

Rae Knowles Receives National Recognition Through the INDEPENDENT PRESS AWARD®

OVERLAND PARK, KS, UNITED STATES, March 5, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The INDEPENDENT PRESS AWARD, one of the most prestigious book award programs globally for independent authors, publishers, and illustrators, recognized "Merciless Waters" by Rae Knowles as the Book Cover Design Fiction category winner.

The competition is judged by experts from different aspects of the book industry, including publishers, writers, editors, book cover designers and professional copywriters. Selected IPA Award Winners and Distinguished Favorites are based on overall excellence.

"Lush and imaginative, tense and atmospheric, 'Merciless Waters' is a vengeful fever dream drowned in saltwater."

—Rachel Harrison, national bestselling author of Cackle and Such Sharp Teeth

"Merciless Waters" by Rae Knowles
Jaq and Lily have no past. They need no past.

Endless present stretches around all the women on the ship Scylla. But Lily has always been fickle, and when the crew rescues a man adrift, she's quick to trade Jaq for the more novel lover. Enraged and heartbroken, Jaq considers the many ways to kill this interloper: The pigs will eat most anything. The sea is deep and choppy and cold. And she has venoms all her own, if it comes to it.

Unfortunately, it won't be so simple.



2025 Independent Press Award Winner

With the man's presence, the entire crew is infected with memories of before, and the ship's fragile peace begins to shatter. Each woman learns how she came to be aboard, igniting a thirst for retribution that gives the usually aimless ship direction. As Scylla draws closer to shore, Jaq must decide whether winning back Lily's affection is worth joining her in a quest for revenge that could destroy their endless present, separating them forever.

In 2025, the INDEPENDENT PRESS AWARD saw participation from journalists, well established authors, and small, medium and large publishers across the globe, including those residing in Australia, Canada, Dominican Republic, France, Germany, India, Hong Kong, Japan, Portugal, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Winners were chosen from publishers such as Amplify Publishing Group, Blackstone Publishing, Brigids Gate Press, Globe Pequot, Finishing Line Press, Gatekeepers Press, Hachette Go (Blanco of Grand Central Publishing), HarperCollins Leadership, Ideapress Publishing, IVP Kids, Koehler Books, Mad Cave Studios, North Dakota State University Press, Oceanview, Publishing Old Stone Press, Pegasus Books, Post Hill Press, Red T Kid's Media, Rowman & Littlefield, She Writes Press, University of California Press, and University of Georgia Press.

"The 2025 INDEPENDENT PRESS AWARD awardees included the excellence and diversity of global independent publishing," said Gabrielle Olczak, IPA President and Award Sponsor. "There is no stopping independent publishing. It provides unparalleled content and quality to consumers worldwide and we are excited to showcase this year's honorees to the world."



"Merciless Waters" by Rae Knowles



Illustrator Daniella Batsheva

For more information please visit [independentpressaward.com](https://www.independentpressaward.com/); and to see this year's list of IPA winners, please visit: <https://www.independentpressaward.com/2025winners>

About the Illustrator

Daniella Batsheva is a self-proclaimed "Illustrator with a design habit" whose aesthetic straddles the line between underground and mainstream. Her art boasts the beautiful intricate linework of traditional Victorian illustration mixed with dark imagery inspired by horror films.

Batsheva's art has been published internationally. Her work can be seen everywhere from "Whole Foods" to London's biggest punk venues. Batsheva has worked with brands such as Kerrang!, Pizza Girl, and multiple musicians such as Paris Jackson and Ben Christo (Sisters of Mercy). Her work has recently been featured at ArtExpo, New York, and The Crypt Gallery, London.

While her work can comfortably fit in multiple contexts, Batsheva's work is always recognizable. Her main motivation is fostering local alternative communities and contributing to the future of illustration in Goth/Metal scenes. Batsheva is also passionate about researching obscure folklore from across different cultures in an effort to preserve legends that are at risk of being lost.

---THE SOCIETY OF ILLUSTRATORS OF LOS ANGELES

About the Author

Rae Knowles (she/her) is a queer woman and author of dark fiction including *The Stradivarius* (May 2023), *Merciless Waters* (November 2023), and coauthor of *Lies That Bind* (February 2024). Her short fiction has been featured in *Dark Matter Ink*, *Nightmare*, *Ghoulis Tales*, *Seize the Press*, *Taco Bell Quarterly*, and *Nosetouch Press*, among others. Rae is represented by Laura Williams at Greene & Heaton.



Publisher Brigids Gate Press



Author Rae Knowles

About the Publisher

Brigids Gate Press, an indie press established in 2021 by Heather, Clyde, and S.D. Ventura-Vassallo, believes in the power of STORY. We seek to be a forge where new and underrepresented talents are refined and developed, and their stories shaped and tempered into beautiful, dark, mysterious, and thrilling tales that will delight readers. Above all, we seek to do our utmost to help and encourage writers on their journeys.

Heather Ventura, co-founder of Brigids Gate Press, believes there are few things that can't be solved with tea, cookies, and a good book. She enjoys reading a wide range of genres, but can't resist fairytales and gothic novels. She currently resides with her husband, son, and two horribly mischievous black cats under the vast prairie skies of the Midwest. She continues to believe the world is a place full of magic and wonder.

S.D. Vassallo is a co-founder and editor for Brigids Gate Press. He's also a writer who loves horror, fantasy, science fiction and crime fiction. He was born and raised in New Orleans, but currently lives in the Midwest with his wife, son, and two black cats who refuse to admit that coyotes exist. When not reading, writing or editing, he can be found gazing at the endless skies of the wide-open prairie. He often spends the night outdoors when the full moon is in sway.

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The Independent Press Award is announced every spring and is open to independent authors and publishers; to see this year's list of IPA Distinguished Favorites, visit:

<https://www.independentpressaward.com/2025winners>

The fall book competition, NYC Big Book Award, <https://www.nycbigbookaward.com/> allows all authors, publishers, and includes submissions from the big five publishers.

Join us for the Awards Dinner on May 3rd held during the BookCAMP event, May 2 - 4, 2025, <https://www.independentpressaward.com/ipabookcamp>

Gabby Olczak

Independent Press Award

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