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Junior Short Story Category – 3rd Prize 2020

THE MINERS HAT

By Riley Wooster

Henry's Nana had an amazing way of turning something ordinary into an adventure. Nana loved painting pictures, going to Op Shops and most of all her grandson Henry.

One lovely summer's day Nana suggested going to Rushworth because it was famous for its gold rush history and they had a delicious ice cream parlour. While they were there Nana spied an Op Shop and said, "Let's go inside and see what interesting things we can find."

"Okay", replied Henry with a smile.

Inside the shop it was dark and dusty and smelled like old things. There were lots of clothes and Barbie dolls but over in the corner was an old fashioned miner's hat that caught Nana's eye. It was brown and folded up at the front and back. Nana told Henry to try it on and he picked it up even though he wasn't sure he wanted to. As soon as Henry put on the hat, in a brown and golden FLASH, he was gone!

Henry couldn't believe his eyes when he looked around. Nana was nowhere to be seen and Henry wasn't in the shop anymore. Most of the buildings looked very different and the asphalt

road had transformed into a dusty, dirt track. A man on a stallion rode past him and all he could smell was horse poo. Henry bravely asked the man in old, dirty clothes what year it was. He replied, 'It is 1856, boy'. Henry was shocked and realised he had to get back to his Nana and his own time but first he was curious to go to the goldmines and see if he could find his own treasure.

Henry followed an old digger carrying a pick and an oil lamp. There was a signpost saying Balaclava Mine this way, with an arrow pointing east. When Henry arrived at the mine he found the digger asleep under a tree. Henry decided to "borrow" his equipment and do some exploring of his own. There were multiple tunnels with miners in them, some were using dynamite to blow up the rocky walls. Henry went over to an empty opening and started hitting the wall with his pick. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw a shimmering mineral, it was gold! It was a shining nugget that was as big as the palm of his hand. He waltzed out of the tunnel but was no greedy thief, so he put the old digger's equipment next to him, as he lay down dreaming about striking it rich.

Henry couldn't help himself, he skipped along happily all the way from Whroo to Rushworth and everyone just knew he had found gold. A policeman bumped into him and asked to check his Miner's license. Henry confessed he didn't have one and the policeman demanded he hand over the gold. Henry felt anxious and decided to make a run for it. He ran as fast as his legs could carry him. The policeman blew his whistle and started chasing after him.

Henry sped into an alley and hid behind a wooden crate. Sweat was dripping down his forehead, so he took off the Miner's hat and in a gold and brown FLASH he was gone. The policeman was confused about where the boy had escaped to. In anger he put up wanted posters with a description of Henry. 'Wanted for illegal mining. Boy aged 9. Brown hair, blue eyes, chequered shirt'. REWARD.

"Do you want to buy the miner's hat, Henry?" asked Nana standing in front of him. In 2020 only a blink of time had gone by.

"No, thanks Nana", Henry politely replied. That old miner's hat had taken him on an adventure that he didn't want to return to.

"Could we go and get an ice cream now?"

"Of course, would you like *golden* honeycomb? That's my favourite." asked Nana.

“*Golden* honeycomb is my favourite too”, replied Henry.

As he left the ice cream parlour, Henry saw a boy his age with brown hair, blue eyes and chequered shirt, similar to his own appearance come out of the op shop with the miner’s hat in his hand. “Uh oh, I know what is going to happen when he puts that hat on,” thought Henry to himself. He wondered whether he should warn the boy about the hat’s magical powers but decided it was too unbelievable. The boy would have to figure out how the hat worked for himself.

Nana smiled at Henry knowingly and Henry smiled back putting his hand in his pocket to feel the big lump of gold.