



December 16, 2006

## **ROXXY BENT WINS SCARLET STILETTO AWARD AGAIN**

A South Australian playwright and script editor, **Roxy Bent**, has won Sisters in Crime's 13th Scarlet Stiletto Award for her story, "Mrs Wilcox's Milk Saucepan". This is the second time that Bent has won the award and the fourth time that the same writer has won the award twice. The national short story competition offered \$2700 in prizes and attracted over 100 entries.

Bent, a founding member of Vitalstatistix National Women's Theatre, took out the **HarperCollins first prize** of \$750 plus a trophy, a scarlet stiletto shoe with a steel stiletto heel plunging into a perspex mount. The shoe was found in the gutter in St Kilda by a Sister in Crime member.

Bent has had 11 of her plays professionally produced and lives with her partner, Margie, and their daughter Ruth, 100 chickens, four geese, three ducks, four alpacas and two dogs on an organic property in the Adelaide Hills.

"Winning the coveted Stiletto is such a thrill," she said. "Winning twice was a truly unexpected blast! It is so encouraging and is just what I needed. Writing is a long, slow business and winning the Stiletto Award is a huge boost to a writer's confidence.

"The Scarlet Stiletto is the funkiest trophy ever and caused quite a stir at security at Melbourne Airport on my way home! I'd like to thank HarperCollins for nurturing writers by providing the means for Stiletto awards and all the hard working Sisters in Crime conveners who make the awards happen."

Under the Sisters in Crime rule of 'two strikes and you're out', Bent will now become a judge.

Crime writer Kerry Greenwood presented the awards at the West St Kilda RSL in Melbourne after entertaining the packed audience with stories of why she decided to start a second crime series – one featuring the baker sleuth Corinna Chapman – in addition to her highly successful Phyrne Fisher series set in the St Kilda of 1928.

**Janis Tait** (Templestowe, Victoria) won **Kill City 2nd prize** (\$400) for her story "The Judge". She has won several national and local short story awards and last year her book about her son's suicide, *Living Death*, was published in the US. "Writing is the most ghastly of occupations. But once the bug bites, it becomes a ghastly passion!" she said.

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***Fighting for justice for women crime writers; promoting women's crime fiction***

**Sisters in Crime Australia, Inc. ABN 52 728 423 463**

**GPO Box 5319BB, Melbourne, Vic, 3001**

**Webpage: <http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sincoz/>**



**Inga Simpson** (Teneriffe, Queensland), a part-time investigator for the Commonwealth Ombudsman, took out both **Readings Books & Music 3<sup>rd</sup> prize** (\$250) and **Chronicles Bookstore Police Procedural Award** (\$150) for “Operation Bluewater”. She is currently working towards a PhD in Creative Writing, looking at detective fiction, at the Queensland University of Technology.

The **Kerry Greenwood Malice Domestic Award** (\$500) went to **Felicity Bloomfield** (McKellar, ACT) for her story, “Mascara”. Felicity Bloomfield won the youth section of the Scarlet Stiletto in 2002, with her first ever murder story. She says it filled her with an insatiable lust to have a shoe of her very own. Since then, she has written five novels and dozens of short stories. Several stories have been published and, prior to the 2006 Scarlet Stiletto Awards, Bloomfield won a total of five competitions. She has just been shortlisted in another crime competition, The Fish-Knife Award, run by Fish Publishing in Ireland. As much as possible, she researches everything in person – except murder.

Three students from Loreto Mandeville Hall in Melbourne were shortlisted – **Elizabeth Park** (Williamstown, Victoria for “A Scrap of Evidence”), **Rebecca Major** (Williamstown, Victoria for “On Butterfly Wings”) and **Mary Shuttleworth** (Port Melbourne, Victoria for “Bang Bang”) – with Mary Shuttleworth, 14, taking out the **Allen & Unwin Young Writers’ Award** (\$250), for writers under 21. Shuttleworth wrote her first story at six and wants to become an animal behaviourist. The students were encouraged by their teacher, Antoinette Poulton, to enter. RMIT multimedia student, **Brooke Maggs** (Greensborough, Victoria) was also shortlisted for the Young Writers’ Award for “Wrong End of the Gun”.

The **Dorothy Porter Award** (\$250) for the best story in verse went to **Monica Carroll** (Hackett, ACT) who has been widely published in numerous anthologies and journals. Poet Dorothy Porter presented the award in absentia as Carroll was celebrating her birthday and announced that next year the award would go to the most innovative story.

**Josephine Pennicott** (Broadway, NSW) was shortlisted for the sixth year running for two stories “Love Me Tender” and “Children’s Hour”. She has previously won first and third prizes and the Kerry Greenwood Malice Domestic Award twice. She is the author of three dark fantasy novels, *Circle of Nine*, *Bride of the Stone* and *A Fire in the Shell*, published by Simon and Schuster. She has almost completed her fourth book, *The Witches of Paris*, an historical/crime/supernatural novel.

A special commendation also went to criminologist **Shelley Hannan** (Newtown, Victoria) for “Tainted” which she’s turning into a novel. Journalists turned fiction writers, **Evelyn Tsitas** (Canterbury, Victoria) and **Caroline Van der Pol** (Victoria) were jointly shortlisted for their story “Deadlines”. Ballarat writer, **Kerry James** (Victoria) won a special commendation for her story

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“School Uniform”. She is working on a murder mystery set in Tonga where she spends half her time.



**Cate Kennedy**, who won the first two Scarlet Stiletto Awards in 1994 and 1995, was toasted at the ceremony for the publication of her first book of short stories, *Dark Roots*, published by Scribe this year. Kennedy, who has won almost every short story competition in the land, including *The Age* short story competition twice, had her first story published in the *New Yorker* this year in its September 11 edition. Kennedy has now offered a prize in the Scarlet Stiletto competition for the best new writer.

Sisters in Crime spokesperson, **Phyllis King**, said that this year’s award ceremony was one of the best ever.

“Kerry Greenwood spoke brilliantly and she and Cate Kennedy provided great inspiration, especially to the young writers still at school,” she said.

“Sisters in Crime (and ‘brothers-in-law’) dined as usual at Leo’s Spaghetti Bar but, because the backroom is still undergoing renovations, we had to walk the mean streets to the West St Kilda RSL which has artillery in the front yard. People hung out the RSL function room but the squash engendered a warm and friendly atmosphere. I’m sure all the shortlisted writers could feel the depth of passionate support coming from everyone in the room.”

King said that the judges – Sisters in Crime national convenors and previous double winners – were impressed by the calibre of the entries submitted.

“The judges were particularly delighted with the wide variety of themes this year. It was nice to see fewer women murdering their husbands for no particular reason – perhaps they’ve finally discovered the divorce court!” she said.

“Along with the usual private eyes, police and journalists, this year’s protagonists included terrorists, aliens, spies and bureaucrats. As always, however, the most enduring theme was revenge: sometimes for good reason; sometimes not.

“The category for funniest story is always a difficult one to judge and this year we decided not to award the **Pulp Fiction Award** for funniest story.”

The Scarlet Stiletto Award is Australia’s most lucrative crime-writing award for either gender. A number of winners of the various categories from previous years – including Cate Kennedy, Patricia Bernard, Tara Moss, Bronwen Blake, Angela Savage, Cheryl Jorgensen, and Jo McGahey – have since had books published. A UK publisher has just announced it will publish a crime novel by Liz Filleul, the 2004 Scarlet Stiletto Award first prize winner.

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The Scarlet Stiletto Awards are kindly sponsored by HarperCollins, Kill City Bookshop, Readings Books and Music, Chronicles Bookshop, Allen & Unwin, Pulp Fiction, Kerry Greenwood, Dorothy Porter, and Spinifex Press.



**The 14th Scarlet Stiletto Awards close on August 31, 2007. The entry fee is \$10. Entry forms will be available next year by writing to Sisters in Crime, GPO Box 5319, Melbourne 3001 or on its website: <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sincoz/>**

Print quality photos can be emailed on request.

**Further info: Contact Phyllis King on 0409 885 587**

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