

Helping your children choose books they will love



Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

Opening extract from  
**The Book of Beasts**

Written by  
**John Barrowman & Carole E  
Barrowman**

Published by  
**Head of Zeus**

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.



First published in paperback and eBook in the UK in 2014  
by Head of Zeus Ltd

Copyright © John Barrowman and Carole E. Barrowman, 2014

Illustrations copyright © Buster Books 2013

The moral right of John and Carole E. Barrowman to be identified as the  
authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with the  
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act of 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored  
in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,  
mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior  
permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

This is a work of fiction. All characters, organizations, and events  
portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination  
or are used fictitiously.

9 7 5 3 1 2 4 6 8

A catalogue record for this book is available from  
the British Library.

Paperback ISBN: 9781781856352

eBook ISBN: 9781781856345

Typeset by e-type, Aintree, Liverpool

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Head of Zeus Ltd  
45–47 Clerkenwell Green  
London EC1R 0HT

[WWW.HEADOFZEUS.COM](http://WWW.HEADOFZEUS.COM)

## THE STORY SO FAR

*(see Glossary for definitions)*

**T**he events of the last couple of months for twins Matt and Emily Calder have been life-changing. Fleeing London with their mother Sandie for their grandfather Renard's protection on the Scottish isle of Auchinmurn, they learn that their mother is an **Animare** and their father Malcolm a **Guardian**, giving them an explosive combination of talents. Not only can Matt and Em bring drawings to life, they can communicate telepathically and have a talent for mind control.

Matt has caused a dangerous rift in time by unbinding his father from the painting in which he has been imprisoned for ten years, and taking him to the Middle Ages in a bid to rescue his mother and sister. But after a fiery struggle on the islands and a time-travelling rescue by Jeannie, the Abbey's housekeeper, Em and their mother Sandie are already safe in the present day. Matt can only watch in horror at the nightmare he has unleashed on the past: his own father.

Matt is trapped in the Middle Ages with just two allies: Solon, an apprentice at the monastery with Animare talents, and Carik, a Norse girl with Guardian abilities who trusts Matt no further than she can throw him. How can Matt return to his own time? And how can he prevent his father from taking control of the beasts trapped in Hollow Earth?

*Turn to Glossary on page 317 for further information.*



# ONE

*Scotland*  
*September 1848*

Duncan Fox stood on the craggy hillside of Era Mina, squinting against the late summer sun drenching the Isles of Bute and Arran in a golden light. He was waiting for his canvas to dry, but his mind was elsewhere. With his hands deep in the pockets of his tweed field jacket, he was thinking of the recent brief visit from Sandie Calder and her children, Emily and Matt.

*My family, Duncan thought. From a future I can hardly imagine.*

He wondered if the hauntings he had been experiencing recently were a consequence of their trip.

The first time he had seen the strange figure, Duncan thought what he was seeing was a lucid dream: a state where he had a solid awareness of his surroundings while he slept. He had experienced such dreams before, but never so vividly. One week ago, he had sat up in bed, drenched in sweat, a vague feeling of dread prickling the hairs on the back of his neck. A gust of wind from Largs Bay had swept open the curtains, carrying with it the smell of the seaside – salty kippers, crushed shells, briny sand. Reaching for the pitcher

of water next to his bed, Duncan poured himself a glass, then promptly spilled it on to the floor. A shadowy figure had stepped from behind his wardrobe.

Duncan hurriedly lit his oil lamp and held it above his head as the figure morphed from a ghostly presence to a fully fleshed man dressed in a brocade robe with a thick collar plate woven in shimmering golden threads – a Druid, magnificent and majestic. The Druid’s robes were white with a silver helix embroidered on the breast. The vision wore a crown of twisted antlers, a fur cloak draped around his shoulders, and he gripped a sceptre cut from a length of knotty white pine, a carved peryton perched on its tip. Duncan could see the man as clearly as he could see the portrait of his own grandfather hanging on the wall behind him.

The figure had remained at the bottom of the bed until the light of morning banished him, leaving Duncan Fox with a vague feeling of unfinished business.

He endured this for three nights. When day four broke, Fox had called for his carriage and ridden alone on the coast road to Ayr to seek advice from one of the oldest Guardians in Scotland.

Frances MacDonald’s fingers were gnarled from arthritis, but her eyes were bright and her intellect keen as Duncan carefully described his vision. She pointed to the first volume of *The History of Religion and the Decline of Magic in Scotland*.

‘That was once required reading for our kind, son,’ she said. ‘You’d do well to read it now if you’re looking for answers. Lift it down for me.’

Duncan took the volume from the shelf she indicated and set it on the table. He waited as her fingers slowly turned the thick pages, his hands clasped behind his back, patient and respectful.

‘Is this whose comin’ to ye in the dark?’ she asked, stepping away from the table to reveal a full-page facsimile from an illustrated manuscript.

Duncan stared at the image. The white robe, the fur cloak, the wooden sceptre with its carved peryton. Every detail, from the twisted crown to the silver helix on the figure’s breast, was identical to the man at the bottom of his bed.

‘That’s him!’ he said in astonishment. ‘Who is he?’

‘He is Albion. The Guardian of the Beasts in Hollow Earth.’

The old woman returned to her chair at the cottage’s bay window and lifted her knitting on to her lap. Despite having twisted fingers, the knitting needles clacked with unnatural speed.

‘Hollow Earth?’ Duncan repeated.

‘Aye,’ she nodded. ‘Hollow Earth. Many think the place a mere story told to children. But it is as real as this room.’ She paused and looked at him. ‘Albion was the first of our kind. He was called to these islands in a dream. Some believe it was the twin perytons, black and white, that called him to found the monastery on Auchinmurn as a safe haven for Animare and Guardians alike.’

Fox perched on the edge of a wooden chair, listening intently. The old woman set her needles on her lap and continued.

‘The beasts who now only live in our stories, our myths and fables, once lived and breathed in Albion’s world. Griffins, basilisks, selkies and more. But when magic was no longer trusted and people had new ways of explaining matters, the world became an unsafe place for creatures such as these. It was Albion who began the task of sealing the beasts away. He started *The Book of Beasts*, indexing and categorizing as he locked them far beneath the islands in the place we call Hollow Earth.’

‘Have you ever heard of Albion manifesting himself in dreams in this way?’ Duncan asked. ‘Outside Hollow Earth?’

The old woman’s eyes were starting to droop. Outside her window a farmer on his milk cart trundled along the cobbled stones.

‘I have heard it said that Albion is the one from whom we are all descended,’ she mumbled. ‘Which makes the Council laws that keep Animare and Guardians apart, when we’re all from the same stock, as daft as dust.’

Her chin dropped to her chest. Duncan realized she was snoring.

Quietly he lifted his overcoat from the back of the kitchen chair, pulled a guinea from his money clip and set it under the marmalade jar at the centre of the table. As he lifted the latch on the door, the old woman suddenly roused.

‘Mr Fox,’ she called. ‘If yer visitor is Albion, then you and your sons and daughters may be in danger.’

Duncan smiled in surprise. ‘Mrs MacDonald, I am a—’  
*Confirmed bachelor.*

He stopped himself from finishing the sentence.

The old woman was referring to Sandie and the twins.



## TWO

That night Duncan Fox decided to sit up and wait for Albion to appear.

A little after midnight, the elongated figure glided out of the corner of the room. He did this for two more nights. Albion never came closer than the bottom of the bed. He never did anything more than raise his sceptre above his head.

On the seventh night, everything changed.

That night, Albion appeared after midnight as usual. But instead of floating above the oriental rug, in front of the portrait of Fox's grandfather, Albion stood before an entirely different backdrop. A rocky opening, dark and shimmering. Fox recognized it at once. It was a cave tucked into the north-west hillside of Era Mina: the small island opposite the main isle of Auchinmurn.

Fox shifted cautiously to the end of his bed, wary of disturbing the apparition but intent on examining the cave.

The cave mouth expanded, in an ever-widening gyre, hitting Fox with a blast of foul-smelling air. Albion raised his sceptre, holding it out towards him.

Not knowing what else to do, Duncan grasped it.

At once he was lifted off his bed. The pursing mouth of the cave had suddenly become a twisting tunnel of spiralling



colours and light; a maelstrom of yellows, greys and blacks. At first it was impossible for Duncan to tell if he was falling or rising, tumbling forward or flipping back. He was weightless, and yet there was pressure pushing on all sides of his body. His hand gripped the wooden sceptre more tightly, sensing that somehow it was controlling his descent.

And then he heard the beasts.

Howls. Bellows. Cries. All of them thunderous, all of them monstrous. A scaly claw burst through the swirling colours, tearing the sleeve of his nightclothes. A hundred harpies swarmed like bats at his feet, snapping their needle teeth at his bare toes.

As Duncan kicked and batted them away in terror, Albion's sceptre flew from his nerveless hand. In that instant, he landed face first on his bed with a thump.

He had rolled over quickly, gasping as he scrambled to his feet. The morning sun was streaming in through the parted curtains. Albion had gone.

The sun was warm on Duncan's face now. He studied his painting again, then looked back at his subject: the old smugglers' cave. It was the place that Albion had shown him. He was sure of it. Sandie Calder and her children were in danger from this place. Somehow. At some time.



## THREE

*Auchinmurn Isle*  
*West Coast of Scotland*  
*The Middle Ages*

High up on the burned and blackened hillside, an elderly woman pulled her hands from the cold earth and watched the rising wave stretch itself over the bay.

Jeannie Anderson, the Abbey's housekeeper, had done what she could to protect the island and its secrets her entire life, as was her birthright and sacred duty. This wave was so powerful that it would destroy most of the island, but it had to be done. *The Book of Beasts* could not fall into the wrong hands. Ever.

Jeannie sat back on her heels, prepared for her own death. She suddenly tensed in alarm. Something was wrong. Someone nearby was out of time.

The monstrous wave blotted out the sun.

From settlements up and down the Scottish coast, men, women and children fled to higher ground. A few fell to their knees, howling to the heavens for mercy. Deer darted deeper into the forest; sheep cowered under hedgerows. Cormorants flew to crannies on the cliffs, leaving a flock of herring gulls

hovering above the shore, circling, cawing, waiting to pick flesh from the dead.

Carik, a pale Norse girl with elfin features and lively blue eyes, stood with Matt Calder and Solon, an apprentice Animare at the monastery. Carik's blue eyes were wide.

'Matt of Calder, is your dark magic controlling the sea?'

Watching the wave rise above them, Matt shook his head. 'Someone else is doing this.' *Someone more powerful than me*, he thought. 'And I aim to find out who.'

Without warning, he took off down the hillside, heading back to the beach.

'Matt, stop!' yelled Solon. 'You may come from a place I don't understand, but I know this: that wave will kill us all!'

Unsheathing a sword from his leather belt, the young Animare charged after Matt. But Carik, who had separated the two boys in a fight earlier that day, stepped in front of him with her hand on his chest.

'Let him go. We owe him no fealty. Let him fight his own battle.'

Solon shook her off. 'But this isn't only his battle. I owe my allegiance to these monks. These islands are my home.'

The wave stretched closer, arching over the tall band of pine trees bordering the shoreline, drenching the island in a salty brine. There was no time left. Carik and Solon threw themselves under a lip of the hillside, bracing themselves for the impact.

The wave shivered like a living thing, but didn't fall.

'What sorcery is holding it?' asked Carik, peering out in astonishment.

'I don't know, but we need to get to higher ground.' Solon seized his pack and grabbed Carik's arm, pulling her from under the rock. They made their way up the hillside, through the trees, towards the abandoned cottage where they'd been

hiding since the attack on the Abbey. ‘If Matt’s father is the dark monk terrorizing my islands, Matt will need our help to stop him. We can’t do that if the sea swallows us first.’

‘But he doesn’t want our help!’

‘I don’t care what he wants,’ said Solon, blinking hard; his eye was swollen after his earlier fight with Matt. ‘I will not have any more blood on my hands.’

Solon stared off into the trees, unblinking, his mind focusing on the one thing he hoped could help.

A brilliant beam of light breached the darkening sky, cutting through the curling, shivering crown of the wave. Carik shielded her eyes as the white peryton swooped across the sky towards them.

The size of ten stallions, the magical beast was an awe-inspiring sight as its huge hooves touched the ground in the clearing before them. With its wings folded against its powerful haunches, the animal galloped to a stop in the middle of a copse of trees. Its presence overwhelmed the small space. Steam rose from its flaring nostrils, and Solon’s arm tingled as he walked over and stroked its head. Its silvery hide glistened with droplets from the wave still hanging like a heavy cape over the trees, muffling all sounds.

Stamping its front hooves impatiently, the peryton kneeled before Solon. Not for the first time, nor for the last, Solon wondered at the ways that this ancient beast was connected to the islands. His master Brother Renard had been the first person to summon the peryton. Now, at a time of extreme danger, the beast had answered Solon’s call. Solon knew that he and the old monk were close, but often wondered if their connection went deeper.

He climbed on to the beast’s back and adjusted his sword before turning to Carik and helping her up. The peryton took

four great galloping strides and lifted into the air. Slipping backwards, Carik scrambled in panic to steady herself as they rose over the wave.

*Solon!*

Clear as a bell, Solon heard Carik in his head. Her Guardian abilities had disturbed him at first, but he now found himself welcoming them. He grabbed the belt of her tunic, hauling her close to him. As she put her arms round his waist, he felt her heart drumming against his back. For a brief moment, Solon savoured the tingling warmth.

A freezing wet wind buffeted them as they rose into the sky and Carik tucked herself closer to him. Solon leaned forward, tightening his grip on the beast's tines, letting his thoughts of saving Matt and the monks drift through his fingers into the skein of fur coating the antlers, deeper and deeper until Solon knew that the peryton understood what must be done.

The beast soared higher. Below them, the dark hovering wave looked like the hungry maw of a sea monster.