

JANE Prowse's TV scripts have included Lynda La Plante's *The Commander* and the BBC drama *Green Eyed Monster*.

For the first time, the director and writer has turned her hand to children's fiction in an exciting tale about half Japanese teenager Hattie Jackson who goes in search of her missing mother.

Prowse, who has set *Hattori Hachi: The Revenge of Praying Mantis* (Picadilly £6.99) in Camden Town, set out to create an action adventure story with a female heroine.

"I was thinking about how hard it is for kids to grow up in this age of terrorism; where they get their moral code from, how they find their way through a world where there are dark forces and how they know who to trust" says Prowse, who has written both adult and children's TV drama.

"I had been trying to develop this idea of a reluctant Ninja warrior with a destiny to fulfil for TV but children's TV is terribly under-budgeted and people were terrified by how expensive it was.

"When I heard a publisher say there was a shortfall of action adventure for 10-plus children with female leads I told her about this story and she agreed to commission it."

Prowse loved the freedom of not having to worry how the action might be filmed or how much it might cost.

"I let my imagination run riot and it flew off my fingers. It was really liberating to write in my voice to let my character be more a version of me instead of writing for a target audience.

"Camden is my turf and I wanted to locate the book in Camden Market which is fantastically visual and somewhere it's easy to get lost in a crowd and where there are so many strange looking people you could get away with murder."

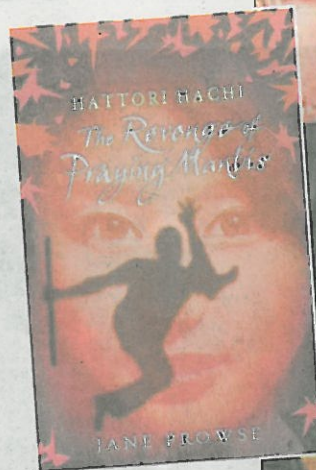
It contains a smattering of Eastern philosophy and a fantastical element as Hattie discovers she is *The Golden Child*, the last in a 1,000-year line of ninjutsu warriors and undergoes physical training to fight the Katakai, evil shape-shifting assassins prepared to kill to take over the world.

Prowse, who lives in Belsize Park, hopes the book will fill a gap in the market and is under commission to write a trilogy.

"So many stories for girls are very pink, about boyfriends, ponies and ballet but I was the kind of teenager who didn't see the world in terms of sitting around waiting for someone to ask me to dance. I thought the

From ponies and pink to life as a ninja

Books for girls are generally all about boyfriends, ponies and the colour pink. But not for writer Jane Prowse, as **Bridget Galton** discovers



world was my oyster and I could go out and have what the boys had. Hattie is not a tomboy, but she's a spirited, resourceful girl who works things out for herself."

In the meantime she has adapted *A Roundheeled Woman*, Jane Juska's bestselling book about looking for sexual adventure in her 60s, as a play. It is due to tour across America starring Cagney and Lacy actress Sharon Gless.

"It's a brilliant story that is not about sex but about a woman from the baby boom generation going out to get what she wants from life as time is running out."



Jane Prowse with accompanying ninja at the launch of her book *Hattori Hachi: The Revenge of Praying Mantis* (inset) at Daunt Books.