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CLELAND SMITH'S NEW HISTORICAL FANTASY TREADS A BLOODY PATH ACROSS ANCIENT SCOTLAND

EGHAM, UK — July 14, 2026 — From Inverness-born author Cleland Smith comes a new historical fantasy novel, *Black Doe*. Set in ancient Scotland, *Black Doe* skilfully blends history, highland folklore and fantasy in a heart-wrenching tale of motherhood, identity and fate.

Black Doe follows the stories of two women: one assassin and one mother. The reader travels with failed assassin Bridei as she pursues her warlord target, her journey taking her along the Great Glen and all the way to the Western Isles. Simultaneously, Tisiphone recounts the tale of raising her boys – potential chieftains who might one day rule at Creag Phàdraig – in the shadow of the ever-encroaching Roman Empire. We relive her story with her as she fights for them, battling suspicion, the threat of invasion and the darkness of thwarted ambition.

Black Doe is set in the landscape of Cleland Smith's childhood. "As kids we played around hillforts, ruins, lochs, and waterfalls," she says. "You can't exist somewhere like that without your imagination running riot. The magic of it stays with you and becomes a way to approach adult subject matter." No wonder then that the historical elements of *Black Doe* are infused with magic and folklore; kelpies, witches and a bloodthirsty faerie pine marten all play key roles in the story.

Perfect for fans of folkloric historical fantasies like *Sister Song* by Lucy Holland and *The Children of Gods and Fighting Men* by Shauna Lawless, *Black Doe*, with its complex female leads and "stunning" prose will also appeal to lovers of writers like Madeline Miller and Naomi Novik.

Cleland Smith is the author of the science fiction novel *Sequela*, and the poetry collections *And in Here, the Menagerie*, *Room of Thieves* and *Real Cute Danger* (as Angela Cleland). *Black Doe* is released in paperback (£16.99) and ebook (£5.99) on August 5th 2026.

Praise for *Black Doe*:

"A harsh, evocative vision of Celtic lands where memory, violence, and myth shape every destiny." — *Kirkus Reviews*

"Hauntingly beautiful, an exceptional book." — *Anna Smith Spark*

"This haunting historical epic will linger long after you finish reading." — *Lucy Holland*

"Bloody and brilliant." — *Cameron Johnston*

"Lyrical and gripping right up to the final incandescent page." — *Neil Williamson*

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