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**22nd DAVITT AWARDS CEREMONY**

**Rising Sun Hotel, 2 Raglan St., South Melbourne**

**6.30 for 7.00 pm Saturday 27 August 2022**

***SCRIPT***

**7.10 pm WELCOME BY JACQUI HORWOOD**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** [Ask people to take their seats.]

Sisters in Crime, Brothers-in-Law welcome to the 22nd Davitt Awards, the night of nights for Australian women’s crime … writing.

My name is **JACQUI HORWOOD** and I am delighted that you have joined us tonight for what promises to be a night of fun, food, felonies and forensics. It’s the first time since 2019 that we’ve been able to hold a live ceremony. Let’s give a cheer.

**[Pause for applause]**

**Indigenous welcome:**

At the outset, on behalf of Sisters in Crime Australia, we respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land, the people of the Kulin Nations. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to the land and the sea.

Our Davitts’ presenter tonight is the multi-talented author and broadcaster, **LOUISE MILLIGAN,** whom I will introduce properly a bit later but give her a big cheer for now.Please take a bow, **LOUISE**.

**[Pause for applause.]**

Apart from **LOUISE**, tonight we can welcome 25 women authors with crime books under their belts, including a sleuth of writers from interstate, and one from New Zealand. Three authors had to pull out at the last moment due to ill health – Loraine Peck, Amy Suiter Clarke and Susanna Lobez.

When I mention your name, please make your presence known – and, if you have books in contention tonight, get your pens ready for signings later.

* Susie Allanson
* Louise Bassett
* Robin Bowles
* Jacqueline Bublitz
* Jacquie Byron
* Lindy Cameron
* Ber Carroll
* Tania Chandler
* Cath Ferla
* Elizabeth Flann
* Suzanne Frankham
* Kelly Gardiner
* Anna George
* Nicki Greenberg
* Leanne Hall
* Kate Holden
* Karina Kilmore
* Jess Kitching
* Ellie Marney
* Vanessa McCausland
* Charlotte McConaghy
* Petronella McGovern
* Lizzie O'Shea
* Dime Sheppard
* Emily Webb

We also welcome RWR (Rob) McDonald, a Brother-in-Law.

Have we left anyone out?

The books of all shortlisted authors and some others are on sale here thanks to the Sun Bookshop. Many thanks for **DEB FORCE** and her team for their great support. 10% discount for members.

It is now my pleasure to introduce **DR CAROLYN BEASLEY,** Senior Lecturer, Writing Department of Media and Communication and Academic Director of Research Training, at Swinburne University of Technology, the Davitts’ sponsor.

**DR CAROLYN BEASLEY**:

Swinburne is so very, very honoured to be able to support the incredible work of Sisters in Crime and the Davitt Awards. It’s a privilege to be in the room with so many talented writers and passionate readers. And, of course, with **LOUISE MILLIGAN.**

Swinburne is so very very honoured to be able to support the incredible work of Sisters in Crime and the Davitt Awards. It’s a privilege to be in the room with so many talented writers (26 authors of published crime books in the room!) and passionate readers. And, of course, to be in the room with **LOUISE MILLIGAN**.

**LOUISE**, you have a special place in our hearts. You fought against unimaginable pressure to tell the story of the culture of abuse against women in Parliament. And to tell the story of an allegation of sexual assault that haunted a young woman throughout her life until she could bear it no more. That young woman, Kate, was a passionate and caring Swinburne PhD student in our direct area. Our students and staff felt her death deeply but your work has helped put our spirits back together again because we know that her death has not been invisible. So on behalf of myself, my university community and our wonderful Writing PhD scholars, we say thank you.

On that note, thanks to the unstoppable Carmel and the Sisters in Crime crew for putting on such an important and fun event and for keeping Ellen Davitt’s spirit alive. So, happy reading and writing, sisters. And don’t forget that Swinburne offers a friendly and supportive community of writing programs ranging from TAFE, to degrees, to masters and PhDs, just in case anyone needs us!

Thank you for your wonderful stories and keep writing!

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** [Thanks Carolyn]

Expect to approached by people selling raffle tix – $5 each or 3 for $10 for 3 big bags of books worth $300 and the ‘Be Immortalised in Fiction’ competition. The winner gets their name in the next novel by the winner of the Davitt (Best Adult Novel.) $5 a pop or 3 goes for $10

Later this night, I’ll be auctioning a Piccoli Portraits Gift Certificate worth $1000.

Meanwhile please order your food – it would help the Rising Sun if you ordered by table. Perhaps starting at 1 …

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**8.15 pm JACQUI HORWOOD INTERROGATES LOUISE MILLIGAN ABOUT HER LIFE IN CRIME**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** Please join with me in welcoming the presenter of Sisters in Crime’s 22nd Davitt Awards – the **award-winning journalist and true crime writer, LOUISE MILLIGAN.**

**[Pause for applause.]**

**LOUISE MILLIGAN** is an investigative journalist for ABC TV’s *Four Corners* and author of the bestselling *Cardinal: The rise and fall of George Pell* (Melbourne University Publishing). The case, involving one of the most senior members of the global Catholic Church, made international news prior to the trial and throughout successive – and ultimately successful – appeals. *Cardinal* won the 2017 Walkley Book Award and was highly commended in Sisters in Crime’s 2018 Davitt Awards. Pell has been in the news again this week. He had a large column in the Weekend Australia defending liberal ideals..

**LOUISE’S** 2020 book, *Witness: An investigation into the brutal cost of seeking justice* (Hachette Australia), won the 2021 Davitt Award (Non-Fiction). The culmination of five years’ work, it charts the experiences of people courageous enough to come forward and face their abusers in high-profile cases of child abuse and sexual assault. Louise was also a witness herself in the trial of the decade, *R v George Pell*. Her analysis is enriched by in-depth interviews with prosecutors, defence counsel, solicitors, judges and academics.

Among the many awards for her work, **LOUISE** has received the 2019 Press Freedom Medal and the 2017 Melbourne Press ClubGold Quill Award.

**[JACQUI HORWOOD and LOUISE MILLIGAN in conversation]**

**9 pm JACQUI HORWOOD: [Thanks LOUISE]**

**[Pause for applause.]**

Please feel free to order dessert if you wish. You might also want to buy some books, raffle tickets or tickets in the Be Immortalised in Fiction’ competition.

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**9.20 pm INTRODUCTION TO THE AWARDS BY JACQUI HORWOOD**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** As many of you will know, the Davitt Awards were set up at SheKilda 2001 Women’s Crime Convention to celebrate the crime writing achievements of Australian women. 22 years later, we’re still celebrating and there’s a lot more to celebrate – something for which the Davitts can take some credit.

Back in 2001, there were 7 books in contention although the awards didn’t then extend to true crime – or what we’re now calling non-fiction. This year a record 169 books have been battling it out. Hooray!

**[Pause for applause]**

## More and more women are turning to crime – and for good reason. Crime is the most popular – and best-selling – literary genre and it’s a broad church. Crime allows authors to apply the blow torch to contemporary issues whether it’s the gendered nature of so much violence or what drives women to take justice into their own hands. Whether your books are littered with gore or recipes, set in the mean streets of Melbourne or the dusty roads of Rusty Bore, population 147, there is a place for everyone.

## When a lot of fiction has literally lost the plot (and a large readership), crime writing stands tall with compelling narratives, a keen sense of place, strong female characters, and an acute sense of justice. And it’s not all deadly serious – there is lots of fun, lots of humour, and lots of irony. It’s just that the outcome is often deadly.

It is particularly gratifying to see the Davitts becoming a springboard to global success.

**[Pause for applause]**

Let’s now turn to **DR PHILOMENA HORSLEY**, the judges’ facilitator, who had the unenviable job of ensuring that all 169 books got read and critiqued.

**JUDGES’ REPORT**

**DR PHILOMENA HORSLEY:**

Good evening to our sisters-in-crime and brothers-in-law.

I’d like to thank my fellow judges **MORAIG KISLER, JOY LAWN, JANICE SIMPSON, EMILY WEBB,** and **JAQUIE BYRON** for their perseverance in the face of the daunting number of entries this year, as well as their thoughtful and astute considerations.

This year the judges negotiated assorted work demands and significant family and health issues, as well as the formidable record number of 169 books in contention. But the rewards of judging the 22nd Davitt Awards were considerable.

The quality of the entries across the categories provided us with real challenges. In the category of Adult Fiction in particular, as noted by **ANN CLEEVES** on the ABC last week, Australian writers have ‘blown open the [crime] genre’.

The shortlisted authors continue to expand traditional notions of narrative, plot and place. The complexity of issues these books address has swelled. They took us on journeys through new knowledge and novel perspectives. They featured women who were complex, strong characters, who continued to survive and grow despite experiences of violence and childhood trauma.

We thank every author and publisher who submitted books. We particularly noted the trend to self-publishing and the significant rise in the quality of books by debut authors. It appears that crime writing is attracting many exciting new aspirants as well as publishers who are eager to publish them. In fact, the Award for Best Debut Crime Book (any category) particularly challenged the judges. Each shortlisted book in that category offers a polished and rewarding read.

The Non-Fiction shortlist took us through important historical accounts of abortion reform, and political and judicial corruption, as well as singular acts of murder in rural settings.

And the Young Adult category continues to showcase an impressive diversity of perspectives and sophisticated plots featuring feisty, spirited young women.

As judges, we say sincere congratulations to the winners and those who made the shortlist. Thank you to all the authors who submitted entries. And to all the readers across Australia. Your combined enthusiasm confirms that the appetite for crime books by and for women continues to flourish.

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** [Thanks **PHILOMENA**. Presents bottle of wine.]

**[Pause for applause.]**

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**9.30 pm DAVITTS PRESENTATION**

**DAVITT (BEST NON-FICTION CRIME BOOK)**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** 21 books competed this year for the Davitt (Best Non-Fiction Book) with 4 shortlisted.

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** It is my great pleasure to announce the Non-Fiction winner – *The Winter Road: A Story of Legacy, Land and a Killing at Croppa Creek* by **KATE HOLDEN.**

**KATE HOLDEN** is the author of *In My Skin: A memoir* and *The Romantic: Italian Nights and Days*, published by Text Publishing, and *The Winter Road*, published by Black Inc. For six years she wrote a column for *The Age* and has published essays, short stories, and reviews in *Griffith Review, Meanjin, The Weekend Australian, The Monthly, The Saturday Paper* and others. For *The Winter Road*, she has won a Walkley Book Award, and the Douglas Stewart Prize for Non-Fiction, and was recently shortlisted for the NSW Premier's History Awards.

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** The Davitt judges report notes:

In 2014, nearing sunset, farmer Ian Turnbull turned his car into Talga Lane, near Croppa Creek in northwest New South Wales. Turnbull raised a shotgun and fired six shots into Glen Turner, a compliance officer with the Office of Environment and Heritage. The men’s history of verbal arguments over illegal land clearance had turned deadly.

The murder is a springboard for Kate Holden’s meticulously researched examination of Australia’s relationship with land since European settlement. Holden explores the dilemmas of land ownership. Does ownership give landholders the right to disturb the balance of flora and fauna resulting in degradation and, at times, extinction? Is it possible to preserve or regenerate in the light of farming practices? *The Winter Road* is an exquisitely written book; the judges all agreed a stand-out in the genre of true crime.

**[LOUISE presents trophy to KATE HOLDEN.]**

**KATE HOLDEN:**

I can’t tell you how amazed and pleased I am to be the recipient of the Davitt (Non-fiction Award this year. This is totally unexpected, not least because I would never have presumed to call myself a crime writer, and to have my book counted among these excellent and definitely *crimey* crime books is a real thrill. I encountered the impressive world of Australian crime writing, and Sisters in Crime itself, as a young bookseller in Melbourne thirty years ago. Now I’m in it!

When I began working on *The Winter Road,* I knew that it involved a murder. I knew it would be hard to write about, emotionally, ethically, and technically, and I knew that I’d also be covering a court trial. But the murder was years ago; the killer himself was dead; the court files were restricted. I couldn’t have written the book without the work done by dozens of journalists, who write crime stories in fragments, using their attention, their expertise and their documentation to make the thousand tiles I used for my mosaic of Glen Turner’s murder at the hands of farmer Ian Turnbull.

I have to thank them, and the witnesses who did talk to me, and even those who couldn’t feel able to. I thank my editor Julia Carlomagno, the team at Black Inc; I thank my partner Tim, my writer friends and Erik Jensen, who suggested I take on this project. This is just a wonderful honour, and I am really grateful.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN and KATE HOLDEN pose for pics.]**

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## 9.38pm DAVITT (BEST CHILDREN’S NOVEL)

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** This year only 8 crime books competed for the Davitt for Best Children’s Novel. 3 were shortlisted.

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** And the Davitt for theBest Children’s Crime Novel goes to *The Detective’s Guide to Ocean Travel* (Affirm Press) by **NICKI GREENBERG.**

**[Pause for applause.]**

**NICKI GREENBERG** is an award-winning writer and illustrator whose work includes critically acclaimed graphic novels, picture books, fiction and non-fiction. *The Detective's Guide to Ocean Travel*, is her first historical novel and her first whodunit. It has also become the first book in the Detective's Guide series, because she is a glutton for punishment (and for extensive, obsessive research). Her intrepid sleuths are now on their way to solve more mysteries in Jazz Age New York, Paris and beyond. Although Nicki spends a lot of time in the 1920s, when she surfaces into the present she loves to roller skate, crochet, and eat dumplings. In her past life she worked as a lawyer.

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** This is what the judges had to say:

“From opening lines that herald an ‘Outrageous Spree’, readers know they’re in for some fun with this story of plucky Pepper Stark who, after much pleading, finally gets to join her father, the Captain, aboard the *RMS Aquitania* on a voyage to New York.

“Set in the 1920s, this story offers old-school escapism for readers eight and up, with Pepper and her new friends on board caught up in the theft of the world-famous Saffron Diamond which disappears mid-voyage. This story has the lot – mini-sleuths, glamorous movie stars, outrageous desserts, even a leopard – but the judges particularly appreciated how Greenberg’s readers will have the chance to explore ideas about social justice and classism as they navigate the different sections of the Aquitania, and as Pepper learns a little of life on the decks below First Class.”

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN presents trophy to NICKI GREENBERG.]**

**NICKI GREENBERG:**

I am thrilled and very honoured to receive this award, and to be included in this fabulous community of wickedly clever sisters. A very heartfelt thank you to Sisters in Crime, to the judges, and to my wonderful publisher, Affirm Press, who set sail on the grand adventure of making this book with me.

*The Detective’s Guide to Ocean Travel* is my first mystery novel, and also my first historical novel – because clearly, I like to take on all the toughest genres in one go. It’s a book for kids, and for adults, too. Kids are often more sophisticated, thoughtful, inquisitive readers than their grown-ups give them credit for, and of course they love crime and suspense and intrigue just as much as we do.

So, even though I was writing for a young audience, I wanted to create an exciting, well-crafted and emotionally resonant story that would glue a reader like *me* to the page as well. And I’m a demanding, nit-picky reader. In my past life, I worked as a lawyer – need I say more?

Lawyering gave me some useful tools as a writer. Most importantly, it taught me the value of clear and precise use of language. But there were also some things that I had to *un*learn in order to write this book, like my inconveniently law-abiding tendencies. Now that I’ve had a taste of breaking the rules, I'm happy to say that I'm looking forward to a long career of unrepentant recidivism!

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN and NICKI GREENBERG pose for pics.]**

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**9.46 pm DAVITT (BEST YOUNG ADULT NOVEL)**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** This year’s Young Adult field was again strongly competitive with the books just more compelling and more enjoyable every year. 8 books were in contention with 4 shortlisted.

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** The winner of the Davitt for Best Young Adult Novel is **LEANNE HALL** for *The Gaps* (Text Publishing).

**LEANNE HALL** is an award-winning author of young adult and children's fiction. Her debut YA novel, *This Is Shyness*, won the Text Prize for Children's and Young Adult Writing, and her novel for younger readers, *Iris and the Tiger*, won the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature at the 2017 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Her most recent YA novel, *The Gaps*, won the young adult category of the Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature and the Ethel Turner Prize for Young People’s Literature at the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards. Leanne is currently a PhD candidate at RMIT.

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** And now for the judges’ report:

*“*When a second girl who attends Balmoral Ladies College is taken from her home, the students and community struggle with loss, grief and fear. The fabric of the neighbourhood is tearing, and the ensuing gaps replaced by shadows. *The Gaps* focuses, not on the abductions, but on the psychology of the impact of the crime on those left behind. **LEANNE HALL** writes in a pared back style using a dual narrative structure told by two students. The author’s study of individuals and group dynamics is sophisticated, with allusions to the lost girls of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and Grimm’s fairy tales*.* Although *The Gaps* mirrors all-too-real situations where females are at risk, the young women here ultimately claim agency.This novel also has much to offer adult readers.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN presents trophy to LEANNE HALL.]**

**LEANNE HALL:**

I’m so thrilled and humbled to win the Best Young Adult Crime Novel Award from such a strong shortlist. The variety on the Young Adult shortlist is a testament to the depth and elasticity of the crime genre, and the vibrancy of Australian young adult writing.

“When I wrote *The Gaps* I wanted to focus unapologetically on the perspectives of young girls and women, so it’s really wonderful to share in this celebration of Australian women’s crime writing. As an admiring consumer of crime stories, I wanted my novel to explore the depiction of young women in the stories we tell, and the lasting effects a crime can have on how young women move through the world. I was inspired along the way by other writers and storytellers who put women at the centre of their narratives with a sensitivity and empathy that I hoped to emulate. I couldn’t feel more honoured to receive this award from Sisters in Crime!”

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN and LEANNE HALL pose for pics.]**

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**9.54 pm: DAVITT (BEST DEBUT BOOK)**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** The judges shortlisted 11 books for the Davitt (Best Debut Book) from a record 55 debut books across all 4 categories.

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** The winner of the Davitt (Best Debut Book) is *Before You Knew My Name* by **JACQUELINE BUBLITZ,** who is here all the way from New Zealand.

**JACQUELINE ‘ROCK’ BUBLITZ** is a writer, feminist, and arachnophobe, who lives between Melbourne, Australia, and her hometown on the west coast of New Zealand’s North Island. She wrote her debut novel *Before You Knew My Name* after spending a summer in New York, where she hung around morgues and the dark corners of city parks (and the human psyche) far too often. Her second crime novel, with just as many dark corners, is coming soon!

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** The judges reported:

Alice Lee arrives in New York on her eighteenth birthday carrying nothing but $600 cash and a stolen camera. A month later, she’s dead, her ostensibly anonymous body discovered by a passing jogger. Ruby Jones is an Australian woman, visiting the Big Apple for a few months to escape problems at home. Soon the women’s lives are indelibly intertwined as Ruby becomes obsessed with finding out who Alice was and how she died.

The judges were intrigued with the decision to make Alice the narrator. When her murderer struck, the girl’s life story was just beginning. Though dead, she won’t let it go yet. Putting the focus on Ruby was also fresh and fascinating. In crime reports, and in traditional crime fiction, the person who finds a body is often never heard from again. Exploring the complex physical and emotional worlds of these two characters was deeply satisfying. The assured and inventive storytelling in this book makes Bublitz an exciting new talent to watch.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN** presents trophy to **JACQUELINE BUBLITZ.]**

**JACQUELINE BUBLITZ:**

This is such an honour. Thank you to the judges, and to the Sisters in Crime community for embracing *Before You Knew My Name* in ways I could only imagine when I sat down back in 2014 after the murder of Renea Lau and finally got honest about what I wanted to do with this ‘one wild and precious life’ of mine. And what I wanted to say about those lives taken too soon.

Thank you to everyone who helped me get from that moment to here. My friends and family who knew I could do this well before I did. My incredible agent, Cara. My amazing editors, Jane and Darcy. The whole crew at Allen & Unwin, especially my publicists and part-time therapists, Ali, and Abba.

My fellow authors and sisters in all-things crime, who have been so generous with quotes, and support, and showing me how it’s done. All of the readers, who have taken the time to reach out and say ‘I felt that’. This city, Melbourne – the story was born here, and my heart very much belongs to her.

“And finally, thank you to my Dad, the biggest storyteller of them all. Next week it will be three years. So much has happened since then, Dad. You wouldn’t bloody believe it! I hope you’re having a wee dance with Stacey’s mum tonight, celebrating how far your girls have come. Thank you.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN and JACQUELINE BUBLITZ pose for pics.]**

**LOUISE:** Could you stay here please**, JACQUELINE?**

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**10.02 pm READERS’ CHOICE AWARD**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** It’s now our great privilege to present The Davitt (Readers’ Choice) award. All 169 books competed for this award as decided by the 500+ members of Sisters in Crime.

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** And **JACQUELINE BUBLITZ** has also won the Readers’ Choice Award. Please put your hands together everyone!

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN** presents trophy to **JACQUELINE BUBLITZ.]**

**JACQUELINE BUBLITZ:**

Thank you very much, my dear Sisters in Crime. I’m so grateful to have been welcomed into your family. Thank you for holding a place for me when I couldn’t get home for a while there. You took such good care of my book for me, and I’m so grateful. This award comes with such a sense of belonging, and it is the most lovely feeling for this newbie.

A special shout out to Karina Kilmore, my fellow Aussie-Kiwi hybrid, for guiding me through my first-ever launch last year; it’s been a steep learning curve, and I’ve been surrounded by the best and brightest women right from the start.

On this night celebrating sisterhood, I’d like to dedicate this award to my soul-sisters, Bron, Stacey, and Paw Paw. I’m so happy to finally be able to celebrate with you, and to give you a break from my endless writerly angst. There is nothing I love more than sitting on the porch at Rye picking your brains on who gets murdered next – but tonight is a very close second. Thank you for dancing into this unknown with me, my great loves.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN and JACQUELINE BUBLITZ pose for pics.]**

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**10.05 pm DAVITT (BEST ADULT NOVEL)**

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** Tonight, another record – an astonishing 132 novels competed for the Davitt (Best Adult Novel) with 11 books shortlisted. It sounds a lot but what a lot of talent is presented in this list!

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** Highly commended is *Unforgiven* by **SARAH BARRIE** (HQ Fiction).

**SARAH** **BARRIE** is the author of nine novels including her bestselling print debut *Secrets of Whitewater Creek*, the Hunters Ridge trilogy, the Calico Mountain trilogy and her new series. In a past life, while gaining degrees in arts, science and education, Sarah worked as a teacher, a vet nurse, a horse trainer and a magazine editor, before deciding she wanted to write novels. About the only thing that has remained constant is her passion for all things crime. When she’s not writing, her favourite pastime involves hiding away with a good Irish whiskey and a copy of her next favourite true crime story.

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** The judges were impressed. They said:

Whiskey devotee and part-time sex-worker, Lexi Winter, a victim of infamous paedophile the Spider, is also an expert hacker who hunts online predators. She tracks a rock-spider and witnesses a murder. But her unconventional and illegal methods preclude involving the police. After a TV documentary, Detective Inspector Rachael Langley, who convicted the Spider, is contacted by a man claiming to be the real Spider. Rachael is sure she got it right. But when a young girl is murdered in a method unnervingly similar to the Spider’s, her confidence flags. Did she get it wrong? Lexi and Rachael are thrown to unearth the truth. The judges agreed *Unforgiven* is jam-packed with unusual characters, a lick of humour, and plenty of twists and turns in this explosive thriller.

**LOUISE MILLIGAN: SARAH** can’t be here tonight but says: “I’m thrilled *Unforgiven* has been highly commended in the prestigious Davitt Awards. I’m so grateful to Sisters in Crime for the extensive and important work they do in supporting and promoting Australian female crime writers.”

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN shows the framed certificate and poses for pics.]**

**LOUISE MILLIGAN:** Big drum roll please …

And the winner of the 2022 Davitt Award for Best Adult Novel is *Once There Were Wolves* by **CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY:**

**CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY** is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Once There Were Wolves*, winner of the Indie Book Award for Fiction 2022 and a Nautilus Gold Award, and the international bestseller *Migrations*, a *TIME* Magazine Best Book of the Year, and the [Amazon.com](http://amazon.com/) Best Fiction Book of the Year for 2020, which is being translated into over twenty languages and adapted for film. She has both a Graduate Degree in Screenwriting and a Master’s Degree in Screen Arts, and lives in Sydney, Australia with her partner and son.

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** And here’s what the judges’ report says:

This beautifully written book is founded on the challenge of rewilding – the re-introduction of grey wolves to the remote Highlands of Scotland hundreds of years after they were hunted to extinction. Unsurprisingly, the return of wolves by biologist, Inti Flynn, angers the local villagers, many of whom fear for the safety of their sheep, and indeed for themselves. During a tense public meeting, she challenges the community’s fears, claiming, “We are the people killers, the children killers. We’re the monsters”.

Readers confront this provocation throughout the novel as McConaghy meshes themes of domestic and sexual violence, suspected murder, and the destruction humans are inflicting on our natural world. The book asks difficult questions, such as can women ‘unmade’ by trauma be healed through love, sisterhood and the natural world? Judges were enthralled by this contribution to the enviro-noir genre.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN presents trophy to CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY.]**

**CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY:**

Thank you so much to the Davitt Sisters Award for this wonderful, surprising honour. I’m over the moon, because this award is one that claims a space for women writers that is long overdue and deeply deserved, so it means a lot.

I want to thank my gorgeous and fierce publisher at Penguin Random House, Nikki Christer, I’m so lucky to work with you and your whole team at PRH. Thank you to my agent, Sharon Pelletier and my American publishers Flatiron Books, and editor Caroline Bleeke. I am so proud of this team of women who brought this book into the world. I’m so proud, also, of the cohort of women crime writers that I can now count myself among.

The longlisted and shortlisted writers must be congratulated, they are women I am inspired by, and admire endlessly. My sisters in crime. I want to thank my family, my strong female role models, in particular my mother, who has supported me to write all my life, and told me it was ok not to do my homework but to write my book instead.

My amazing partner Morgan, who believes unwaveringly in me and makes sacrifices of his own so that I can continue to do this work. And my beautiful boy, Finn, you put everything into perspective and you make me a better human being.

This book, *Once There Were Wolves*, is, like many crime novels, about the darkest, cruellest sides of humanity. It’s about the harm we do not just to each other, but to the natural world and the wild creatures we share this planet with. It was therefore a challenging and sometimes heartbreaking book to write.

But it is also, and ultimately, about the triumph of tenderness. It’s about love and compassion and generosity, it’s about our profound capacity to nurture. And, in rewilding not only landscapes but ourselves, too, it declares loudly and proudly that the wildest parts of ourselves, and particularly of women, to be the strongest, kindest, and most essential parts. So, I’d like to thank the judges for awarding this strange hybrid of a novel such an important honour in the crime community. I receive it proudly.

**[LOUISE MILLIGAN and CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY** **pose for pics.]**

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**10.15 pm JACQUI HORWOOD:**

* [**LOUISE MILLIGAN** to draw raffle winners –3rd, 2nd, 1st] and pose for photos
  1. **pm** [**CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY** to draw the ‘Be Immortalised in Fiction’ competition] and pose for photos
* Auction Piccoli Portraits Gift Certificate Worth $1000. (And pose for photos.)

Includes an initial 30-minute consultation by Zoom, a 60-90 creative portrait session worth $350. and a finely crafted matted and mounted portraits valued at $650.

Previous successful bids have been **MAGGIE BARON** and **KARINA KILMORE**.

Great for authors but you don’t have to be an author to benefit from this gift certificate.

* [Thank **LOUISE MILLIGAN** – **present gift bag**.]

**JACQUI HORWOOD:** Just before closing, some announcements:

The **Scarlet Stiletto Awards** short story competition offers a record $12,365 in prizes this year – not closing until 31 August so there’s time to get your story in. Grab an entry form on your way out.

The next Sisters in Crime events are:

Two Sisters in Crime in the Library events:

* **Thursday 15 September, 6pm, Brighton Library: The Unbelievable Vikki Petraitis**
* **Thursday 22 September, 6pm, St Kilda library**. **Bodies on the Beach.** Emma Viskic and Aoife Clifford in conversation with Leigh Redhead.
* **Friday 7 October:** **Murder, mystery and memory** withMegan Goldin, Nell Pierce and Tania Chandler in conversation with Ruth Wykes. Here at the Rising Sun.
* **Friday 28 October: Felony with fun** withKirsty Manning, Lucia Nardo, and Katherine Kovacic in conversation with Angela Savage. Here at the Rising Sun.

More details on the Sisters in Crime website.

We’d also like to thank:

**The judges:** Philomena Horsley (facilitator), Jacquie Byron, Moraig Kisler, Joy Lawn, Janice Simpson, and Emily Webb.

Caz Brown for graphic design.

Kathryn Lamont for creating the Davitts shortlist video,

Alexsandra Pontonio for designing the trophy.

Simon Wrangles for crafting the trophies.

**Books for the raffle were kindly donated by**: Affirm Press, Allen & Unwin, Black Inc., Hachette Australia, HarperCollins Publishers Australia, Melbourne University Publishing, Penguin Random House Australia, Text Publishing

**Sisters in Crime convenors:** Lindy Cameron, Lesley Gillis, Sara Hood, Moraig Kisler, and Carmel Shute.

Please stick around for a bit, buy books and get them signed by the authors.

10% discount for members at the Sun Bookshop stall.

At Sisters in Crime’s front desk you can join, rejoin or put your name on the email event notification list.

Could you also please leave your name tag. It’s part of Sisters in Crime’s war on waste.

Please also put your hands together again for **LOUISE MILLIGAN**.

**[Pause for applause]** Thank you. See you again next year.

**Could all the winners come up here for a group photo with their trophies.**