

Table of Contents

- The Call
1. Boys Versus Girls
 2. The Launch Party
 3. Storm Off the Vineyard
 4. Magic and Science
 5. Greenland (or “Save the Polar Bears”)
 6. Creatures of the Night
 7. A Swim with a Selkie
 8. Cairn Castle
 9. Big Ideas
 10. Night Games
 11. Durst, The Ancient Warrior Ghost
 12. Night Games, Part Two
 13. “The Prince of Darkness is a Gentleman”
(William Shakespeare)
 14. Bad Intentions
 15. Treachery and Traitor
 16. Malfleur Manor
 17. Dangerous Ground
 18. From Bad to Worse
 19. Ugly on Ugly
 20. Back to the Serpent’s Den
 21. “To Greed, All Nature Is Insufficient”
(Seneca, Roman Philosopher)
 22. A More Powerful Magic
 23. A Play Within a Play
 24. Homeward Bound
 25. Six Druid Lane

THE CALL

Present Time, Scottish Highlands, the Castle

Durst was not upset about being dead.

But he *was* upset, mightily so.

His homeland was threatened.

Not for the first time over the ages. But while past threats had come from fierce soldiers he had fought with fiery passion and honor, this danger came in the smooth words and slippery smile from the one known as “Gorgeous.” And though Durst was now a cold ghost, it chilled him.

From a rough-hewn cavern beneath the dungeon, Durst’s vaporous form rose up and up, until he was high above the tower walls. Below him the castle’s grey stones gleamed softly in the weak moonlight.

A fog lifted slowly from the rocky cliff that bordered his land and overlooked a restless inland sea.

An owl swooped past in search of prey. A lone wolf howled. Other creatures of the night went about their quiet business.

This land must not be destroyed!

Durst returned to his solitary chamber deep underground.

He rubbed the flat edge of his stone knife back and forth, back and forth, against his pale blue cheek.

Done then with thinking, he stabbed the blade overhead, and a single crash of thunder quaked the Highland dark, summoning two other unearthly guardians of the castle.

In their own times and in their own ways each of them had devoted their living days to these lands — the proud mountains and their valleys of sweet heather, on which even a god could lie and rest his head and drink from bottomless, clear lakes.

The ghosts shifted in the small space, uncomfortable together. They were not friends. But they were bound by a love of their homeland that could not be bounded by a short earthly life.

Now they needed one from the living world. One with the purpose ... and the magic ... to protect this sacred place.

Durst took up the length of sapwood from the sacred alder tree on which he had carved the old symbols, and with the stone knife cut the final notch of a simple flute.

The three touched, a spark flew, and it grew until their shimmering forms blazed in a cold, white-gold fire.

Durst's ancient ghostly lips met the living wood.

He breathed in all their hopes and fears, and sent forth to the Four Winds a sweet, sharp song. His command was clear: "Carry here the youngest of the clan, the youngest Thistle."

A future was cast.



Highland Night Sky