



ZOE GILBERT WINS 2014 COSTA SHORT STORY AWARD

Writer and PhD student Zoe Gilbert from Sydenham Hill, South-East London has won the 2014 Costa Short Story Award. She beat five other writers in a public vote where the identities of all six writers were unknown.

The announcement was made last night (Tuesday 27th January) at the prestigious Costa Book Awards ceremony in central London which saw Zoe presented with a cheque for £3,500 by Costa Managing Director Christopher Rogers for her short story, *Fishskin, Hareskin*.

Two runners-up, part-time dentist Paula Cunningham from Belfast, and Penarth writer Joanne Meek, received £1,500 and £500 respectively.

Over 1000 entries were received for the Costa Short Story Award, now in its third year and open to both published and unpublished writers, for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words written in English by an author aged 18 years or over.

Established in 2012, the Award - run in association with the Costa Book Awards but judged independently of the main five-category system – is unique in that it was judged anonymously ie without the name of the author being known throughout the process.

A shortlist of six stories was selected by a panel of judges comprising writers Patrick Gale and Victoria Hislop; Richard Beard, Director of the National Academy of Writing; Fanny Blake, novelist, journalist and Books Editor of *Woman & Home* magazine; and Simon Trewin, agent at William Morris Endeavor – and then made available on the Costa Book Awards website for the public to download and read, and then vote for their favourite.

Zoe's story, *Fishskin, Hareskin*, received the highest number of public votes, followed by *The Matchboy* by Paula Cunningham, and *Jellyfish* by Joanne Meek.

Zoe Gilbert

Zoe Gilbert's short stories have appeared in anthologies and journals in the UK and internationally. Her work has won prizes from Cinnamon Press, Lightship and the British Fantasy Society amongst others, and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is currently working on her first folklore-inspired collection of stories, which will form part of her PhD on the short story at the University of Chichester. She lives in London, where she runs a writers' critique group and co-hosts the Word Factory short story club.

Fishskin, Hareskin

Ervet tries to escape her new life as a fishwife by returning to her past and its lost comforts.

Go to www.costa.co.uk/costa-book-awards/costa-short-story-award to read and/or listen to Zoe's winning story and the other five shortlisted ones.

The inaugural winner of the Costa Short Story Award in 2012 was former prison manager now full-time writer, Avril Joy, from Witton-le-Wear in Bishop Auckland whose winning story, *Millie and Bird*, was included in an anthology of short stories compiled by Victoria Hislop called *The Story: Love Loss and the Lives of Women - 100 Great Short Stories (Head of Zeus)*.

Writer and poet, Angela Readman, won the 2013 Costa Short Story Award for *The Keeper of the Jackalopes*. The story will feature in her debut short story collection *Don't Try This at Home*, published by & Other Stories and available in May 2015.

The Costa Book Awards recognise the most enjoyable books of the last year by writers based in the UK and Ireland. Originally established by Whitbread PLC in 1971, Costa announced its takeover of the sponsorship of the UK's prestigious and popular book prize in 2006.

For more information on this year's Costa Book Awards, go to www.costabookawards.com.

-ENDS-

For further press information please contact:

Amanda Johnson

Costa Book Awards Press and Publicity
Telephone: 07715 922 180
Email: amanda@amandajohnsonpr.com

Notes to Editors:

About the Costa Short Story Award:

- The Costa Short Story Award was launched in 2012.
- The Costa Short Story Award is for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words by an author aged 18 years or over and written in English.
- The author's primary residence must have been the UK or Ireland for the past three years.

- The Award runs in association with the Costa Book Awards but is judged independently of the main five-category system.
- Entrants need not have been previously published but publishers and agents may submit entries on behalf of authors.
- The winner of the 2013 Costa Short Story Award was *The Keeper of the Jackalopes* by Angela Readman.

About the Costa Book Awards:

- The Costa Book Awards, formerly the Whitbread Book Awards, were established in 1971 to encourage, promote and celebrate the best contemporary British writing.
- The total prize fund for the Costa Book Awards – including the Costa Short Story Award - stands at £60,000.
- The award winners from the five categories - Novel, First Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children's Book - each receive £5,000.
- The overall Costa Book of the Year is selected from the five category Award winners with the winner receiving a further £30,000.
- The winner will be announced at an awards ceremony in central London on 27th January, 2015.
- To be eligible for the 2014 awards, books must have been first published in the UK or Ireland between 1 November 2013 and 31 October 2014.
- The 2013 Costa Book of the Year was *The Shock of the Fall* by Nathan Filer (Borough Press).

About Costa:

Costa is the UK's favourite coffee shop, having been awarded "Best Branded Coffee Shop Chain in the UK and Ireland" by Allegra Strategies for five years running (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 & November 2014).

Winner of "Best Branded Coffee Chain in Europe" Allegra Strategies 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014.

With over 1,800 coffee shops in the UK and more than 1,100 overseas, Costa is the fastest growing coffee shop business in the UK and the second largest coffee shop operator in the world. Founded in London by Italian brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa in 1971, Costa has become the UK's favourite coffee shop chain and diversified into both the at-home and gourmet self-serve markets.

Costa employs over 12,000 people and is creating around 1,500 jobs this year and over 4,500 jobs in the next three years in the UK

Costa is committed to looking after coffee-growers. That's why we've established The Costa Foundation, a registered charity. The Costa Foundation's aims are to relieve poverty, advance education and the health and environment of coffee-growing communities around the world. So far, The Costa Foundation has funded the building of 42 schools and improved the social and economic welfare of coffee-growing communities.