

The Supernatural Tourist –The Hidden Folk  
By Marina Boccuzzi

Odin killed the frost giant, Ymir, who fell and created the earth and oceans. Through his corpse, supernatural creatures issued forth. The ugly beings became trolls and dwarves and the beautiful beings became light fairies or elves. Many stories such as this are told on a cold winter's night in Iceland, huddled around the fire.

Although Iceland is a relatively young country, it makes up for its youth through rich story telling. Their language is an ancient form of Norse so they can read a thousand-year-old book in their native tongue. Iceland's first settlers were Scandinavian (mostly Norwegians) and Vikings around the latter part of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. The fascination with fairies and elves stems from early Norse tradition of the Vikings, which was also blended with their Celtic thralls who shared similar beliefs.

Today, Iceland's biggest city, Reykjavik, boasts of an actual Elf School, complete with classrooms, textbooks, and certificates. In order to receive a certificate, one must complete a half-day session taught by Magnus Skarphedinsson, head of the Elf School. There are several classifications of fairies and other beings to learn about including elves, gnomes, trolls, light fairies, dwarves, and Hulderfulk.

Mr. Skarphedinsson has been collecting "data experiences" on reported sightings of different supernatural folk for about twenty-seven years. In doing this, he has collected over 1,000 experiences of natives and people who have visited Iceland. His school also has records of ancient Icelandic folklore. To date, there are over 7,000 inhabitants of fairy folk in Iceland alone! It appears over 70% of these experiences are of Hulderfulk, whereas the rest of the fairy populations tend to be rather shy or moody around humans.

Hulderfulk or Hidden Folk, are quite tall, humanoid looking, and wear old-fashioned clothes. There is also a rare breed of Hidden Folk that have been spotted that appear to be completely blue right down to their skin and nails!

Natives who claim they have been rescued from the Hidden Folk, say they live in rocks and trees. They also seem to coexist in a parallel universe to humans and are very advanced. There are reports that their calendar year is 5022 and their lifespan is double that of humans. Yet they have a biological problem and their birthrate is declining. Sometimes Hidden Folk have been known to fall in love with a human who will then disappear from the known world forever.

There is a story about the origin of the Hidden Folk that connects Adam and Eve from the Bible. Eve had many children. One day, God decided to pay her a visit. Eve set to the task of cleaning her children but missed a few. When God paid her the visit, she set her children before him except the unclean ones who remained hidden. God examined the children and asked if Eve had any more. She replied that she did not. Upon uttering those words, the children disappeared from existence, thus becoming the Hidden Folk.

There is another version of the origins of the Hidden People. Viking raiders came to enslave Irish peasants living in Iceland who literally ran into another world invisible to their enemy. Another theory is that Hidden Folk are probably a mutated form of elf that started in Northern Europe and made its way up to Iceland.

Elves are Germanic in origin and have a big role in Iceland's history. They were written about in the famous Sagas in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries that most Icelanders, when asked, can recite like the backs of their hands. They resembled the elves in *Lord of the Rings*, and were known to be minor gods of nature and fertility.

Today, Elves range from about five centimeters to about one hundred and fifty centimeters. Some look thinner and spindly. Others have large ears or big hair. Some look plain and drab. Others can be colorful. There is never a set thing with elves. They can appear everywhere and nowhere. And some claim to see them all the time. However, they do love their privacy.

Gnomes are very popular these days. You can buy them at any gardening store. However, in Iceland, ethnicity seems to play a key role in their appearance with sightings of light and dark skinned gnomes, and even some that appear Asian. They are about 15 centimeters, woodsy, and not interested in humans. Older Germanic fairy tales speak of gnomes as keepers of ancient, secret knowledge, while later stories tell of their vast hidden treasure. They are originally from southern and southeastern Europe. During the Bronze Age, they were tin miners slowly moving northwest to make bronze.

Trolls have a unique history. They come from Norse mythology and were considered elemental giants. Natives believe that the unusual rock formations around the coast are trolls who accidentally went out into the sun! Trolls can be as tall as 20 meters tall or as small as 6 meters. They are rough haired and have mosslike growths on their faces, especially in their noses. They aren't very bright and live alone in glacier mountains. They are also fond of human flesh, which stands to reason why not many people try to approach them!

Light Fairies look like a lot like Tinkerbell. They possess flight and shine like fireflies. As for the attitudes of these willow wisps, very little is known. No one has ever gotten close enough to one of them for an interview. The legends of fairies originated in the Orient, and later found their way into European mythology after the Crusades. Others speculate that fairies originate from small, dark Neolithic people that escaped to remote areas, hiding from Iron Age invaders.

If you saw *Lord of the Rings*, then chances are you know what dwarves look like. They are about 4-4.5 ft. tall, humanoid looking, and originate from Norse mythology. An interesting fact about dwarves is that Scandinavians used to believe that dwarves were dark elves because they lived in the ground. So Gimli and Legolas have a lot more in common than they think!

Magnus Skarphedinsson's Elf School has become quite popular and will be a big Icelandic attraction for years to come. Many people from around the world have already attended the school, and left richer in the knowledge of fairies, and with a diploma to take home. Sometimes, they are even lucky enough to experience Iceland's Hidden Folk...

### **Sources for The Supernatural Tourist**

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