



TITLE INFORMATION

THE MAKING OF A WITCH

Judy Molland

She Writes Press (256 pp.)

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BOOK REVIEW

In Molland's historical novel, a young girl in 17th-century England learns how to heal her fellow townspeople and suffers as a result.

It's 1656, and 10-year-old Alice Molland is living in Exeter, near Devon, when she first witnesses a woman being put to death for the crime of witchcraft. The hanged woman, Goody Luscombe, had always been kind to Alice, showing her the right herbs and roots to use to treat various ailments. Alice vows to remember all that the deceased woman taught her and to continue her studies. Those studies help to keep her going, even when she experiences the tragic loss of loved ones over the next few years. Still, Alice starts losing her faith in God, and her faith in society, asking, "Why is it always women who are arrested and hanged?" since men always seem to be the cruelest ones. Her ability to tend to the sick, as well as her beauty, attracts the attention of Richard Greenway, the son of a wealthy merchant, and the two later confess their romantic feelings for each other—but when she becomes pregnant, Richard cruelly turns her away. She may be able to avoid scandal and escape Exeter for Ivycombe, but the peace she experiences doesn't last; a year later, rumors and accusations fly, and, as a result, Alice's life is endangered. Molland offers a fictional retelling of the life of her own ancestor, who led a similarly difficult life. The narrative tells Alice's story from the age of 10, skipping months and years between chapters, but although the timeline moves rapidly, the missing time doesn't adversely affect the reading experience, and dates in each chapter heading effectively keep readers on track. Alice's impressive drive to help others and to be true to herself, no matter the consequences, will have readers rooting for her when her circumstances look the most dire.

An engrossing story of one of the last accused witches in England's history.

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