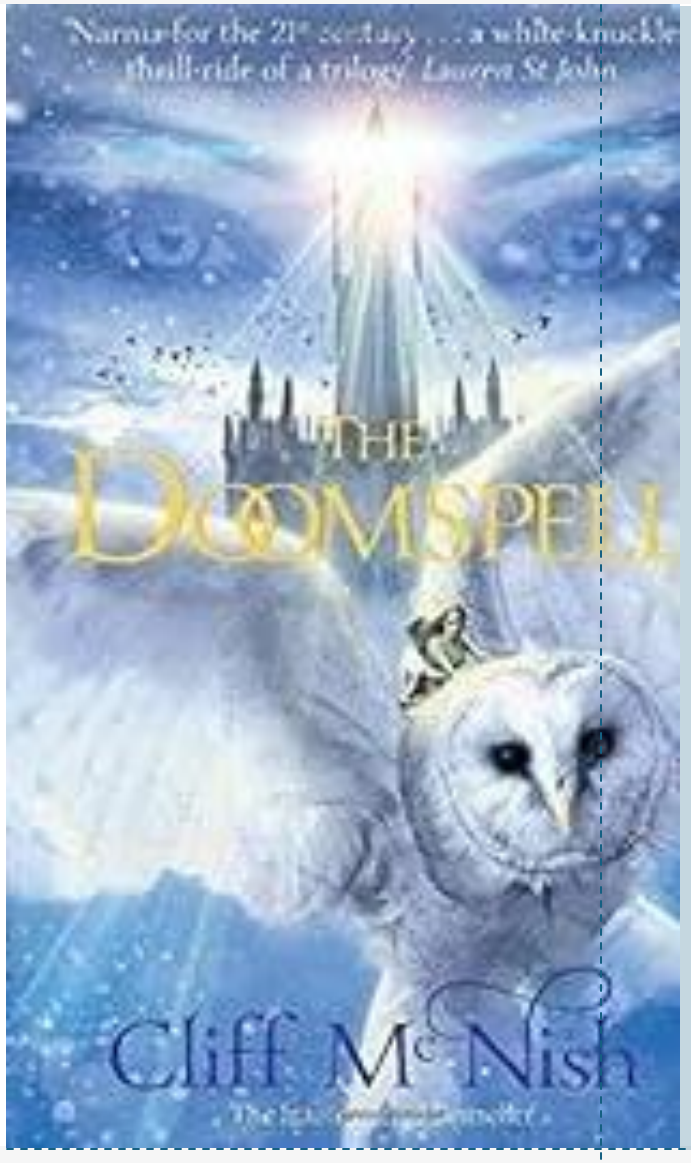
Lily's Monster
Cliff McNish

About the Author

- Cliff McNish is a British author.
- His books include *The Doomspell Trilogy*, *The Silver Sequence*, *Breathe: A Ghost Story* and *Savannah Grey*
- *Breathe* won multiple children's Literature awards and has been translated into over 20 languages
- He is known for writing fantasy and horror stories
- McNish's fiction often explores **magic, ghosts, and otherworldly adventures**



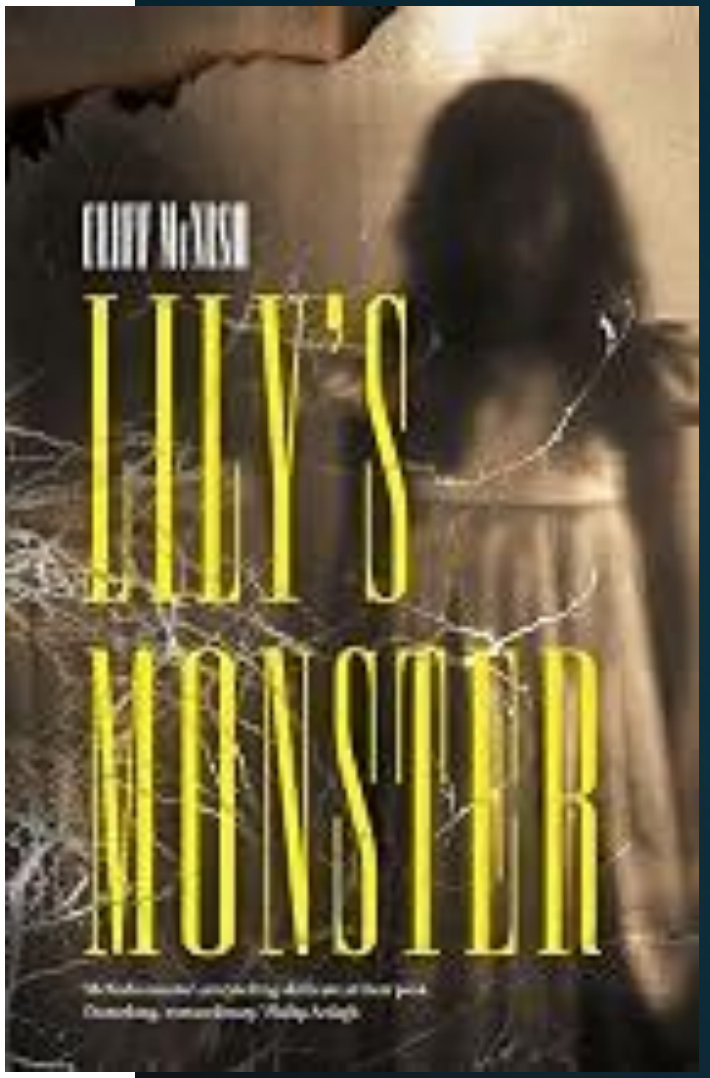


Plot Overview

Holly, a teenage girl with a big secret, discovers that a frightening "monster" lives in the holiday house her family has moved to.

As strange events occur, she must face danger, fear and difficult truths, if she is to escape and rescue her family.

The story combines **horror**, **suspense** and **adventure**.



Main Characters

- **Holly – brave but frightened; the main protagonist.**
- **The "Monster" – mysterious and threatening.**
- **Family members – Holly’s mother, father and younger brother all play a key role in Holly’s journey and decisions.**



Themes

- Fear and courage
- Family relationships
- Growing up and responsibility
- Good versus evil
- Survival and resilience

Language Techniques

Descriptive imagery	Descriptions of Gant House, dark corridors, shadows, the isolated seaside setting, and supernatural events.
Suspense-building sentences	Scenes where Holly hears or notices something strange in the house, but neither she nor the reader fully understands what is happening. Information is revealed gradually to create tension.
Powerful adjectives and verbs	Words associated with fear and danger, such as descriptions of a menacing house, a restless spirit, or a dark power that swirls and threatens the characters.
Foreshadowing	Early clues about Lily's true identity and the history of Gant House hint that something is wrong long before the full truth is revealed.
Emotional language	Holly's feelings of guilt and grief following her brother's death are central to the novel. The language used to describe her emotions encourages readers to sympathise with her.

Who is the monster?

The ‘monster’ is a small child but also death itself (symbolised by the black gaping hole in the ground).

What questions does this pose about a fear of death and how we define a ‘monster’?

Is Lily a monster?



Modern gothic horror

An isolated setting: Gant House is separated from normal life and becomes a place of fear and mystery.

A haunted house: The house has a dark history and contains a restless spirit. Haunted locations are a key Gothic convention.

Ghosts and the supernatural: Lily is a ghost child, placing the novel firmly within the Gothic tradition of spirits and hauntings.

Secrets from the past: Much of the story involves uncovering what happened to Lily and understanding the history behind the house and the portal.

Atmosphere of fear and uncertainty: psychologically chilling with a focus on unease



The "monstrous hole"

The portal to death is a strong Gothic image in the novel.

This could be interpreted as:

- **a boundary between life and death**
- **the unknown made physical**
- **a symbol of grief and loss**
- **a reminder that some horrors cannot be fully understood**

Traditional Gothic novels often contain forbidden spaces—locked rooms, cellars, crypts, tunnels, hidden passages. In Lily's Monster, the hole functions similarly. It is a place that attracts and terrifies characters at the same time.

Psychological Gothic

The novel is also Gothic because the greatest struggles are internal.

Holly is consumed by guilt over her brother's death. The supernatural events become intertwined with her emotional state. Trauma, bereavement, guilt and grief are major elements of the story. This is very Gothic: external horrors reflecting internal fears.

If you enjoyed Lily's Monster you might like:

The Hunting Ground — Cliff McNish

Breathe — Cliff McNish

Coraline — Neil Gaiman

The Graveyard Book — Neil Gaiman

The Woman in Black — Susan Hill

Room 13 — Robert Swindells

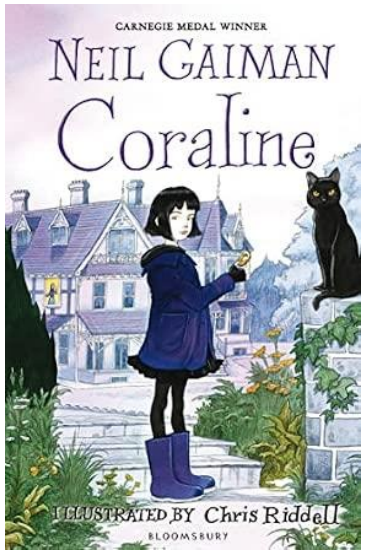
A Monster Calls — Patrick Ness

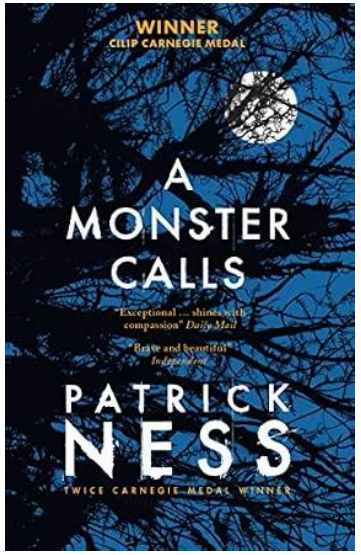
The Ghost of Thomas Kempe — Penelope Lively

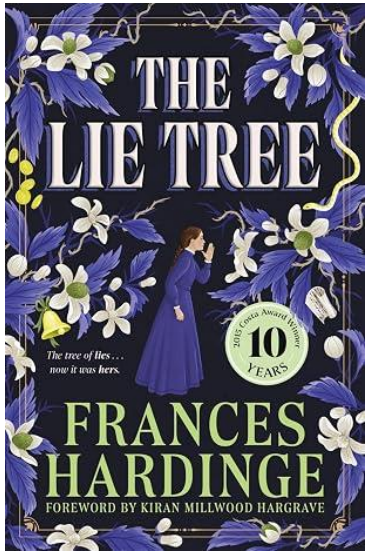
The Lie Tree — Frances Hardinge

The Whitby Witches — Robin Jarvis











A Monster Calls — 12A

Coraline — PG

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children — 12A

The Others – 12A

Films you might enjoy

Discussion

- What role does Gant House play in the story?
- Is Lily a victim, a villain, or something in between?
- Should we feel sympathy for Lily? Why or why not?
- Is the novel really about monsters, or is it about something deeper?