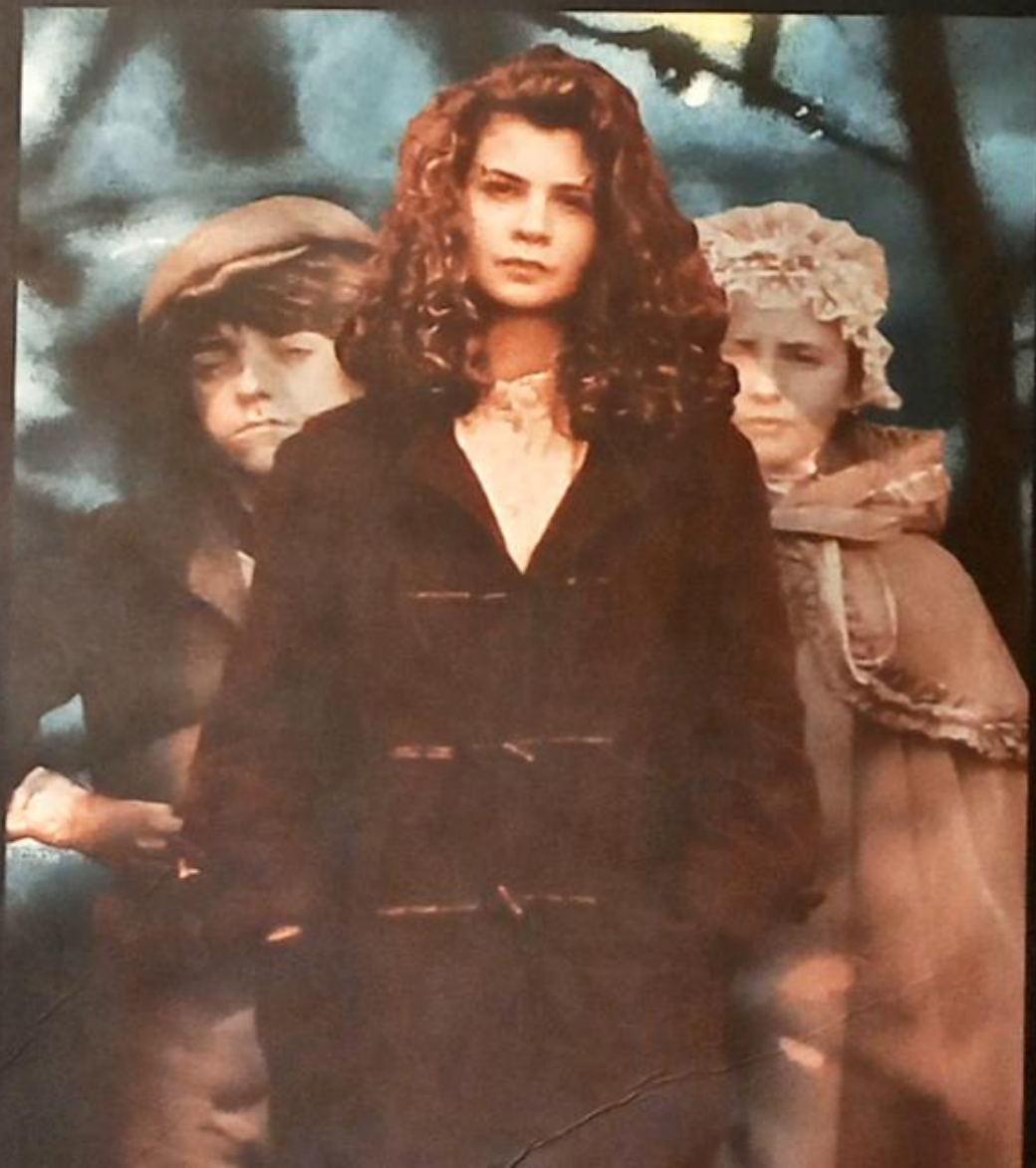


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3

MOONDIAL

HELEN CRESSWELL



MOONDIAL

In the garden of Belton House stands a sundial, but the shadow that falls on it at night comes from moonlight, not sunlight. And a moondial tells a different kind of time.

Minty Cane has a sixth sense – a sense which understands things that cannot be seen or heard by other people. When she first enters the garden at Belton House, she knows at once that there is some mystery waiting for her . . . and the moondial is at the heart of the mystery.

Soon the moondial takes Minty travelling, to the same garden a hundred years ago. There she meets Tom, a poor servant boy with a painful cough. And then the moondial sends her even further back to another century, where she hears a child's sad voice singing in the moonlit garden . . .





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Fantasy & Horror

Moondial

Stage 3 (1000 headwords)

Edited by
John Escott

Illustrated by
Cathy Grace



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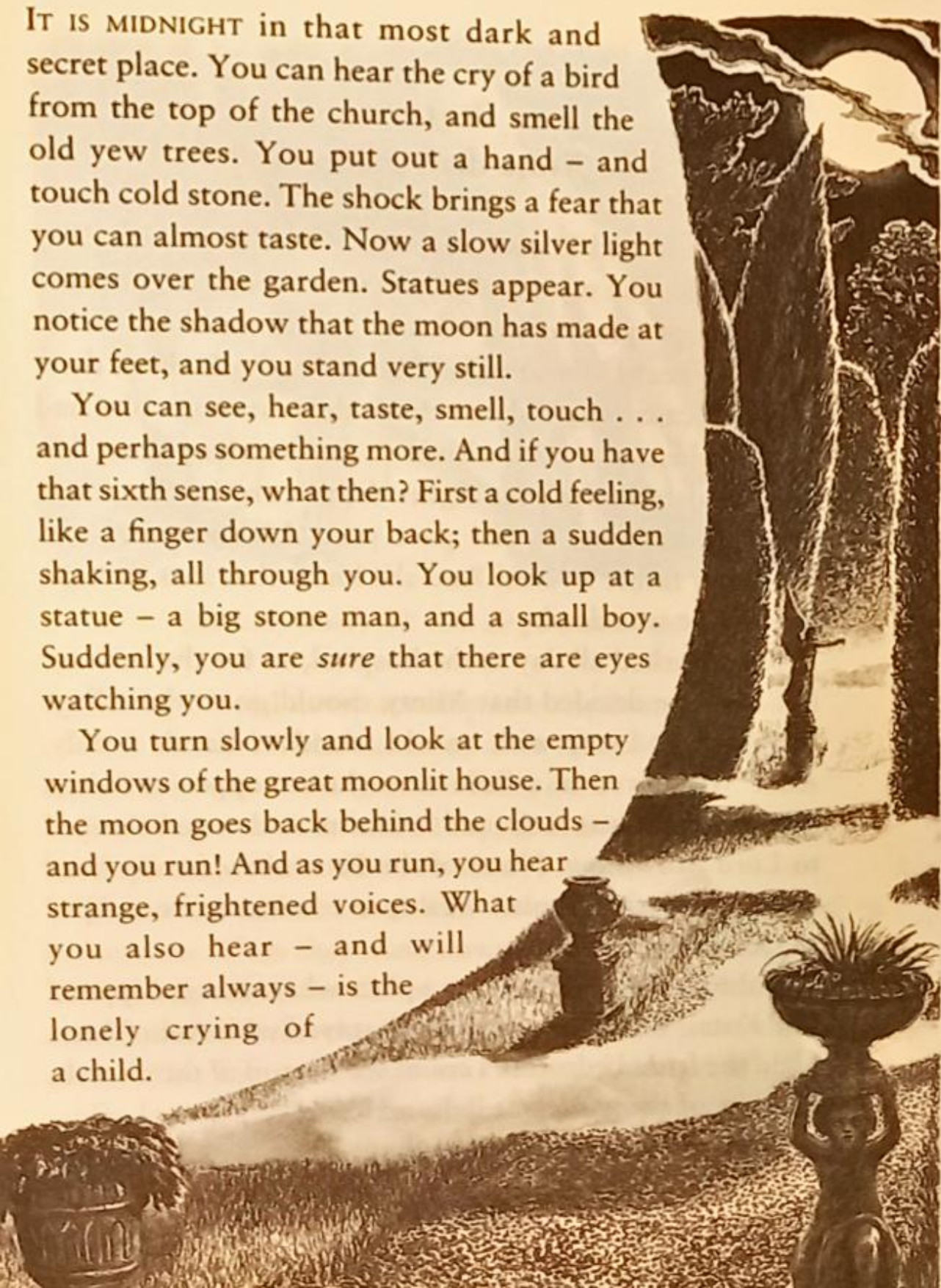
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IT IS MIDNIGHT in that most dark and secret place. You can hear the cry of a bird from the top of the church, and smell the old yew trees. You put out a hand – and touch cold stone. The shock brings a fear that you can almost taste. Now a slow silver light comes over the garden. Statues appear. You notice the shadow that the moon has made at your feet, and you stand very still.

You can see, hear, taste, smell, touch . . . and perhaps something more. And if you have that sixth sense, what then? First a cold feeling, like a finger down your back; then a sudden shaking, all through you. You look up at a statue – a big stone man, and a small boy. Suddenly, you are *sure* that there are eyes watching you.

You turn slowly and look at the empty windows of the great moonlit house. Then the moon goes back behind the clouds – and you run! And as you run, you hear strange, frightened voices. What you also hear – and will remember always – is the lonely crying of a child.



More than shadows

Minty Cane had known she was a witch, or something like it, since she was small. She had woken at night to see shadowy people moving silently across the floor of her room, or heard invisible feet. She did not talk about these things because she did not think them strange. She had once spoken of a dark visitor to her mother, Kate, but Kate had talked about lights from cars in the street making shadows. In the past year, Minty sometimes heard her father's voice. And she knew that *was* strange, because he was dead.

Kate worked all day at the hospital, so for the summer holidays she decided that Minty should go to the village of Belton and stay with an old friend of Kate's family. Aunt Mary lived in a little stone house opposite Belton House, which was large and beautiful and once belonged to Lord Brownlow. None of the Brownlow family lived there now and the house was open to visitors from April to October.

'I always think of Belton as a place where things *happen*,' said Kate. 'When I was small and stayed with Aunt Mary, I had the front bedroom. I could see the top of the church, and bits of the garden at Belton House.'

'Were there ghosts?' said Minty.



Suddenly Minty felt cold air pass over her.

‘Perhaps. But I never actually *saw* anything.’

They drove to Belton the day after school finished, and Aunt Mary was waiting at her front door.

‘You’ve grown,’ she told Minty, then said to Kate, ‘She’ll have the same room that you always had.’

They went upstairs and Kate helped Minty to unpack her suitcase. Then they came down for the lunch that Aunt Mary had cooked for them. After lunch Kate and Minty went to look at the church, which was only a short walk away. The July afternoon was hot and still, and they walked slowly through the churchyard, stopping to read gravestones as they passed.