



### **EXTRACT 5 – The Silent Moving Folk**

We are The Good People, The Hidden People, The Fair Folk. We dress in green and live in hollow hills in Celtic lands, in an Otherworld where youth and summer never end.

Fairyland is a place of delights, where we feast and sing and dance in rings. We are as vibrant and numerous as the blades of grass on our fairy knolls. Although they sometimes call us The Little People, do not imagine that we are always small. Everything is capricious about us, even our stature. We take whatever size or shape pleases us.

You can't see us unless we want you to. Do you have the second sight? Did we give you some of our own eye ointment? Are you clasping a four-leafed clover? Did you bury three hazel wands under some hill whereas you suppose fayries haunt? The best time to find us is twilight or midnight under a full moon or at Hallowe'en, May Day, Midsummer Day, Lady Day or Christmas Day.

If you leave out milk, water and food for us, we will be your friends and will steal from you neither supper nor children. We might even finish your spinning or your housework for you as you sleep. If we really like you, we might cast a spell that lets you voice your heart's inspiration through a musical mastery of the pipes or assume great skill in your chosen trade.

But, good as we are, we don't take kindly to being insulted, so be careful what you say. We are sharp of hearing, and no word that reaches the wind escapes us. If you throw dirty water out of doors after dark you would do well to shout out "*Hugga, hugga salach!*" as a warning to us not to get drenched. And if you hack away at our fairy-bushes to build a fire, for instance, you'll find straight away that the branches will not burn. Then within six months you'll be dead.

If you build a new house you might want to place inside it, the night before you aim to take up residence, a bed, some other furniture, and plenty of food. If, in the morning, the food is not eaten and the crumbs all swept up by the door, you'd better not move in.

It may be that you've built the house across a fairy track, which you want to avoid at all costs, for then you will be right out of luck. Everything will go wrong. Your animals will die, your children will fall sick, and no end of trouble will come on you. You wouldn't ever be able to close the doors at the front and back, or the windows if they were in the line of the track, for at night we must march through.

You also need to know the *right way* to live and how to keep a secret. If we tell you the whereabouts of some hidden treasure and then you tell someone else, you may well die. Either that, or the treasure will turn into ivy leaves or furze blossom.

Most of us have no wings, and yet we can fly. We ride on ragwort stalks or on the backs of birds and sometimes we don magic caps to take flight as spirits of nature and of the air.

Normally we are seen only in a passing glimpse, in a twinkling of your glance. But between one of your blinks and the next we can get up to much in the way of green-eyed magic and mischief! If you ever come to our land of Tír na nóg and are *away with the fairies* for what seems like just a few hours or days, you may discover on your return that many years have passed in your world.

We *aos sí*, we Gentle Folk, we *Tylwyth Teg*, are not earthly people; we are not of your material realm, nor of your linear experience of time. We are a people with a nature of our own. We are The Silent Moving Folk: we inhabit a parallel level of reality made of a timeless intangible energy that ebbs and flows below, above, around and, for those brief spine-tingling moments, alongside and within your own reality.

You do not see us now, or hear our pisky songs, you people of the sterile age. First the bible-bashers tried to chase us away and then the very first screeching of the steam-whistles, the first hammerings of machineries, sent us fleeing underground and out of sight, just like our surem cousins in Mexico. Why would we linger too long in your filthy, stinking, noisy world of motorways, factories and airports?

*From haunted spring and grassy ring,  
Troop goblin, elf, and fairy;  
And the kelpie must flit from the black bog-pit,*

*And the brownie must not tarry;  
To Limbo-lake,  
Their way they take,  
With scarce the pith to flee.  
Sing hay trix, trim-go-trix,  
Under the greenwood tree.\**

But you also do not see or hear us because you do not look or listen. On Dalby Mountain on the Isle of Man, the old Manx people used to put their ears to the earth to hear the Sounds of Infinity, *Sheean-ny-Feaynid*. They knew that these murmurs were the voices of invisible beings that were all around them in a universe that is never empty, but spanned by the great cosmic web of life, the invisible structure of archetypes, ideas and possibilities which forms a deep and underlying reality on which our own shallow and ephemeral world depends.

If, one day, you manage to wrench yourselves away from your shopping, your social media and your stunt-souled cynicism, you will once again hear our music haunting the hawthorns and see our green shadows flitting around the menhirs on the moonlit moors.

\* Sir Walter Scott, *The Abbot*

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