



24th DAVITT AWARDS CEREMONY

Rising Sun Hotel, 2 Raglan St., South Melbourne

6.00 for 6.30 pm Saturday 31 August 2024

SCRIPT

6.50 pm WELCOME BY KELLY GARDINER

KELLY GARDINER: [Ask people to take their seats.]

Sisters in Crime, Brothers-in-Law welcome to the 24th Davitt Awards, the night of nights for Australian women's crime . . . writing. Let's hope we survive the weather.

My name is **KELLY GARDINER**. [Introduce myself.]

I am delighted that you have joined us tonight for what promises to be a night of fun, food, felonies and forensics.

[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, the sea, and culture.

Our Davitts' presenter tonight is the multi-talented author, **SULARI GENTILL**, whom I will introduce properly a bit later but give her a big cheer for now. Please take a bow, **SULARI**.

[Pause for applause.]

Apart from **SULARI**, tonight we can welcome 25 women authors with crime books under their belts, including a sleuth of writers from interstate.

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.

- Louise Bassett
- Lindy Cameron
- Tania Chandler
- Muriel Cooper
- Amy Doak
- Emily Gale
- Lucinda Gifford
- Alison Goodman
- Christine Gregory
- Bronwyn Hall

- Amanda Hampson
- Rebecca Hazel
- Lynne Johnson
- Christine Keighery
- Ellie Marney
- Marija Pericic [Per-u-chich]
- Angela Savage
- Janice Simpson
- Laraine Stephens
- Jane Sullivan
- Monica Vuu
- Katrina Watson
- Emily Webb
- Ruth Wykes
- Anna Zobel

Have we left anyone out?

We'd also like to welcome two brothers-in-law:

- Robert Gott – who usually heads the Dicks' team when we hold the infamous Dicks versus Dames debates and
- Jarad Henry, who has also been on the Dicks' team in the past

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

DR CAROLYN BEASLEY, the Course Director of the Masters of Writing, the Discipline Coordinator of the Literature and Creative Writing major and Academic Director of Research Training for the School of Social Sciences, Media, Film and Education (pew!), at Swinburne University of Technology, would normally be making the sponsors' speech at this point but alas she can't be here. Let's give her a big cheer that she can hear in Geelong!

[Pause for cheers.]

Just a few announcements. Expect to be approached by people selling raffle tickets – \$5 each or 3 for \$10 for 2 Tilnak Fine Art Portraits worth \$699 and 3 big bags of books worth \$350. You'll also be approached about entering 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. If you don't have cash, you can pay with a card via the phone.

Later tonight, fellow convenor **LESLIE FALKINER-ROSE** will be auctioning a family photoshoot package worth \$1395, also kindly donated by Tilnak Fine Art Photography. Tilnak have kindly donated other prizes which will be revealed . . .

Meanwhile please order your food if you haven't already. I am aiming to talk to **SULARI GENTILL** about her life in crime at 8.

8.00 pm KELLY GARDINER INTERROGATES SULARI GENTILL ABOUT HER LIFE IN CRIME

KELLY GARDINER: Please join with me in welcoming the presenter of Sisters in Crime's 24th Davitt Awards – **SULARI GENTILL**, who is here from Batlow, a small country town in the Australian Snowy Mountains where she grows French Black Truffles, breeds miniature cattle and raises two wild colonial boys – and writes, usually in her pyjamas.

Sulari initially studied astrophysics before becoming a corporate lawyer, but luckily for us, she turned to crime. She is now the author of the multi-award-winning Rowland Sinclair Mysteries, a series of (currently) ten historical crime novels set in 1930s Australia. Her widely praised standalone novel, *Crossing the Lines* (now titled *After She Wrote Him*), won the Ned Kelly Award for Best Crime Novel and was short-listed for the Davitt Award. Recently, she has published two bestselling novels set in the USA – *The Woman in the Library* and *The Mystery Writer*.

[Pause for applause.]

[KELLY GARDINER and SULARI GENTILL in conversation]

8.45 pm KELLY GARDINER: [Thanks SULARI.]

[Pause for applause.]

Please feel free to order dessert if you wish – at your own cost. You might also want to buy some books, raffle tickets, tickets in the Be Immortalised in Fiction’ competition or some of the merchandise on sale – tote bags, t-shirts, pens, books, fridge magnets. We’re starting the awards presentation at 9.15.

9.15 pm INTRODUCTION TO THE AWARDS BY KELLY GARDINER

KELLY GARDINER: 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. 24 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 153 books have been battling it out. Hooray!

[Pause for applause]

This year, there has been a shift in approaches. Only two police procedurals were long-listed. The new sleuths are more likely to be tea ladies, historians, vets, contact tracers, criminal psychologists, or just ordinary citizens. Books are variously set in Australia, Sweden, the UK, and the USA – or in a plane flying 35,000 feet above the earth.

Themes have ranged from INCELS, coercive control, prison, the inequities of the legal system, criminal psychology, mental health, and, of course, that old perennial, male violence. Some books have also challenged the ‘rural noir’ tropes – floods in the outback – not a dusty road in sight – or pursuits on horseback across the mountains, to rival *The Man from Snowy River*.

When a lot of novels have 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.

And it’s wonderful to see women’s crime writing writ large on the screen. The second series of *Troppo* based on Candice Fox’s Crimson Lake books has just finished and it looks like it’s set up for a third series. Meanwhile, Brouhaha Entertainment is filming Sarah Bailey novel, *The Dark Lake*, which won the 2018 Davitt (Best Debut Book). *Boy Swallows Universe* star Phoebe Tonkin will executive produce and act in it. Hooray!

[Pause for applause]

Let’s now turn to **RUTH WYKES**, the judges’ coordinator, who had the unenviable job of ensuring that all 153 books got read and critiqued.

JUDGES' REPORT: RUTH WYKES:

There's no doubt that judging the Davitts gives you a front-row seat to the wonderful entertainment that is Australian women crime stories. This year, we travelled the world through the pages of 153 books: from an isolated house in Tasmania, to a road trip to the Kakadu National Park and all the way to a posh boarding school in Switzerland; and a hundred places along the way. We met some rather colourful characters; some who made us laugh out loud, others who left us in tears. And we had moments where we were secretly rooting for the bad guy.

This year's themes seemed darker than last year. There were several stories that revolved around close family dramas, many that sadly reflected the darker, more hidden side of real-life Australia. Family violence and dysfunction, or long-buried secrets were the basis for many stories. Several authors wove their stories around mental health issues, a theme that has been taboo; deliberately avoided or watered down for many years. But this is perhaps a realistic reflection of the impact of COVID and those life-changing lockdowns we experienced in 2020. Our worlds changed, and so did the worlds of our storytellers.

The other noteworthy point is the rise in self-published stories. There is a richness of imagination in those authors who are not constrained by the 'safe choices' of big publishers. Some of their stories are wonderful.

I want to encourage authors, whether they are self-published or with a traditional publisher to push their editors and beta readers harder. There were some very good books that lost out at the shortlisting stage of judging, purely because the editing had let them down.

Congratulations to every author who entered a book in the 2024 Davitts. It's an amazing achievement to write and publish a book, and all the judges appreciated the journeys you took us on. And to all the shortlisted authors, you made the shortlist for a reason; and you made it very difficult for us to choose the winners.

The winners this year were those stories that stood out, the ones we couldn't forget. In some cases, it was because you introduced us to memorable and interesting characters, or you told us a story that we got lost in. Or you challenged us and made us uncomfortable.

Congratulations to all the winners of the 2024 Davitt Awards. Thank you for telling us your stories and for reminding us that Australian women crime writers are right up there with the best in the world.

KELLY GARDINER: [Thanks **RUTH.**]

Would all the Davitt Judges like to join us up here – we'd like to present you with a certificate of appreciation and gift card.

[Present certificates to

- Deb Bodinnar [Bod-dee-nar]
- Emily Gale
- Romany Rzechowicz [Rome-any Reck-a-vic]
- Emily Webb
- Lyn Yates
- and last, but not least, Ruth Wykes, our marvellous Davitt Judges coordinator.]

[Pause for applause.]

[Photo ops]

9.30 pm DAVITTS PRESENTATION

DAVITT (BEST NON-FICTION CRIME BOOK)

KELLY GARDINER: 12 books competed this year for the Davitt (Best Non-Fiction Book) with 4 shortlisted.

SULARI GENTILL: It is my great pleasure to announce the Non-Fiction winner – *The Schoolgirl, Her Teacher and His Wife* (Vintage Press) by **REBECCA HAZEL** who has joined us from Sydney for tonight’s ceremony.

REBECCA HAZEL has worked in family law; in a women and children’s refuge; helped establish the Women’s Family Law Support Service at the Family Court in Sydney; and briefly in domestic violence policy at Legal Aid. *The Schoolgirl, Her Teacher and His Wife* is her first book.

KELLY GARDINER: The Davitt judges report notes:

Justice and the voices of women is at the heart of Rebecca's Hazel's *The Schoolgirl, Her Teacher and his Wife*. This book focuses on ‘The Schoolgirl’ JC and Lynette Simms, the victims of Chris Dawson, now convicted of the murder of his first wife Lynn. Without Hazel's curiosity and groundwork – conversations with JC when they worked together at a women's refuge – Dawson would never have come to account for his crimes.

Rebecca Hazel spent more than a decade researching this compelling case. She hit roadblock after roadblock, yet never gave up. When a colleague asked for help, because he was going to do a podcast, Rebecca gave generously of her time. That colleague was Hedley Thomas and the podcast was *The Teacher’s Pet*.

The judges all agreed that *The Schoolgirl, Her Teacher and his Wife* is a vital account, not only of a decades-long unsolved murder and the journey to the truth of what happened to Lynette, but also the tragedy of violence against women and the number of lives altered forever by one man's actions.

[SULARI presents trophy to REBECCA HAZEL]

REBECCA HAZEL: I am honoured to be here tonight and to receive the 2024 Davitt Award for best non-fiction book. I owe thanks to the Sisters in Crime conveners, and the judging panel for their work.

I wanted to tell this story because the two women at the centre of my book, JC and Lynette Simms, as she is now known, had no voice. The same man silenced them through violence - he murdered Lynette, and he controlled JC until she had no personal agency and her life was overlaid with the ever-present threat that she too could disappear like his first wife. Far too often we are forced to ask, what can we do to stop domestic and family violence and homicide? There are only complex and imperfect responses to these questions, but our first response is a personal one – how do I recognise domestic violence or its signs? How do I understand it? How do I intervene if I see it? In recognising my book, this award recognises the importance of hearing women’s stories. This award says, we are listening and we are learning.

When Ellen Davitt picked up her pen in the mid-nineteenth century, she was struggling to make ends meet and writing crime fiction was not an obvious path to a secure future, but she was brave and even as she faced poverty, she was compelled to write. In many respects, she shared the fragility of life with Lynette Simms and JC, and I think she would proud that her legacy has helped raised their voices. Thank you.

[SULARI GENTILL and MEGAN NORRIS pose for pics.]

9.38 pm DAVITT (BEST CHILDREN’S NOVEL)

KELLY GARDINER: This year an impressive 16 crime books competed for the Davitt for Best Children’s Novel. 4 were shortlisted.

SULARI GENTILL: And the Davitt for the Best Children’s Crime Novel goes to *Boris in Switzerland* (Walker Books) by **LUCINDA GIFFORD**.

[Pause for applause.]

LUCINDA GIFFORD is a writer and illustrator based in Melbourne. Her favourite illustration subjects are wolves, castles and chickens. She pretty much likes to write on these topics as well. Rather than prowling in packs, Lucinda's wolves dress up in fine tweed and travel the historical centres of Europe in search of cultural experiences, as well as shopping for rare antiques to take back to their marvellous turreted house in Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, Lucinda's chicken characters are dramatic divas, donning sparkly tiaras and sequined basques to perform to rapt audiences at Club Sparkles.

Lucinda loves the freedom and potential of a blank piece of paper. Like her wolf character Randall Greycoat, she is always seeking out new hobbies. Currently, Lucinda enjoys ice skating, hiking, collage and satisfying plot twists. However, unlike Randall, Lucinda prefers to undertake these activities one at a time.

KELLY GARDINER: This is what the judges had to say:

The judges were thoroughly entertained and impressed by *Boris in Switzerland*, an original take on the traditional boarding-school mystery with the addition of an endearing family of anthropomorphic wolves. As well as being the second book in The Wolves of Greycoat Hall series, we appreciated the fact that *Boris in Switzerland* can also be richly enjoyed on its own. We found that there was something here for everyone, adults and children alike, making this not only a story for a confident reader to get deliciously lost in by themselves but also an ideal book to read together as a family. There is great depth to the humour as well as to the underlying themes, selection of characters and the mysteries they aim to solve. With witty, expressive illustrations on almost every page, *Boris in Switzerland* is jam-packed with the talent, passion, and esteem for readership of author-illustrator Lucinda Gifford.

[SULARI GENTILL presents trophy to LUCINDA GIFFORD.]

LUCINDA GIFFORD: It's thrilling to be here, at last! As a life-long lover of mysteries and elaborate literary twists, I have been plotting for years to 'move into crime'. So, upon discovering there was a children's literature category for the Davitt Awards, I urged Walker Books to submit the latest book in my middle grade series, The Wolves of Greycoat Hall. *Boris in Switzerland* may be read by children as young as seven, but it is rich in crime and skullduggery.

Yes, the hero of the story is a young, talking wolf who learns to cope with life at an exclusive Swiss boarding school, but the plot revolves around art theft, forgery and child labour – even including the false imprisonment several minors. . . The 'Wolves' books have been described as simple, but writing mysteries for children is far from straightforward. The threads of the story must be interesting and multi-layered, but they must join into a clear picture that a young reader unfamiliar with the mystery genre can decipher for themselves. Plot points must be clearly signposted (but still surprising); there should be genuine suspense and – most importantly I believe – justice must prevail. Thank you for *choosing Boris in Switzerland* for these wonderful awards. I am in incredible company and am truly honoured to be here. I am absolutely thrilled.

[SULARI GENTILL and LUCINDA GIFFORD pose for pics.]

9.46 pm DAVITT (BEST YOUNG ADULT NOVEL)

KELLY GARDINER: The Young Adult field was surprisingly small this year. 5 books were in contention with 2 shortlisted.

SULARI GENTILL: The winner of the Davitt for Best Young Adult Novel is **AMY DOAK** for *Eleanor Jones Is Not a Murderer* (Penguin Random House).

AMY DOAK is a lifelong lover of books, reading and writing. Her debut novel, *Eleanor Jones Is Not a Murderer*, was released in September 2023 and was shortlisted for the 2024 Australian Book Industry Award Book of the Year for Older Children as well as the 24th Sisters in Crime Davitt Awards. It was also a CBCA Children's Book of the Year 2024 Notable.

The sequel, *Eleanor Jones Can't Keep a Secret*, was released in July 2024.

Amy lives on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in central Victoria with her husband, teen, tween, dog and a very grumpy cat.

KELLY GARDINER: And now for the judges' report:

What can be worse than being the new girl at High School? Being the new girl for the *ninth* time. That's what Eleanor Jones was coping with in the small town of Cooina. Eleanor had been dragged from town to town by her mum and rarely saw the point of making friends.

When one of the first student she meets ends up getting stabbed, and she was the last person he messaged, the whole town has an opinion on Eleanor Jones; "she did it".

Eleanor is determined to clear her name and sets out on an investigation that only a teenager could even think up.

The Judges all connected with Eleanor and loved her banter with the reader throughout the book. We got lost in the story, were reluctant for it to end. And we were all invested in Eleanor Jones. She was such a terrific character: bolshie and cynical, yet secretly vulnerable. The diverse group of teenagers that came into the story were people we all felt we knew: the popular girl, her hangers on, the misfit, the nerd, the school jock, and the bad seed.

This is an outstanding story about belonging, about coming of age. And, of course, about solving a murder.

[SULARI GENTILL presents trophy to AMY DOAK.]

AMY DOAK: The last time I won something, I was in Grade 5 and it was a colouring competition. I know I tried extra hard, because the first prize was a book of short stories for adventurous girls. I'm not sure what it says about me and where I've ended up – particularly because I haven't even so much as won a raffle since then – but I think it's safe to say that good things are worth waiting for. A book and this award would have to be the two most wonderful things I could hope to win.

When I first joined Sisters in Crime, I was still dreaming about being published and just the thought of being in close proximity to my most favourite authors was so very exciting. If I could go back in time and tell that hopeful young woman that in the not too-distant future she'd be the recipient of a Davitt Award, there is no way she would have believed me. What an amazing honour this is, and recognition that I will treasure for a lifetime.

I would love to thank my parents, especially my mum – Cheree – who is here, because she is the reason I love both books, and crime. And also my publisher, Penguin Random House, and my agent, Alex Adsett. Thank you so much.

[SULARI GENTILL and AMY DOAK pose for pics.]

9.54 pm: DAVITT (BEST DEBUT BOOK)

KELLY GARDINER: The judges shortlisted 7 books for the Davitt (Best Debut Book) from 33 debut books across all 4 categories.

SULARI GENTILL: The winner of the Davitt (Best Debut Book) is *The Half Brother* by **CHRISTINE KEIGHERY**.

CHRISTINE KEIGHERY (who also writes as Chrissie Perry) is the author of more than thirty-five novels for children and Young Adults. Chrissie wrote thirteen books in the hugely successful Go Girl! Series. Her Young Adult title, *Whisper*, won a White Raven and IBBY award and was shortlisted for the CBCA and the WA Premier's Awards. Her work has been published in ten countries, including the US, UK, Spain, Brazil, Slovenia, and Korea.

KELLY GARDINER: The judges reported:

This is a gripping story set in modern Australia, full of psychological suspense, gaslighting, new developments, and a well-handled final section that we didn't see coming. The story begins when the apparently rich and charming Alex turns up as the half-brother whose existence was previously a well-hidden secret by his mother Margaret, and who is now eager to become close to his two half-sisters.

The elder sister Hannah, is an academic, competitive and proud of her free spirit, living with Rex and possibly beginning to regret her decision not to have children. Her sister Stef is an interior designer, recently separated from Liam and struggling to launch her career, while also juggling a rebellious teenage daughter Rosie and a younger son Heath.

The characters are strong and interesting, and are all given well-filled out three dimensional lives. The hopes and disappointments of the sisters' professional lives are intertwined with their jealousies and rivalries of each other, and all of these are ripe to be disrupted and exploited by Alex. The action moves between Melbourne and South Australia, with both the reader and characters often unsure who to believe and who to blame.

Christine Keighery's writing is clear and readable and page-turning. The quality of her characters, the joys of her twisting plot, her control of pacing and pay-off merited this as our for Davitt Best Debut Novel of 2024. Her second title for adults, *We're Not Us Without You*, will be published in May, 2025.

[SULARI GENTILL presents trophy to CHRISTINE KEIGHERY.]

CHRISTINE KEIGHERY:

I have a confession to make. I'm not a debut author. But *The Half Brother* was my first book for adults, and what a learning curve it's been. To have recently turned sixty and landed in a new and exciting sphere has been a delight in itself. Then, this!

I guess it was part of the looming birthday that informed my choice. I've wanted to write for peers for a long time. I had characters shouting out to me from multiple short stories, so I threw my hat in a different ring.

With it, I made a conscious decision to banish humility – that scourge of womankind – begone. In a round table meeting at Ultimo Press, I told a team of Australia's best publishers I wanted to be their next Liane Moriarty. James Kellow grinned, then asked if I could write a book a year.

It turns out I can't. But my next Psych Thriller/Crime book is coming out in May 2025 and it's a doozy. Well, until recently, it was a beautiful mess. But with so much help and guidance from astute editors and divine writerly friends, it's getting there.

A huge nod to my fellow nominees. Many thanks to Sisters in Crime, especially the judges who do such difficult work. Thanks to my family, in particular, my long-suffering husband Marty who's had to endure life with someone who resides in multiple worlds. I'm truly – thrilled.

[SULARI GENTILL and CHRISTINE KEIGHERY pose for pics.]

10.02 pm READERS' CHOICE AWARD

KELLY GARDINER: It's now our great privilege to present The Davitt (Readers' Choice) award. All 153 books competed for this award as decided by the 600 members of Sisters in Crime.

SULARI GENTILL: **ALISON GOODMAN** has won the Readers' Choice Award for *The Benevolent Society of Ill-Mannered Ladies* (HarperCollins Australia). Please put your hands together everyone!

ALISON GOODMAN is a Melbourne based writer of crime, fantasy and historical fiction. She is the author of eight novels including her latest release *The Benevolent Society of Ill-Mannered Ladies* which was a

Washington Post and an *Amazon* Best Mystery Book of 2023. Her novels also include the award-winning Lady Helen trilogy, and *EON* and *EONA*, a *New York Times* bestselling fantasy duology. Alison has recently completed her PhD focusing on creative writing, historical research and the Regency era and is currently working on the third novel in the Ill-Mannered Ladies series. She is fuelled by strong coffee and air-fried chips, and will travel a long way for a good high tea.

[SULARI GENTILL presents trophy to ALISON GOODMAN.]

ALISON GOODMAN:

I am chuffed. Such a lovely word and it encompasses that feeling of both pride and pleasure that I feel about winning the Davitt Readers' Choice Award.

I want to firstly thank Sisters in Crime for creating the Davitts to celebrate the work of Australian women crime writers. Celebrations like this are so important – an acknowledgement of women artists and our ever-growing community of crime writers and readers.

I would also like to thank HarperCollins Australia and Anna Valdinger for loving Lady Augusta and Lady Julia Colebrook—two mid-aged sisters having adventures in the Regency-- and bringing them to Australian readers.

And, of course, huge thanks to my husband, Ron, who has always believed in my writing and has done everything in his power to support it, and to Karen McKenzie who speaks the same story language as I do and asks all the right questions about plot and character and theme. I can't count how many times they have each patiently listened as I endlessly try out sentence structures, storylines, character arcs and twists.

Lady Gus and Lady Julia were born from my own desire to read stories about older women having adventures. That desire coincided with an anthology titled *And Then* that the wonderful Lindy Cameron was putting together which had, as its parameters, stories about sleuthing duos that were not romantic partners set in Australia. Now it was a big stretch to find any Australian content in the Regency adventure that I wrote for the anthology, but Lindy graciously allowed the one mention of Australia in my story to suffice. That story was the first time my mid-aged sleuthing sisters appeared and it became the inspiration for *The Benevolent Society of Ill-Mannered Ladies*. So, thank you Lindy, firstly for inviting me to write a story for *And Then* and secondly for pretty much throwing out your own parameters.

For me, this is a particularly sweet win -- voted by readers from the Sisters in Crime membership. Thank you to all the readers who voted for Lady Gus and Lady Julia. And thank you, also, to those readers who didn't vote for my book but voted for the other eligible books that they enjoyed. It is this kind of engagement that keeps our reading and writing community vibrant. You, the readers, are why we plot and write and rewrite. You are why we strive to create the delight, whether that delight be the comfort of a cosy crime or the terror of a thriller or the fascination of a police procedural. So I thank you and Sisters in Crime for finding delight in my Ill-mannered Ladies.

[SULARI GENTILL and ALISON GOODMAN pose for pics.]

10.10 pm DAVITT (BEST ADULT NOVEL)

KELLY GARDINER: An astonishing 120 novels competed for the Davitt (Best Adult Novel) with 7 books shortlisted. What a lot of talent is presented in this list!

SULARI GENTILL: Big drum roll please ...

And the winner of the 2024 Davitt Award for Best Adult Novel is, *When One of Us Hurts* (Pan Macmillan Australia) Debut by **MONICA VUU**.

MONICA VUU was born in Langley, British Columbia. She has a background in Cognitive Systems. After graduating she worked with Emirates airlines and lived in Dubai for a couple of years, where she met her Australian partner, who managed to convince her to make the big move to Tasmania in 2019. *When One of Us Hurts* is her first novel and was inspired by the remoteness of rural Tasmania.

KELLY GARDINER: And here's what the judges' report says:

It takes courage to write a story like *When One of Us Hurts* and to portray a small, tight-knit community in a way that is at times familiar to readers of crime fiction, and at other times it's uncomfortably confronting.

Richly gothic at heart and fuelled by a multitude of masterful misdirections, *When One of Us Hurts* is a chilling foray into simmering small-town secrets, family tensions and mental illness. The judges were wowed by the unique voices of Livvy and Marie and the complex cast of supporting characters that brought rural Tasmania to vibrant – and threatening – life. A book that lingered with us long after the last page, *When One of Us Hurts* is a compulsive read and a worthy winner.

MONICA VUU:

I'm so excited to be here tonight! Thank you so much to Sisters in Crime for granting *WOOUH* this award and for your dedication to champion female crime writers.

When I enrolled in the 90-day novel course, I never imagined that I would a) see it through and actually finish writing a novel and b) that this novel would be published, let alone win an award. This journey has been a series of genie wishes, one after the other.

I'm thrilled and honoured for *WOOUH* to be counted among some incredible novels by amazing women. It's been a privilege and a gift to meet all of you and many other writers in the arena.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Jenny, Cate, and Anyez. Your hard work and support have been invaluable. *WOOUH* and I owe this award to you. A special thank you to Ian Pringle for his unwavering belief in my work, reading drafts one through to a billion, and pushing me to excel. I am also grateful to Tassie for providing the perfect environment for creativity and courage—two things I needed to chase after my dreams. And always a thank you to my partner, Tom, for his constant and unwavering support of these dreams and for everything else. I love you so much.

Once again, thank you for this honour.

[SULARI GENTILL and MONICA VUU pose for pics.]

10.15 pm KELLY GARDINER:

Before **SULARI** draws the raffle, feel under your seat. 3 lucky people should find a voucher for a family portrait shoot worth \$450, kindly donated by Tilnak Fine Art Photography

Would you like to come up here for a quick photo op?

[SULARI GENTILL to draw raffle winners –5th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st] and pose for photos

10.25 pm MONICA VUU to draw the 'Be Immortalised in Fiction' competition] and pose for photos.

10.30 pm KELLY GARDINER: Could **LESLIE FALKINER-ROSE** please come forward to conduct the auction of by **Tilnak Fine Art Photography worth \$1395**. It includes a 70 minute family portrait session, a 1 X 18" signed fine art portrait and a ticket to their Zoom Master class.

Previous successful bids for photo packages have been from **MAGGIE BARON** (give us a wave **MAGGIE**), **KARINA KILMORE** and **RWR MCDONALD**.

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

KELLY GARDINER:

Thank yous:

Presenters: Sulari Gentill & Kelly Gardiner

Judges: Deb Bodinnar [Bod-dee-nar]; Emily Gale; Romany Rzechowicz [Rome-any Reck-a-vic]; Emily Webb; and Lyn Yates

The Davitt Sponsor: Dr Carolyn Beasley, the Course Director of the Masters of Writing, the Discipline Coordinator of the Literature and Creative Writing major and Academic Director of Research Training for the School of Social Sciences, Media, Film and Education (phew!), at Swinburne University of Technology

Production: Caz Brown for graphic design; Alexandra Pontonio for trophy design; Simon Wrangles for crafting the trophies; and Deb Force for the Sun Bookshop stall.

Books for the raffle were kindly donated by Affirm Press; HarperCollins Australia; Pan Macmillan Australia; Penguin Random House Australia; Walker Books.

Sisters in Crime convenors: Lindy Cameron; Leslie Falkiner-Rose; Kelly Gardiner; Lesley Gillis; Sara Hood; Carmel Shute; And Ruth Wykes.

[Thank **SULARI GENTILL – present gift bag.**] [Pose for pics]

Just before closing, some announcements:

The next Sisters in Crime events are:

Friday 25 October, 6.30 pm for dinner, 8.00 pm for show: TV Noir: from Scandi ice to Outback heat. **Sue Turnbull** and **Marion McCutcheon** are coming from Wollongong to talk about their book, *Transnational TV Crime: From Scandinavia to the Outback* with **Fiona Egger**, co-founder of Every Cloud Productions which has produced the Miss Fisher's shows and film, and much much more. The event includes a very brief AGM.

We'd also like to thank the judges and everyone who has worked on this event [screens will roll through].

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 **SULARI GENTILL**.

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

CARMEL SHUTE to present gift to **KELLY GARDINER**.

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

ENDS