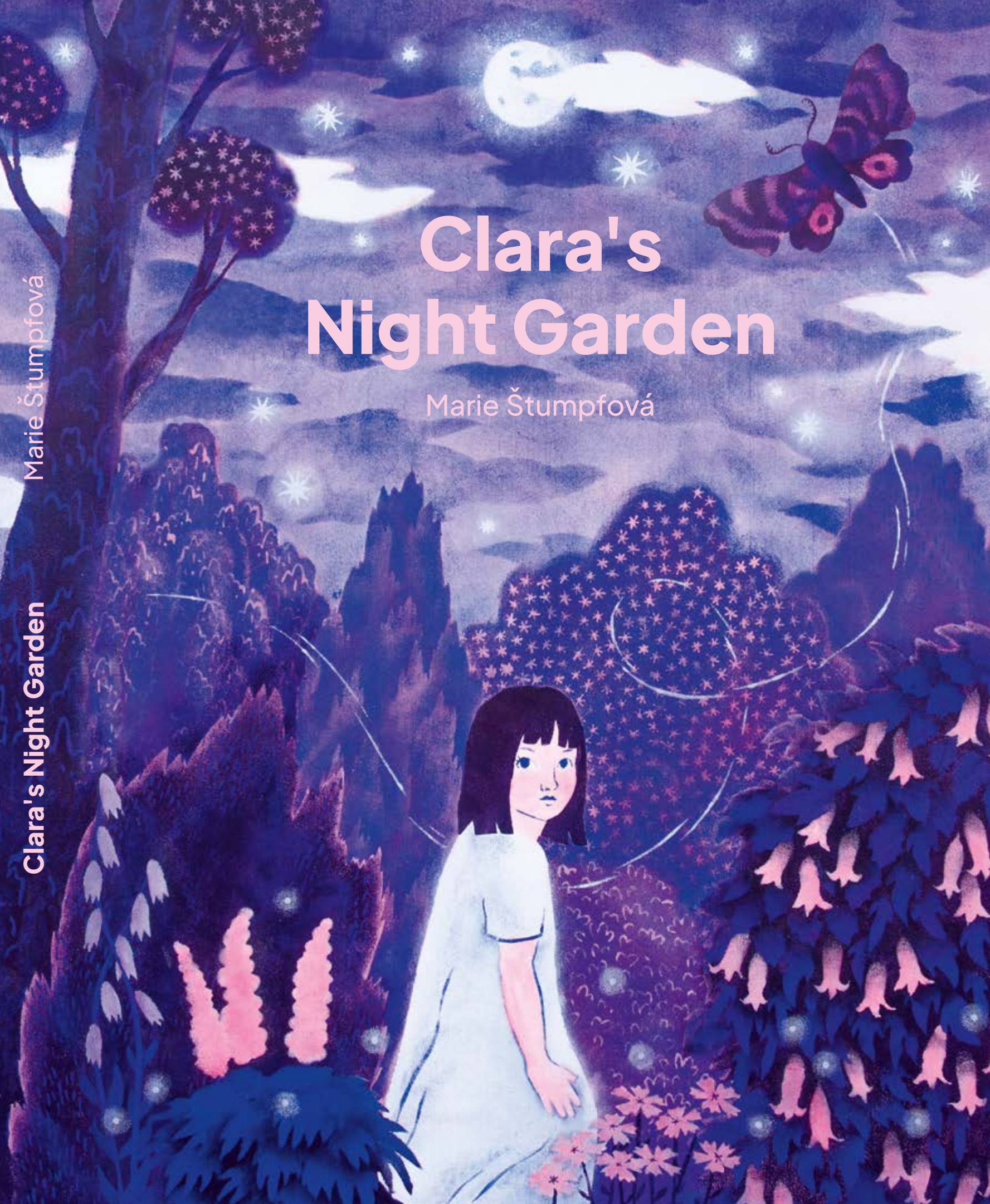


Marie Štumpfová

Clara's Night Garden

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Daylight faded and stars began to light up in the darkening sky, awakening one by one. And among those twinkling dots, so very high up, sat a large, round, silvery moon, shining softly. Every now and then, it snuggled under a fluffy white duvet of passing clouds. It was a magical summer night.



All the while, Clara watched the sky's secrets unfold. She didn't feel like sleeping. Sitting by the window, she peered out into the garden, where everything looked mysterious in the light of the full moon. She would have liked to go out for a nocturnal walk, but she was afraid of the dark.

"There's no need to be afraid," a little voice whispered from the shadows.

"Who's that?"

"My name is Luna. I'm a moth and I can show you how to love the dark... if you'd like."

"Is that really possible?" Clara wondered.

"Of course it is. The night has a beauty of its own.

Shall we go into the garden?"



Clara was not very keen.

“Luna, I don’t like it out here. I can hardly see a thing!” she whimpered.

“But there are lots of things to see! Like the stars, and they can only be seen in the dark. The stars shine brightest when the night is at its darkest. Just wait a second, your eyes will adjust.”

And then together they ventured into the leafy shadows.

“Ooh, look! What are those?” Clara asked.

Tiny lights were flickering here and there in the dark.

They flitted among the bellflowers and ox-eye daisies, and fluttered around the glinting silver pods and white lilies.

“Beautiful, aren’t they? They’re fireflies.” Luna whispered happily.



“What do you do all night, Luna?” Clara asked.
“Well, I spend my time visiting blossoms. I flit from flower to flower, breathing in their perfume and sipping nectar. Then I dance through the air, turning circles in the dark. Come with me, Clara. I have something to show you.”

They came upon a tall bush, draped in clusters of large white blossoms that filled the air with sweet perfume.
“Those flowers look like little trumpets!” Clara giggled.





Luna settled on one of the large flowers and began to unfurl her wings.
“Oh, look! What are those markings on your wings?” Clara asked in surprise.
“They’re my eyespots,” Luna replied.

“Why eyespots?”
“Because I’m an eyed hawkmoth and you can recognise me by my eyespots” she said, fluttering her wings.
“And they say that moths aren’t pretty!” Clara laughed.

“Thank you, Luna. And you, too, Mr. Hedgehog.”
Clara whispered goodbye as she began to drift
into sleep. Just before she closed her eyes,
she looked out into the garden one last time.
Now, the deep black shadows that had once
seemed so frightening felt different.
They had somehow turned beautiful...
like a blanket of soft, dark velvet.

