



****EMBARGOED UNTIL 09.30AM ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18****

Eight writers shortlisted for SFF prize

Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of Colour is excited to announce its shortlist for the 2021 prize.

The eight shortlisted stories are (in alphabetical order by author surname):

- A Shadow in Chains by M H Ayinde
- The Sawling by Jordan Collins
- Frankincense by Salma Ibrahim
- In the City of Villages by Franchesca Liauw
- Margot, Who Is Beautiful Now by Bea Pantoja
- The Warden by Madeehah Reza
- Contracts Made in Gold by Aqeelah Seedat
- A Box Full of Stories by Fatima Taqvi

The shortlist was chosen by the prize's publishing partners who read anonymised versions of the entries.

Sarah Shaffi, project manager for the prize, said: "Our shortlist consists of eight brilliant new voices in the world of SFF.

"This is a prize looking for originality, for works that enrich the SFF genre and for potential, and our eight shortlisted writers and their work display all that and more.

"It is now over to our judges to decide on one winner. I don't envy them!"

Ben Aaronovitch, founder of the prize, said: "What has stunned me about the response to the Future World Prize is the number of entrants, their quality and their enthusiasm. Even so I believe that we have only sampled the ocean of talent out there and I hope we can build

upon this promising beginning to get even more brilliant writing in front of even more readers.”

Actor Adjoa Andoh, who judged the prize in its first year and is providing financial support in its second year, said: “I came on board to support Future Worlds Prize, the brainchild of novelist Ben Aaronovitch, because I, like Ben, want to see more storytellers of colour exploring the possibilities that the speculative and science fiction form offers to reimagine the world and embrace new readerships. I am delighted therefore in the second year of the award that so many writers of colour have stepped up. Long may we grow and flourish as writers and readers. Keep those stories coming!”

The prize will be judged by:

- Actor and author Shobna Gulati
- Author Tasha Suri
- Writer Nii Ayikwei Parkes
- Journalist Zahra Hankir
- Cultural commentator Lloyd Bradley
- Publisher Valerie Brandes.

Future Worlds Prize for Fantasy and Science Fiction Writers of Colour aims to find new talent based in the UK writing in the SFF space, from magical realism and space operas to dystopia and more. The winner will receive a prize of £4,000, the runner-up £2,000 and up to six additional shortlisted authors will each receive £800. All shortlisted writers, the runner-up and the winner will also receive mentoring from one of the prize’s publishing partners.

The prize’s publishing partners are HarperVoyager, the SFF imprint at HarperCollins, Penguin Random House UK’s Del Rey UK, Gollancz, Hachette’s SFF imprints including Orbit, and Pan Macmillan’s Tor.

Future Worlds Prize, first run in 2020 and founded by bestselling author Ben Aaronovitch, was previously called the Gollancz and Rivers of London BAME SFF Award. As part of the prize’s long-term aim of opening science fiction and fantasy publishing to more people, it has been rebranded for its second year. The prize is sponsored by Aaronovitch, with additional financial support from *Bridgerton* actor Adjoa Andoh. It is administered by Cityread, a registered literature charity.

The 2020 prize was won by Esmie Jikiemi-Pearson for *The Principle of Moments*, a space-based adventure story. Jikiemi-Pearson has since secured a publishing deal with Gollancz, and her debut novel will be released in 2022.

Media enquiries: Sarah Shaffi, sarah@futureworldsprize.co.uk

About the shortlisted authors and work

A Shadow in Chains by M H Ayinde

M H Ayinde is a SSF writer, screen time enthusiast, and chai drinker from London's East End. Her short fiction has been published in FIYAH Literary Magazine, Daily Science Fiction, and elsewhere.

Blurb for A Shadow in Chains

In the Nine Lands, only those of noble blood can summon their ancestors to fight in battle. But when a commoner from the slums accidentally invokes a powerful spirit, she finds it could hold the key to ending a centuries-long war.

The Sawling by Jordan Collins

Jordan Collins is a transplant from the United States, having traveled to England seven years ago to earn an MA in Creative Writing at the University of Exeter, and is passionate about using her writing to improve upon BIPOC representation in fiction, particularly in the science fiction and fantasy genre. Her hope is to help make it possible for young people of colour to see themselves and their stories in the fiction they read.

Blurb for The Sawling

When a bomb destroys her family's dragon farm, May must travel across the war-torn Trecian countryside in search of her mother, bringing with her the sole survivor of the explosion: a newborn dragon. After forging an unlikely friendship with a fellow traveller, May begins to explore her own identity outside of the context of her family home and the confines of her complicated relationships with her mother - even as she struggles to keep herself and the sawling alive long enough to track down the matriarch.

Frankincense by Salma Ibrahim

Salma Ibrahim is a 26 year old South Londoner who works in marketing at a global NGO. Growing up around the Somali tradition of poetry and stories, Salma seeks to explore her community's experiences through literature beyond realism.

Blurb for Frankincense

Whilst on her way to work on a London bus, Sirad Ali finds herself arriving in a parallel universe in modern day Mogadishu, Somalia. There she discovers what life would be like if her family hadn't left Somalia during the civil war.

In the City of Villages by Franchesca Liauw

Franchesca Liauw is a creative writing PhD candidate at Brunel University, working on a memoir chronicling her grandparents' experiences during the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia. She is also a freelance illustrator, video game enthusiast, and hobby baker.

Blurb for In the City of Villages

Five years have passed since the incident and Mercy now roams the kingdoms as a wanderer, having forsaken both magic and identity she is not prepared when a simple bounty brings her face to face with the darkness she's tried so hard to escape. Piecing together the fragmented memories of her past Mercy must remember the events that led to the destruction of her home in order to prevent it from happening once again.

Margot, Who Is Beautiful Now by Bea Pantoja

Bea Pantoja grew up in the Philippines and Indonesia, and moved to the UK in 2014 to complete an MA in Creative Writing & Publishing at City, University of London. She works in publishing operations and lives in London.

Blurb for Margot, Who Is Beautiful Now

In the biggest break of his career, journalist Noah Laverty scores an exclusive story with Margot Ocampo, a teenager whose body has been taken over by an extraterrestrial being with the power to annihilate people at whim. So when Margot grows increasingly frustrated with Noah's fixation on her beauty, it goes about as well as you'd expect — until Noah finally discovers what Margot has been imploring him to see all along.

The Warden by Madeehah Reza

Madeehah Reza is a British Bangladeshi writer from London who moonlights as a pharmacist. She writes speculative short stories and creative essays and dreams of publishing her first book.

Blurb for The Warden

Dahlia is the young warden of the planet X56T-I and is tasked by the enigmatic Hub to research the planet as a potential new home for humanity. But when the Hub abandons their plans and leaves Dahlia the sole occupant of a violent planet, how will she escape the gnawing reality of loneliness?

Contracts Made in Gold by Aqeelah Seedat

Aqeelah Seedat is a Mancunian, born and bred. She graduated from law a million years ago, and the only thing she can claim now is to be an unintentional-turned-intentional collector of umbrellas.

Blurb for Contracts Made in Gold

After her mother's selfish bargain, Setareh Talal has two choices; kill the Goblin King who has laid claim to her, or find a way to outsmart the King of Deals himself.

A Box Full of Stories by Fatima Taqvi

Fatima Taqvi is a Pakistani short story writer living in London. She can be found online on Twitter as @FatimaTaqvi and at www.fatimataqvi.com.

Blurb for A Box Full of Stories

In Mughal India two sisters are split apart by a prophecy, a Storyteller, and his magic box. When they cross paths again the right choice could mean they will never be separated ever again.