

Little People by Ron Quinn

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Introduction

Countless people throughout history have experienced some type of strange encounter during their lives: UFOs, ghostly apparitions, little grey aliens, Bigfoot, et cetera.

My mysterious venture into the unknown occurred during August 1942 while on a summer vacation in upstate New York. At the time I was a young lad of ten. Some might find this difficult to fathom. But I actually saw a little man, perhaps a foot tall, standing on a window ledge. It was a living being and not some grand hallucination conceived within an adolescent's mind.

As I reached adulthood, I became fascinated by the stories of little people seen in this area of New York. I began a lengthy investigation into these alleged sightings by both young and old.

The following stories are both tantalizing and mysterious, and have been gathered from people living within the region of the Catskill Mountains. Many will sound unbelievable. But at the time they were quite real to the witnesses.

My Encounter

Each summer our parents would take my brother Chuck and I on a two-week vacation. Mom's older sister would accompany us with her three children, Martin, Jackie, and Rita. Our ages ranged from ten to fourteen. Dad would visit on weekends, returning home Sunday afternoon by train.

We would either head for the mountains or rent a beach house out on Long Island. Most of these vacations were filled with adventure and excitement, especially if our three wild cousins were along.

Dad knew a man named Richy Murtagh, whose parents had acreage and a large home in Mongaup Valley. They also had a cabin nestled near the tree line that they rented out for the summer. Arrangements were made and Dad rented it for two weeks.

This vacation and the strange experience I would encounter would remain with me for all time.

Mr. Murtagh, Rich's father, met us at the train station. How we managed to all squeeze into his truck along with our baggage remains another mystery.

It was a seven-mile trip to the cabin, and as we sped merrily along in the old Model A, my heart beat with excitement at the prospect of living out in the open country again.

Mr. Murtagh told us there was a river near the cabin that had a deep swimming area. Moments later we crossed a bridge, and I caught sight of the river below. Turning right, we drove a short ways up a hill. On the right stood a large, stately home surrounded by tall trees. Just below was the cabin beside an open field. A lone cow grazed nearby, and their dog, Nelly, barked wildly as we came to a stop.

Our first afternoon was spent exploring the nearby forest. Afterwards, I remember running happily down the grassy slopes barefoot, feeling the cool lawn beneath my feet. The air had a clean freshness to it as I stopped and sat beside the others, dangling our feet in the cool running water of the river.

One day I committed a minor infraction of the law set down by Mom. I was told to return to the cabin and remain there for an hour while the others played. I was sitting at a table feeling sorry for myself. After a while I heard a sound like somebody gently tapping against glass. I looked in the direction of the sound and couldn't believe what I saw.

Standing outside on a window ledge was a small, odd-looking man, about a foot tall. I am not joking; he was there as big as life.

At this point you might be thinking: "Oh, that was just a child's imagination," but this little fellow did not entirely resemble the traditional elf, gnome or leprechaun we have all seen depicted in various books and motion pictures. Being somewhat amazed, especially by something I knew couldn't possibly exist, I looked away in hopes the illusion would vanish. No such luck. Again came the tapping and once more I glanced up. Sure enough, he was still there, smiling and waving towards me. The sounds of the tapping came from his walking stick being struck lightly against the windowpane.

The odd little guy wore a small, crumpled hat, dark in color. A short, gray beard covered the lower part of his face. From beneath his hat, silky hair cascaded down to his narrow shoulders, covering his ears. His shirt was gray and somewhat tight-fitting around his upper body. The sleeves were very baggy, and his trousers ended near his knees. Something resembling a belt encircled his wide waist. His boots, also gray, were soft in appearance, ending near the knees.

Comparing this figure to a normal man, he looked perhaps fifty or so. The eyes were the most striking feature of all. They were extremely large and full of friendship. Dumfounded, I sat gazing at this little man in complete dismay. I might have only been a lad of ten, but I have been told many times I was years ahead of myself when it came to logical reasoning. I understood that what I was seeing just couldn't be; yet there before me was living proof.

The excitement of the trip, the lonely dark woods, and all the fun I was having could have triggered such an illusion. But once more, I was looking upon a real, living entity in every sense of the word; his facial and eye movements; the shadow he cast on the ledge; everything was there. After several seconds this happy fellow motioned for me to come closer. I glanced out another window and saw Martin and Rita, playing with Nelly. I wanted to rush and open the door and call to them, but changed my mind for no apparent reason.

When I looked back toward the little creature, he once again motioned for me to come nearer. This time I did and knelt beside the window. He kept smiling and looked me over, as though he never had been so close to a human boy before. I didn't speak, but cautiously opened the window. Not knowing what to expect, I slowly reached out to touch the strange being that had invaded my tranquil life, but he stepped back. Tilting his head from side to side, he inspected me from all angles.

Smiling, the little guy leaped from the ledge, landing gracefully on the grass below. He ran with long leaps across the lawn. Stopping, he looked back momentarily before vanishing among the shadows near the tree line.

I ran from the cabin and told the others, but they only laughed, as I might have had I heard the story from another. Mom smiled, saying I was day-dreaming, or had one wild imagination. The others went on to tease me for several days.

Occasionally while out among the trees, one of them would stop and call out, "Look, over there. I just saw that little man dart across the path!" Then they would all run off laughing. I guess I was the big joke around there for a while. My story even reached the general store.

Throughout the remainder of our vacation, I kept an eye out for that little fellow, but I never saw him again. Perhaps he was somewhere in the forest, watching us.

You might ask why I am so positive about my seeing this little oddity that entered my life. Well, the final proof of the pudding was the little footprint left in the soft earth below the window. When the little guy leaped, one foot landed on the grass, while the other hit the moist ground, leaving a perfect outline of his footprint. It resembled the mark you would make if you stepped into some soft earth while wearing only socks. I was accused by my family of making it myself, which I hadn't.

I'm very open-minded. Either I saw a small being, or I didn't. There can be no middle ground. This brings to mind the well-known phrase: "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy."



Big Bob and the Little Man

Big Bob McCain was a giant of a man, standing well over six-foot-five and weighing some three hundred pounds of pure brawn. He wore a short black beard and was missing several front teeth. Despite his rugged appearance, Bob was a gentle man. He had a heart as large as his body, and was always there to lend a helping hand to those in need.

Bob trapped near Canada and used the Hudson River to ferry his pelts to market. During the early 1830s, Bob had a string of traps near the St. Lawrence River. He would depart come fall and work his trap line till spring.

This big character could spin ghostly tales about his adventures in the wilderness. Most were true, but Bob had fun stretching the truth to enhance the yarns. When telling his stories, he knew his friends didn't entirely believe him. But that was part of the game—seeing what he could get away with. Anyway, most folks enjoyed his wild tales while relaxing around camp.

Bob once became very serious about a particular story, and swore it was true. But having been caught in numerous falsehoods, he was in the same category as the boy who cried wolf.

One morning while checking traps he heard a sound like a young child calling for help. He followed the sound along a brook and came to a clearing.

When in town, Bob would tip the bottle with the best. But this time he was sober as a judge.

The sight which greeted his eyes made him gasp in disbelief. There, caught in a trap, was a little man some two feet tall.

The tiny fellow began screaming his lungs out. He kept yelling and tugging desperately at the jaws of the trap holding him. His leg was clamped in a trap that could have broken it, but the leg was undamaged. He had a look of sheer terror as Bob slowly approached. Bob reached down and sprung the trap open, at the same time gently picking the tiny guy up. He kept yelling and struggling to free himself. Maybe he thought he was about to be devoured.

The strangest thing about this little man was that he had no weight. Bob could feel his body, but weight was missing. It was like holding nothing.

“Calm down little fellow,” said Bob. “I won’t hurt ya none.” His captive was more frightened than injured. His trousers were torn, but no sign of blood was visible.

Bob said the tiny fellow had green, leathery clothing and boots. His eyes were large but he hadn’t any eyebrows. He wore a small beard and had an odd looking scarf around his neck. Bob still couldn’t get over the fact that he was weightless.

In all my research I have never heard a statement like this. As far as I know, nobody else has ever held one of these little creatures.

Bob knelt and placed his captive on the ground. The little man stood up, looked at the gigantic form before him, and slowly backed away. Reaching the safety of the trees, he turned and fled into the forest.

Looking down, Bob discovered that the tiny guy had forgotten his hat. He used this as evidence when telling his strange story.

This mysterious hat was reportedly on display in some general store during the early 1930s. What became of Big Bob is unknown. Like others before him, this friendly giant vanished into the dusty pages of history.

Little Girl Lost



Out of all the stories I have heard, this is my favorite.

Sometimes back in the mid '40s, a young girl by the name of Jill was lost in the haunting forests in the vicinity of the Catskill Mountains. This cute little girl of five and her parents were visiting her cousins one weekend. Her aunt’s stately home was located off the road and surrounded by thick woods on three sides.

The children were often told never to wander into them because they could become lost.

Jill and her three cousins were playing out back. Their parents were having tea on the covered front porch, which extended the full length of the home.

A short while later, Jill left the others to chase some butterflies she had seen near the fishpond. The others hadn’t noticed her following them into the nearby forest. As suspected, she ventured too far and became lost among the tall trees.

When it was discovered that she was missing, a search party was formed. Neighbors from the area joined, but no sign of Jill could be

found. By late afternoon some forty-odd people were engaged in the search. They called but received no response. As dusk approached, the searchers returned. Both parents were frantic, but they knew nothing more could be done until morning. As the neighbors were preparing to leave, little Jill was seen emerging from the darkened woods. With a dirty face and a big smile, she came running to her mother.

This is Jill's tale of how she was guided safely back: After following the butterflies she chased them in among the trees. She became lost and began searching for her aunt's house. But this only caused her to venture deeper into the silent forest.

At one point while resting she could hear somebody calling her name. But they were far away. She tried walking toward the sound but became even more confused. Later, Jill came upon a small clearing and sat on a fallen tree. It was very still and the only sound was the breeze gently moving through the trees.

Remembering she had a candy bar in her pocket, she ate some of it. Looking up, Jill saw two small "dolls," as she put it, standing beside a rock, looking at her. Both were dressed in shiny green clothing, and had small hats and wavy silver hair down to their shoulders.

She smiled and offered them some candy, but they didn't respond to her friendly gesture. With tears in her eyes, Jill said. "Do you know where my aunt's house is?"

Both nodded as if they understood and motioned her to follow them.

By now dusk was approaching and the forest took on a menacing appearance. Long shadows began creeping over the county and the sky grew darker. Jill followed as her new-found friends led her through the forest. As it became dark, little balls of blinking colored light appeared around the tiny creatures as they moved along.

As Jill followed close behind, the little dolls moved faster and faster. She too was moving at a rapid pace through the woods. But didn't understand how this was happening. Years later, she described the movement like one sees at the movies, when everything is speeded up.

Several moments later the dolls abruptly stopped and pointed toward the aunt's home, some one hundred yards away. Jill saw a large group of people near the house. Turning to thank her little benefactors, she saw that they had vanished. Jill then saw her mother and ran to her.

Here indeed is a strange, fascinating tale of the little ones told by a girl of five. She called them little dolls—a rightful description for a young girl.

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