



[By April Slaughter]
Illustration by Paulina Cassidy

the existence of

Fae



Do you believe in Fairies?

Fairies have long existed in the folklore of centuries past, and have often resurfaced in the works and texts of artists and authors all over the world. They are described as beings of air and nature, indefinitely connected to the spirituality of the Earth and constantly shifting their shapes and intentions to intertwine with our human reality.

Throughout history, these beings have been labeled with countless names such as nature spirits, elementals, elves, and gnomes, among many others. The English spelling of the word 'faery' is derived from the Latin word *fatum*, meaning destiny or fate. No matter how you spell it, fairies have held and continue to hold a unique fascination in the world of metaphysical curiosity.

The Book of Invasions, a medieval text of collected Irish legends discovered in the twelfth century, describes an elegant race of beings arriving to take over the island under a cover of dark clouds on a mountain in Connaught. They became known as the Tuatha de Danann (or "people of Dana", a Celtic Goddess worshipped in all the lands these individuals ruled). Some believed they had descended from Heaven, as their knowledge and beauty far surpassed that of ordinary human beings. A popular theory arose that they were fallen angels who had not quite earned their spot in Hell, or that they were perhaps consigned to a life on earth after the gates of Heaven had been shut in an attempt to exclude Satan and his rebels. The Tuatha de Danann were constantly challenged by humans as well as others believed to be of 'otherworldly' decent. Eventually, they retreated into a dimension parallel to ours and have carried on a less visible existence.

While the origin of such creatures cannot be adequately proven, it is certain that the mystery of the faery folk has existed far longer than any documentation found on them. In fact, the Celtic ideology of fairies is only one piece of a very large historical puzzle.

The Neoplatonist Porphyry, religious and mystical philosophers of Ancient Greece, believed that both good and bad spirits existed all around them in the air. These spirits were shape shifters and never took on any one permanent form. They believed that the bad spirits would intentionally cause disruption and chaos when human beings did not pay them the proper respect. The Romans also often spoke of the Lares, spirits who protected one's home and family when gifts of gratitude were bestowed upon them. Should you forget or neglect to pay homage to the fairies for their presence and efforts, home life could quickly become uncomfortable.

J.M. Barrie,

author of the classic play *Peter Pan* portrayed Tinker Bell as the quintessential fairy; a being of light constantly changing, beautiful, graceful and endearing.

According to Barrie, not believing in the existence of fairies meant certain death to them as if being intimately tied into human imagination was intrinsic to their survival. But do fairies actually exist and are they what we grew up picturing them to be? Are they all as inviting as Tinker Bell, ready and willing to grant our every wish and lead us into a world of endless adventure?

What seems most consistent throughout history is the inability to physically see fairies, though it has not been altogether impossible or unreported. The descriptions from those who have encountered them in the physical sense differ almost entirely, lending credence to the idea that fairies never take on and keep to one form.

According to Brian Froud, prolific fairy author and illustrator, "in their most primal form, we perceive them simply as pulsing forces of radiant light, with a glowing center located in the region of the head or heart." The power of recognition has been thought to strengthen the fairies resolve to further be seen, to interact, and develop personal relationships with those attuned to them. Fairies are most often witnessed by those bestowed with the gift of clairvoyant sight, but this is not to say that fairy sightings are exclusive to them. Many ordinary citizens throughout history have encountered the Fae (a word used to describe all esoteric beings within the fairy dimension).

Categorizing fairies is hardly an exact science, though most researchers universally believe they are intimately tied into the spirit of the Earth itself. Fairies, at the very least, are most commonly associated with the four basic elements (hence the term 'elemental') – earth, water, fire, and air. All over the world, these beings have been given many names and thought to possess powers and abilities one would only expect to find in the aptly named 'fairy tales' we have become so familiar with in our lives.

While we'd like to believe that all fairy folk are docile and gentle, some cultures truly believe they are creatures to be feared. According to American folklorist W.Y. Evans Wentz, the Fae possess the ability to wipe out half of the human race if they so wished, but have never done so because they have ethics to consider.

In his book *Good Faeries / Bad Faeries*, Brian Froud describes his belief in the fluidly changing intentions of the fae.

Despite our tendency to split the world into good and bad, right and wrong, light and dark, we must remember that in truth (and in the faery realms) such divisions are not always cleanly cut. Each contains a piece of the other, holding the world in tension and balance. And the shape-shifting denizens of Faery can appear wearing either face.

As the ever-preoccupied race of beings that we are, it is difficult at times for us to imagine that other worlds parallel to ours exist and flow in and out of our reality at will, perhaps influencing us on levels we cannot detect or uncon-

sciously refuse to acknowledge.

Some of the most intriguing stories about fairy interactions begin with the belief that fairies possess the innate ability to trick us; to make us see what they want us to see rather than what is real. This is defined as 'Fairy Glamour' and it can be one of the most entrancing and deceiving things you are likely to encounter with the Fae. You will recall the story of the old and haggard woman in *Beauty and the Beast* who came to the door of a vain prince, seeking shelter and testing the true nature of his heart. When he cruelly dismissed her, the ugliness of her appearance faded away to reveal a beautiful fairy who set a curse upon the prince to live as a beast until he could learn to show love and compassion to another.

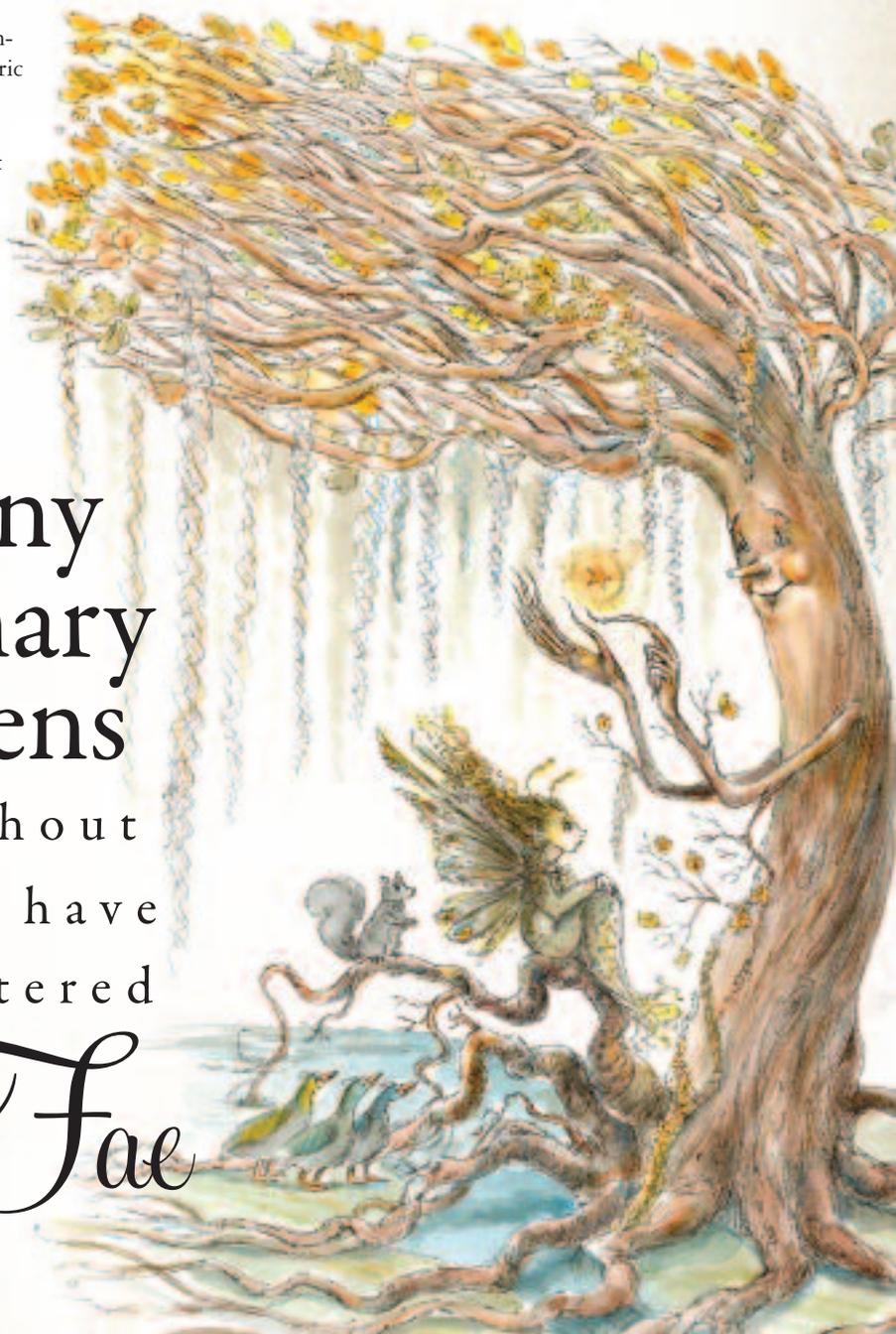
Not all fairy guises are meant to leave a positive impact on human lives. Fairy folklore is rich with stories of children stolen from their homes and replaced with sick and unruly replacements called Changelings. It was believed that the real child would be taken to the land of fairy and lost to their families forever, leaving parents to raise a child that was not their own, even though it appeared to be one in the same.

So, what could be done to protect oneself from fairy mischief? Throughout history and in countries all over the world, people believed that simple talismans and traditions were enough to keep the

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malignant fairies at bay. Different herbs and plants were carried or strategically placed for defense, such as St. John's Wort and flaxseed, among many others. Some even took sanctuary in churches, believing that it was a domain that fairies could not enter.

While fairies are described as neither being wholly good or bad, one thing remains consistent in fairy lore – they demand your attention and respect. Small offerings or gifts to acknowledge their existence have played a largely important role in the mutual understandings between humans and fairies. As Mr. Froud eloquently describes:

It is still a good idea to leave water and food out at night for your local faeries' refreshment. In the morning the food will still be there, but the goodness will have been extracted. This is true soul food, reminding us that faeries need to be nurtured by gifts of the spirit.



At present, the human race is so busy – so pre-occupied with the responsibilities and burdens we bear that it can be difficult to slow down and connect with the different spiritual elements that constantly surround us. How can we be more aware, to discover and interact with the fae?

In her book *Fairy Magic*, renowned paranormal author Rosemary Ellen Guiley describes her belief in the benefits of establishing a relationship with the fairies.

We have much we can learn from the fairy realm... In lore, fairies bestow their magical gifts as favours. By cultivating cooperative relationships with them, we stand to learn how to bring their magic into our world. Fairy Magic is not a magic laden with odd procedures or rituals but is an expansion of consciousness that anyone can attain.

The idea that seeing fairies through one's 'third eye' is universal.

While some claim to physically see these beings, most experience them through a clairvoyant sight. They leave an impression, and evoke imagery in your imagination as a way to introduce themselves into your life. Most every text available on the research of the Fae suggests that an open mind and desire to connect to nature is essential to their manifestation. It is

believed that they have the ability to sense your intent, and will allow you access only when you're head and heart are in the right place. Expanding your senses to attune yourself with the environment around you may take some time, but with practice is said to enhance your experiences with fairies.

With a little research, you will find that processes may differ but all have a direct connection to nature and your willingness to learn from it.

For those of us who spend a great deal of our time delving into the unknown, fairies may not be a subject we take very seriously, but why not? If it is possible to see the spirits of those who have crossed over from this life into the next, is it not also possible that we share our spiritual space with fairies as well? Perhaps there is more to what goes bump in the night than the idea that there are ghosts in our midst. If one phenomenon exists, surely there is an infinite possibility of others to co-exist. It is also possible that we have often mistaken one experience for something entirely different.

Was it a ghost you caught out of the corner of your eye, or does it warrant a second look? We as human beings are not limited to any specific number of phenomena to experience, but by our ability to see and accept those things beyond what we view as 'normal'. What is the definition of paranormal if not that?

Fairies have inspired and sparked the imaginations of generations. Whether you will ever have the chance to experience the many magical intrigues of fairy for yourself is entirely up to you. Truth is, you may have already encountered them without even realizing it.

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