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DRESS CASTS A SPELL

Carolyn Weaver's 'Killer Giller' outfit almost letter-perfect



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Tonight's the night for the Giller Prize book gala, the ne plus ultra in metropolitan flash and well-fermented highbrowers. And set to up the ante considerably this year is Carolyn Weaver, who will arrive tonight at the Four Seasons in what she's dubbed her "Killer Giller" frock. It's specially commissioned, a vision in red silk, and certainly eye-popping enough to make even Robertson Davies wake up and notice from his big, fluffy bookmark in the sky.

Everything's just grand with the dress, except for the spelling mistake, of course. Maybe nobody will notice?

Here's the thing: Weaver, who hosts the TV book club *Fine Print* (on Rogers cable and Book Television), wanted to go with something extra-special this year, so she got Montreal designer Adam Quang to cook up this lit-chic number. The dress has on it the name, year and book title of each of the past nine winners of the prize. In addition, it has the name of Giller impresario Jack Rabinovitch running down the V of the bodice, plus the name of his late wife, Doris Giller, in whose name the awards were established. Or should we say Dorris Giller? That's what the dress says, and what the press release from Rogers says it says.

Oh well. The very fetching, very single, somewhat spelling-challenged Weaver filled me in on the "Killer Giller" when we spoke yesterday. She tells me how glamorous and international the Gillers have become over the years (super-agent Bruce Westwood told her last year that the party absolutely holds its own with the Booker Prize party in London), and how not too long ago First Lady Laura Bush told *Good Morning America* she was reading *Polished Hoe*, written by last year's Giller champ, Austin Clark.

Weaver explained she picked red for the dress because the invite for the gala is red and comes with a red rose, and because Canadian literature is "red-hot." She said it's also a reminder that book readers are seriously sexy people and not the squares depicted by Hollywood, because a "reader has to paint pictures from the brain, and that's steamy."

Three years have passed since Weaver, a former marketing exec, first pitched *Fine Print*. The show has since inspired a copycat on CBC, and is so big that the mistress of books estimated she cracks about 140 spines a year.

"I never skim," she said pointedly. So, about this year's five nominees? What's her verdict? Weaver puts the smart money on Mar-



Carolyn Weaver and her "Killer Giller" dress.

and "not just because she's Margaret Atwood." The book, she said, makes you think about the decisions we're making as a society.

As for that other big mystery — who will wear what — Weaver said the two human page-turners she'll be on the lookout for are Suzanne Boyd and Louise Denny. *Flare* magazine's Boyd, the city's top fashionista, always "sets the tone" for the night, while Knopf Canada's flame-haired Denny is always "very elegant, very dramatic."

The men, meanwhile, are always dashing at this event, but she's most curious to see if Richler enfant Noah will wear a bow tie and cummerbund to match his date's dress, like he did last year.

To find out the answer to that question — and more — tune into *Fine Print's* coverage of the 10th annual awards on Nov. 10 at 4 p.m. or at 10:30 p.m. on Rogers.

And while we're being book-wise, here are a couple of other things my ears have picked up.

1. McClelland & Stewart biggie Douglas Gibson has acquired a scar. The result, apparently, from an encounter with a flying keg of beer in Scotland.

2. A Toronto restaurateur with an enviable track record wants to open a "new wave Caribbean" restaurant, which apparently is all the rage in Britain. And get this: He talked to last year's Giller

project, and wants to name it after one of his novels. Just think: *Polished Hoe*, the restaurant.

Ten more things to tell you:

1. Anytime now-PM Paul Martin has a favourite movie. It's *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

2. Sarah McLachlan can't stop being Vancouver — even when she's in Toronto! Last week, the warbling Gaia ate at ultra-healthy Fresh on Queen West, that place which is about as Lotusland as you can get in these parts.

3. Celebrity yoga instructor Danny Paradise has the best surname in the business, and is the one credited for introducing Sting and wife Trudie Styler to the art of body-pretzling — and this week, if you'd like, he can be all yours. The Yogi is set to teach two classes — one Thursday, another Sunday — at Toronto's healthy hipster central, the Downward Dog Ashtanga Yoga Centre on Queen West. Please note, too: Paradise is originally from Canada, boasts a client list that also includes Pearl Jammer Eddie Vedder and Gotham courtier Donna Karan, and is famous for being able to sleep quite happily with his feet planted behind his head. 416-703-8805 are the digits for Downward Dog.

4. Daryl Hannah got a good bargain when she was in town during the film fest in September. She went flea-marketine and scored a

dion. This, we ascertain from the encyclopedia *InStyle*.

5. Serial pundit David Frum has had to send his precious Mac off to have surgery, and this, sadly, has meant a shortage of opinion-generation on his part. Recently, in his online *National Review* diary, Frum ranted, "I'm a big fan of Mac computers, but the iBook I carry with me and that I use for this diary has proven to be an especially sour lemon. It's had to be wiped and rebuilt twice; it just melted down again and is to be shipped for its final encounter with its maker."

6. Don't expect graceful hunk Rex Harrington to be rushing toward the gay altar anytime soon. In one of those ads for Harry Rosen in which various bold-face dudes spout words of wisdom, he uses this description to describe the partnership between two dancers: "I've always said it's like a marriage without sex — but then maybe that's a marriage." Rex, by the way, may just be one of the human bodies of work you'll spot at the Gladstone Hotel tomorrow night, when there's a lovely yet louche fundraiser happening for the Toronto Dance Theatre. \$100 gets you music by DJ Will Munro, enough martinis to debilitate you for the rest of the week, and an excellent opportunity to cozy up to the National Ballet's new Dorian Gray-in-residence, Guillaume Cote. Tix at 416-967-1365.

7. Canadian shoe designer Patrick Cox, bigger than ever since becoming the creative director for giant French luxury brand Charles Jourdan this year, still misses his old boyfriend, fellow Canuck Tyler Brulé. Cox, who split with the founder of *Wallpaper* magazine about seven years ago, tells this month's *Tatler* that he wishes he could be friends with his ex. "But," he adds wistfully, "Tyler's Tyler."

8. I was minding my own beeswax at Xacutti on College last week when smoothie singer Deborah Cox suddenly appeared and sat down on the banquet table beside me. Fresh from the opening Raptors game and singing the praises of her pal Vince Carter, she told me she's now based in Ft. Lauderdale, but comes back to Toronto often. No touring for a while, though, "cause the Whitney-voiced one just had a baby. Then, Cox showed me her black leather jacket with a big letter I printed on the back. It stands for her four-month one, Isaiah, and Roots, I was told, made it for her special. This way she's always got her son's back.

9. Yellow, the new restaurant inside the Hotel Le Germain on Mercer, starts cooking in mid-December, and the long-awaited Drake Hotel on Queen will enjoy a soft opening on Dec. 8. I'll believe it when I see it, but that's the word as of this milli-second.

10. The place to be if you want to hang with eye-easy hairstylists from perennially trendy Queen Street salon Coupe Bizarre is The Chelsea Room on Dundas West. On Sunday nights. That's when one of the coiffeurs turns the tables at the new, hot (but not hot in a too-hot way) bar, while many of his hairy colleagues loil playfully. A select number of non-hairdressers, I understand, are also allowed on the premises.

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