



The Beast

Zidrou

Frank Pé, Illustrator

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A boy adopts a strange creature in Zidrou's stunning graphic novel *The Beast*.

Francois and his mother Jeanne live in Belgium, where they face ridicule and mistrust: Francois's father was a German soldier who returned home after World War II. Jeanne indulges her son's love for animals: their menagerie includes a three-legged dog, a wild boar, and a horse that drinks alcohol. When a mysterious creature earmarked for a zoo escapes, Francois finds it and takes it home. When he takes "Longtail" to school to show his classmates, chaos erupts: a child is bitten, leading the authorities to seize Longtail, along with Francois's other animals.

With his twenty-eight-foot tail, spotted fur, and appetite for toffee, Longtail is unforgettable. So, too, are his guardians—loving, lovable Francois and Jeanne. While there are moments of dark suspense and melancholy in the trio's tale, it is directed by an overriding sense of wonder and adventure. When Longtail is transported in a covered cage to and from a vet visit, for instance, Francois and Jeanne try to explain away the creature's loud cries of "Hooba!"

The illustrations are exquisite. Scenes featuring Longtail in action explode with kinetic energy, while heartwarming interactions among the cast also benefit from details and color. When Francois's classmates are told to draw Longtail, for example, one requests to use two sheets of paper "on account of the tail"; later, he admires his two-page, taped-together masterpiece.

The Beast is an endearing graphic novel about a troubled boy and the unique animal he adopts.

PETER DABBENE (May / June 2026)

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