home again, Kellen must wield his budding powers and train his newly bonded Mana Beast. Even if he succeeds, nothing will ever be the same again.

A young man from Earth. A Mana Beast. Together, they'll progress into legend.

✿ Created with Vellum

To every farm kid with a dream.

CHAPTER ONE



The first things Kellen noticed were purring and a small, warm weight resting in the middle of his chest. He groaned and blinked awake.

A pair of large, cat-like green eyes stared back at him. “You’re alive!”

Kellen screamed and flailed his arms. He knocked the creature off his chest and scrambled into a sitting position, scuttling away through the tall grass in an awkward crab walk.

“Hey!”

His heart pounded in his chest as he stared at the thing that had been resting on his chest moments ago.

It looked like someone’s stuffed animal brought to life: downy cream-colored fur covered a football-shaped and -sized body. The thing had no neck—like a baby seal—with four stubby paws, too-big pointed ears, and a short, foxlike tail.

He normally would have felt an overwhelming urge to pick it up and squeeze it—if it hadn’t been talking. Apparently, he wasn’t awake. He couldn’t be.

“What’s the big idea?” it said, tiny paws kicking in the air as it struggled to right itself.

“I’m dreaming,” Kellen said out loud. It was always easier to wake up from a dream when you realized you were in one.

“You’re not dreaming!” The little football-shaped fox bounced up and down over the tall, golden grass. “I’m your Mana Beast!”

“I’m dreaming,” Kellen repeated. But he was less sure of himself this time.

Nothing made sense. The last thing he remembered, he’d hit a rock while cutting grain in the harvester and...

The blood drained from Kellen’s face. Memories flooded back. That wasn’t the last thing he remembered.

The last thing he remembered was Allison disappearing into that bright blue light. Then he followed her.

Coyote Lady watched the poor young man from Earth try to make sense of what just happened to him. Even she, a Primeval tasked with observing the ley lines and portals between Oras and Earth, was surprised when the stone in Idaho came to life. As the Fourth Noctun approached, the portals had grown less active, but more erratic.

A shout of alarm curled Coyote Lady’s lips back from her two canine fangs in a smile. She chuckled to herself as Kellen ran from his Mana Beast, still unnerved at the concept of a talking creature with a personality. He only made it a few feet before his feet tangled in the tall, dry prairie grass, and he fell hard. His new Mana Beast was on him in an instant, oblivious and ignorant of why his presence upset the young man.

They both had a lot to learn.

At her side, Raccoon Boy snickered. “He’ll be dead in a day.”

Coyote Lady shot her companion a sidelong glance. “I’ll take that bet.” She held out a hand.

The smaller Primeval, resembling a bizarre cross between a raccoon and a boy—as his name suggested—eagerly reached to seal the deal. He paused at the last moment, eying her with suspicion. “You’re meddling.”

Coyote Lady put on an expression of fake shock. “I am not... yet.”

With their presences veiled from Kellen and his Mana Beast, both Primevals were close enough to hear the small groan when Kellen rolled over. The small fox-like creature jumped on the young man’s chest once more. Coyote Lady thought she could hear Kellen hyperventilating but pretended not to notice while Raccoon Boy gave her a knowing smirk.

“Come on,” she said, waving an irritable hand at Raccoon Boy. “We’ve got places to be.”

Raccoon Boy glanced at Kellen then back to her. “That’s it? You’re not going to give him any help? Not even going to say anything?”

Coyote Lady shook her hand. “Not yet. We’ll see.”

With that, they vanished.

Kellen’s mind struggled to comprehend—well, anything. Ignoring the incessant questions from the talking animal perched on his chest, he tried to piece the day’s events together.

He’d woken early that morning to start cutting grain. Allison had wanted to ride in the cab of the harvester with him, and their parents had given her permission to tag along. They’d only been out for about an hour when he had hit something. Backing up,

he'd discovered a flat-sided rock about the size of a mini fridge sticking out of the ground.

That alone had made no sense. He had felt certain the rock hadn't been there when they'd planted the field the previous spring—you couldn't miss something that large sticking out of the ground. Even stranger, however, the rock had started to glow. That was the blue light he remembered.

He had shouted for Allison to get away from it, but the light had grown brighter until he couldn't see her anymore. She'd screamed. He had jumped out of the harvester, ran blindly toward her, and...

And there he was, in the middle of who knew where, with a talking plushie fox. Maybe he'd fallen and hit his head.

He didn't think he was dead. At least he hoped he wasn't dead if this was what heaven was. He sat up, gingerly lifting the fox from his chest in case it tried to bite him. The creature's fur was every bit as soft as it appeared. It seemed friendly, but it also shouldn't be talking, so Kellen didn't want to take any chances. Heart pounding, he sat it down next to him.

"I'm not going to eat you," the fox said as if reading his mind. It opened its miniscule mouth as wide as it could, revealing a pair of tiny fangs. "How would I even do that?"

Some part of Kellen decided if he didn't reply and pretended the fox didn't exist, it might go away. To distract himself, Kellen examined his surroundings. Maybe there would be some signs of where Allison had gone.

The sky above was dirty blue, marred by the brown haze of wildfire smoke. At least Kellen assumed it was wildfire smoke, based on the smell in the air. Like home, it seemed to be late summer, a hot and dry one at that. Unlike home, tall, crooked pillars of red rock jutted up randomly all across the endless expanse of grassy hills.

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There didn't seem to be another living thing in sight.

"Allison!" Kellen stood and yelled from cupped hands.
"Allison!"

He shouted while turning around, hoping to hear her reply or see her running toward him. In every direction, the scenery looked the same: empty.

"Is Allison another human like you?" the fox asked after several moments passed. Before Kellen could answer, it started yelling his sister's name repeatedly. More concerned about finding his sister than addressing the unexplainable creature at his feet, Kellen resumed shouting too.

He didn't know how much time had passed, but eventually his throat grew hoarse and sore. Allison—nor anyone else—had responded.

Sinking to his knees, he fought against the panic rising within him. His sister was nowhere to be found. *He* was nowhere to be found. And even if by some miracle Allison did appear, there was no harvester, no rock, nothing that might provide a clue to how to get home from wherever they were.

As his chest tightened and his breath came in quick gasps again, the football fox drew closer and nudged his hand with its tiny nose. Rather than freaking him out further, Kellen found the feeling strangely calming.

"Hey, you doing okay? You don't seem so good."

A nervous breakdown. That's what it was. Maybe heatstroke. He was hallucinating. Had he hit his head?

He clung to the small hope that he was really dreaming. If so, everything would be fine when he woke up. It was probably still the night before, and he hadn't actually gone out to cut grain with Allison after all.

"This isn't real. This isn't real. This isn't real."

"Seems pretty real to me." The fox's voice sounded like a

preteen boy and lacked all the comfort and compassion that often went along with that age group.

“Don’t talk to it,” Kellen said to himself. “That will only encourage it.” He squeezed his eyes shut. When he opened them, the little round fox sat right in front of him and looked right into his eyes.

“Maybe we should start over,” it said. “My name’s Vex.”

Kellen decided to play along in the hopes he would wake up soon. “I’m Kellen Lars. It’s... good to meet you?”

“It’s great to meet you too!” The football fox—Vex—jumped forward and Kellen extended his hands and caught the creature out of reflex. He winced and fought the urge to hold Vex out at arm’s length. Vex stared up at him with those big green eyes expectantly.

“Uh... any chance you know where we are, Vex?”

“This is Oras,” Vex said. “You probably didn’t know that since you’re from Earth. But don’t worry, you’ve got me to help you out with things like that.”

“Oras,” Kellen repeated. Aside from the fact he was talking to a fox, everything Vex said only confused Kellen more.

“Yeah!” Vex said, sounding like this was the greatest thing ever. Like they had just won an all-expense paid vacation. “Now that you’ve finally arrived from Earth, we’re going to be awesome together!”

“So, you’re telling me this is an entirely different planet?” With no other options, Kellen thought it best to learn what he could from the fox. He’d gone through an adolescent phase when he’d thought he wanted to be an improv comedian. It had lasted just long enough for him to learn the first rule of improvisation: always accept whatever scenario your partner creates.

He wasn’t sure the rules applied in whatever situation he was currently in, but it was worth a shot.

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“I’m not sure...” Vex said slowly, the way a middle-school student might when the teacher called on them and they hadn’t been paying attention. “It’s not the same place.”

Okay... time for a different approach.

“I’m looking for a girl,” Kellen said. “She’s twelve years old, blond hair, wearing a red jacket. That’s Allison. She’s my sister. Did you see anyone like that before I came along?”

Vex blinked. Kellen waited, but the fox didn’t respond.

“Well?” he asked finally.

“Umm... no. Nope. Sorry,” Vex said. Then his ears perked up. “I’d love to help you find her, though!”

Kellen resisted the urge to swear, mostly because he didn’t want a five-minute conversation with Vex explaining the meaning of whatever expletive he chose.

“Okay,” he mumbled to himself. “Let’s think through this.”

“Great plan!” Vex said. “You start.” He plopped down and looked up expectantly.

Ignoring the fox, Kellen sat down in the grass and worked to piece together what he knew: Allison had disappeared into the light before him. He had to assume she’d ended up roughly in the same place he had, *if* this place was real. What would his sister have done in the same situation? Had a talking animal appeared to her as well?

He snorted at the thought. Knowing Allison, she’d have already taught it a trick while she waited for him to show up.

That was what bothered him now: if his sister was anywhere nearby, she would have heard him and would have found him. If she’d landed in the same place he had, she would have stayed there. If you get lost, don’t go anywhere. She’d had that drilled into her by their parents at least once a week since...

Kellen swallowed hard. A sick feeling gripped his stomach. Not again. This couldn’t be happening again. It was one of the

only things that still made him think this was a nightmare, because *this*, this was his worst nightmare.

“Kellen?” Vex’s soft voice caught him off guard. The fox looked up at him, big green eyes shining. “We’re going to find her, okay?”

He didn’t know how, but the fox understood.

Pushing aside thoughts of home, his parents, and a million other worries bombarding his rattled mind, Kellen stood up and brushed bits of dried grass from his jeans with shaking hands. He had to find Allison.