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The Faeries' Oracle

BRIAN FROUD

Text by

JESSICA MACBETH

Under the supervision and direction of the *faeries*,
especially **Brian's** inspiration faery, **Penelope**,
and **Jessica's** friends **Lyset**, **Miccon**, and **Elspeth**,
with special credit to the **Fee-Lion**

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From Brian . . .

To Wendy and Toby Froud with much love and gratitude.

From Jesa . . .

To the members of the Faery Oracle gang, an Internet writer's critique group formed especially for this book—Eileen Inge Herzberg, Pat MacKenzie, Jonathan MacLane, Nadine MacLane, Nanc' Nelson, Michael Slaughter, Richard Wentk, and Kathy Seven Williams. Without them this book would be much less than it is. It would also have been much less fun to write.

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I especially want to say how much I've enjoyed working with Brian and the faeries. Brian has a generous, caring heart, which shows in his paintings and his personal relationships. I'm tickled pink with polka dots that he chose me to help create *The Faeries' Oracle*. And, of course, the faeries themselves—well, they are always fun.

May the faeries bless them one and all and fill their paths with joyful surprises. And yours, too, dear reader.

Dedicated to...

Why, to Them, of course!

*“Our frontiers are made of mists and dreams and tender waters:
thresholds are crossed from time to time.”*

—Pat O’Shea, *The Hounds of the Morrigan*

“All things absurd, nonlinear, nonsensical, irrational, and madly poetic reveal the secrets of the unconscious and the secret language of Faery.”—Brian



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Foreword

Once upon a time I wanted to create a divination deck, and so, like the Fool, I stepped off the cliff into the unknown and started to paint. Weeks later, after much research, I had finished my first card. Looking at the image, I realized what a long and extraordinary journey I had begun. At this rate, it would be a lifetime before I could complete all the paintings, and I was impatient. I wanted to hold the deck in my hands—*now*. So, I thought, why not include every image I paint now in a future deck, and allow the faeries themselves to mold its form and direction?

Over the next ten years I continued to explore Faeryland, drawing and painting what I felt and saw there. The result was a book called *Good Faeries/Bad Faeries*. In that volume the faeries gave tantalizing glimpses into their world and provided clues for humans who would like to communicate with them. This connection with the faeries is wonderful because it gives us an opportunity to experience the world in an open and connected way. But I knew that the images in the book and the promise of communication with the faeries held an even more profound secret. In my dealings with the faeries I had discovered much sense in their seeming nonsense—and I had found that there is great wisdom to be gained if we allow them to turn our prejudices and preconceptions upside down. Now was the time to focus the innate energy of the images toward the oracle deck I had longed for and to discover the deep meaning of the art and the faeries.

The process of creating *The Faeries' Oracle* has been a long and immensely rewarding one filled with extraordinary surprises, courtesy of the faeries. As I found, one of the most treasured gifts they can ever give is of bright inspiration. It was a bright day indeed when I thought to ask my friend Jessica Macbeth to help me listen to wise faery voices. Jessica is a

"faerynaut" of extraordinary powers, exploring the deep inner spaces of Faeryland, mapping and recording so we can all follow safely. *The Faeries' Oracle* cards are portals that allow light direct from the faery realms to illuminate our darkness. They reveal a world of connection, meaning, and healing energy. Through these cards we can all be fellow travelers in these magical realms. Welcome to the fellowship of Faery.

Brian Froud



Introduction

Welcome! So pleased to meet you. Those folk over there, flickering on the edge of visibility, are various faeries, and the quiet fellow whose words you read on the preceding page is, of course, Brian Froud, who is a delightful person living at the boundary between Faery and this world. He acts as an ambassador between the worlds through his brilliant art. You'll be hearing from other people later on as well—Nadine, Eileen, Pat, and others. These are people who worked with the cards, listened to the faeries, and helped me to create a better book for you. In a way, dear reader, their voices are surrogate voices for yours. As Brian often says, "Faeries are inclusive, not exclusive." He suggests that you consider what these people have said and think about whether or not it rings true for you. You can use their thoughts as springboards for your own thoughts. They are there to help you focus, which is part of the illumination process. They remind you of the dialogue between the faeries and yourself and that the faeries' messages for you may be different from their messages for others. And, of course, you'll get to know me, Jesa.

I hope you'll enjoy our journey together into the wide, wild, and wonderful otherworld of Faery.

I had intended to stop this introduction right here, but it has been pointed out to me that there is a bit more you may want to know before we go much further.

First, what is "faery"? Is it just that I can't spell? I can't, but I have a spelling checker, so that is not my reason for spelling the word like that. "Faery" is an old term that embraces all the elves and gnomes and fairies and other folk, small and large, of the otherworld. It includes the angels whose wings spread across the cosmos, and the wee things that go bump in the night while they scrub your kitchen, tie your shoes neatly to each other, and knot elf locks in your hair as you sleep.

The word *faery* also means the place—Faery, the land of all the faeries, also known as the otherworld. Faery is alongside our everyday world, almost but not quite in synchronization with us, overlapping in some ways, different in others, and operating on a different level of energy. One

of the things I hope you will discover during our journeys into the other-world is how to live in both worlds at once. It is just a matter of learning to increase your range of perceptions, which is much easier than you might expect.

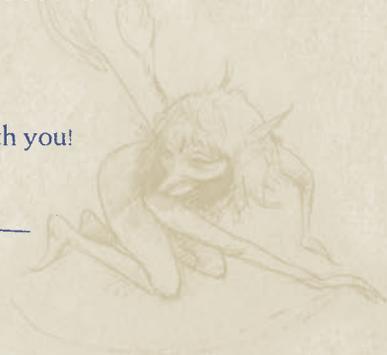
Using the Faeries' Oracle is not like reading any other card deck, whether tarot or oracle. In other decks we (you and I, gentle reader) are working with archetypes and intellectual concepts. In *The Faeries' Oracle* we are, of course, still concerned with those. However, we are also interacting with the living, breathing faery beings. They are just as real as we are, if not more so, but they are very different from us. These differences and the faeries' inimitable approach to life will provide us with some interesting joys, challenges, and experiences as we become acquainted with and use this deck. (Imagine me here with a very wry grin.)

Last, you may be wondering if you really belong on this journey to Faery. You might have bought these cards because they are so beautiful, and now perhaps you are wondering if you really can communicate with the faeries and use the cards "properly." Yes, you most certainly can, although it may take a certain amount of practice-as-a-game. I assure you that you will love the results.

Using the Faeries' Oracle is a lot more fun than you might expect—even if you are expecting a lot of fun. And if you are interested in joining us on the Internet to learn and develop your Faeries' Oracle skills even more, please be sure to read the pages in the back of the book on Recommended Sources.

May the faeries be with you!

Jana Macbeth



Part One

Faeries and Oracles

How to make friends, influence angels, and read oracles

First Steps into the Otherworld

The first thing I always tell my students about oracles and tarot decks is:
Don't read the book.

This book, of course, is different. . . .

This book is about the living oracle of the faeries—a set of cards and a way of seeing that is different from standard human tarot and oracle cards. Brian once began to paint a human tarot with faery in it, but that wasn't what the faeries wanted him to do. They wanted him to make their own oracle cards, as nearly as he could without being able to paint in light instead of pigments.

This book is also about a different, intuitive way of reading the cards. It starts by helping you to discover your own meanings and insights in the cards instead of telling you mine. Later on, in Part Two, I'll give you the "starter" interpretations as I (and a few others) see them, but right now you need to be aware that any oracle has many possible valid interpretations. These "meanings" change from moment to moment and person to person. Like the faeries, the definitions are changeable and mutable, depending on how you see the world just now and on what the faeries would like to communicate to you. Here we will focus on discovering your own individual interpretations and your special pathways and connections with the Faeries' Oracle.

So, what I really meant when I told my classes not to read their books was: *Don't read someone else's definitions of the cards until you already have some idea of what they mean to you.*

Discovering what the cards mean to you, actually looking closely enough at them to begin to find some of the faery secrets they hold, will give you a completely different and far more magical and intuitive approach to reading the oracle than memorizing a bunch of definitions. To help you to find your own insights, let's start here with some of the things that you will find useful to do and to understand before you read the second part of this book.

First, take a good look at your attitude. Are you really serious about this? Do you believe you will need to work hard with the cards?

If so, please, don't be like that. As much as you can, let yourself approach the cards and the faeries with a light and playful heart. Consider lightheartedness. We usually think of it as the opposite of having a heavy, sad heart, but the faeries also see it in terms of illumination. A light heart is not only *not* heavy—it is glowing with joyful light. It allows us to see things in a different light. Be prepared to have fun with this. Be ready to enjoy the inevitable faery jokes and games. This lightheartedness will illuminate the Oracle for you, making your insights brighter, the concepts embodied in the cards more luminous, and your heart capable of holding even more light.

Now, with a healthy, playful mind-set, take the deck of cards and randomly spread them out, faces up, on a table—or on the floor if, like me, you prefer a lot of space for working. The first thing you will notice, if you have any experience with tarot or oracle cards at all, is that this is not like any other deck. Well, it wouldn't be, would it? This is a *faery* oracle, and as unique, unpredictable, humorous, profound, and beautiful as you would expect something of Faery to be.

You will also notice that there are different types of pictures, and I'd like you to begin by dividing the cards into groups that seem to go together. Set your own criteria for selecting them and begin to notice how the different images and beings shown on the cards might relate to each other.

For example, you may sort into one group the cards that look rather abstract, while the other cards form a group showing scenes and beings that appear more detailed and realistic. As you try to divide the cards into these two subsets, you will find that there are a few that don't quite fit neatly into either but have qualities of both. They form a third set of their own.

Another way of sorting the cards is to divide them into a set that only shows one individual on the card, and a set that shows two, and another set that shows three or more. Or you can divide them into the faeries who look beautiful, the ones who look funny or amusing, and the ones who may appear menacing or threatening to you.

You might sort them by the what is on the heads of the principle faery in each card. Some wear wreaths of flowers or leaves. Some wear floating crowns of stars. There are woodland-style acorn caps, salmon hats, and

many others. There are even the bareheaded faeries. What, if anything, do the members of each of these groups have in common? Can you find a kinship between them?

Use your imagination and intelligence and find a variety of ways to compare and relate and differentiate between the cards. There is no right way or wrong way to do this. It is just practice in looking at the cards and seeing the similarities and differences between them. Be inventive and creative and playful about it. The more you do this, the better you will begin to understand this Oracle and Faery itself.

I hope that you are already doing this and not just reading my words. Very shortly we are going to be discussing things that won't make nearly as much sense if you have not done these preliminary steps.

Please practice this for a while, before you go on.



Next, please pick a card up and look at the back of it. What do you see? Lovely, isn't it? But please remember what you are really looking at. Paper. Colored ink. The card in your hand was made by machines from mundane materials. No magic here, is there? Yet somewhere there is magic in the process of reading an oracle. Where can it be?

All right, turn over the card and look at the face of it. An astonishing work of art, isn't it? But the card, picture and all, is still just ink on a piece of paper. No magic here either, is there? Where is that magic then? If you look at the edge, you will not find a thin layer of something glimmery and glittery sandwiched between the front and the back, so there is probably no magic hidden within the card either. Where can it be if it is not in the cards themselves?

Brace yourself for this.

The magic is in *you*. Many people in this modern, unenlightened age have a hard time believing in faeries, but far more people find it impossible to believe that there is magic in themselves. They can only believe in magic outside of themselves—crystals, incense, drugs, cards, other people, widgets, gizmos, whatever.

Some people can believe in anything—except in themselves. I don't want you to believe in just anything and everything, and I don't want you to believe in anything just because I say it is true. I want you to discover what is *really there*—and you will. But a good place to start is by admitting to

yourself that the cards themselves are not magical. The magic of the Oracle, if anywhere (and it is definitely somewhere), is elsewhere.

Not only is this magic in you, but it is also in Faery, it is in Brian and his paintings, and even in me.

You can't miss it.

Okay, now we'll stop fooling around and get down to some serious playing.

Please put that first card back down. Look at the rest of the cards for a while. Take your time looking the cards over and as you look, try to find two special cards: the one that appeals to you the most and the one that appeals to you the least, which makes you the most uncomfortable when you look at it. You may choose several before you settle on the two special ones, but you'll know when you have them. They will feel right.

It doesn't really matter why you choose a card as your most appealing or least comfortable. Your choice might be because of the image, because of the colors, because of your personal associations with something in the card. *Whatever your reason*, these two cards are, at this particular moment, your two Power Cards. Let's consider them. (*Please don't look them up in the second part of the book yet!*)

As we go along with the various exercises like this one and the ones to follow, from time to time I shall suggest that you ask for information. Whenever I say "ask" in that way I mean to ask whatever or whoever you look to for guidance. It might be God or Goddess, the Christ Consciousness, your higher self, a spirit guide, your faery guide, or a faery on the card. It's up to you.

At this point I'd like to suggest that you keep an oracle journal, notes on what you are learning about the cards and Faery and the individual faeries and yourself. An excellent place to begin your notebook is with the following:

Look first at the card that appeals to you the most. Look at it carefully, and write down what you see there in response to the following questions.

1. What is the emotional atmosphere of the card? Does it seem peaceful? Happy? Sad? Loving? Lonely? Friendly? What else? If you don't know the answer, make a guess and write it down. Some cards have complex symbols, and it can be confusing at first to try to pick out one or a few simple attri-

butes from the wealth available. If you have any difficulty with this, just close your eyes, hold the card, and ask for the first feeling word that comes to your mind. Don't worry about whether or not you know why your mind chose this word, just go with it for now. As you continue to look at the card, you might see more of the different archetypal energies and attributes shown in it. You might also see a deeper emotional tone than you did at first. Write those perceptions down as well.

2. What might the physical manifestation of this card's symbols be in someone's life? What aspect of life does this card symbolize to you? Could it be talking about better relationships? A special relationship? Solitude? More money? More fulfillment? More time for special activities? More things and possessions? Fewer? A simpler life? Chaos? Order? Activity? (What kind?) Health—good or bad or changing? What else? Again, if you don't think you know, close your eyes and ask for a word, while holding the card. Write down whatever word you get, or whatever image that comes into your mind.

3. What do you see in the card's symbols that might represent the card's mental characteristics? Is it complex or simple? Multi- or one-dimensional? Clear or confusing?

4. What are the spiritual characteristics of the card's symbols? Empathy, compassion, healing, awareness, teaching, questioning, or something else?

5. What do you find most appealing about this card?

6. Is there anything you find uncomfortable or unappealing about this card?

7. Have you any other ideas about or impressions of this card?

If you were unable to answer any of the questions above, I'd suggest that you take a break. Pet the cat or throw a stick for the dog, or go for a little walk or do something else that you enjoy for a few minutes. Loosen up. Sometimes we try so hard we block ourselves with the intensity of our energy. When that happens, we just need to let go a bit. Then come back and try it again in a more relaxed state of mind and body.

Once you've finished with the first card, let's look at the card that you felt most uncomfortable with. Go through the same questions above, but with a change in 5 and 6. The new versions of those two are:

5. What do you find most uncomfortable about this card?

6. Is there anything you find appealing or attractive about this card?

Please write down all of the answers to the questions before you continue reading.



The card that appeals to you the most tells you what you are trying to create in your life. This may be something you are consciously aware of working on, or it may have been hidden in your unconscious mind until this moment. Be as honest with yourself as you can. Look again for what the card shows—which may or may not be what you would prefer for it to show or what you thought you wanted.

People often argue about this card. It might show a peaceful scene of someone contemplative and solitary, suggesting that we have a desire for time for ourselves. Yet we may insist that we are trying to become involved in a relationship or expand our social life. If we allow them to, the cards tell us the truth about ourselves. They are, after all, just a magic mirror. They tell us about the things we have not let ourselves think—perhaps have not dared to consider or wish for. Begin to broaden your horizons, please, and consider all the possibilities. And remember that this is the card that you chose as the most appealing, so it surely represents something you deeply want, perhaps even need very much.

The card that makes you feel most uncomfortable tells you something about what you are having the most trouble dealing with in your life. It deals with your strongest inner conflict. It probably tells you quite a bit about what is hindering you from achieving the desires that are expressed in the card that appeals to you the most. It may also tell you about some of your blind spots. The being (or beings) on this card represents your most important teacher at this stage of your life.

Next, turn all the cards facedown. Let your hands and eyes wander over the backs of the cards. As you do this, focus part of your awareness on your breathing. Take deep, slow breaths down into your abdomen. As you do this, you will begin to notice that the cards are not all the same. It is true that they are made of the same paper and ink and show the same design on their backs, but they have subtle differences that are not necessarily visible to the eye. After a while one card will begin to draw you. It may pull very, very gently at your hand or your eyes—or even quite strongly. Pick up that card.