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Opening extract from

An Illustrated Treasury of Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales

Written by

Theresa Breslin

Illustrated by

Kate Leiper

Published by

Floris Books

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Theresa Breslin

Theresa Breslin is a highly acclaimed, Carnegie Medal-winning author, who has published over thirty books for children and young adults. She lives near Glasgow, Scotland. Her work has been filmed for television, broadcast on radio and translated into many languages. Theresa worked as a librarian before becoming a fulltime writer; she is passionate about children's literature and literacy.

Kate Leiper

Kate Leiper is an artist and illustrator based in Edinburgh, Scotland. She studied at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, and her work has been exhibited in galleries from London to the north of Scotland. She has been commissioned for projects by the Scottish Storytelling Centre and the Royal Lyceum Theatre. Inspirations for her work range from Scottish folklore, to tales from the Far East, to Shakespeare.

seals swam in towards the shore

selkies would dance and sing

An Illustrated Treasury of

Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales

Theresa Breslin

Kate Leiper

Floris Books

This book is for

Joanna Amy – T.B.

Iona – K.L.

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our fields will be ready for spring sowing

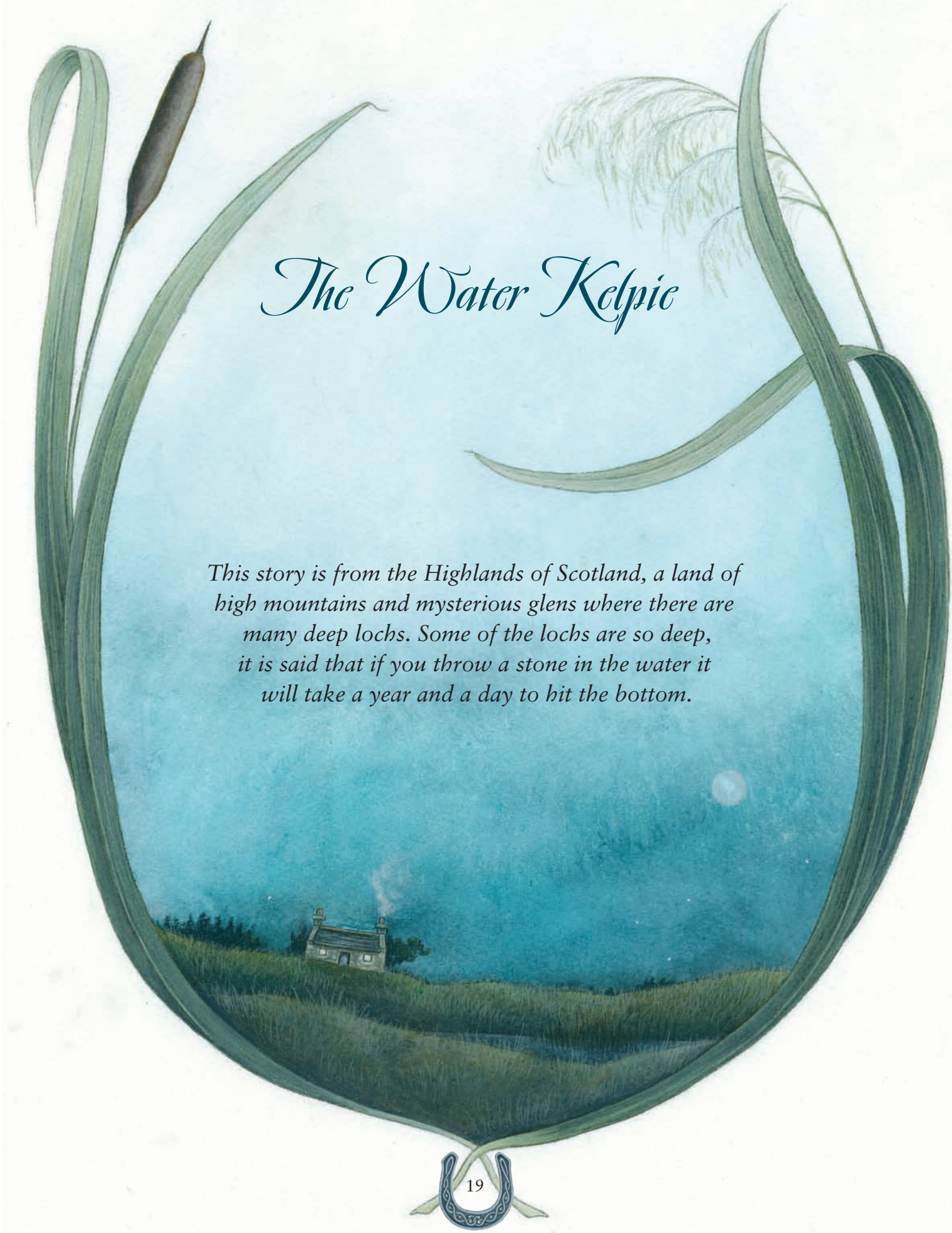
I have seen a fine black horse roaming there on the loch shore

no man can ride a kelpie and live

smoke plumed from its nostrils

it snorted and stamped its feet on the shingle shore

sparks flew from its hooves



The Water Kelpie

This story is from the Highlands of Scotland, a land of high mountains and mysterious glens where there are many deep lochs. Some of the lochs are so deep, it is said that if you throw a stone in the water it will take a year and a day to hit the bottom.

Near the deep dark waters of Loch Ness

there lived a young lad by the name of Kyle. All the food the family had to eat was what they grew on the narrow strip of land between their cottage and the shores of the loch. Kyle had lived there quite happily for eleven years of his life helping his mother and father work their little croft when, one evening near the beginning of the year, he heard his mother speak to his father:

"It's almost time for spring sowing. You must rise early tomorrow and plough our fields to make them ready."

Kyle's father replied, "I am too old now to drag the plough around the fields and Kyle is still too young."

"What will happen to us then?" his mother asked in a worried voice. "If we do not plough our fields our crops will not grow and we will starve when winter comes."

Kyle's father pointed out the window. "I've seen a fine black horse roaming there on the loch shore these last nights of the silver moon. I think I could harness it and make it pull our plough."



"Oh no!" Kyle's mother said in alarm. "You mustn't go near that beast for it is one of the spirits that roam near fresh water to trap unwary folk and drown them. It isn't a horse. It is a water kelpie."

"Nonsense woman!" Her husband laughed. "That's a good strong horse. I can take the rope from our plough and tie it round thon horse's neck. I'll put my hands on its mane and haul myself onto its back and then I will tether it to our plough and it will do the work I cannot do. By this time tomorrow night our fields will be ready for spring sowing."



