

Oy Fey!



David Reynolds

# ***Oy Fey***

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- Red's Meadow Pack Station is located in the Devil's Postpile National Monument near Mammoth Lakes, California.

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# **Chapter One**

“Take a hike” means different things to different people, Trevor Wilson knew. For some people it was the same as “get lost” while others went for a short walk in the wilderness. In Trevor’s case, “take a hike” literally meant walking about 250 miles up the Pacific Crest Trail from Mt. Whitney to South Lake Tahoe, California.

Now, five days into his lengthy backpacking trip, Trevor and his tiny black Chihuahua companion Tinkerbelle came across a perfect campsite not too far before dark: a wide open sandy meadow sloping gently to an alpine lake. There were several scraggly pine trees nearby and enough dry branches and grass for Trevor to make a little campfire. Campfires aren’t allowed in national forests, though Trevor decided to take his chances and have one anyway, but only after digging a pit, lining it with large rocks and sweeping the area with a pine branch.

Not too far away he spotted some wild roses and thinking he might want to use some petals for a tea, he picked a bunch. Spotting a granite outcropping not too far away, Trevor laid out the rose pedals in a circle, letting them dry.

Several small birds began fluttering nearby once the roses were arranged in a circle but Trevor ignored them. The birds—several species that included woodpeckers and others—were his constant companions, or so it seemed, since the former Missourian started his hike.

Trevor set up his tent about ten feet from the campfire ring on a nice, soft sandy spot, fed Tinkerbelle her dry food and unrolled his sleeping bag. He pulled out his small cast iron fry pan, his fishing pole and his small bottle of Irish whiskey plus a plastic cup before hoisting everything else into a tree. A rope and a tree meant his food wouldn’t tempt bears and other critters to shred his tent, and him, Trevor knew.

He cracked open the whiskey bottle, letting the pungent odor reach out into the crisp, clean mountain air, before placing it inside the circle of roses only because that was the most convenient spot. The rock was large, fairly flat and hopefully far enough away where if a bear did decide it wanted to get crocked, the bear wouldn’t wander into his tent.

The large rock pure and simple was just a good spot for the bottle, Trevor thought. “It’s close enough where I can could grab a sip when I want but far enough away from the fire ring to not get hot.”

Trevor poured a small measure of whiskey into his cup before using a filter pump—“it’s an essential when you’re travelling that trail because there is no way you can carry enough water” a salesperson had said—to top the drink with clear mountain water.

Thinking he might as well enjoy himself, Trevor unshipped his cellphone and cycled through his music.

“The Chieftains, now that sounds like an appropriate band to listen to on a night like this,” Trevor thought. He found an album on the phone and the traditional Irish music, some of it with a rock beat, began playing through the phone’s speaker.

Baiting a hook with a small crust of bread, Trevor took a sip of his drink before turning his back on the booze and flowers and tossing his line into the nearby lake. After more than a dozen casts, he had not even a nibble. He was getting tempted to dig into his store of food when he felt a strong tug. Several of the little birds—there seemed to be even more of them around than usual, he thought—were hovering over the water where his line entered it.

A short fight ensued before he was able to reel in a single rainbow trout that the hungry human estimated was about 12 inches long. If his reading was accurate, that was a monster at this elevation though comparatively puny on the Owens Valley floor. A flick of Trevor’s lighter got the fire going and a tiny bit of work with his knife gave him a long stick he could use to cook the trout. He cut off the head and gutted it, being careful to do that far from his camp. Carrion birds and other critters would clean up the rest of the fish stuff, he knew.

As Trevor took in the curtain of brilliant stars beginning to become visible in the twilight, he noticed something strange: it looked like one of the birds was trying to drink some of the whiskey out of the bottle. Trevor shook his head, thinking, “no way. It can’t be. Birds drink water, not whiskey. I know I’m tired and hungry so it must be a trick of the light.”

He went back to his fire, had another sip of his cocktail and turned his back on the rock as the moon peeked over the nearby rocky peaks, a few still having a cap of snow on them.

A strange feeling, like he was being watched, made Trevor glance over at the rocky circle. He looked and saw what he at first took for a hummingbird hovering over the bottle of Irish whiskey. He blinked and may have seen a tiny human, a woman by her figure, with large transparent wings roughly the shape of a butterfly's but much larger. He blinked again and the bird was back.

Trevor shook his head and paid careful attention to his fish, watching it cook. Every time he would look at the whiskey cup a bird—or tiny human because that hallucination kept coming back—would be there trying to take a drink from the bottle.

On a whim, and after enjoying his dinner and tossing the fish carcass into the flames, Trevor poured two fingers of whiskey into the cup. He took a small, satisfying sip and let out a sigh of pleasure. The whiskey rolled down his throat, igniting a fire in his belly, one that help fight off the chilly night air.

He sat the cup back down inside the circle of flowers and stood there, statue still, waiting to see what would happen next.

Some of the birds flew close by his head, not quite dive-bombing him but getting close enough to attract his attention and take it away from the cup.

When Trevor looked again at the cup, he saw a tiny winged creature perched on the rock, trying to get its—her—mouth into the cup without falling in.

“I don't know what I had to drink, or why I'm talking while I'm dreaming, but this is a cool dream,” Trevor said aloud. His voice made the birds scatter.

Even so, he walked back down to the lake and found some reeds near the shore. He stuck his hand into the water and using the moonlight to see what he was doing, broke off a few small pieces.

Trevor walked back to his cup and checked in the poor light to see if any reeds were long enough to reach the whiskey and go up above the cup's rim. Hollow reeds are nature's drinking straws, he knew. Finding one that was a little too long, he broke off a piece as a bird—first creature, next bird, before finally deciding to stay as a creature—watched intently.

Trevor placed the reed inside the cup and took a step back, curious to see what would happen.

One of the creatures sat down on the rim, inhaled the scent of the whiskey and looked down the reed. Trevor nodded and said clearly, “go ahead, have a sip or a nip. You may not like it but give it a try.”

The tiny winged woman inhaled, causing a mouthful of whiskey to enter her mouth. The instant it hit, she spit it out—all of perhaps two or three drops—before shooting straight up into the sky like someone had tied a bottle rocket to her back and lit it.

Several birds climbed into the air and gathered around her. They began twittering and chittering as birds do.

In a brief moment of clarity, Trevor recalled he had a phone app letting him record music and play it back at fast or slow speeds. Figuring he had nothing to lose, he turned on the recorder and captured some of the bird sounds.

The first creature returned to the reed straw and this time took a cautious, slow sip. Her face lit up in a smile and several more birds landed near her. A moment later, what looked like bird cloaks were lying on the rock. The first creature was joined by several more that looked nearly identical to each other.

From what Trevor could see, and guess, the first tiny woman appeared to tell her friends to take a slow sip and wait, which they did in turn. Once all of them did that, they began making bird sounds in earnest.

Trevor reached a hand in between the women-like creatures no longer than his hand, seeking a sip of Irish whiskey for himself. The tiny figures moved out of his way but stayed close. Trevor knew he could have touched them if he wanted to but figured discretion was the best idea.

“Besides, who knows what is in this booze. Someone must have spiked it with LSD or something else because, while I know I’m not exactly sober, I’m not blind drunk either. There’s no way I could be,” he said aloud to the beings nearby.

He took a long pull, letting the eighty proof booze reignite the fire in his belly. Trevor looked at his small bottle and decided it was worth adding a wee bit more of his precious stock to the cup.



One of the creatures hovered a foot in front of his face so Trevor could get a good look at it. It had human arms, human legs, a human head but with triangular ears a bit higher up than on a person, and obvious female anatomy. It was also completely naked, though the cold seemed not to bother it one bit.

“Are you fairies?” Trevor asked, awed.

When the creatures appeared to answer him, he remembered his phone. He hit the playback and the tiny women were stunned to hear their own voices come from its speaker.

The speech, if that was truly what it was, was far too fast for Trevor to understand it. He began slowing it down and began hearing semi-intelligible sounds. Playing it back at its slowest speed, Trevor heard speech that sounded like some talking with a very strong Irish or Scottish accent.

“What is this strange nectar?” one asked.

“I don’t know, but it tastes far different than anything I’ve ever had,” another replied.

“And it makes me feel very strange,” a third one chimed in.

Trevor picked up the phone and said, “It’s not nectar. It’s whiskey from Ireland, if you know where that is. It’s called Irish whiskey after the Tullamore, the county in Ireland where it’s made.”

Trevor stopped his recording and played it back, but at the program’s fastest possible speed.

The three fairies, because that was what Trevor considered them, nearly fell over when his voice came out of the phone speaking at a pace they could understand.

Their excited babbling was too fast for even the phone’s software to make understandable when Trevor played it back. They chirped, hooted, warbled and made every other kind of bird sound imaginable. Trevor was waiting for them to either growl or meow but he was interrupted by a bark: Tinkerbell.

Tinkerbell had sniffed a bear wanting to explore the campsite in search of a quick and easy meal, Trevor saw as his eyes took in the walking rug. Trevor got up from his warm perch near the fire, grabbed his walking stick and started twirling it around while raising his arms and making horrible noises of his own. The bear, thinking it was about to be

attacked by something bigger, meaner and given how long it was since Trevor bathed—smellier—than it, ran back into the woods.

Tinkerbell, sensing the trouble was over, let out a cautious, “woof?”

Trevor went over to their shelter and after clipping a leash onto her, let his little dog out of the tent and near the small but still warm fire. The fairies, once their fear subsided, became curious about the dog. Trevor put the dog in his lap and began tickling and scratching her behind the ears, between the shoulder blades, at the base of her tail and up and down her back while the fairies hovered nearby, getting ever closer.

One came close enough where she got within reach of Tinkerbell. Tink, being a little lover, did what any lover dog would do: she licked the fairy. The dainty little fairy girl, who was a very pale shade of green, more grayish than greenish under the dim light from the moon and the fire, turned a much darker color. “I think she’s embarrassed,” Trevor thought.

The other fairies were laughing hysterically, holding their stomachs tightly because of the joy. Tinkerbell used that distraction to get a little closer and licked the other two, too. All three were covered in dog slobber but after a brief shake—and a hit from the whiskey cup—none the worse for wear.

One fairy came close, hovering well within reach of Tinkerbell’s tongue—and her small but sharp teeth—and darted forward to kiss the dog between her eyes. This time it was the dog’s turn to look bemused and befuddled as the other fairies took turns doing the same thing.

“You know, you are all small enough and light enough that if you’re careful and hang on to her collar, Tinkerbell might let you ride her,” Trevor said into his phone before speeding it up and playing it back for the fairies.

They huddled, looked carefully at her nylon collar with a stainless steel buckle—Trevor had read somewhere that iron, and by design, steel, was deadly to fairies—and found a way to sit on the dog’s back.

“Do you want to go for a walk?” Trevor asked his dog as each fairy had double handfuls of dog hair tightly gripped in their tiny hands.

Tinkerbell knew what “walk” meant, and though the combined weight of all three fairies was next to nothing, knew they were there. Tinkerbell’s first few steps made the

little ladies nervous, causing them to flutter and flee in fright. Realizing the dog was not going to hurt them, they landed again on her back, Trevor saw.

After a moment of a gentle walk, Tinkerbell got in a playful mood and began walking faster and faster before breaking into a run while the fairies held on for dear life. Every now and then one would bail off only to fly and catch up while she caught her breath. Trevor even let one of the fairies sit on his head while he got down on all fours and did his dog impression, including a bark with a horrible human accent, much to the fey folk's delight.

It didn't take long, though, before the altitude, the day's worth of hiking and the shots of Irish whiskey Trevor threw down, made him start yawning.

Trevor pointed to his tent and after Tinkerbell relieved herself, she went back inside. The human bent at the waist in exaggerated bow and doffed an imaginary cap in a formal salute. One of the fairies pointed to the phone and Trevor recorded her directing a short saying.

"Good night big one," she said. "We wish you and the hairy four-legged one a very pleasant night. We will make sure nothing disturbs your slumber. And thank-you for your mead, your generosity and your kindness. We little ones of the mountains repay beings that please us," and she seemed to think about it, before adding very seriously, "and those that anger us, in kind."

Trevor waved goodnight, but not before putting a lid on the whiskey bottle and offering the last little bit in the cup to the wee folk. They took turns having a final pull at their reed straw before donning their bird disguises and flying, but not very smoothly, away. "Where's the fairy cop to give out drunken flying tickets when you need one?" Trevor thought.

"Now that was one hell of a strange dream," Trevor said to Tinkerbell as he carefully covered the fire with sand before hauling himself into his sleeping bag.

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## ***About the Author***

David B. Reynolds lives and works in California where many of his stories are set. A former weekly newspaper reporter and editor, he works as a Certified Technical Writer.

In addition to spending much of his free time writing, the author is a frequent reader of action and science-fiction novels. Many of his stories pay homage to extraordinary works he read in the past.

If you enjoyed *Oy Fey*, please leave a review on Reynolds' Amazon.com page. You can also download (in PDF format only) free sample first chapters—and some complete stories—at <https://storiesbydavereyn.wordpress.com>.