

Rhys Shaw's Kirkyard Moon Examines What the Persecution of Scottish Witches Reveals About Women, Power and History

Author's historical fantasy explores the lives of women across centuries and asks what happens when women are punished for refusing to remain powerless

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, October 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The persecution of women has left a dark mark on history, and few chapters illustrate that more starkly than Scotland's witch hunts. For centuries, women who challenged expectations, attracted suspicion, or simply found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time could be accused of witchcraft, imprisoned, tortured, or executed. For author [Rhys Shaw](#), that history raises enduring questions about women, power, independence, and whose voices get remembered.



Rhys Shaw

"My work is about women finding each other through the centuries. Historically, women have often been treated poorly by society. Many people know about the Salem witch trials, where women were persecuted with little or no evidence of witchcraft. Far fewer know about the Scottish witch trials, where more than 4,000 people were accused of witchcraft and thousands were persecuted and executed," Shaw explained.

Set between 18th-century Scotland and 20th-century Edinburgh, [Kirkyard Moon](#) follows Janet Murray, a socially awkward young woman struggling to find her place in the world, and Elspeth, an 18th-century woman whose spirit lives within Janet. Elspeth has endured spousal abuse and has been accused of witchcraft by people who claim to love her. As the two women form an unlikely friendship across time and death, Janet discovers that Elspeth's story may help her find her own strength.

"I have always been interested in history, particularly the women whose stories have been overlooked or who have been blamed for decisions made by others," notes Shaw. "Kirkyard Moon gives me a way to explore that through two women living in completely different worlds but facing questions that remain deeply human: Who gets to decide what a woman is allowed to be? What happens when she refuses to accept the role others have chosen for her?"

Scotland's history provides a powerful backdrop. Between 1550 and 1700, nearly 4,000 people were accused of witchcraft in Scotland, and Historic Environment Scotland reports that approximately 85% were women. Many were executed. The Scottish Witchcraft Act of 1563 established a legal framework for persecution and remained in force until 1736. Janet Horne, executed in Scotland in 1727, is recognized as the last person executed for witchcraft in Britain.

In 2022, Scotland formally apologized for the historical persecution of people accused of witchcraft.

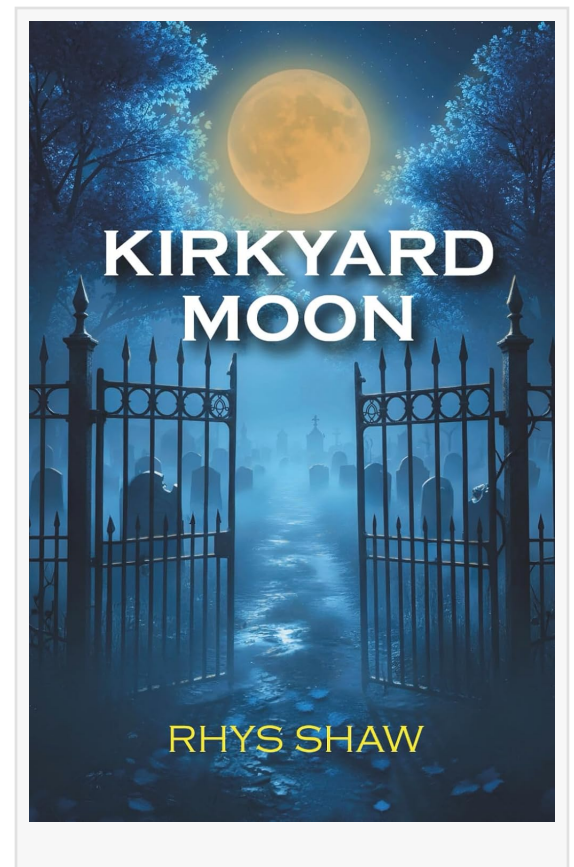
"That question of what happens when a woman's autonomy, voice, and choices are controlled by others is at the heart of my work. I'm interested in what happens when women are forced to navigate systems that seek to limit their power, their independence, or their ability to determine their own lives.

"That theme runs throughout my four-book Welexia Series, beginning with Someone's Daughter and continuing through A Daughter Rules, Weight of Her Crown, and A Queen's Wisdom. Through Princess Alaria's journey, I explore betrayal, grief, political power, survival, and the responsibilities that come with leadership. Women are not simply characters in these stories. They are at the center of the decisions, conflicts, and struggles for power," Shaw explains.

Shaw's fiction asks readers to look at history not as something safely contained in the past, but as a record of whose stories were silenced, whose choices were restricted, and whose experiences were dismissed.

"Women's stories matter," said Shaw. "When we look closely at history, we find women who survived extraordinary circumstances, even when they were denied power, freedom, or a voice. I want my books to bring those women back into the conversation."

About the Author



Rhys Shaw is an author whose work explores history, fantasy, women's lives, and the enduring struggle for independence, identity, and power. She is the author of the four-book Welexia Series, which follows Princess Alaria through betrayal, grief, political intrigue, survival, and the responsibilities of leadership. Shaw also wrote Kirkyard Moon, a historical fantasy set in Scotland that connects women from different centuries through a story of friendship, witchcraft, and self-discovery. Drawing inspiration from history, ancient ruins, and stories of women whose voices have been overlooked or misunderstood, Shaw brings historical themes into imaginative fiction that examines power, resilience, and the choices that shape women's lives.

Kirkyard Moon is available through bookstores and online retailers.

https://www.amazon.com/Kirkyard-Moon-Rhys-Shaw/dp/B0FVTDS1RB/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0

To learn more about Rhys Shaw and her books, visit www.welexia.com.

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