

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition 2019-2020

Under 18 Prose Highly Commended The Mermaid's Stone: Bay Rochford

The Hugh Miller Writing Competition carries the name of one of Scotland's most endearing geologists, Hugh Miller (1802-1856), and aims to honour his legacy by inspiring new, original prose and poetry on the theme of Scotland's geoheritage. The competition is organised by the Scottish Geodiversity Forum and The Friends of Hugh Miller.

Further details of the competition, and all the winning entries, are available at www.scottishgeology.com/hughmiller/

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The Mermaid's Stone

By Bay Rochford

Iris and her little brother Magnus loved to explore the beaches in Cromarty. Having so much to see right outside their door was something they cherished. Every day after school the children would run home, grab a snack and sprint down to the shore. They would collect lots of interesting things and fill their pockets to the point they were about to burst. Then head home, empty them onto the kitchen table and show their parents their "treasure".

One day they were on the beach by the royal hotel and Magnus spotted a peculiar shaped stone, it had many swirls and stripes and was perfectly smooth. It glowed a soft blue colour. He stuffed it into his pocket, it was oddly light, and he could barely feel it at all. When they returned to their house, he showed the family his stone, they were all enchanted by his find and its beauty.

"You should take it to the Hugh Miller's Museum and ask an expert about it." said their mum. So that's what they did, after school the next day they skipped along to the museum. They showed the stone to a lady at the counter, "That is a rare gem called a moonstone, they are very expensive, and you should keep it very safe."

Magnus and Iris went home as happy as can be and celebrated with cake and lemonade. But that night when the children were sound asleep in their bedroom, they started to hear a strange song. It was a soft gentle voice but somewhat haunting and eerie. They saw a cave by the shore, and two emerald green eyes, like little gemstones in the deep blackness of the cave. When they wake up they ignore their dream, but when the dream comes back again, and again they become suspicious of the moonstone so the children head down to the beach and throw the stone back into the sea, finally released from the spell. Or so they thought...

That night they had the nightmare again and heard a screeching voice, "HOW DARE YOU THROW AWAY THE STONE! RETURN THE STONE TO THE CAVE OR YOU WILL BE PUNISHED! Magnus woke up shaking after the dream and crawled into his sister's bed for comfort. Then he saw it, the moonstone was sitting on his bedside table. He woke Iris up and showed her the stone. They tried to think away out of this, but they only had one choice; do as the voice says. As soon as the morning came Iris and Magnus headed in their wellies and jackets, Magnus with the stone in his pocket as they took it to the cave.

Iris quickly realized that they had no idea where to go, but then Magnus heard the voice whispering in the distance. They followed the voice over crooked rocks and

swampy grass until the voice was shouting in their faces. But there was nobody there. The voice stopped abruptly and a mystical song started. As it did, Magnus (with the stone in his pocket) subconsciously started walking to the water. Iris dived into the icy cold water. There was a pale-green, gilled creature before them, it had a long scaly tail, webbed hands with sharp claws and emerald green eyes like gemstones. A mermaid. Iris was desperate for air, but she couldn't leave her brother. She struggled through the water and unzipped the pocket holding the stone. She grabbed the treasure and threw it in the direction of the mermaid. She then pulled her little brother out of the water and quickly inhaled the fresh air. Magnus coughed and spluttered a bit, but they were unharmed. The children agreed to never ever go treasure hunting again, just in case the mermaid came again.