



FANTASYCON 2023



the british fantasy society

September 15th - 17th 2023

Leanardo Royal Hotel
245 Broad Street
Birmingham B1 2HQ

'The British Fantasy Society and Fantasycon, its annual convention, are two of the main reasons I'm in this position, doing the job I love. There can be no better way for young writers, artists and editors, starting down this path, to meet and interact with other writers, artists, editors, publishers – in fact, I would urge anyone hoping to make their living within the fantasy and horror genres to join. At once.'

Jo Fletcher, Publisher, Jo Fletcher Books

the british fantasy society



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- **BFS Journal**, a twice-yearly magazine of articles, interviews and other non-fiction
- **BFS Horizons**, a twice-yearly magazine of fiction, poetry and art
- A monthly members-only bulletin
- Special publications (occasionally!)
- A discount on FantasyCon tickets
- A vote in the British Fantasy Awards
- Free entry in the BFS short story competition

But it's not just what you get,
it's what you become!
A member of a society
dedicated to the
things you
love!



See www.britishfantasysociety.org for more details

Fantasycon 2023 Team

This event is run by HWS, but we could not do it without the support of the wonderful volunteer team, both the Red Cloaks, who work so hard at the event, and members of the British Fantasy Society.

Some people appear on more than one list as they have helped in multiple ways.

HWS Events

Allen Stroud
Karen Fishwick
Stuart Maher

Red Cloaks

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Babs Nienhuis
C.A. Yates
Christopher Jarvis
Dion Winton-Polak
Elliot Craggs
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British Fantasy Society

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Karen Fishwick
Katherine Fowler
Ian Hunter
Sarah Deeming
Stephen Poore
Pete Sutton
E.M. Faulds
John Stabler

For information on FantasyCon 2024 as well as other British Fantasy Society events,
news and publications, then please check out:

www.britishfantasysociety.org

For future events from HWS, keep an eye on their website here:

www.hwsevents.co.uk



Welcome to Fantasycon 2023!

This is the 'new normal' for many of us, but as we approach the convention, my thoughts are with those who remain concerned about in-person events and stay away. We all make the decision to attend conventions and gatherings in person to spend time with friends and to celebrate the achievements of everyone present. It is harder to include those *in absentia* and they must find it hard to feel a part of what transpires.

These days, the decisions we make about going out and being around people are deliberate and conscious. The social element of our lives has become more of an active choice and has to take into account our own health and the wellbeing of others.

That all said, the importance, significance and impact of a gathering of talented and creative human beings that occurs at Fantasycon cannot be understated. This is a wonderful moment and one I am humbled to Chair. Whether this is your first convention or your umpteenth, I do hope you enjoy it and come away with special memories made.

Allen Stroud.



It's been a busy year for me, which I am sure I write every time we run a Fantasycon and it's probably not a coincidence!

This year we successfully bid to run World Fantasy Convention 2025, which at time of writing has hit a hiccup or two. I hope we have resolved these by the time you are reading this! I plan to give an update at the AGM.

We will attending WFC 2023 in Kansas City to promote and hopefully open ticket sales for the event.

It will be great to have the event here, it has a few differences from UK Fantasycon in terms of traditions and international expectations, but in many ways it is a very similar event. It is an opportunity to invite the world to come to the UK and celebrate fifty years of Fantasycons.

I hope you enjoy this event and look forward to seeing you at Fantasycons in the future.

Karen Fishwick.



Where To Eat in Birmingham

Birmingham has a wealth of fine dishes to choose from, from the famous Balti to Chinatown's Triple Roast. The Jury's Inn is well-situated for culinary explorers, especially those with dietary or mobility restrictions, with a range of cuisines on offer within five minutes' walk. Those on a budget will also find themselves catered for, with lunch options and cheaper chains all within walking distance.

Please note:

- While there are plenty of options available, flexibility is key, as we found some popular restaurants were closed or only open for delivery/collection at the time of writing.
- Cat fans wanting to visit Kitty Café (see 37) should book as soon as possible.

We'd like to thank to all those who made recommendations on the BFS Facebook and elsewhere, including AC Baker, Farah Mendlesohn, Edward James, Tiffani Angus, and Carol Goodwin.

Restaurant and Café Areas

Before we get into the detailed recommendations, here are the four top food areas near the Jury's Inn (or a wee bit further afield). Most of our recommendations can be found around these areas.

1) Brindleyplace

Brindley Pl, Brunswick St, B1 2JF
<https://www.brindleyplace.com/>

Five minutes' walk from the Jury's Inn, Brindleyplace (yes, that's how's it's written) is full of enough bars, restaurants, and other shops to keep you going all weekend. Whether you want Italian (Zizzi, Pizza Express, Piccolino, Cielo), Thai (Siamais), Japanese (Wagamama, OKO), Argentinian (Pulperia), or good old pub food (Slug & Lettuce), there's a range of chain and independent options for you. For a budget lunch, there's also Boots, Sainsbury's Local and SPAR, as well as a range of café chains.

2) Bullring & Grand Central

B5 4BU
<https://www.bullring.co.uk/dine>

Located just above Birmingham New Street Station, this pair of essentially merged shopping centres was recommended to us for Pho (currently only doing takeaway – sorry!) and Lebanese (Comptoir Libanais) – as well as the Kitty Café! With a good list of chains and smaller restaurants, treats include two bubble tea shops, bubble waffles, two Nando's, and many more. Note the shopping centres themselves are usually open until 8pm, though the restaurants are open later.

3) China Town *Recommended* B5 area

Starting from the Southside exit of New Street station, China Town stretches down to Pershore Street, Hurst Street and Bromsgrove Street. Birmingham's China Town is celebrated for its Triple Roast, particularly that of Look-In and Peach Garden.

4) Balti Triangle

Ladypool Road and surrounding streets, B12

Think Birmingham cuisine, think Balti. Unfortunately, the Jury's Inn lies some distance from the Ladypool Road area, where most of the best balti restaurants can be found. The fastest way to get there is by taxi (about ten minutes total) or walking for ten minutes to Frederick Road and catching the 8A Inner Circle Bus to Ladypool Road (another ten minutes by bus).

Brindleyplace Restaurants

Note that Brindley place has a huge selection of restaurants, so we've only presented a few here.

5) Bank Restaurant *Recommended*

Four Brindleyplace, B1 2JB
<https://www.brindleyplace.com/tenant/bank-restaurant/>
0121 633 4466

Seasonal British cooking with specially-selected British beef.

6) Pulperia

3 Brindleyplace, B1 2JB

<https://pulperia.co.uk/>
0121 546 0594

Michelin Guide-listed Argentinian cuisine, offering some cuts otherwise unavailable outside of London.

7) Siamais
6 Brindley Place, 7 Oozells St, B1 2HS
<https://siamais.co.uk/>
0121 643 3993

Thai food. Note this has a separate bar area serving cocktails, if you're not in the mood for food.

8) Las Iguanas
The Waters Edge, B1 2JB
<https://www.iguanas.co.uk/>
0121 827 9977

9) Perios
The Waters Edge, B1 2JB
<https://www.myperios.com/>
01216656542

South American and Mexican chain restaurants.

10) Pizza Express
The Waters Edge, B1 2JB
<https://www.pizzaexpress.com/book>
0121 643 2500

11) Gourmet Burger Kitchen
The Waters Edge, B1 2HL
<https://www.gbk.co.uk/>
0121 643 7715

12) Slug & Lettuce
The Waters Edge, B1 2JB
<https://www.slugandlettuce.co.uk/birmingham>
0121 633 3049

13) Wagamama
The Waters Edge, B1 2HL
<https://www.wagamama.com/our-menu>
0121 643 7656

Note there are also branches of Wagamama on Spieceal Street opposite St Martin's Church and at 98 New ST.

14) OKO
11 Brindleyplace, 2 Brunswick Square, B1 2LP
<https://nuvobar.com/our-menu/>

0121 631 1600

Dim sum, sushi and sashimi – but only open Wednesday to Saturday.

Bullring & Grand Central Restaurants

Note that a number of the more popular places like Five Guys and Pho are only offering delivery/collection only at present, so do check before you go.

15) Vietnamese Street Kitchen (GF)
St Martin's Square, B5 4BW
<https://vietnamesestreetkitchen.com/>
0121 679 8872

With the highly-recommended Pho only offering delivery/collection right now, Vietnamese Street Kitchen might help you get your sit-down fix. Gluten free menu available.

16) Nando's
B4100, Unit R2, Bullring & Grand Central, B5 4BP
<https://www.nandos.co.uk/restaurants/birmingham-bullring>
0121 632 6866

17) Tapas Revolution
Ground Floor, Grand Central, B2 4XJ
<https://www.tapasrevolution.com/menus>
0121 643 6381

18) Thai Express
Unit 36 Grand Central, 50 Stephenson Street, B5 4AH
<https://thaiexpress.co.uk/>
0121 439 3250

19) Comptoir Libonais *Recommended*
Unit 29 Grand Central, Stephenson Square, B2 4BF
<https://www.comptoirlibanais.com/restaurants/birmingham>
0121 667 3160

Lebanese home cooking, with all-day menu.

20) Café Rouge
Unit SU744, Upper Mall West, Bullring, B5 4BG
<https://www.caferouge.com/bistro-brasserie/birmingham/bullring>
01217 961 882

21) Tasty Plaice

Unit 35 Grand Central, B2 4XJ
www.tastyplaicesignature.co.uk

Pioneers of the Black Country special, Battered Chips. NB. Closes at 7pm.

Chinatown

Birmingham Live recommends the following.

22) Chung Ying Cantonese
16-18 Wrottesley Street, B5 4RT
<https://www.chungying.co.uk/>
0121 622 5669

The oldest restaurant in Chinatown, they offer a Hong Kong Brunch with a choice of 26 dim sum and bottomless Chinese tea.

23) Dezhou Style Braised Chicken restaurant
Arcadian Centre, 70 Hurst Street, B5 4ST
<https://www.facebook.com/dezhoustyle/>
0121 622 3283

Fresh noodles made on site! Now open again after closing during the pandemic.

24) Ken Ho
41-43 Hurst Street B5 4BJ
<https://en-gb.facebook.com/KenHoBham/>
0121 622 1323

Another Dim Sum recommendation.

25) Look-In
6 Ladywell Walk, Birmingham B5 4ST
<https://www.facebook.com/lookinrestaurant/>
0121 666 7587

26) Peach Garden
34 Ladywell Walk, Birmingham B5 4RX
0121 666 7502

Both recommended for Birmingham's celebrated Triple Roast.

27) Caffè Chino
Unit B107, Arcadian Centre, 70 Hurst Street, B5 4TD
<https://caffechino.com/>
0121 622 1144

Chinese cakes and bubble tea for dessert!

The Balti Triangle

Below are the top recommendations from Andy Munro, who gives tours of the Balti Triangle. Please note the celebrated Al Frash closed in 2019.

28) *NB. Possibly closed* Adil's
148-150 Stoney Lane, B12 8AJ
<https://www.facebook.com/OfficialAdils/>
0121 449 0335

In any other time, this would be a must-visit for Balti fans, as the site where Mohammed Arif invented the dish. However, Google suggests it's temporarily closed as of the time of writing, so do have an alternative ready if you're heading down.

29) Shababs
163-165 Ladypool Road, B12 8LQ
<https://www.shababs.co.uk/>
0121 440 2893

30) Shahi Nan Kebab House
353 Stratford Road, B11 4JY
<https://www.just-eat.co.uk/restaurants-shahi-nan-kabab-birmingham/menu>
0121 772 2787

Recommended not just baltis, but also for their street food menu kebabs.

Vegan Specialities

While many places offer Vegan options (including JuJu's), here are some additional recommendations from BFS members, most within 15-20 minutes' walk of the Jury's Inn.

31) Plant and Pulse
Unit 9 The Minories, Birmingham, United Kingdom, B4 6AG <https://plantandpulse.co.uk/>

Seasonal, sustainable foods, including falafel, wraps, pakora, kimchi and more. Also available on UberEats and Deliveroo.

32) The Vegan Kitchen
26 Great Western Arcade, Birmingham B2 5HU
<https://www.thevegankitchen.co.uk/>
0121 294 3156

Burgers, hot dogs, dirty fries and so on, with some delicious-sounding cheesecake dessert options.

33) Yo!

Birmingham Grand Central

Unit MK9, Grand Central, Stephenson's Place, Birmingham, B2 4BQ

0121 227 4394

Birmingham Selfridges

Selfridges, Upper Dean Street, Bullring, Birmingham, B5 4BP

0121 271 0217

<https://yosushi.com/>

Two separate branches here in the Bullring & Grand Central hopping centre, offering the usual fare of small plate sushi and other Japanese dishes.

More Restaurant Recommendations

Here are a few favourites of BFS members within a short walk of the hotel.

34) JuJu's *Recommended*

Watermarque, Canal Square, 100 Browning St, B16 8EH

<https://www.jujuscafe.co.uk/>

0121 456 3384

A great selection of full English (including Vegan and Veggie) for a tenner, as well as classic British fare and Sunday Roast just ten minutes' walk away.

35) The Indian Streatery *Recommended*

21a Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2 5QP

<https://www.theindianstreatery.co.uk/>

0121 643 5334

Reasonably priced street-style Indian food about 15 minutes' walk away. Quite small, so book in advance. Otherwise, there's also a pop-up on the Top Level of the Bullring & Grand Central.

36) The Ivy (Temple Row) *Recommended*

67-71 Temple Row, Birmingham B2 5LS

<https://theivybirmingham.com/>

0121 725 2110

"Sophisticated and friendly" dining, with afternoon tea, cocktails, a la carte dining and a separate Vegan & Vegetarian menu.

Café Recommendations

37) Kitty Café *Recommended*

Unit 12, Grand Central, Stephenson's Place, B2 4BF

<https://www.kittycafe.co.uk/locations/birmingham>
0121 3898587

Booking in advance highly recommended for this cat café on the second floor.

38) Yorks Café at Ikon *Recommended*

Ikon Gallery, 1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, B1 2HS

<https://yorkscafe.co.uk/>

0121 828 5060

Ikon is the free contemporary art gallery only five minutes' walk from the hotel, but it's the attached café we're recommending with its range of brunch/lunch and cake options.

39) *CLOSED* Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

We received a number of recommendations for the café here, but sadly the building is closed until 2022.

Brindleyplace offers additional options just by the Jury's Inn.

40) Baguette du Monde

Brunswick Arcade, Brunswick St, B1 2JF

<https://www.loc8nearme.co.uk/west-midlands/birmingham/baguette-du-monde/333705/>

0121 643 8629

41) Costa Coffee

10 Brindleyplace, B1 2JB

<https://www.costa.co.uk/>

0121 643 8629

42) Pret A Manger

Unit 5 Brindley Place, B1 2JB

<https://locations.pret.co.uk/birmingham/unit-5-brindley-place>

0121 643 1071

43) Caffé Nero

4 Brindleyplace, B1 2JP

<https://caffenero.com/uk/store/birmingham-brindleyplace-598/>

0121 643 4572

You can also find many of these chains and two branches of Starbucks in the Bullring & Grand Central, along with these:

44) Mee-cha
Kiosk 19 Lower Mall, Bullring, B5
<https://mee-cha.com/>

Ice cream and bubble tea from the physical home of the online store.

45) Joe and the Juice
Grand Central, B2 4XJ
<https://www.joejuice.com/menu-2-0/uk>

Sandwiches and juices. Worth a try just for the pun-worthy titles, including Beet It and Peas of Mind.

Budget Lunch Options

Brindleyplace and Bullring & Grand Central offer a range of cheaper restaurant chains. If you're after a lunch deal or snack between panels, here are some suggestions

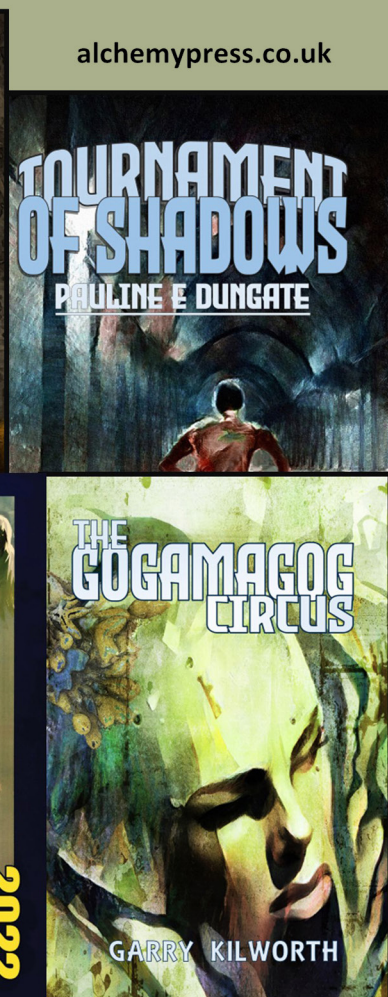
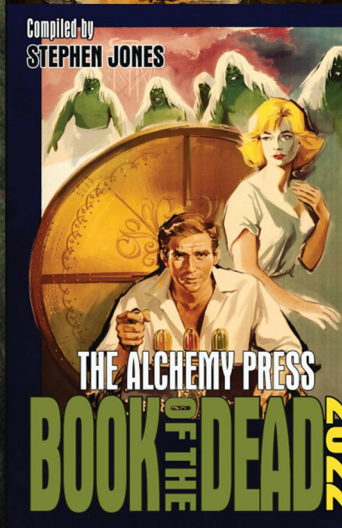
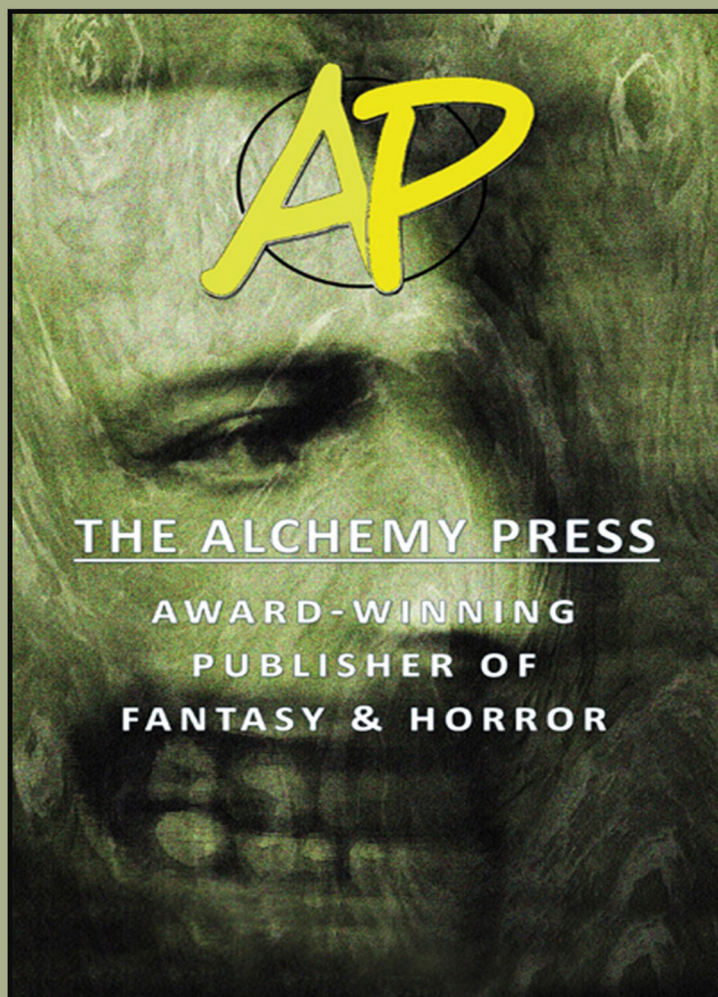
46) Boots

2 Brindley Pl, B1 2HJ
<https://www.boots.com/stores/1028-birmingham-brindley-place-b1-2jb>
0121 643 4872

47) Sainsbury's Local
10 Brindley Pl, B1 2JB
<https://stores.sainsburys.co.uk/4078/brindley-place-local>
0121 643 6132

48) SPAR Brindleyplace
Unit 1a, Brunswick St, Brindley Pl, B1 2JF
<https://www.spar.co.uk/store-locator/afb61300-spar-brindley-place>
0121 643 5502

49) Greggs
Lower Level, Bullring & Grand Central, B5 4BU
U12 New Street Station, B2 4QA
<https://www.bullring.co.uk/dine/greggs>
0121 643 6951



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Fantasycon Through The Years

The first Fantasycon was convened in 1972.

Detailed below is a list of the details of each Fantasycon from 1972, to the present convention. Many names may be familiar to you. Some have left us and we are much poorer for their passing.

Many of those who have put their energies into the organisation, continuance and development of the convention have gone on to create, write, edit and publish an array of fantasy, horror and science fiction. They remain an integral part of the Fantasycon community. For those attending their first event, it is worth asking some of the book sellers, panelists or other attendees about their memories of Fantasycon. There is an incredible wealth of knowledge and a powerful behind the event.

My first Fantasycon was 2015. When I chaired Fantasycon Peterborough in 2017, I was very aware of this lineage. In some respects, I was wary of it as I knew the approach I would bring to the event would be different in some ways to what I had seen before. That caution was wise and tempered with a need to be open and to listen. Wiser heads than mine have tried different things and learned what works and what doesn't.

Allen Stroud

1972

The first BFS AGM was held at Chessmancon (the BSFA Eastercon). The August Derleth Fantasy Award (ADFA) was won by Michael Moorcock for *The Knight of Swords*. A BFS President was elected, subsequently becoming an honorary title.

1973

(18 November): Beyond the Horizon, a one-day fantasy fayre, part of the Space Exploration Festival, Ceolifrith Arts Centre. Speakers: Kenneth Bulmer, Ramsey Campbell, Richard Davis, George Locke and Hartley Patterson.

1974

Part of BSFA's Tynecon (Eastercon). Keith Walker announced the ADFA winners.

1975

Fantasycon I (22 February). Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Dave Sutton, Sandra Sutton, Jim Pitts and Dave Riley. Speakers: Richard Davis, Hugh Lamb, George Locke, Ramsey Campbell, Adrian Cole, Keith Walker. Programme Book: A5, 16 pages, edited by Dave Sutton. Cover Art: Stephen Jones. Notes: A one-day event with 41 pre-registered members; 60 actually attended. The AGM was held in the morning, the speeches in the afternoon

1976

Fantasycon II (28/29 February). Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Dave Riley, Dave Sutton, Sandra Sutton. GoH: Robert Aickman. MC: Ken Bul-

mer. Programme Book: A5, 24 pages, edited by Dave Sutton. Cover Art: Stephen Jones. Notes: Fantasycon was designated from thence onward as a forum for writers, artists and editors to meet fans, for the BFS to present its Awards, and a venue for its AGM.

1977

Fantasycon III (26/27 February). Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Jon Harvey, Stephen Jones, Brian Mooney, Jim Pitts, Keith Walker. GoH: Basil Copper. MC: Ken Bulmer. Programme Book: A5, 28 pages, in card cover edited by Keith Walker. Cover Art: Stephen Jones. Notes: The Programme Book is a mix of articles and information concerned with the weekend's events: AGM, buffet, panels, talks, films and... folk music (well it was 1977). A list of attendees shows a number of stalwarts still attending to this day, such Ramsey and Jenny Campbell, Sandra and Dave Sutton, John Carter, Steve Jones, Peter Coleborn, Adrian Cole, Mike Chinn.

1978

Fantasycon IV (24/26 February). Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Steve Jones, Jon Harvey, Dave Sutton, Sandra Sutton, Jim Pitts, John Heron, and Adrian Cole. GoH: Stephen King (fell ill and could not attend.) MC: Ramsey Campbell. Programme Book: A5, 28 pages, edited by Steve Jones. Cover Art: by Jim Pitts (based on Salem's Lot). Notes: The attendee list is almost twice the length of its predecessor. A bigger list of events shows a rise in interest and a strengthening of the Fantasycon phenomenon.

1979

Fantasycon V (23/25 February). De Vere Hotel, Coventry DeVere). Organisers: Dave Sutton, Jean Sheward, Mike Chinn, Keith Walker and Jim Pitts. GoH: Karl Edward Wagner. MC: Dave McFerran. Programme Book: A5, 22 pages edited by Dave Reeder and Ro Pardoe. Cover Art: David Lloyd Notes: The tried and tested panels, but with a predominance of film in the Saturday evening programme. The buffet/banquet was ditched for a GoH speech and the AGM settled at its honoured spot of Sunday morning. Plenty of lady speakers this year, with Louise Cooper, Pat McIntosh, Jessica Yates and Terri Beckett.

1980

Fantasycon VI (3/5 October). Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Steve Jones, Peter Coleborn, Mike Chinn and Carl Hiles. GoH: Ramsey Campbell. Guest Artist: Jim Fitzpatrick. MC: Karl Edward Wagner. Programme Book: A5, 34 pages edited by Steve Jones and Jo Fletcher. Cover Art: Jim Fitzpatrick (heroic fantasy with a Celtic flavour). Notes: This convention was dedicated to the memory of Dave McFerran (1954-1980), a long-time member of the Society who sadly passed away in that year. The now familiar Awards statuette designed by Dave Carson was used for the first time this year.

1981

Fantasycon VII (10/12 July). Centre Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Peter Coleborn, Mike Chinn, Ramsey Campbell, Carl Hiles, Ken Cowley, Dave Reeder and Jim Pitts. GoH: Peter Tremayne. Artist Guest: Alan Hunter. MC: Karl Edward Wagner. Programme Book: A5, 36 pages edited by Stephen Jones and Jo Fletcher. Cover Art: Alan Hunter. Notes: The programme is film heavy and we see a return of the buffet, plus Adrian Cole's songs and sonnets.

1982

A convention to include GoH Tanith Lee and Eddie Jones, and Anne McCaffrey as MC, sadly did not happen due to internal BFS problems. The con was taken over by others and named Mythcon.

1983

Fantasycon VIII (14/16 October). Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Steve Jones, Jo Fletcher, Mike Wathen, Di Wathen, Mike Chinn, Nic Howard, Carl Hiles, Dave Sutton, and Peter Coleborn. GoH: Gene Wolfe. MC: Ken Bulmer. Programme Book: A5, 44 pages edited by Stephen Jones and Jo Fletcher. Cover Art: Bruce Pennington (Fantasycon attend-

ees received a glossy colour version; non-attendees received a monochrome version). Notes: Programme of panels, films, plus... the RAFFLE. Yes, this is the onset of an institution that survives to this day.

1984

Fantasycon IX (14/16 September). Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Steve Jones, Jo Fletcher, Mike Wathen, Di Wathen, Peter Coleborn, Kim Newman, Dave Sutton and Dave Carson. GoH: Charles L Grant. Special Guest: Tanith Lee. MC: Ramsey Campbell. Programme Book: A5, 48 pages edited by Steve Jones and Jo Fletcher. Cover Art: Andrew Smith. Notes: A secondary cover from Fantasy Tales was inserted inside the official cover of the Programme Book.

1985

Fantasycon X (6/8 September). Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Steve Jones, Jo Fletcher, Mike Wathen, Di Wathen, Peter Coleborn plus others. GoH: Robert Holdstock. Special Guest: Diana Wynne Jones. MC: Charles L Grant. Programme Book: A5, 96 pages edited by Steve Jones and Jo Fletcher (first of the A4 format-sized programmes). Cover Art: David O'Connor (in full colour). Notes: The guest speakers list goes on for ever! This Con saw the rise of publisher's parties and signings.

1986

Fantasycon XI (26/28 September). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Stefan Jaworzyn, Di Wathen, Mike Wathen plus others. GoH: Dennis Etchison. Special Guest: Jody Scott. MC: Samantha Lee. Programme Book: A4, 68 pages edited by Stefan Jaworzyn, Carl Hiles and Steve Jones. Cover Art: JK Potter. Notes: This was the first Fantasycon to be staged in the Midland Hotel. There's one illustration to note: a photo-montage by JK Potter of Jo Fletcher and Steve Jones in full monster mode.

1987

Fantasycon XII (4/6 September 1987). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Stefan Jaworzyn, Steve Jones, and a host of others. GoH: M John Harrison, George RR Martin, JK Potter. MC: Douglas E Winter. Programme Book: A4, 70 pages edited by Dave Sutton and Steve Jones. Cover Art: Jim Burns's Other Edens (courtesy Unwin/Hyman) in full colour. Notes: A JK Potter photographic portfolio was included in the Programme Book.

1988

Fantasycon XIII combined with the World Fantasy Convention (28/30 October/Halloween). Ramada Inn, London. Organisers: The Worldcon Committee. GoH: James Herbert. Artist Guest: Michael Foreman. Special Guest: Diana Wynne Jones. MC: Clive Barker. Programme Book: Hard cover programme book edited by Stephen Jones and Jo Fletcher. Notes: This was the first time the WFC left North America. The theme of the convention was Gaslights & Ghosts.

1989

Fantasycon XIV (6/8 October). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Mike Wathen, Di Wathen, Peter Coleborn, Sylvia Starshine. GoH: Thomas F Monteleone. Stephen Laws. MC: Brian Lumley. Programme Book: A4, 68 pages edited by Di Wathen and Mike Chinn. Cover Art: Martin McKenna. Notes: Back to the Midland Hotel.

1990

Fantasycon XV (14/16 September). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Mike Wathen, Di Wathen, Robert Parkinson, Peter Coleborn. GoH: Joe R Lansdale, Stephen Gallagher. MC: Stephen Laws. Programme Book: A5, 52 pages edited by Di Wathen and Mike Chinn. Cover Art: Steve Pawlett. Notes: Some interesting and extensive guest notes (very long guest list).

1991

Fantasycon XVI (15/17 November). Ramada Inn, Earls Court, London. Organisers: Di Wathen and Michael Arft. GoH: Dan Simmons, Jonathan Carroll. MC: Brian Lumley. Programme Book: A5, 52 pages edited by Di Wathen and Mike Chinn. Cover Art: Steve Pawlett. Notes: Guest list even longer than 1990!

1992

Fantasycon XVII (2/4 October). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Di Wathen and Robert Parkinson and others. GoH: David Schow, Lisa Tuttle and R Chetwynd-Hayes. MC: Adrian Cole. Programme Book: A4, 56 pages edited by Di Wathen and Phil Williams. Cover Art: Bob Covington. Notes: David Schow did not arrive due to pressure of work.

1993

Fantasycon XVIII (1/3 October). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Peter Coleborn, Mike Chinn, and Sylvia Starshine. GoH: Peter James, Tad Williams, and Les Edward. MC: Dennis Etchison. Pro-

gramme Book: A5, 56 pages edited by Phil Williams. Cover Art: Les Edwards.

1994

Fantasycon XIX (30 September/2 October). Midland Hotel, Birmingham. Organisers: Peter Coleborn, Mike Chinn, Sylvia Starshine. GoH: Katherine Kurtz, Brian Lumley. MC: Graham Joyce. Programme Book: An unfamiliar, almost square, format, 60 pages, edited by Dave Hughes and Seamus Ryan. Cover Art: Clive Barker. Notes: The Programme Book's unconventional format caused much comment at the time.

1995

Fantasycon cancelled through lack of organisers, but Fcon regulars gathered instead at Welcome to my Nightmare in Swansea on the Halloween weekend (27/29 October). The event was staged as part of the UK Year of Literature and Writing 1995.

1996

Fantasycon XX (4/6 October). International Hotel, Docklands, London. Organisers: Peter Coleborn, Mike Chinn, Jan Edwards. GoH: Chris Fowler, Tom Holt. MC: Kim Newman. Programme Book: Peter Coleborn. Notes: Marks the 25th year of the BFS.

1997

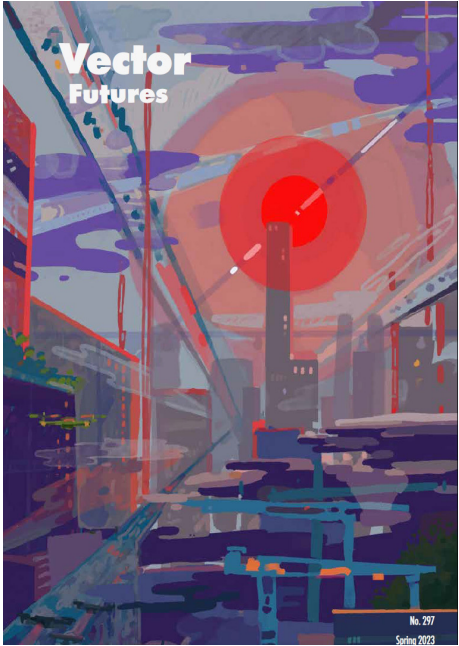
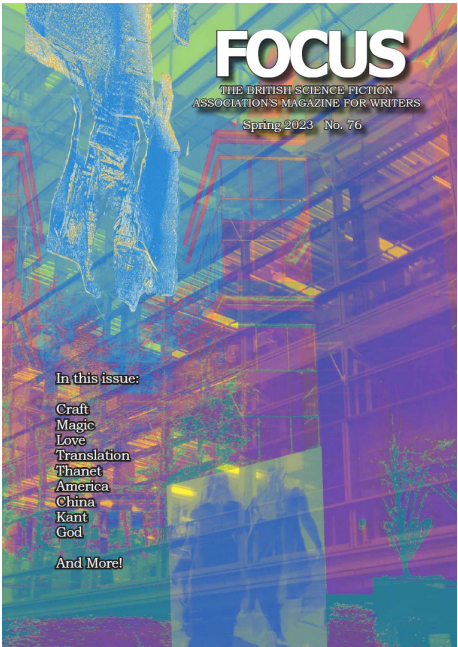
FantasyCon XXI (running with World Fantasy Convention). International Hotel, Docklands, London. 30 October - 2 November 1997. GOH: Iain Sinclair, Joan Aitkin, Bob Eggleton, Hugh Cave, Ron Chetwynd Hayes, Doug Bradley, Robert Holdstock. We're not absolutely sure who organised it, but we think it included Steve Jones & Jo Fletcher, and probably Peter Coleborn, Jan Edwards & Mike Chinn. Any further info will be very welcome!.

1998

FantasyCon XXII. 11 - 13 September 1998. Birmingham. GoH: Freda Warrington, Jane Yolen. MC: Ramsey Campbell. Organised by: Debbie Bennett, Mick Chinn, Peter Coleborn, Jan Edwards, Lynn Edwards, Di Lewis, Pauline Morgan.

1999

FantasyCon XXIII. 17 - 19 September 1999. Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. GoH: Louise Cooper, Raymond E. Feist, Graham Masterton, Robert Rankin, Mike Tucker. Organised by: David Howe, Debbie Bennett, Mike Chinn, Peter Coleborn, Jan Edwards.



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2000

FantasyCon XXIV. 8 - 10 September 2000. Britannia Hotel, Birmingham. GoH: Storm Constantine, Stephen Lawhead, Doug Bradley, Stan Nicholls. Organised by: David Howe & Debbie Bennett.

2001

FantasyCon XXV (Birthday Bash). 23 September 2001. Champagne Charlies Pub, London. GoH: Hugh Lamb, Simon Clark. Organised by: David Howe, Debbie Bennett.

2002

FantasyCon XXVI. 2002. Champagne Charlies, London. GoH: Graham Joyce. Organised by: Debbie Bennett, Nicki Robson.

2003

FantasyCon XXVII. 2003. Stafford. GoH: Chris Fowler, Catherine Fisher. Organised by Debbie Bennett & Nicki Robson.

2004

FantasyCon XXVIII. 2004. Quality Hotel, Bentley, Walsall. GoH: Robert Holdstock, Muriel Gray. Organised by: Debbie Bennett, Nicki Robson.

2005

FantasyCon 2005 (XXIX). 30 September - 2 October 2005. Quality Hotel, Bentley Walsall. GoH: Mark Chadbourn, Simon Clark, Steven Erikson. MC: Graham Joyce. Organised by: Debbie Bennett, Vicky Cook, Marie O'Regan, Jenny Barber, Pat Barber.

2006

FantasyCon 2006 (XXX). 22 - 24 September 2006. Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. GoH: Neil Gaiman, Juliet E. McKenna, Ramsey Campbell, Raymond E. Feist, Clive Barker. MC: David J. Howe. Organised by: Debbie Bennett, Vicky Cook, Marie O'Regan, Paul Kane, Pat Barber, Jenny Barber.

2007

FantasyCon 2007 (XXXI). 21 - 23 September 2007. Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. GoH: Stephen Jones, Michael Marshall Smith, Terry Brooks. MC: Peter Crowther. Organised by: Jenny Barber, Vicky Cook, Marie O'Regan, Paul Kane, Pat Barber.

2008

Fantasycon 32 - Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. GoH: Christopher Golden, James Barclay, Dave McKean. MC: Christopher Fowler.

The organising committee included Marie O'Regan, Paul Kane and Vicky Cook.

2009

Fantasycon 33

FantasyCon 2009. 18–20 September 2009. Britannia Hotel, Nottingham. GoH: Gail Z. Martin, Brian Clemens, Jasper Fforde. Special guest: Sebastian Peake. MC: Ian Watson. Organising committee: Peter Coleborn (chair), Guy Adams, Jen Barber, Pat Barber, Debbie Bennett, Jan Edwards, Martin Roberts. The souvenir programme was A4, 52pp, edited by Peter Coleborn and produced and designed by Lee Thompson.

2010

Fantasycon 34

17 – 19 September 2010, Britannia Hotel, Nottingham

The Guests of Honour Garry Kilworth, Lisa Tuttle and Bryan Talbot;

MC James Barclay

Guy Adams Chair, Ranjna Theaker, Stephen Theaker Helen Hopley, Martin Roberts and Del Lakin-Smith.

2011

Fantasycon 35

30 September–2 October, 2011 at the Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton

Gwyneth Jones, John Ajvide Lindqvist, Brian Aldiss

MC Sarah Pinborough

Organisers: Marie O'Regan, Paul Kane.

2012

Fantasycon 36

27 - 30 September 2012, at the Royal Albion Hotel, Brighton.

Guests of Honour: Joe R. Lansdale, Muriel Gray, Brent Weeks

Special Editor Guest: Mary Weeks

Special Media Guests: Mark Gatiss, Robin Hardy

Master of Ceremonies: Tim Lebbon

2013

Fantasycon 37

World FantasyCon 2013 Brighton UK 31 October–03 November 2013.

2014

Fantasycon 38

The Royal York Hotel.

Guests of Honour: Kate Elliott, Charlaine Harris, Toby Whithouse and Larry Rostant.

5th – 7th September

Chair: Lee Harris

2015

Fantasycon 39

Nottingham

October 23, 2015 - October 25, 2015

MC Juliet E. McKenna, guests – Jo Fletcher, John

Connelly and Brandon Sanderson

Chair: Lee Harris

2016

Fantasycon by the Sea (40)

23-25th of September. The Grand Hotel and The

Royal, Scarborough

Guests – Elizabeth Bear, M. R. Carey, Frances

Hardinge, Joel Hill, Derek Landy, Scott Lynch, Adam

L. G. Nevill, James Smythe,

Chair: Alex Davis

2017

Fantasycon 2017 – (41)

29th September to 1st of October. The Bull Hotel and

Conference Rooms, Peterborough

Guests – Pat Cadigan, Nancy Kilpatrick, Ben Aaronovitch

Organisers: Allen Stroud (Chair), Karen Fishwick.

The programme was A4, 56 pages, edited and designed by Allen Stroud.

2018

Fantasycon 2018 - (42)

19th of October to 21st of October. The Queen Hotel, Chester.

Guests - Adrian Tchaikovsky, Clare North, Farah Mendlesohn.

Organisers: Allen Stroud (Chair), Karen Fishwick.

The programme was A4, 48 pages, edited and designed by Allen Stroud.

2019

Fantasycon 2019 - (43)

18th of October to 20th of October. Main Conference Hotel, Clydebank.

Guests - Paul Tremblay, Una McCormack

Organisers: Andy W Marsden (Chair)

2020

No convention.

2021

Fantasycon 2021 - (44)

19th of October to 21st of October. The Jurys Inn, Birmingham.

Guests - Jen Williams, Ian Whates, Marcus Gipps

Organisers: Allen Stroud (Chair), Karen Fishwick.

The programme was A4, 48 pages, edited and designed by Allen Stroud.

2022

Fantasycon 2022 - (45)

17th September to 18th of September. The Radisson Red Hotel and Conference Centre, London.

Guests -

Organisers: Shona Kinsella (Chair), John Dodd, Karen Fishwick.

The programme was A4, 48 pages, edited and designed by Karen Fishwick.

Haunted

By Randee Dawn

The ruined house's door flew open and a teary, white-haired young woman stumbled past where Mr. Wizzle leaned on the porch. "You monster."

Wizzle sucked on his pipe; breathing hellfire stoked him. He knew what she'd seen inside: the afternoon her brother locked her in the closet for eight hours.

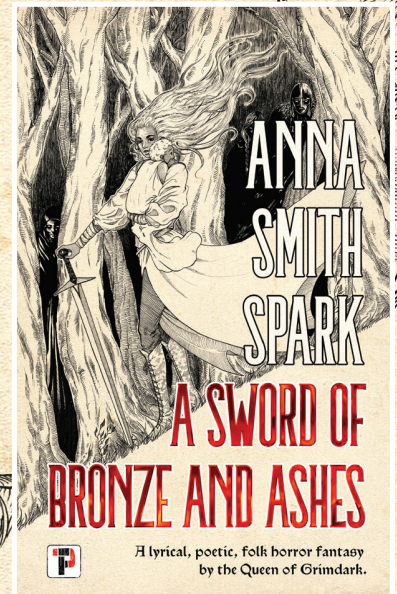
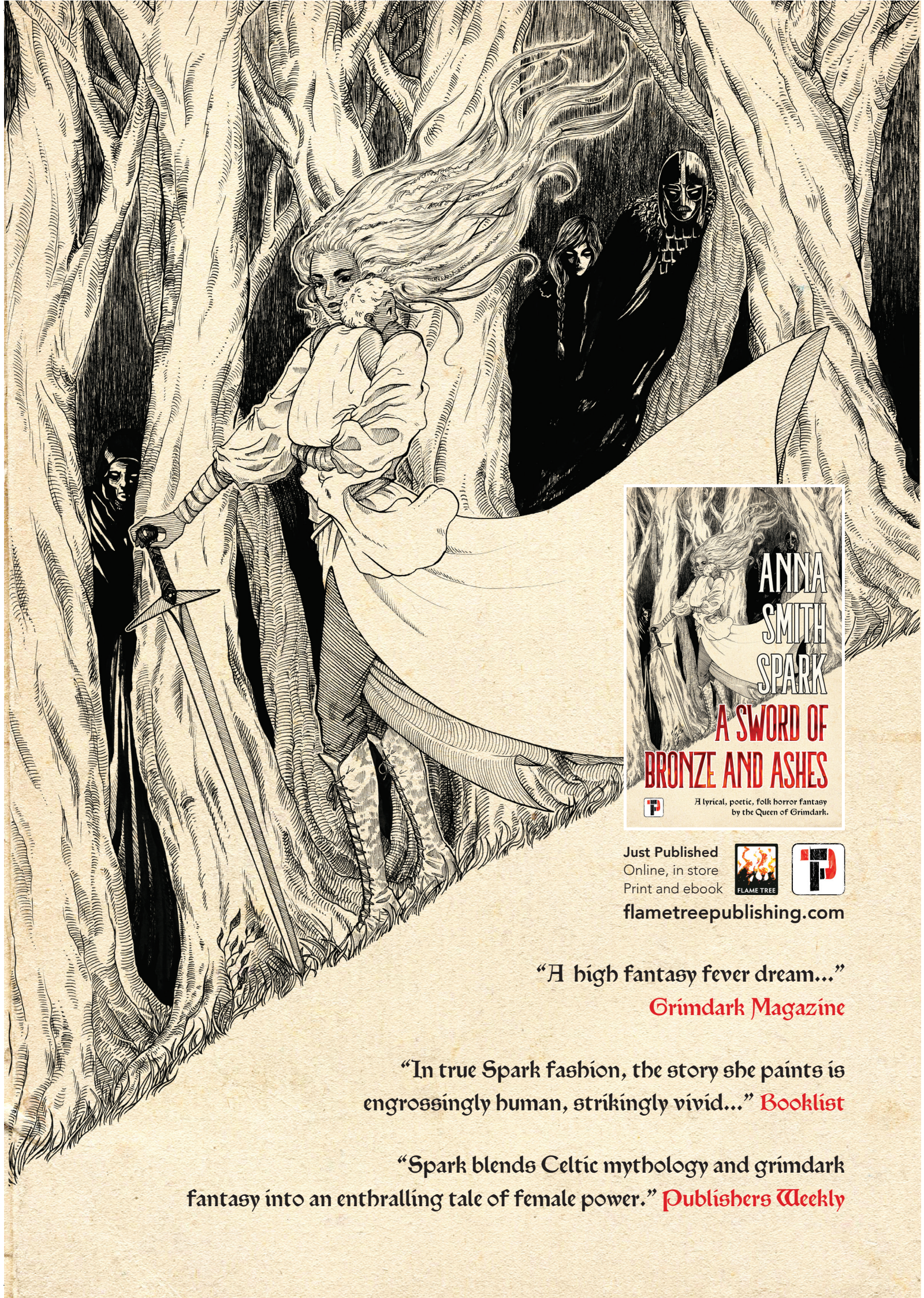
Earlier, visitors had seen friends murdered; a too-hot bath that boiled the skin; marital bed violations.

The possibilities were infinite, just like their memories.

Sadly, only at Halloween could humans be enticed into a haunted house.

Of course, that was a lie. The house was not haunted.

But people were.



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“A high fantasy fever dream...”

Grimdark Magazine

“In true Spark fashion, the story she paints is engrossingly human, strikingly vivid...” **Booklist**

“Spark blends Celtic mythology and grimdark fantasy into an enthralling tale of female power.” **Publishers Weekly**

Introducing Fantasycon 2023

Guest of Honour - Tasha Suri

*Fantasycon 2023 is delighted to
announce Guest of Honour: Tasha Suri*

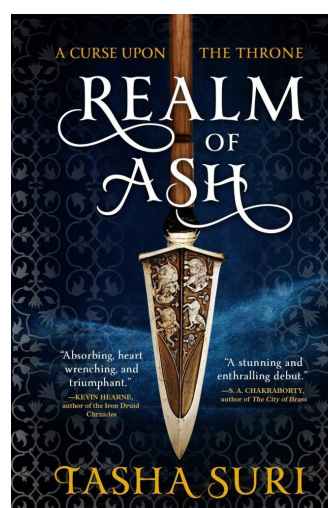
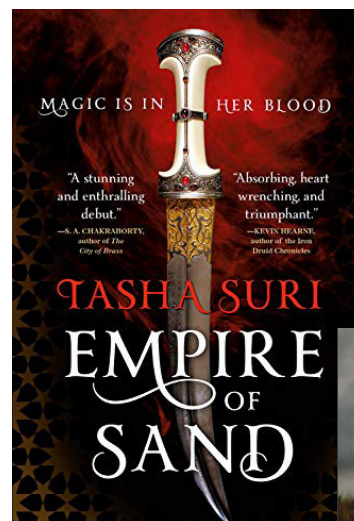
Tasha Suri is an award-winning author, a writing tutor, an occasional librarian and a cat owner. She has won the Best Newcomer (Sydney J. Bounds) Award from the British Fantasy Society, the Starburst Brave New Words Award, and has been nominated for the Astounding Award and Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel. Her debut novel *Empire of Sand* was named one of the 100 best fantasy books of all time by TIME magazine. It's sequel, *Realm of Ash* came out in 2019. Her 2021 novel, *The Jasmine Throne*, won the World Fantasy Award in 2022.

The second edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* describes Suri's writing as "inspired by Medieval India". There is a lot more to consider when examining her work. The prose is confident and stirring, the ideas imaginative and unbound by formulaic constraint. Her stories are considerate of their audience, some aimed at younger readers, but this focus does not detract from the exploration and journey she wants the reader to take.

The emotional qualities of these stories stand out. Readers are made to cry and care, as they should, from a really really good book.

When she isn't writing, Tasha likes to cry over TV shows, buy too many notebooks, and indulge her geeky passion for reading about South Asian history. She lives with her family in a mildly haunted house in London.

Fantasycon 2023 is proud and privileged to have Tasha Suri as a guest of honour for this year's convention.



Tasha's Timetable:

Friday

6pm - World Mythologies

7pm - Welcome to Fantasycon

Saturday

10.30am - Bad Girls in SFF

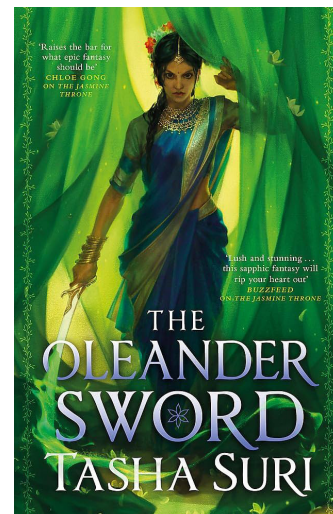
7pm - British Fantasy Awards Banquet

9pm - British Fantasy Awards

Sunday

11am - Guest of Honour Interview

2pm - Making Worlds



Jasmine Throne

by Tasha Suri

PROLOGUE

In the court of the imperial maharaja, the pyre was being built.

The fragrance of the gardens drifted in through the high windows—sweet roses, and even sweeter imperial needle- flower, pale and fragile, growing in such thick profusion that it poured in through the lattice, its white petals unfurled against the sandstone walls. The priests flung petals on the pyre, murmuring prayers as the servants carried in wood and arranged it carefully, applying camphor and ghee, scattering drops of perfumed oil.

On his throne, Emperor Chandra murmured along with his priests. In his hands, he held a string of prayer stones, each an acorn seeded with the name of a mother of flame: Divyanshi, Ahamara,

Nanvishi, Suhana, Meenakshi. As he recited, his courtiers—the kings of Parijatdvipa's city- states, their princely sons, their bravest warriors—recited along with him. Only the king of Alor and his brood of nameless sons were notably, pointedly, silent.

Emperor Chandra's sister was brought into the court.

Her ladies-in-waiting stood on either side of her. To her left, a nameless princess of Alor, commonly referred to only as Alori; to her right, a high- blooded lady, Narina, daughter of a notable mathematician from Srugna and a highborn Parijati mother. The ladies-in-waiting wore red, bloody and bridal. In

their hair, they wore crowns of kindling, bound with thread to mimic stars. As they entered the room, the watching men bowed, pressing their faces to the floor, their palms flat on the marble. The women had been dressed with reverence, marked with blessed water, prayed over for a day and a night until dawn had touched the sky. They were as holy as women could be.

Chandra did not bow his head.

He watched his sister. She wore no crown. Her hair was loose—tangled, trailing across her shoulders. He had sent maids to prepare her, but she had denied them all, gnashing her teeth and weeping. He had sent her a sari of crimson, embroidered in the finest Dwarali gold, scented with needle- flower and perfume. She had refused it, choosing instead to wear palest mourning white. He had ordered the cooks to lace her food with opium, but she had refused to eat. She had not been blessed. She stood in the court, her head unadorned and her hair wild, like a living curse.

His sister was a fool and a petulant child. They would not be here, he reminded himself, if she had not proven herself thoroughly unwomanly. If she had not tried to ruin it all.

The head priest kissed the nameless princess upon the forehead. He did the same to Lady Narina. When he reached for Chandra's sister, she flinched, turning her cheek.

The priest stepped back. His gaze—and his voice—was tranquil.

"You may rise," he said. "Rise, and become mothers of flame."

His sister took her ladies' hands. She clasped them tight. They stood, the three of them, for a long moment, simply holding one another. Then his sister released them.

The ladies walked to the pyre and rose to its zenith. They kneeled.

His sister remained where she was. She stood with her head raised. A breeze blew needle- flower into her hair—white upon deepest black.

"Princess Malini," said the head priest. "You may rise."

She shook her head wordlessly.

Rise, Chandra thought. I have been more merciful than you deserve, and we both know it.

Rise, sister.

"It is your choice," the priest said. "We will not compel you. Will you forsake immortality, or will you rise?"

The offer was a straightforward one. But she did not move. She shook her head once more. She was weeping, silently, her face otherwise devoid of feeling.

The priest nodded.

"Then we begin," he said.

Chandra stood. The prayer stones clinked as he released them.

Of course it had come to this.

He stepped down from his throne. He crossed the court, before a sea of bowing men. He took his sister by the shoulders, ever so gentle.

"Do not be afraid," he told her. "You are proving your purity. You are saving your name. Your honor. Now. *Rise.*"

One of the priests had lit a torch. The scent of burning and camphor filled the court. The priests began to sing, a low song that filled the air, swelled within it. They would not wait for his sister.

But there was still time. The pyre had not yet been lit.

As his sister shook her head once more, he grasped her by the skull, raising her face up.

He did not hold her tight. He did not harm her. He was not a monster.

"Remember," he said, voice low, nearly drowned out by the sonorous song, "that you have brought this upon yourself. Remember that you have betrayed your family and denied your name. If you do not rise . . . sister, remember that you have chosen to ruin yourself, and I have done all in my power to help you. Remember that."

The priest touched his torch to the pyre. The wood, slowly, began to burn.

Firelight reflected in her eyes. She looked at him with a face like a mirror: blank of feeling, reflecting nothing back at him but their shared dark eyes and serious brows. Their shared blood and shared bone.

"My brother," she said. "I will not forget."

Head of the Class

By Randee Dawn

At her wit's end, Miss Holland scrawled a diploma, handing it to her goblin "student."

"Congratulations," she said. "You graduated."

Gob had appeared unannounced that morning, hairier than a dog, smelling like an ashtray – and unleashed chaos on her 4th grade class. He'd broken all the pencils, swung from the lamp and argued that the world was formed from sleep crumbs gathered at ogres' eyes.

"All learned up in a day?" Gob grinned, skipping to the door. "Know what?"

She froze, hand on the sherry bottle hidden in her desk.

"Tomorrow, I'm gonna send all my friends!"

Miss Holland fainted.

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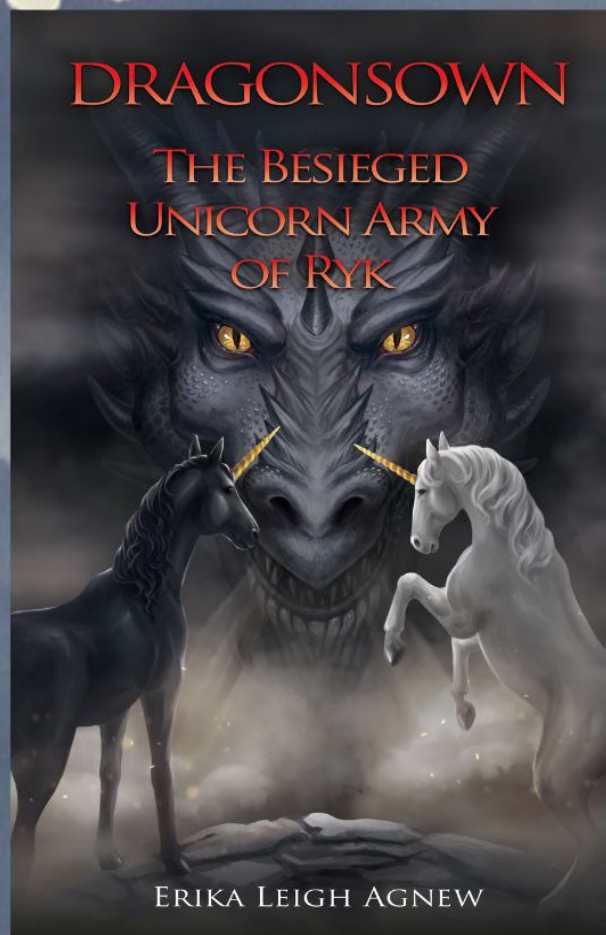
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Introducing Fantasycon 2023

Guest of Honour - Alastair Reynolds

Alastair Reynolds was born in Barry, South Wales, in 1966. He studied at Newcastle and St Andrews Universities and has a Ph.D. in astronomy. He stopped working as an astrophysicist for the European Space Agency to become a full-time writer. *Revelation Space* (2000) and *Pushing Ice* (2005) were shortlisted for the Arthur C. Clarke Award; *Revelation Space*, *Absolution Gap* (2003), *Diamond Dogs* (2001) and *Century Rain* (2004) were shortlisted for the British Science Fiction Award, and *Chasm City* (2001) won the British Science Fiction Award. The novella, *Slow Bullets* (2018), won the Locus Award.

There is an effortlessness to Reynolds' writing. The science in his fiction is strong when it needs to be, but doesn't inhibit his storytelling. Space pirates, Far future police adventures, Doctor Who stories and more all litter his portfolio of work. Even in the darkest moments of his stories, you get the sense that this is an author who is having fun, he enjoys telling stories, letting his imagination roam free upon the page. Big imagery and big ideas are described and rationalised with a careful grace that makes it all look deceptively simple. However, that deft touch isn't confined to the science. Seemingly unconnected narratives from the start of his novels are often woven together to make the conclusion a fascinating jigsaw of character arcs.

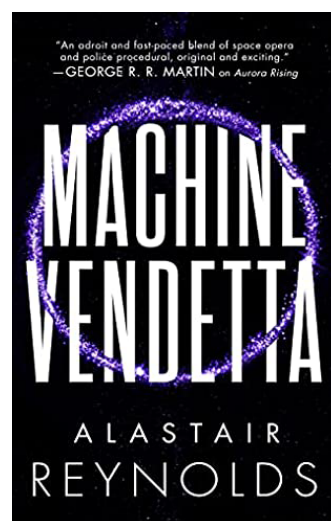
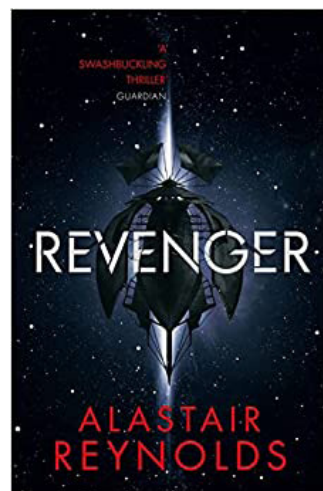
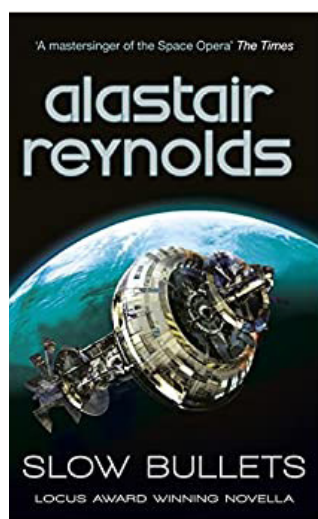
Recently Reynolds' work has been adapted by Netflix in the popular series of science fiction shorts, *Love, Death and Robots*. The short stories, "Zima Blue" and "Beyond the Aquila Rift" are both part of the first season of standalone science fiction adaptations. Both are clever shorts, with twists and reveals that illuminate the mysterious circumstances described, but that also linger a little while to allow characters and readers to consider the implications of what they have learned.

The third book in the Prefect Dreyfuss Emergency Series, *Machine Vendetta* is published in September 2023.

You can learn more about Alastair Reynolds by visiting <http://www.alastairreynolds.com>.



Fantasycon 2023 is proud and privileged to have Alastair Reynolds as a guest of honour for this year's convention.



Alastair's Timetable:

Friday

7pm - Welcome to Fantasycon

Saturday

9.30am - Futures and Science Fiction

4.00pm - Guest of Honour Interview

7pm - British Fantasy Awards Banquet

9pm - British Fantasy Awards

Sunday

10am - Science! Pseudoscience! Science Fiction!

MACHINE VENDETTA

(An Excerpt from Chapter One)

By Alistair Reynolds

Something terrible had happened in Mercy Sphere.

Thalia Ng was the first on-scene. She touched a hand to her throat, stifling nausea. With her other hand she slipped on a pair of goggles, feeding her observations back to the Supreme Prefect.

'I'm inside, ma'am,' she said. 'You should have a clear view of the scene.'

'Pan around for me,' the voice in her ear instructed. 'Slower. Slower still. Why isn't it in focus?'

'It is, ma'am.' Thalia coughed. 'There's a lot of smoke in the air. The circulators are struggling to clear it.'

'Do you need a breather?'

'No, ma'am. It's pretty bad, but if these people are managing without breathers, I think I can as well.'

Mendicants – the order who operated Mercy Sphere – were busy fixing damage, clearing bodies and tending to the few souls who had survived the conflagration. Humans and hyperpigs alike made up their number, dressed in green and white clerical outfits.

As Thalia tracked around, her goggles placed reference tags on the fallen and sick.

'It's vile, ma'am. That someone should do this deliberately ...' She trailed off, the horror too unwieldy to be carved into words.

'Detachment, Ng,' Jane Aumonier said. 'Record and assist where you can. Medical and forensic squads are inbound.'

Thalia coughed again. Some part of that smoke haze came from the burned fabric of Mercy Sphere, but the rest was a sooty suspension of barbecued flesh. The flavour of it was new and ancient at the same time, as if her brain had always been primed to recognise it.

'Ma'am,' she said, swallowing hard.

'Why haven't they sent a hyperpig?'

The question came not from Jane Aumonier, but from the Mendicant who had arrived alongside Thalia. A middle-aged human woman with ash-smeared skin and eyes slitted and inflamed by the smoke.

Her goggles brought up her name from Panoply's register of citizens.

'I was the nearest when the alarm came in, Sister

Drusilla. It could have been any one of us, a human or hyperpig prefect. We make no distinction.'

'Words for my benefit, or is your superior listening in? Let me address Jane Aumonier personally.' Staring directly at Thalia, Sister Drusilla pushed steel into her voice. 'This attack against us was a foregone event. We've been warning of such a thing for six months, begging for greater protection. Why did you not listen?'

'Tell her that we did listen, but that our resources are not infinite,' Aumonier interjected.

'There are just a thousand of us,' Thalia offered. 'That's a thousand of us to cover every possible threat in the Glitter Band, anything that can't be managed by the constables. With the best will in the world, we can't be everywhere at once. And since the Cranach crisis blew up ...' She winced at her own ill-judged choice of words. 'We're tallying multiple threats and multiple possible targets, and with each escalation the problem gets worse.'

Sister Drusilla surveyed the carnage surrounding them: the burned, twisted, charred and smoking bodies, the melted architecture, the damage caused by secondary fires and explosions as the chain of destruction played out.

She touched a hand to the snowflake stitched across her chest.

'So, your policy is to stand back and observe ... until such threats are acted on?'

'I wish I could offer more, Sister.'

'That's the best you have, a wish?'

'Do not apologise for a system forced on us by the democratic will of the citizenry,' Aumonier interjected.

Thalia salted some authority into her reply. 'Be grateful that we're here at all, Sister. My colleagues will shortly be arriving in force. Rest assured our investigation will be extremely thorough. I must ask: did you have much warning before the capsule docked?'

'What difference does it make, now that the harm's done?'

'With respect, Sister, that's for me to decide. Was there anything unusual?'

A sigh. 'We had a few minutes' warning – the usual pattern. When escapees flee to us, they rarely have time to put elaborate plans in place. Of course, our suspicions have been heightened with the threats made against us – that's why we've been pleading for more protection – but everything about this capsule seemed genuine.' Despair broke through her mask. 'If there's something we missed, something we should have seen ...'

'There won't have been,' Thalia said firmly. 'The ones who did this to you would have made sure of that.'

'How long will it take you to identify them?'

'We're already working on that problem. We think they used a nonvelope to conceal the capsule's movements until it was very close to you.'

'I have no idea what that is.'

'A sort of invisibility screen, made from a quick-matter shell. It's contraband technology, but easily within the grasp of hundreds of families and concerns in the Glitter Band.'

'But you will find them.'

Thalia groped for an answer that was neither a lie nor promised too much. 'This attack was part of a pattern of escalating grudges, drawing in many actors. We'll seek to identify all culpable elements. Our greatest concern, though, is to stop the violence on all fronts.'

'You've dodged my question.'

'We will bring our resources to bear,' Thalia affirmed. 'And none of us will rest until you have an answer.'

'Well-handled, Ng,' came the voice in her ear.

Thalia unholstered her whiphound, displaying it to Sister Drusilla. 'I'm going to send this device off to gather evidential traces. You needn't be alarmed by it.'

Sister Drusilla scoffed. 'I've just seen my best friends burn alive, Prefect Ng. They're in my nostrils. Do you imagine much is capable of alarming me now?'

Thalia didn't answer. She flicked out the whiphound's traction filament and sent it scurrying away, a busy blur of flickering silver.



LESLEY JONES

Perfect the Word – Lesley Jones, fiction editor

I am a line and stylistic editor specializing in fiction of all genres, but in particular fantasy, sci fi, spec fiction and thriller. I work with major publishers including Faber, Macmillan, Black Library, and Harper Collins, but most of my work is with indie authors. Entrust your project to me and I will not only polish your spelling, punctuation and grammar, but help you add an extra touch of style. Contact me for a free sample edit (up to 1,000 words) and a quote.

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Fantasycon 2023

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Francesca T Barbini
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Laura Bennett
Richie Billing
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Elliot Craggs
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Raven Dane
Randee Dawn
Kat Day
T. H. Dray
Rose Drew
Robin CM Duncan
Kate Dylan
Jan Edwards
Saara El-Arifi
Kevin Elliott
Kiya Evans
Tracy Fahey
E.M. Faulds / Beth
Karen Fishwick
I.R. Fox
Philip Fracassi
Trip Galey

CL Gamble
Alexander Glass
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Sarah Wilkinson
Jen Williams
Tad Williams
Susie Williamson
Ed Wilson

Paul Woodward
Marian Womack
David Wragg
Mel Wright
Susan York

Some Things Don't Stick

By Allen Stroud

"Drive!"

The camper van doors slam shut, and I stamp my foot on the accelerator. We're moving, racing into to the street, the familiar green of Lloyd's Bank disappearing in the rear-view mirror as we speed away.

The radio comes on. I kill it quickly. A quick dose of Queen and Bowie - Under Pressure. Yeah, you have no idea.

I glance at Janet. "How much did you—"

"Shut up!" she roars, and I feel something cold and metallic pressed into the back of my neck.

"Keep your eyes on the road," Pete hisses from the back seat.

I can hear sirens in the distance. Police response time around here is about eight minutes. Eight minutes for us to get as far away as possible. A brief look in the mirror tells me they've brought three sacks. Three sacks of cash and coins! My share should pay of the mortgage, Wonga, my gambling debts and—

"Turn right here, Darren," Janet orders

"But that's not part of the—"

"I said turn right!"

"Okay."

We're in an alley. There's a van ahead blocking the way. I pull up behind it. "I'll have to turn around," I say.

"No. You're done here."

The cold metal is still there against my skin. "Sorry Darren," Pete whispers.

I lift my hands from the wheel. "I thought we were friends. In this together?"

"We were," Janet says. "But things change."

And with that, my world explodes.

*

Am I alive?

How am I alive!

Dirt in my eyes, my nose, my mouth, my throat. I choke and gag as I thrash my arms and legs in mud. It's wet and loose, like clotted wet sand, refusing to bear my weight.

My hands scrape against something – a rock or a stone buried in the muck. I clutch at it. My fingernails splinter as I struggle to gain purchase and drag myself upwards. I fight the urge to cough and vomit until I can feel the air on my face.

I'm out, I'm lying on the ground. Only then do I start to retch up the black paste that should have drowned me.

How did it not?

It's night. The moon is high in the sky. The camper van is in the layby beside the empty road. Ahead of it are two more cars parked at awkward angles, their doors open.

I start to recall what happened. The getaway and the gun. The aftermath. Dying. The feel of wet leather of the seat beneath me. I know I am the source of wetness. Each beat of my heart dumping blood out onto the upholstery.

I remember breathing. Each gasp of air taking more and more effort. I tried to move, to get up, but knew it was hopeless.

Shadows at the window. The back doors are opened. They murdered me and took the money.

Hands grab mine drag me out and then...

Nothing. Until now.

Waking up in my own grave.

I look around. In the moonlight I can see more piles of earth along the verge. The dirt is moving, there are fingers reaching out, people clawing their way to the surface.

I hear muffled screams.

Extract from Out of Atlas by Damien Hine, published by Monolith Books.

Having grown up in Atlas, Fred Banks has been told that the only thing standing between him and packs of vicious marauders are the city's high walls. He has never seen the outside world. Tonight, however, he has decided to sneak out to climb the walls and see for himself what lies beyond...

– 2 –

What Lay Beyond

The moon cast a glow over the ropes and ladders soldiers once used to reach the top. He tracked one of them up, thirty feet to a wooden platform where another ladder waited. Ladder, platform, ladder, platform, all the way to the top.

'Seems easy enough,' he muttered. 'Bet it won't be.'

He slid a finger along one of the rungs and it came away carrying dust.

'Not used in some time. Better test it.'

Seizing the rails on either side, he placed his full weight on the lowest rung. Immediately it sagged with a low moan. That didn't sound good. The next moment it cracked and wood chips sprayed up in his face.

He whipped round. If someone heard that... The dusty streets zipped south, zigzagging in and out of each other, yet nothing stirred and no one came calling after him.

'Right then, back to it.'

The question though was, how? How on earth could he do it? The wall leapt a hundred and fifty feet up to the moon. If the other ladders proved as reliable as this one, he'd be better off using a glass pickaxe.

He peered east across the wall and grinned. 'Hah-ha! Oh yeah.'

When the mines came within the city limits, they constructed a mechanism for hoisting teams of men and rocks in bulk to the top. A pair of timber rafts balanced each other to form a lift controlled from the bottom. Thus, as one went up the other came down. By conventional means, it took a small crew to run safely. Well, conventional means...

He snatched an axe from the base of the wall, along with a pair of dusty, discarded rawhide gloves, and stomped off.

The nearest raft sat flat against the earth.

Ropes rose from each corner and melded into one strand as thick as his arm that climbed to a colossal pulley at the top. A night wind sang against the rope and billowed down on him, lifting his coat high. He froze in his tracks. The fibres of his shirt stuck to the chilled sweat sliding down his back.

'This is crazy,' he muttered, 'totally crazy.'

It was also this or the ladders and a fat lot of use, they were.

Clinging to the axe, he mounted the raft, shimmied up one of the ropes and steadied himself against the master rope. The rawhide gloves gave him tremendous grip. He leant back and gazed up. A cold drop of sweat dripped from his chin. Man, it was far. Am I really doing this? People in Atlas talked about prayer sometimes and, looking up, he wished there was someone to pray to.

'Here goes.'

Ensuring he had a good grip, he leant back and struck the rope with the axe. The collision sent ripples to the moon and a bunch of threads split. Again. More threads split and another ripple to the moon. Once more. That did it. The rest of the threads started snapping, great fissures rocketing up.

His eyes bulged. 'Oh n—!'

The word was ripped from his lips as the rope shot up like a firework. He clung for dear life, begging his arms to not be ripped clean off.

Ladders and platforms scorched past. The other raft came plunging down like a guillotine, missing him by inches and taking his breath with it.

Then the top was rushing to meet him. His throat clamped tight. The pulley looked even

more immense from here. Just before the rope mangled him into it, he let go and went coursing into the air.

For an instant he sailed above the wall. He slowed and it was him and the stars, no wind, no movement. But this was no time to relax. What came next was vital.

Landing.

The nudge of gravity hooked into him, the wind reversed and he swivelled his gaze to the head of the wall with his axe poised to strike.

‘Three... two... NOW!’

He lunged with both hands and the axe caught a bed of rocks.

‘Hold! For goodness sake, hold!’

The ax head snagged, held true and his whole body slammed into the wall. The impact was a sledgehammer to the chest. Blinding pain rolled through him.

‘Argh!’

Before his arms gave way, he wrenched himself up and collapsed flat on his back.

‘Hah-ha! Woah.’

It was like the rope had ripped the lungs from his chest and proceeded to bury them beneath the wall. He scrunched his eyes tight and laughed with a delirious cocktail of terror and adrenaline.

‘L-let’s never do that again.’

Inch by inch, sanity started returning to his body. Now for the prize. His knuckles were white, trembling. Planting them either side, he wrenched himself into a sitting position. The world lurched and he wobbled dangerously close to the edge.

‘Ooph, ok. Not too fast.’

When the horizon steadied itself into an appropriate, non-lurching angle he let himself gaze around. A quiet smile crept up his cheeks.

No fires, no burning, the world was green and beautiful. By the stars and the moon he could make out hills and valleys, flowing waters. He could smell the rich aroma of fresh grass. Owls were soaring and in the crystal silence he could even hear foxes barking and howling.

Yet that wasn’t the strangest thing. That wouldn’t be the thing to ignite his imagination like wildfire.

On the north horizon he saw something that beggared belief. Where the earth met the sky there lay a silver glint of beaming light, like a new-born star rising for the first time. Were it not midnight he would have put it down to the first glimmer of a rising sun. Yet unlike the sun, it was staying quite put.

He blinked hard, and again. It remained.

So, not a star and not the sun. Then what was it? Could it be a place, a people? He turned back to gaze at Atlas. Why had no one ever told him about this before? Did no one know?

He whipped back to the glint on the horizon. As he peered on it, his heart leapt up again with an almighty ‘Yes!’ The world was bigger than Atlas, so much bigger, and there were adventures to be had, places to go, secrets to unveil. The world beyond was not fierce and burning but good, endlessly good, overflowing with rich possibility, running deep with boundless freedom. He was practically salivating.

State Bird

By Randee Dawn

“Enjoyin’ Maine so fah?” the driver asked Emmi, unloading her suitcase from the truck.

Emmi scratched a welt on her hand. “Your bugs are ... lively.”

“Ayup. Mahskitos. State bird, dontchaknow.” He yanked a 12-gauge from the rack. “Duck, miss.”

An insect the size of cat swooped over the hotel – and disintegrated in the blast. “Don’t fret,” said the driver, a mad glint in his eye. “’Twas but a babe.”

Emmi’s eyes were saucers.

“Alas,” he said, reloading and donning an Army helmet, “when ya do fah the babe, Mama comes next.”

Emmi glanced over her shoulder.

The sky darkened.

Introducing Fantasycon 2023 Guest of Honour - Ian Whates

Ian Whates is the author of published Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror novels, novellas, and a vast number of short stories that have appeared in a variety of venues, including *Nightmare Magazine*, *Galaxy's Edge*, *Daily Science Fiction*, the science journal *Nature* and numerous anthologies.

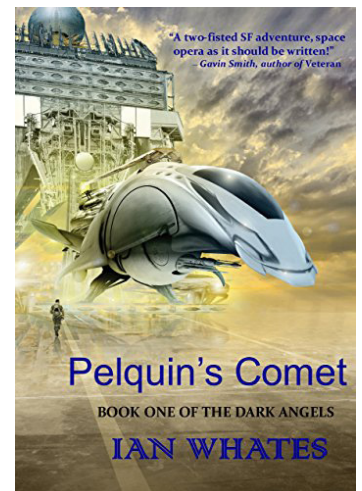
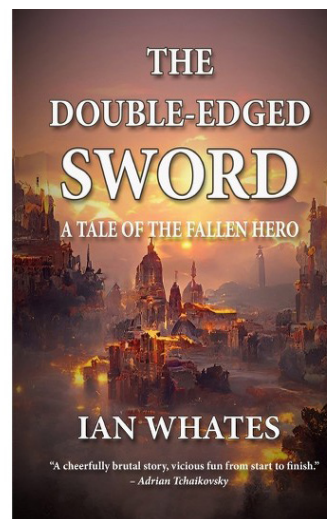
Whates' work has been shortlisted for the Philip K. Dick Award and on three occasions for BSFA Awards. He is a director and former chair of the British Science Fiction Association and has been a judge for both the Arthur C. Clarke Award and the World Fantasy Awards. He has edited more than 40 anthologies and is the editor of *ParSec* digital magazine for PS Publishing.

As founder of Newcon Press, Ian Whates is also one of the most prolific and diverse independent publishers in the United Kingdom. Ian Whates is appreciated by all who have the pleasure to spend time with him and to read his stories.

At first, Whates saw publishing success through magazines, but he quickly developed a strong catalogue of work with independent presses and short stories published in a variety of venues. His *City of a Hundred Rows* novel trilogy published by Angry Robot and Noise sequence published by Rebellion/Solaris showcased his talents as a writer, while his editing of a number of collections for Solaris demonstrated his ability to work with other talented artists, bringing out the best in their creative endeavours.

However, the foundation of his own publishing company, Newcon Press, signalled a new direction for Whates, one that would come to benefit many of the amazing writers that he chose to work with.

Anthologies, showcasing short work from a vast array of contributors, collected together on a theme, or a genre, all expertly edited, followed. The concept behind each allowed for imaginative interpretations by the writers. Established names, partnered with new discoveries allowed readers to discover just how rich and diverse the genres can be. As a publisher,



Ian Whates is a diligent companion and confidante to his writers. A supporter who wants their work to be as wonderful as possible.

In 2019 Whates received the Karl Edward Wagner Award from the British Fantasy Society. Whether writing, editing or publishing, he epitomises the meaning of the prize, his work constantly is ‘an important contribution to the genre’. He and his wife Helen are an integral part of genre publishing in the United Kingdom.

In 2020, at the start of the pandemic, Newcon Press published *Stories of Hope and Wonder*, an anthology of stories, the proceeds from which went to provide PPE for frontline medical staff. Whates was then due to be Fantasycon guest of honour in 2021, but was unable to takepart owing to ill health.

As a publisher, Whates’ work provides a stepping-stone for those developing their careers in writing. NewCon Press has championed novels, novellas and collections by authors whose work might otherwise

have escaped attention, many of whom have gone on to success with major publishers. Ian’s generous nature has been shown time and time again, with Newcon Press authors winning recognition through nominations and awards, but he has not neglected his own fiction and continues to release shorts and novels through his own company and in collaboration with others.

Today, Ian Whates continues to successfully balance a career as a writer, editor and publisher, with his Dark Angels trilogy of space opera novels earning new accolades and twice seeing him top Amazon sales charts. In early 2023, Ian Whates has returned to the fantasy genre with *The Double Edged Sword*; a gritty swashbuckling adventure full of desperate and dubious characters for readers to love and hate.

Fantasycon 2023 is proud and privileged to have Ian Whates as a guest of honour for this year’s convention.

Ian’s Timetable:

Friday

7pm - Welcome to Fantasycon

Saturday

1pm - Guest of Honour Interview

6pm - Writerly Experiences

7pm - British Fantasy Awards Banquet

9pm - British Fantasy Awards

Sunday

11am - The Publisher’s Panel

12 Noon - The Editor

The Double-Edged Sword

[excerpt from Chapter 1: Not a Moment to Swoon]

By Ian Whates

“Was Gerard really as magnificent as they say?”

I suppressed a groan. Oh well, he was paying. “Gerard was certainly magnificent to look at,” I conceded. “Tall, bronzed, well-muscled with golden hair...”

“A great, great hero.”

I snorted, “Yeah, right. He was awkward with a bow, a passably good swordsman and a hopeless strategist – some hero.”

Predictably, that surprised him. The Gerard I’d just described was at odds with the one painted by popular myth in every way, which was a tremendous tribute to the man’s true genius: the ability to manipulate his own public image.

“Awkward...? Passable? Why did the rest of you follow him, in that case?”

Why indeed? No mystery really; the reasons were obvious once you took the trouble to look at them.

“He had the rep,” I said.

Gerard wasn’t a man who ever felt the need to play down his notoriety – quite the opposite, in fact: he revelled in it, relished it, and we all benefited as a result.

“Don’t get me wrong,” I continued, “he wasn’t stupid. He surrounded himself with people who were experts at the things he wasn’t. I was a miles better swordsman, for example, and so was Alvin. Cedric was the best archer I’ve ever seen and Tam, who joined us after Cedric was killed at Arden Falls, wasn’t far behind. Jaeko was a master at planning and strategy and old Sirius had a few tricks that had to be seen to be believed. Claimed they were sorcery and they probably were, if you give credence to that sort of thing. Each and every one of us had our uses.

“Thing was, by following Gerard we got all the plum jobs and the big rewards – the sort that none of us would ever have had a sniff at on our own. He had the reputation, you see, he was ‘The Hero’. Only ever one man to call on in a crisis: Gerard.”

“But surely there must have been something special about him,” the youth insisted. “After all, he must have won that reputation somehow in the first place.”

“Oh yes,” I assured him, “there was something special about him all right. His power over women.”

“His fabled charm.”

“No,” I shook my head, “it was more than that. It was like a bewitchment, a spell if you will, which he could turn on and off just like that,” I snapped my fingers. “I’ve seen it happen. One minute we’d be getting nowhere with some stuck-up lady this or countess that, with her not giving an inch on payment rates or terms, then suddenly she would stop in mid-sentence, forget what she’d been saying and go weak at the knees. After that she’d be putty in his hands. It was quite something.”

“You really believe that? You think it was some sort of magical power?”

I shrugged and muttered, “Fairy moans.”

“Pardon?”

“Oh, just something Sirius told me once. He said he reckoned it was all down to fairy moans. Maybe he was right, I never did know much about sorcery. Maybe Gerard was able to summon the voices of fairies that only women could hear, bewitching them.” I shrugged, “Used to listen hard whenever I knew he was doing it... never heard any fairies though, moaning or otherwise.

“Sirus would just laugh when I told him and say I was doing it wrong, that I should have been listening with my nose, but he always was a funny old coot.”

“Incredible.” The lad was well and truly hooked.

“Thirsty work, this story telling,” I glanced meaningfully at my now empty tankard.

“Oh... I’m sorry,” he stood up. “Allow me.”

With pleasure.

Ale replenished, I set about telling him what had happened, describing briefly how we had risen to prominence after a series of successful jobs, each of which led to the next one, slightly more significant than the last and correspondingly more rewarding.

Then came the big one. The council of Trilmouth approached us and asked for our help. This was major league at last, what we had been working towards. Trilmouth was one of the top trading cities. If we could make ourselves useful to them, indispensable even, then we really had cracked it.

It emerged that the Crystal of Relf had been stolen. Even I had heard of that hallowed chunk of glass. Bequeathed to the city by its founder, the ‘sorcerer’ King Relf, it was said to contain great power.

Many believed that Trilmouth owed its success and pre-eminence entirely to the mystical properties of the crystal. However real or imagined those powers might be, the council felt the city's influence would wane without it.

To make matters worse, it had been stolen by one of their own number following a disagreement. Said to be a sorceress herself, the Lady Margeaut had snatched the crystal and fled to her castle hideaway in the mountains above the city. The council were now uncertain of whom among their own troops and contacts were to be trusted, so they turned to us.

They offered a reward larger than everything we had earned to date combined – enough that each of us could retire in reasonable comfort, if we chose to.

I described in slightly greater detail what happened on the fateful day itself – how we tricked our way into the castle, how we had penetrated deep within before being discovered and then had to fight our way after that. Swordplay in a confined space is a great leveller and as we made our way upward in pursuit of a fleetingly glimpsed woman who stayed tantalisingly out of reach, every step demanded payment in sweat and blood. Not much of it our blood, thankfully. We were good; very good.

She fled to the very roof of the highest tower and it was there that we finally cornered her.

"It was a frozen tableau," I explained, milking it, aware that he was hanging on my every word. "The lady Margeaut poised on the brink of the parapet, glorious in silk and velvet, illuminated by moonlight and sputtering torches, golden hair flowing in the wind, which whipped her dress about like some half-furled banner. Her hand was held out, suspending the precious orb over the void.

"Tam was there, staring down the shaft of an arrow pointed at her heart; me and Alvin flanked him, with swords drawn, wondering if we dared inch any closer, whilst Jeanty stood off to one side, debating whether any of his acrobatics would enable him to catch the crystal if she did drop it...

"And at the centre stood Gerard. Magnificent, Golden Gerard. The voice of reason, telling her that it was finished, insisting that if she would just step away from the edge no harm would befall her, that he personally guaranteed her safety if she would just hand over the crystal. It was working too. She was weakening, starting to discuss terms. Any fool could see that she was on the point of yielding, that she was about to give up... Well, any fool but one, apparently. Another moment and it would have been job done, but do you know what the stupid oaf did then? What the great Golden Buffoon just had to go and do?"

My audience shook his head, enthralled.

"He turned on his much-vaunted charm, that's what. It wasn't happening quickly enough for our Gerard, oh no. Mere words were too slow, so he had to do it the easy way, the dumb ox!" I paused, shaking with fury even now, after all these years.

"And?" I was prompted.

"She swooned. Literally collapsed. You could see the exact instant when Gerard's power hit her. One minute she stood there, beautiful and defiant, the next she just crumpled, lost her balance and toppled right over the edge, with all of us lunging to try and catch her. Jeanty even managed to grab hold of a corner of her dress, but it tore as she fell and he was left holding no more than a tatter of silk." I stopped speaking, seeing it all again, unable to go on for the moment. "Biggest purse of our lives and he had to go and do that!" I muttered at length.

"Is that when you hit him?"

I nodded, "Smack on his golden bloody chin."

"None of this ever came out," he said breathlessly.

"Of course not. Gerard was still the meal ticket after all, so the others all got together and decided to salvage what they could. Thus the official story emerged – about how we had fought valiantly through the castle to confront the evil sorceress on the roof of its highest tower, from whence she flung herself to her doom, taking the crystal with her rather than surrender it to its rightful custodians."

"But you refused to go along with that story?"

"Too true. I'm a man of principle, you see. I'd had more than enough of the Golden Gorilla and his posturing by then. Besides which," I felt obliged to concede, "that punch broke his jaw, so he wasn't too keen on having me around any more."

"Which is why you were thrown in jail."

"Yup, that's about the size of it. For assaulting the great Hero." I drained my tankard. "Well, there you have it – the real story of what went on. Thanks for the drinks." I went to rise. "All such a long time ago," I muttered. "The only thing I still have from those days is the ornamental dagger Gerard gave me that time when I saved his life. Of course, we were on better terms back then."

"Can I see it?" he said at once.

"The knife? Sorry, I haven't got it with me, it's back at my room."

"Oh." Obvious disappointment.

"...which isn't really that far – just around the corner, in fact, if you'd care to come back and see it."

"Would you mind?"

I shrugged, "I was going there anyway."

So we left together, with him still talking, still ask-

ing questions, which I answered in unhelpful monosyllables, my mind on other things.

It was dark already – the evenings were drawing in. As we stepped from the smoky warmth of the inn, the night greeted us with a cold slap to the cheeks. I led him through a narrow side street, badly lit, little more than an alley really.

His questions turned to the subject of the dagger. “Where did it come from exactly?”

“I’m not sure, exactly... One of his lady friends, no doubt – a token of undying love from some gentlewoman or other.”

“Why have you kept it all this time?”

“Oh, it comes in useful.” It really was dark here. We seemed to be the only two people out at this late hour.

“It can be used, then? It’s a real knife, I mean, not just an ornament?”

“Oh no, it’s perfectly serviceable,” I assured him. “Here, let me show you.”

With one fluid movement, I drew the knife from my belt, stepped in towards him and drove it deep into his belly, my free hand covering his mouth. In the dim light I could barely make out the look of disbelief and shock that froze his features. He had just

started a low gasping moan when I drew the blade across his throat, silencing him forever.

He would have fallen then but for my supporting arm. I lowered him to rest in a sitting position against the wall. A quick glance round to make sure no one had seen anything, then I slipped a hand into his coat and relieved him of the bulging purse which had caught my attention when he first bought me a drink.

“You didn’t stand a chance,” I told his sightless eyes. “If not me, it would have been someone else.” In truth, it was a miracle he had survived this long. His sort of naïvety came with a very short shelf-life.

I pocketed the purse, which felt satisfyingly heavy, then cleaned and did the same with the knife. “Sorry kid, but there’s not much work around for retired heroes these days and I have to make a living somehow.”

I stood, composed myself and strolled away, humming a half-remembered tune that Jimmy the Minstrel used to play around the camp fire. Gerard would invariably lead the singing with gusto. He had a decent voice, come to think of it.

Those were the days.

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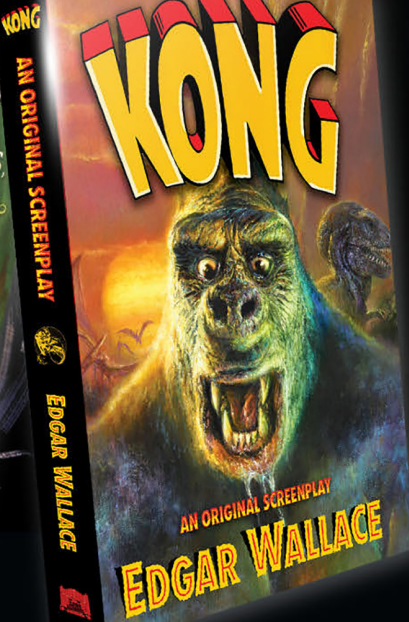
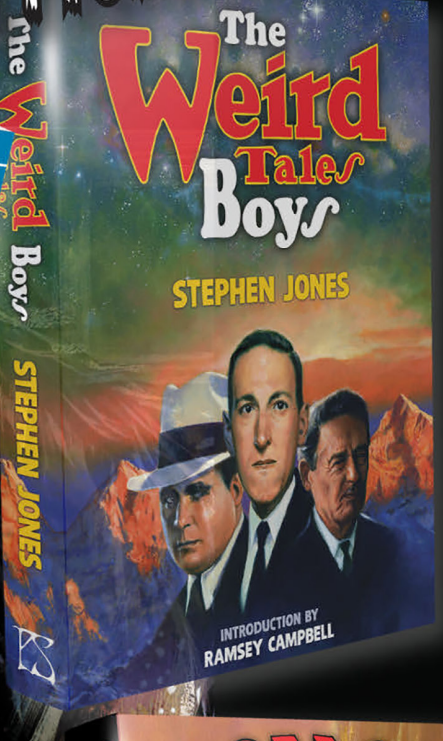
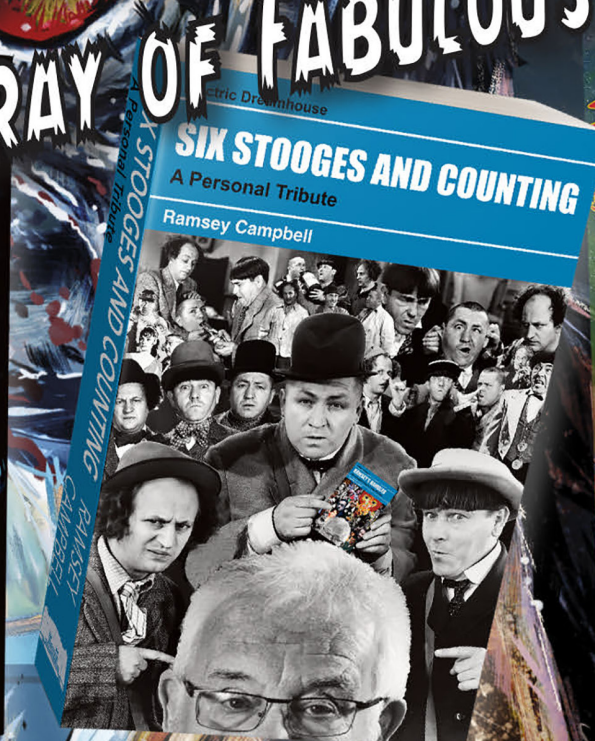
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Event Schedule Friday

Bar Opens 11am (Closes 12 Midnight).

11.30am: Fantasycon Reception Opens (Reception Area)

Pick up your goodie bag and ID card from our desk. After this, a phone number will be left on the desk for you to contact if you have any queries. **Registration closes at 10pm.**

12 Noon: Traders Open

Browse our selection of publishers and grab yourself some excellent books. **Traders close at 6pm.**

Launch: Eerie River: David Green - Friday 4pm (Main Room)

New to Fantasycon - Friday 4.00pm (Panel Room 2)

Karen Fishwick (Moderator).

Is this your first time at Fantasycon? Been coming here a while? Pop along to our introductory session to meet new Fantasycon members.

Launch: PS Publishing - Friday 5pm (Main Room)

Fantasy Readings - Friday 5pm (Reading Room)

David Green, James Bennett, Randee Dawn.

Reading Something New - Friday 5pm (Panel Room 1)

Charlotte Bond (Moderator), Adri Joy, Rachel Knightley, Gary Couzens, Maura McHugh.

Admire the formulaic and familiar, just once in a while, a story comes along that does something different. We all need to expand our minds on occasion. Join us for recommendations for your reading list!

Imaginative Audio - Friday 5pm (Panel Room 2)

Sasha Sienna (Moderator), Devin Martin, Emily Inkpen, George Penney, Nick Wells.

What does it take to make audio fiction? How can the medium speak in a way others cannot? Our panel share their experiences.

Launch: Newcon Press - Friday 6pm (Main Room)

Fantasy Readings - Friday 6pm (Reading Room)

Mark Stay, Jan Edwards.

Reading For Performance 2 - Friday 6pm (Panel Room 1)

T. H. Dray, EM. Faulds.

A return of T. H. Dray's popular panel on how best to bring your work to an audience. A must for new writers who are planning to read at conventions.

World Mythologies - Friday 6pm (Panel Room 2)

Charlotte Bond (Moderator), Tasha Suri, Alexander Glass, A. Y. Chao, Joanne Harris.

Writers draw inspiration from all sorts of sources. The lingering tales from the ancient past can be rich for reinterpretation and new exploration. Our panel discusses their own fictional mythologies and some of the real world elements they researched.

Welcome to Fantasycon - Friday 7pm (The Main Room)

Allen Stroud, Alastair Reynolds, Tasha Suri, Ian Whates.

Welcome to Fantasycon 2023! An introduction from the chair of the convention and introducing our guests of honour.

Horror Readings - Friday 7pm (Reading Room)

Marian Womack, Ashley Stokes, Eygló Karlsdóttir.

The Screenwriting Panel - Friday 7pm (Panel Room 1)

Mark Stay (Moderator), Mark Morris, Gavin G. Smith, Phillip Fracassi, C. K. McDonnell.

Screenwriting is a discipline adjacent to writing books. Some take to it easily, others find it an anathema. Our panel discusses their screenwriting experiences and offers some advice on writers who are interested in the dos and don'ts of the discipline.

Award Recognition - Friday 7pm (Panel Room 2)

Adri Joy (Moderator), Francesca T Barbini, Adrian Tchaikovsky, Simon Kurt Unsworth.

What makes a work worthy of an award? What's it like to be nominated? How do all the different awards work? Our panel shares their experiences.

Karaoke: Rebellion - Friday 8pm (Main Room)

Disability in SFF - Friday 8pm (Room 4)

Robin CM Duncan (Moderator) Kit Whitfield, Hesper Leveret, Allen Stroud.

How are disabled characters portrayed in Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror? Can we highlight some good examples? Are there writer voices we should be championing to improve representation? This panel discusses stories that feature disabled characters.

Writing Collaborations - Friday 8pm (Panel Room 1)

Heide Goody (Moderator), Andrew Hook, Iain Grant, Alasdair Reynolds, Ruth Aylett.

Whether working with other writers on an anthology in a common setting, or writing a novel in partnership, there are methods of working that are particular to collaborators. Our panel share their experiences.

Poetry Corner - Friday 8pm (Panel Room 2)

Allen Ashley (Moderator)

In what has now become a staple of Fantasycon, Allen Ashley will once again be hosting the “Poetry

Round Robin”. Bring a couple of poems to share. No stars, no guest readers, we will get round and appreciate everybody.

For further details: Contact Allen on allenashley-writer@hotmail.co.uk

Horror Readings - Friday 8pm (Reading Room)

Phillip Fracassi, Benjamin Langley, C. C. Adams.

Fantasy Readings - Friday 9pm (Reading Room)

Damien Hine, Justin Lee Anderson, Anna Smith Spark.

Light and Laughter - Friday 9pm (Panel Room 1)

Randee Dawn (Moderator), Donna Scott, Andrew Crowther, Thomas D. Lee, Adam Millard.

Fantasy and Science Fiction with humour? Stories with lightness. Sometimes these elements are necessary to help readers get away from the real world. But, they can also be used to bring all sorts of other poignant qualities to a story. Our panel shares their experiences.

She Used To Do The Forecasts

By Allen Ashley

Thunder is the sound of God and his angels rearranging the heavenly furniture. Especially when not accompanied by lightning or rain. We get a lot of these aural disturbances since The Event. I pause in my daily search for substantial firewood, something better than the brittle twigs littering the parched local fields. Gazing upwards, I wonder what else apart from a marble throne and pearly gates gets shunted around. Tables, chairs? Beds? Pianos?

Science has failed us, so the old beliefs are back to prominence. The bitter irony is that my wife Maria has a degree in meteorology and used to do the forecasts on TV, explaining the difference between anticyclones and warm fronts. Now she peels scrawny root vegetables in the gloom, adds berries and fungi to the ever-simmering stew pot. I top this up with acrid water. She hums a line from *Keep the Homes Fires Burning*. I wish I could find the rest of the song but there's no electricity, no internet...

“Look at that angry sky,” I tell her. “Listen to that rumble.”

She stays crouched, the wooden spoon connecting her to the bubbling saucepan like a lightning rod.

The sky cracks again. I cover my ears but my eyes widen as I see a huge bench and a giant wardrobe fall from the clouds and crash about a mile to the west. Their landing is an aftershock, thunder's echo.

“Mary, find some rope. We have been blessed with new fuel and must fetch it.”

- Allen Ashley

Event Schedule Saturday

9:00am: Fantasycon Reception Opens (Reception Area)

Pick up your goodie bag and ID card from our desk. After this, a phone number will be left on the desk for you to contact if you have any queries. **Registration closes at 7pm.**

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 9.30am (Reading Room)

Stephen Aryan
Thomas D. Lee
Juliet E. McKenna
Teika Marija Smits

Shortcraft - Saturday 9.30am (Panel Room 2)

Pete Sutton (Moderator), Richard Clive, Rachel Grosvenor, Tina Rath, Devin Martin.

What makes a good short story? How can the word limit play to your advantage? Our panel discuss writing short and their experiences.

Futures and Science Fiction - Saturday 9.30am (Panel Room 3)

Allen Stroud (Moderator), Alastair Reynolds, Elliot Craggs, Eliza Mood, Pauline Kirk.

Can science fiction help us understand our real world future? Are there elements of prediction that can help us face challenges in the real world? Can I get some lottery numbers from you please? Our panel discusses how SF interprets the future and how this might be relevant to the present as we look forwards.

10:00am: Traders Open

Browse our selection of publishers and grab yourself some excellent books. **Traders close at 6pm.**

Launch: Dead Ink - Writing the The Future. Saturday 10.00am (Main Room)

Building Your Writer Website- Saturday 10.00am (Panel Room 1)

E.M. Faulds (Moderator) Steve Morgan, George Penney, Ryan Cahill, Cheryl Morgan.

Designing and maintaining your own space on the internet is part and parcel of being a writer these days. Our panel will go through some of the ways you can set up your website and offer advice on the dos and don'ts.

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 10.00am (Room 4)

Kit Whitfield
Shona Kinsella
Robin CM Duncan

Bad Girls in SFF - Saturday 10.30am (Panel Room 2)

A. Y. Chao (Moderator), Saara El-Arifi, Samantha Shannon, Tasha Suri, Kate Dylan.

Gone are the days of the meek princess awaiting rescue - a new crop of SFF protagonists are tearing up the rulebook and writing a different kind of story.

Detective Fiction in the Genres - Saturday 10.30am (Panel Room 3)

Sandra Unerman (Moderator), Tim Major, Dave Brzeski, Simon Clark, Alice James.

There's been a crime. There needs to be an investigation. That could be in space, in a fantasy world, or part of a horror story with elements far beyond the real. Our panel explore the interaction between a detective narrative and elements of fantasy, horror and science fiction.

Bar Opens 11am (Closes 12 Midnight).

Launch: Luna Press Maureen Kincaid Speller - Saturday 11.00am (Main Room).

Horror Readings - Saturday 11.00am (Room 4)

Tracy Fahey
Mathew Gostelow
Timothy J. Jarvis

Marketing and Promoting Your Work - Saturday 11.00am (Panel Room 1)

Richie Billing (Moderator), Lauren McMenemy, Steve Morgan, Tiffani Angus, Teika Marija Smits.

The hardest thing can be to sell yourself and your work. But in a crowded publishing industry, it is difficult to find the audience you deserve. Our panel share some advice and experiences of how they handle the challenge.

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 11.00am (Reading Room)

Lucy A. McLaren
Sam Hopkinson

Ian Hunter

Fantasy in Contemporary Times - Saturday 11.30am (Panel Room 2)

James Bennett (Moderator), Juliet McKenna, C. K. McDonnell, David Green, Randee Dawn.

Mixing 21st century milieu with the trapping of fantasy is bread and butter to many writers and readers. The subgenres abound, involving all sorts of supernatural and magical. Join our exploration of modern times with a magical twist.

Multi-culturalism in SFF - How to get it right - Saturday 11.30am (Panel Room 3)

Omar Kooheji (Moderator), Stewart Hotston, João F. Silva, Gabriela Houston, Anna Stephens

Fantasy, Horror and Science Fiction offers writers a chance to explore all sorts of different cultures and societies. Our panel discusses the ways in which you can avoid the pitfalls when trying to create worlds of diversity and variety.

Launch: Darkness Visible Publishing - Bloody Crazy Series by Simon Clark - Saturday 12 Noon (The Main Room)

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 12 Noon (Room 4)

Rosanne Rabinowitz
Ellis Saxey
Susan York

Science Fiction Readings - Saturday 12 Noon (Reading Room)

Tim Major
Adrian Tchaikovsky
Allen Stroud

Other People's Worlds - Saturday 12 Noon (Panel Room 1)

Mike Brooks (Moderator), Guy Haley, Anna Stephens, Maura McHugh, Weiqi Wang.

When the brand isn't your brand and your work uses characters or a setting that already has a history, there are a variety of important priorities you have to consider. Our panel discusses the how you go about working with pre-existing fictional worlds.

Doing the Research - Saturday 12.30 (Panel Room 2)

Tristan Gray (Moderator), Benjamin Langley, Lucy Holland, Ashley Stokes, David Wragg.

Often, writers immerse themselves in the subject material of their stories. If you don't, you risk being pulled up by a well-informed reader when you get something wrong! Our panel discusses the ways they research stories and how that research helps their writing.

World Ending Villainy - Saturday 12.30 (Panel Room 3).

Paul Woodward (Moderator) M H Ayinde, Will (W.P.) Wiles, Tina Rath, Anna Smith Spark.

Fantasy and Science Fiction stories often feature a Dark lord or lady. Many 21st century stories examine these archetypes in more detail - beyond the surface agenda. This discussion covers the twisted rationales of these would be world tyrants and destroyers.

Guest of Honour Interview: Ian Whates - Saturday 1pm (Main Room).

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 1pm (Room 4)

Charlotte Bond
Gary Couzens
Anna Stephens

Horror Readings - Saturday 1pm (Reading Room)

Alison Littlewood
Ramsey Campbell
Catherine Cavendish

The Elusive Agent - Saturday 1pm (Panel Room 1)

Ed Wilson (Moderator), Laura Bennett, Amanda Rutter, Kiya Evans, Bethany Lucas.

Are you sending submissions and getting rejections? Our panel tries to explain the mysterious work of agents. How many submissions they receive, why they accept and reject and what happens after that. Join in to learn about the process from writer to publication.

Immersion - Saturday 1.30pm (Panel Room 2)

Lucy Holland (Moderator), S. Slottje, Kit Whitfield, Tiffani Angus, Tad Williams

They suck you in. Right up to the tips of your ears and beyond. Stories can be an escape, but sometimes that escape can become all encompassing and consuming. How do we get immersed? What are the best and most moving stories? The ones that scare, that thrill and make you cry.

Folk Source - Saturday 1.30pm (Panel Room 3)

Gabriela Houston (Moderator), Jan Edwards, Allison

Littlewood, Tracy Fahey, Maura McHugh

Tales passed down through generations. Local legends reimagined into lingering horror or magical fantasy. Folktales cross genres and remain as sources of inspiration for writers. We will discuss.

Launch: Flame Tree Press - Anna Smith Spark & Allen Stroud - Saturday 2pm (Main Room)

The Muse - Saturday 2pm (Panel Room 1)

Juliet E. McKenna (Moderator), Sam Hopkinson, Ian Hunter, Shellie Horst, Russell Smith

Where do you get your inspiration for writing? Does the creativity well ever run dry? If it does, what are your tips for finding your muse again? How do you preserve your creativity in a long writing career? This panel will consider the barriers to being and maintaining a career as a professional writer.

Science Fiction Readings - Saturday 2pm (The Reading Room)

E.M. Faulds
Eliza Mood

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 2pm (Room 4)

Gabriela Houston
Elijah Kinch Spector
Susie Williamson

Between Genres - Saturday 2.30pm (Panel Room 2)

Allen Ashley (Moderator), Dan Coxon, Adam Millard, Frances White, Andrew Hook.

You can have spaceships and dragons. You can have magic and laser beams. The writer's toolbox doesn't have to be genre specific. Our panel discuss writing that can't be put into one particular genre box and how they go about it.

Fantasy: Where Are The People Like Me? - Saturday 2.30pm (Panel Room 3)

Cheryl Morgan (Moderator), Lindz McLeod, Omar Kooheji, C. L. McCartney.

A panel that looks at how different readers can see themselves in the fantasy worlds of authors. This is a consideration of identity and formative inspiration.

Launch: Titan - Saturday 3pm (The Main Room)

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 3pm (The Reading Room)

Ruth Aylett

A. Y. Chao
Alice James

Writing 21st Century Horror - Saturday 3pm (Panel Room 1)

Kat Day (Moderator), Phil Sloman, Ramsey Campbell, Philip Fracassi, Raven Dane.

What are the new techniques and innovations in Horror? Is there a new scare? How does the tradition of horror writing help us develop new stories and new ideas? Join our panel to discuss and pick up some reading recommendations.

Fantasy Fellowship Panel: Connecting with the Reader Market - Saturday 3pm (Room 4)

I.R. Fox (Moderator), Kiya Evans, Brett Kirchner, Eleanor Teasdale, Sarah Wilkinson.

Fantasy Fellowship sits down with experts from across the book industry to discuss what makes a book sell successfully and what draws readers to purchase their next book.

Writing Fighting 2: The Revenge! - Saturday 3.30pm (Panel Room 2)

Anna Smith Spark (Moderator) Kate Dylan, David Wragg, Shauna Lawless, Aparna Verma.

The combat scene panel returns! Expert authors discuss how they approach battles and duels in their novels. Who knows? They may even act out a few?

Writing for Younger Readers - Saturday 3.30pm (Panel Room 3)

Damien Hine (Moderator), Weiqi Wang, Sandra Unerman, Ian Hunter.

Telling a story for younger readers can be difficult. What are the dos and don'ts of writing fantasy, horror and science fiction that can inspire the next generation? What are the different categories and how do you define "Young Adult" or "Middle Grade"?

Guest of Honour Interview: Alistair Reynolds - Saturday 4pm (The Main Room)

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 4pm (Room 4)

Maura McHugh
Aparna Verma

Horror Readings - Saturday 4pm (The Reading Room)

Simon Kurt Unsworth
Steve Toase

Richard Clive

Character Gender and Sexuality - Saturday 4pm (Panel Room 1)

James Bennett(Moderator), Ruth Aylett, Elijah Kinch Spector, Trip Galey, C. L, McCartney.

Improving the way we portray gender, and the way in which sexuality is conveyed in fantasy, horror and science fiction is essential. There is always more to learn and more we can do. Our panel discuss positive representations and content, highlighting some ways in which writers could explore these elements thoughtfully.

Feminism in Fantasy Saturday 4.30pm (Panel Room 2)

Charlotte Bond (Moderator), Kate Dylan, Samantha Shannon, Susie Williamson, M H Ayinde.

Fantasy is improving, in terms of balance and the equity of characters and protagonists, but we have a ways to go. Our panel discusses positive developments of 'F in F'.

Creepy Creepy - Saturday 4.30pm (Panel Room 3)

Kat Day (Moderator), David Watkins, C.C. Adams, Catherine Cavendish, Will (W. P.) Wiles.

The horror seeps in, gradually builds, lingers and stays around long after you've shut the book, or turned off your ereader. Join our panel for a conversation on how best to create a little squeam.

Launch: Fly On The Wall - Saturday 5pm (The Main Room)

Readings - Saturday 5pm (Room 4)

Phil Sloman
Trip Galey
Ruth EJ Booth

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 5pm (The Reading Room)

Tad Williams
Frances White
David Wragg

Supporting Artists - Saturday 5pm (Panel Room 1)

Rose Drew (Moderator), Jenni Coutts, David McCormack, Weiqi Wang, Andrew Knighton.

Stories can describe incredible places and moments. An artist who works on a cover, or collaborates with a graphic novelist is a massive part of how that world

is imagined by the reader. The artist perspective and approach can be different, but just as creative.

The Shudder - Saturday 5.30pm (Panel Room 2)

David Watkins (Moderator), Eygló Karlsdóttir, Catherine Cavendish, Alison Littlewood, Simon Kurt Unsworth.

How do you work with the scary? What makes a reader afraid and how can a writer use that fear? Join our panel as they discuss this key element of writing horror.

Contracts - Saturday 5.30pm(Panel Room 3)

Allen Stroud (Moderator), Joanne Harris, Francesca T Barbini, Dan Coxon, Lauren Mcmenemy.

Surprisingly or unsurprisingly, writers are often very anxious about the wording of a contract. After the euphoria fades, should we be worried about what we signed? Our panels shares some experiences with contracts.

Readings - Saturday 6pm (The Reading Room)

Raven Dane
Jess Hyslop
Jen Williams

Writerly Experiences - Saturday 6pm (Room 4)

Heide Goody (Moderator), Ian Whates, Thomas D. Lee, Aparna Verma, Ruth EJ Booth.

The journey of every writer is different. Where are you in your work right now? What has helped you along the way? Our panel share their journeys and try to offer some advice and support from their experiences.

The Doctor Who Panel - Saturday 6pm (Panel Room 1)

Sasha Sienna (Moderator), Tim Major, Ben Kurt Unsworth, Mark Morris, Raven Dane.

The UK's most famous time traveller! Our panel discuss their experiences of Doctor Who and consider the influence of the franchise in SFF.

Let's Play Fantasy Ecology - Saturday 6.30pm (Panel Room 2)

PS Livingstone (Moderator), Susie Williamson, Chris Behrsin, João F. Silva.

Living things and the worlds they inhabit. Writers of Fantasy are not bound by reality and so can invent weird and wonderful things. Join us for a tour amidst the creatures and peoples that never existed.

Help us invent new life and discuss how it might survive and thrive.

Self Publishing Journeys - Saturday 6.30pm (Panel Room 3)

David Cartwright (Moderator), Kevin Elliott, David Watkins, Ryan Cahill, Michael R. Miller.

Is self-publishing right for you? Or is it something you just want to explore so you have options? Our panel discuss their experiences with self-publishing and offer some advice.

The British Fantasy Awards Banquet - Saturday 7pm (The Main Room).

The society's annual dinner that precedes The British Fantasy Awards.

The Great British Monster Off - Saturday 7.30pm (Panel Room 2)

Iain Grant (Moderator), Ellis Saxey, Cheryl Morgan, Heide Goody, Ashley Stokes.

They come from impossible worlds, drawn from terrifying stories to compete in this contest of champions. Who will win? Dragons? Demons? Parasites? Viruses? A humorous face off between monstrous beasts!

The Tropes Bin - Saturday 7.30pm (Panel Room 3)

Robin CM Duncan (Moderator), Mark Morris, Lucy McLaren, Sandra Unerman, Kevin Elliott.

Fantasy, Horror and Science Fiction all have their formulas of plot, character and setting. What are the tropes that have been done to death, or passed their sell by date? Can we dust some of them off and give them new life?

Fantasy Readings - Saturday 8pm (The Reading Room)

Adam Millard

Ben Kurt Unsworth

Ryan Cahill

True Story

By Randee Dawn

I swiped Miss Evers' fountain pen. It's older'n her an' drips but she loves it. Teach her to fail me in CompLit. Craparoonie pen still uses ink. Jeez, it's 1952, not 1852.

The pen is mightier than the atom bomb, she said. Not the sword.

The Return of Utopias/The End of Dystopias - Saturday 8.30pm (Panel Room 3)

Rose Drew (Moderator). Rosanne Rabinowitz, Andrew Crowther, Eliza Mood.

The world turns and the lights dim. When we are looking for hope or an escape from grim reality, a better world awaits in utopian fiction. Are there better ways for human civilisation? How do these new utopias answer their critics? Similarly, with the world turning to the dark, is this the end for the fictional apocalypse?

The British Fantasy Awards - Saturday 9pm (The Main Room).

Featuring the prize giving for Best Anthology, Best Artist, Best Collection, Best Comic/Graphic Novel, Best Fantasy Novel, Best Film/TV Production, Best Horror Novel, Best Independent Press, Best magazine/Periodical, Best Newcomer, Best Non-fiction, Best Novella, Best Short Fiction, Best Audio Work, and the Karl Wagner Award.

Dungeons & Disorderly - Saturday 10.00pm (Panel Room 1)

David Thomas Moore (Moderator), Alice James, Stewart Hotston, Mike Brooks, AK Faulkner, Laura Bennett.

This panel will start after the awards concludes. It's the return of the annual Dungeons and Disorderly panel! Join David Thomas Moore as he leads a haphazard gang of cyber wizards, biker elves and hacker trolls in a poorly executed heist in an edgy near-future world where metal meets magic...

Tales From The Dark - Saturday 10.00pm (Panel Room 3)

Kit Power (Moderator), Eygló Karlsdóttir, Philip Fracassi, Tina Rath.

This panel will start after the awards concludes. Late night horror short stories in the dark from a selection of horror writers, presented by Kit Power. Be prepared to be scared!

So I wrote: My dog has fleas

Alphonse didn't twitch. I forgot the period. I wrote: "."

He started scratchin' like mad.

I wrote: The world ends at noon today

Dumbass. Practically noon right now. I went to cross out the line.

The pen dripped.

One perfect period.

Now sirens're wailin' outside. Whoop whoop wh

The Garden Does Need a Good Water

By Kat Day

It was a dark and stormy night.

Well, it had to happen occasionally.

Father Brennan looked out of his window and smiled. It was June – that obstreperous month which English people, in denial of all prior experience, always expected to be dry and calm. And which usually contrived to be anything but.

In fairness, the morning had been sunny and blue-skied, with that cool, hopeful ambiance that so often followed sunrise. The priest, who had been paying attention to the weather forecast, had ridden to the reservoir. There, he had extracted his tartan blanket from his bicycle's basket, along with a large thermos flask of tea, and settled down to a morning of enthusiastic prayer.

It had been rather lovely. He'd even had time to enjoy a slice of lemon drizzle cake.

By midday, clouds had begun to dim the sky. Not rain, not yet, but the air had lost its earlier clarity and become heavy and muggy. Clouds of tiny, black insects appeared as if from nowhere and were clustering around his head, leaving him with the uncomfortable fear that he might be unwillingly inhaling their tiny bodies.

Father Brennan packed up his things and made for home.

This time of year, of course, the days were long and the nights short, but the storm clouds had darkened the sky early and ensured there was neither moon or starlight. By eleven pm, it was black as velvet across the land at the back of the rectory. There weren't even streetlights, here. Not that those would bother them.

They had been a nuisance, lately. Father Brennan wasn't sure if his little experiment would work, but if it didn't, well, it had only cost him a morning by the

reservoir. Hardly a high price to pay.

He pulled a chair over to the window and touched the heavy, silver crucifix he wore around his neck. At that moment, the sky flashed. Not a filmic fork of lightning, rather a simple second of brightness, followed two beats later by a thick rumble that hit deep in his gut.

Heavy drops of rain began to splatter against the windows. The priest sat down in the chair and sipped from his cup of tea. The vampires tended to pass this way on their way out of the crypt. Not every night, but these conditions would, he thought, appeal to their sense of drama.

In the past they'd had a sort of agreement. An armistice, you might say. He didn't bother them, and they didn't bother the town. They didn't really need human blood. They didn't need much of anything, actually. They were, at the end of it all, immortal.

Well, mostly.

Some of the younger ones had been getting ideas lately, though, and things had become... messy. A strong message needed to be sent.

Lightning flashed again, and this time he saw, just for a second, figures in the darkness. Not moving with their usual lithe, unnatural grace, but rather hunched, contorted – as though in pain. And it was hard to be entirely certain, but... was that steam?

Father Brennan sipped his tea and sat back. Well, well. He really hadn't been sure. If water evaporates in one place, is the same water likely to fall as rain nearby? And then there were really quite considerable dilution factors to consider. Astonishing, really.

He hummed to himself. It was truly a dark and stormy night, and there was a great deal of very blessed rain.

Snakes No. 1-3

By Randee Dawn

Garters are smarter among snakes you might pet
They won't mind a poke just for practice
But reach for an adder and you'll just make him madder
His bite comes full of anaphylaxis

The king snake is royal and understandably vain
He'll dress up if asked to high tea
But disinvite the krait to any blind date
His venom could lose you a kidney

Devorah – so devoted to both beaus and reptiles
"Be friends!" she'd insist. "Take a chance!"
But a big hug from a boa is unfortunately a no go-a
And black mambas do not like to dance.

Event Schedule Sunday

9:30am: Fantasycon Reception Opens (Reception Area)

Pick up your goodie bag and ID card from our desk. After this, a phone number will be left on the desk for you to contact if you have any queries. **Registration closes at 12 Noon.**

10:00am: Traders Open

Browse our selection of publishers and grab yourself some excellent books. **Traders close at 1pm.**

Fantasy Readings - Sunday 10.00am (The Reading Room)

Guy Haley, Rosa B. Watkinson, Lindz Mcleod.

BFS AGM - Sunday 10:00am (Panel Room 1)

Shona Kinsella, John Dodd, Karen Fishwick.

The annual meeting of the British Fantasy Society, presided over by the committee. All members of the society are invited to attend.

Fandom: From THEN to NOW - Sunday 10.00am (Panel Room 2)

Ruth EJ Booth (Moderator), Lucy A. McLaren, Stewart Hotston, David Cartwright., Andrew Knighton.

The 2010s saw Fantasy fandom in upheaval, from the Sad Puppies and Gamergate, to greater fan-creator interaction, the legitimization of fanon, and blink-and-you'll-miss-it TV. With the rise of hybrid conventions after COVID, and on the eve of the BFS Journal special on Gaming, we ask where are genre fandoms in 2023? And what does the future hold?

Science! Pseudoscience! Science Fiction! - Sunday 10:00am (Panel Room 3)

Allen Stroud (Moderator), Adam Millard, M V Melcer, Gavin G. Smith, Alistair Reynolds.

The interaction between science and science fiction in a story can be a continual process, with writers inventing technology and innovations that are based on real world science. Our panel discusses the way in which science and science fiction can connect, how science fiction can inspire a new generation of scientists and their own experiences negotiating the interaction.

Guest of Honour Interview: Tasha Suri - Sunday 11am (The Main Room)

Readings - Sunday 11am (The Reading Room)

Joanne Harris, Andrew Crowther, Shellie Horst.

Bar Opens 11am (Closes 12 Midnight).

Make Them Suffer - Sunday 11.00am (Panel Room 2)

Alice James (Moderator), Jenni Coutts, Ramsey Campbell, Steve Toase, Jen Williams.

It is often said that the characters in a book have to undergo adversity before they achieve anything. That could be physical injury, or mental erosion. Sometimes that adversity can be extreme. Our panel discusses the suffering and how to get it right so that readers aren't triggered.

The Editor - Sunday 11.00am (Panel Room 3)

Jonathan Oliver (Moderator), Ian Whates, Teika Marija Smits, Mel Wright, Pete Coleborn.

A story is submitted and accepted. That's only the start. Now you get to work with the editor. Join our panel to discuss editing experiences. What are the different types of editing and how does it all work?

Launch: The BFS Anthology - Sunday 12 Noon (The Main Room)

Shona Kinsella

Readings - Sunday 12 Noon (The Reading Room)

M V Melcer, Pauline Kirk, Kevin Elliott.

A Conclave of Mages and Sages - Sunday 12 Noon (Panel Room 1)

Hesper Leveret (Moderator), Justin Lee Anderson, Marian Womack, M H Ayinde, Stephen Aryan

Magic permeates fantasy. There are a myriad of interpretations proposed and described by writers. Our panel are magical experts in their own writing, and will offer some thoughts on how magic can be used in stories. The balance between systems and mystery or toolkit and wonder.

Marmite Characters - Sunday 12 Noon (Panel Room 2)

Anna Stephens (Moderator), Ryan Cahill, A. Y. Chao, Sam Hopkinson, Aparna Verma.

The heroes you hate, the villains who you miss when they're gone. There are a whole assortment of marmite characters - those individuals who can divide opinion. Join us to discuss how to make them,

and what we think of them.

The Publishers Panel - Sunday 12 Noon (Panel Room 3)

Eleanor Teasdale (Moderator), Nick Wells, David Stokes, Ian Whates, Nadia Saward.

Publishing opportunities for UK writers of fantasy, science fiction and horror are available all the time. You may not know where to find the right place for your story, or how best to approach the people you want to read your work. Our panel discusses different routes for authors and how they can navigate the world of publishing.

Fantasy Readings - Sunday 1.00pm (Panel Room 3)

João F. Silva, Alethea Lyons, Rachel Grosvenor

Fantasy Readings - Sunday 1.00pm (The Reading Room)

Lauren McClelland, Chris Behrsin, Tristan Gray

Audiobooks - Sunday 1pm (Panel Room 1)

Iain Grant (Moderator), Rosa B. Watkinson, Michael R. Miller, Rose Drew, Pauline Kirk.

Making audiobooks, writing in a way that helps your work to be read out loud. Our panel discusses their experiences of working on audiobooks and offers some advice for those interested.

Roll The Dice - Sunday 1pm (Panel Room 2)

David Cartwright (Moderator), C. L. Gamble, Justin Lee Anderson, Pete Sutton.

Roleplaying games are an adjacent creative industry to the craft of writing stories. So many elements of roleplaying games are relevant to how you can ap-

proach storytelling. Our panel share some experiences and advice from playing and creating roleplaying games that might be useful for new imagineers.

Ballroom Warfare - Sunday 1pm (The Main Room 3)

Anna Smith Spark (Moderator), Shona Kinsella, Elijah Kinch Spector, Sinead Gosai, Andrew Knighton.

War doesn't just take place on the battlefield. Conflicts can erupt in all sorts of places and what you wear can make a statement about how prepared you are for different types of fighting. Join our panel for a discussion about verbal sparring, poisonings, impromptu assassinations and more.

Making Worlds - Sunday 2pm (The Main Room 3)

Mike Brooks (Moderator), Tasha Suri, Adrian Tchaikovsky, Jen Williams, Shauna Lawless.

The creation of a setting and a context around the story to be told. Making worlds draws experience from authors, roleplaying game designers and computer game designers.

Neurodiversity - Sunday 2pm (Panel Room 1)

Emily Inkpen (Moderator), Kit Whitfield, Susie Williamson, Ben Kurt Unsworth.

Authors who are neurodiverse, characters who are neurodiverse. Widening representation in stories for readers and learning from personal experience. What are good examples in stories. Panelists share their experiences.

The Dead Dog Party - 3pm (The Main Room)

An after party celebration of the convention, its participants, volunteers and organisers. Thank you all for coming! **Party ends at 6pm.**

Candles

By Allen Ashley

It's an unhealthy glow:
my bones are showing
through my flesh like
I'm a walking X-ray.
Don't light a candle. Haven't we
had enough brightness already?

Flashes that blinded, neutralised
our sperm and our ovaries.
I find that my skin is increasingly
green-tinged. That was not
a shade from the previous array

of human beauty tones.

I haven't been able to eat
for days. Sips of water
taste like tarnished metal.

And so it was that he lit the candle,
then they lit the candle and we...
well, we had to light a candle in response.
Megatons of candle wax
obliterating, guttering, gutting.
No more candles, please.
Nothing pleasant to see here,
move along now. If you still have limbs.

(Previously published online at "101 Fiction")

Fantasycon 2023 Timetable (Friday)

Friday												
Room	105 - 110 - Main room	112 - Panel Room 1	114 - Panel room 2	104 - Room 4	103 - Reading Room	Registration and info desk	101/102 - Dealers Room					
11am						Registration Open	traders open 12 till 6pm					
12noon												
1pm												
2pm												
3pm												
4pm												
	Eerie River Launch - David Green	Reading Something New	New to Fantasycon		Reading Fantasy (3)							
5pm	PS Publishing Launch		Imaginative Audio		Reading Fantasy (3)							
6pm	Newcon Press Launch		World Mythologies		Reading Fantasy (3)							
7pm	Welcome to Fantasycon	The Screenwriting Panel	Award Recognition	Reading Horror (3)								
8pm		Writing Collaborations	Friday Night Poetry	Disability in SFF								
9pm	Light and Laughter											
10pm												

Fantasycon 2023 Timetable (Saturday Morning/Afternoon)

Saturday										
Room	105 - 110 - Main room	112 - Panel Room 1	114 - Panel room 2	116 - Panel Room 3	104 - Room 4	103 - Reading Room	Registration and info desk	101/102		
Function	Big events	Panels/Talks	Panels/Talks	Panels/Talks/Readings		Readings	Registration	Traders		
9:00 AM										
10:00 AM	Dead Ink Launch - Writing the Future	Building Your Writer Website	Shortcraft	Futures and Science Fiction	Reading Fantasy (3)	Reading Fantasy (4)	Registration Open	Traders open 10am till 6pm		
11:00 AM	Luna Press Launch - Maureen Kincaid Speller	Marketing and Promoting your Work	Bad Girls in SFF	Detective Fiction in the Genres	Reading Horror (3)	Reading Fantasy (3)				
12 Noon	Darkness Visible Publishing Launch: Bloody Crazy Series by Simon Clark	Other People's Worlds	Fantasy in Contemporary Times	Multi-culturalism in SFF - How to get it right	Reading Fantasy (3)	Reading Science Fiction (3)				
1:00 PM	Guest of Honour Interview: Ian Whates	The Elusive Agent	Doing the Research	World Ending Villainy	Reading Fantasy (3)	Reading Horror (3)				
2:00 PM	Flame Tree Launch - Anna Smith Spark & Allen Stroud	The Muse...	Immersion	Folk Source	Reading Fantasy (3)	Reading Science Fiction (3)				
3:00 PM			Between Genres	Fantasy: Where Are The People Like Me?						

Fantasycon 2023 Timetable (Saturday Afternoon/Evening)

Saturday												
	Room	105 - 110 - Main room	112 - Panel Room 1	114 - Panel room 2	116 - Panel Room 3	104 - Room 4	103 - Reading Room	Registration and info desk	101/102			
	Function	Big events	Panels/Talks	Panels/Talks	Panels/Talks/Readings		Readings	Registration	Traders			
3pm		Titan Launch	Writing 21st Century Horror			Fantasy Fellowship Panel: Connecting with the Reader Market	Reading Fantasy (3)					
4pm		Guest of Honour Interview: Alistair Reynolds	Character Gender and Sexuality	Writing Fighting 2: The Revenge!	Writing for Younger Readers	Reading Fantasy (3)	Reading Horror (3)					
5pm		Fly on the Wall Launch	Supporting Artists	Feminism in Fantasy	Creepy Creepy	Reading Fantasy (3)	Reading Fantasy (3)					
6pm		Banquet set up	The Doctor Who Panel	The Shudder...	Contracts	Writerly Experiences	Reading Fantasy (3)					
7pm				Let's Play Fantasy Ecology	Self-Publishing Journeys							
8pm		Banquet		The Great British Monster Off!	The Tropes Bin							
9pm					The Return of Utopias/The End of Dystopias		Reading Fantasy (3)					
10pm		British Fantasy Awards										
11pm			Dungeons and Disorderly		Tales from the Dark with Kit Power							

Fantasycon 2023 Timetable (Sunday)

Sunday								
Room	105 - 110 - Main room	103 - Reading Room	112 - Panel Room 1	114 - Panel room 2	116 - Panel Room 3	Registration and info desk	101/102	
Function	Big events	Readings	Panels/Talks	Panels/Talks	Panels/Talks/Readings	Registration	Traders	
9am								
10am		Reading Fantasy (3)	BFS AGM	Fandom: From THEN to NOW.	Science! Pseudoscience! Science Fiction!	Registration Open	traders open 10am to 1pm	
11am	Guest of Honour Interview - Tasha Suri	Reading Fantasy (3)		Make Them Suffer	The Editor			
12noon	BFS Anthology Launch	Reading (3)	A Conclave of Mages and Sages	Marmite Characters	The Publishers Panel			
1pm	Ballroom Warfare	Reading Science Fiction (3)	Audiobooks	Roll the Dice!	Reading Fantasy (3)			
2pm	Making Worlds		Neurodiversity					
3pm	Dead Dog Party (Informal Social Gathering)							
4pm								
5pm								

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The British Fantasy Awards 2023

Compiled and Organised by Katherine Fowler - (BFS Awards Administrator)

The votes are in, the jurors have been empanelled, and we are delighted to announce the shortlists for this year's British Fantasy Awards! Many congratulations to all!

Best Newcomer (The Sydney J. Bounds Award)

Jurors: Liz Delton, Michael Dodd, Fabienne Schwiz-er, Arturo Serrano, Stephen Theaker

- Sunyi Dean, for *The Book Eaters* (Tor)
- Hiron Ennes, for *Leech* (Tor)
- Somto Ihezue, for a collection of short stories: *Whole; Like Stars Daring to Shine; A Girl is Blood, Spirit and Fire; The Carving of War*
- Shauna Lawless, for *The Children of Gods and Fighting Men* (Head of Zeus)
- Elijah Kinch Spector, for *Kalyna the Soothsayer* (Erewhon Books)
- Susan York, for *Starless and Bible Black* (Midnight Street Press)

Best Non-Fiction

Jurors: Cerys Gardner, Susan Maxwell, Kevin McVeigh, TJ Moules, Aparna Sivasankar

- *An Earnest Blackness* – Eugen Bacon (Anti-Oedipus Press)
- *Fantasy: How it Works* – Brian Attebery (OUP)
- *The Full Lid* – Alasdair Stuart, ed. Marguerite Kenner
- *My Life in Horror, Vol. 2* – Kit Power
- *Outlander and the Real Jacobites* – Shona Kinsella (Pen & Sword History)
- *Terry Pratchett: A Life with Footnotes* – Rob Wilkins (Doubleday)

Best Artist

Jurors: Cat Anderson, Mehzeb Chowdhury, David Green, Adam McDowall, Paul Yates

- **Chris Baker** (Fangorn)
- **Ben Baldwin**
- **Jenni Coutts**
- **Vince Haig**
- **Dan Hillier**

Best Magazine / Periodical

Jurors: Jonathan Laidlow, Hesper Leveret, Lauren McMenemy, Eleanor Pender, Nathaniel Spain

- **Ginger Nuts of Horror**
- **Interzone**
- **Shoreline of Infinity**
- **Strange Horizons**

Best Independent Press

Jurors: Rowena Andrews, Andy Angel, Robin CM Duncan, Alex Norriss, Sara Omer

- **Black Shuck Books**
- **Flame Tree Press**
- **Luna Press Publishing**
- **NewCon Press**

Best Audio

Jurors: Rosemarie Cawkwell, Arden Fitzroy, Morgan Greensmith, Amy Portsmouth

- Breaking the Glass Slipper
- The Painkiller Podcast (Bitter Pill Theatre)
- Podcastle (Escape Artists)
- Pseudopod (Escape Artists)
- The Secret of St. Kilda (Michael Ireland & Naomi Clarke)
- The Stranger Times (C.K. McDonnell)

Best Anthology

Jurors: Chris Butler, Robin CM Duncan, Ian Hunter, Mira Manga, Abbi Shaw

- *Africa Risen: A New Era of Speculative Fiction*, ed. Sheree Renée Thomas, Oghenechovwe Donald Ekpeki & Zelda Knight (Tordotcom) with stories by Dilman Dila, WC Dunlap, Steven Barnes, Joshua Omenga, Russell Nichols, Nuzo Onoh, Franka Zeph, Yvette Lisa Ndlovu, Wole Talabi, Sandra Jackson-Opoku, Aline-Mwezi Niyonsenga, Alex Jennings, Mirette Bahgat, Timi Odueso, Maurice Broaddus, Tlotlo Tsamaase, Tobias S. Buckell, Somto Ihezue Onyedikachi, Tananarive Due, Ytasha L. Womack, Oyedotun Damilola, Alexis Brooks de Vita, Tobi Ogundiran, Moustapha Mbacké Diop, Akua Lezli Hope, Mame Bougouma Diene and Woppa Diallo, Shingai Njeri

Kagunda, Ada Nnadi, Ivana Akotowaa Ofori, Chinelo Onwualu, Danian Darrell Jerry, and Dare Segun Falowo.

- ***The Book of Queer Saints***, ed. Mae Murray (Medusa Publishing Haus) with stories by Eric Larocca, Hailey Piper, Joe Koch, Briar Ripley Page, Nikki R. Leigh, Joshua R. Pangborn, Eric Raglin, Belle Tolls, Perry Ruhland, James Bennett, LC von Hessen, K.S. Walker, and George Daniel Lea.
- ***Great British Horror 7: Major Arcana***, ed. Steve J. Shaw (Black Shuck Books), with stories by Ida Keogh, Anna Taborska, Dan Coxon, Jonathan Sims, Lynda E Rucker, Gary Budden, Carly Holmes, Malcolm Devlin, Alison Moore, Steven J Dines, and Conrad Williams
- ***Isolation: The Horror Anthology***, ed. Dan Coxon (Titan) with stories by Paul Tremblay, Joe R. Lansdale, Ken Liu, M.R. Carey, Jonathan Marberry, Tim Lebbon, Lisa Tuttle, Michael Marshall Smith, Ramsey Campbell, Nina Allan, Laird Barron, Angela Slatter, Mark Morris, Alison Littlewood, Brian Evenson, Lynda Rucker, Owl Goingback, Gwendolyn Kiste, Marian Womack and Chikodili Emelumadu.
- ***Sky Breaker: Tales of the Wanderer*** – Lee C. Conley, H.L. Tinsley, J.E. Hannaford, David Green, Derek Power, C. Marry Hultman, Damien Larkin and C.F. Welburn (Nordic Press)
- ***Someone in Time***, ed. Jonathan Strahan (Solaris) with stories by Alix E. Harrow, Zen Cho, Seanan McGuire, Sarah Gailey, Jeffrey Ford, Nina Allan, Elizabeth Hand, Lavanya Lakshminarayan, Catherynne M. Valente, Sam J. Miller, Rowan Coleman, Margo Lanagan, Sameem Siddiqui, Theodora Goss, Carrie Vaughn, and Ellen Klages.

Best Short Fiction

Jurors: Laura Bennett, Andrew Freudenberg, Jessica Levai, Peter McLean

- *The Call of El Tunche* – Shona Kinsella (in *Weird Horror Anthology*, Flame Tree Press)
- *A Moment of Zugzwang* – Neil Williamson (in *ParSec #4*)
- *Morta* – James Bennett (in *The Book of Queer Saints*, Medusa Publishing Haus)
- *The Tails That Make You* – Eliza Chan (in *Fantasy Magazine #82*)

Best Collection

Jurors: Brian Kinsella, Ann Landmann, Chris McNallen-Jones, India Nye, Derek Schofield

- ***Behind a Broken Smile*** – Penny Jones (Black Shuck Books)

- ***Breakable Things*** – Cassandra Khaw (Undertow Publications)
- ***Candescent Blooms*** – Andrew Hook (Salt Publishing)
- ***Under the Moon*** – E.M. Faulds (Ghost Moth Press)

Best Novella

Jurors: Rick Danforth, Elizabeth Elliot, Jessica Hyslop, E. Saxey, Miranda Seitz-McLeese

- ***And Then I Woke Up*** – Malcolm Devlin (Tordotcom)
- ***The Entropy of Loss*** – Stewart Hotston (NewCon Press)
- ***Interference*** – Terry Grimwood (Elsewhen Press)
- ***Ogres*** – Adrian Tchaikovsky (Solaris)
- ***Pomegranates*** – Priya Sharma (PS Publishing)
- ***The Queen of the High Fields*** – Rhiannon A. Grist (Luna Press Publishing)

Best Horror Novel (The August Derleth Award)

Jurors: Ben Appleby-Dean, Theresa Derwin, Rhian Drinkwater, Rebecca Gault, Sasha Sienna

- ***Full Immersion*** – Gemma Amor (Angry Robot)
- ***The Hollows*** – Daniel Church (Angry Robot)
- ***Just Like Home*** – Sarah Gailey (Hodder & Stoughton)s
- ***Miracle Growth*** – Tim Mendeas (Eerie River Publishing)
- ***Sundial*** – Catriona Ward (Viper)

Best Fantasy Novel (The Robert Holdstock Award)

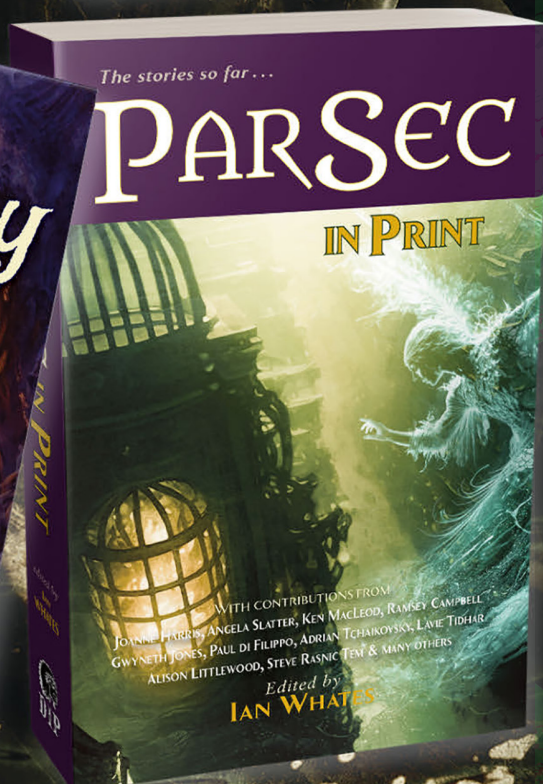
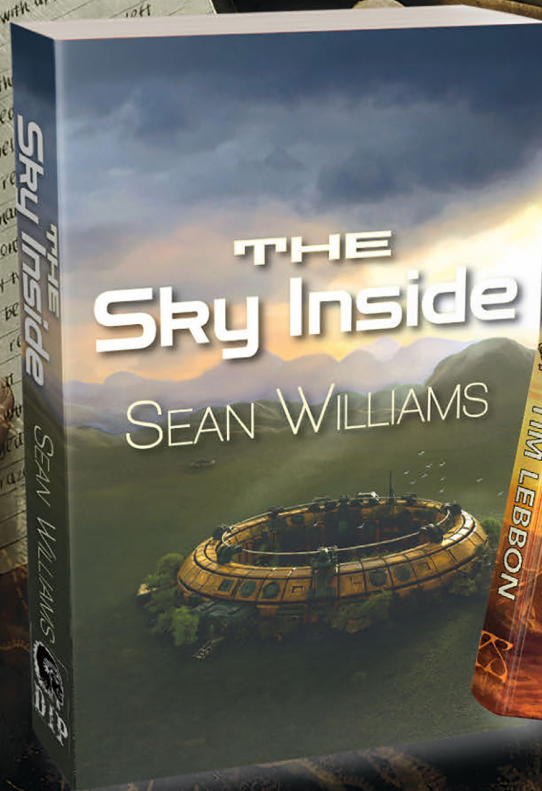
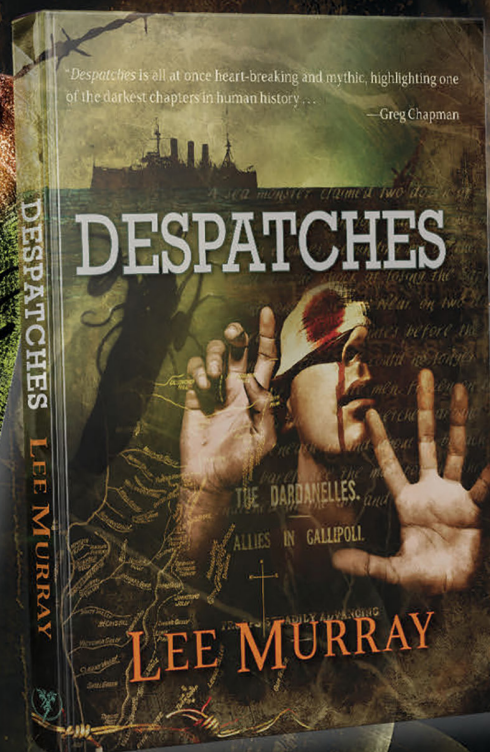
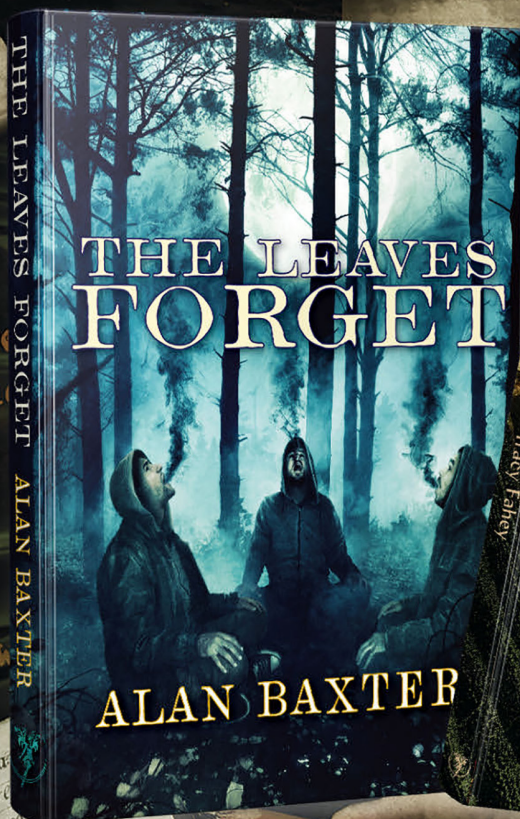
Jurors: Elias Eells, Elloise Hopkins, S.D. Howarth, Nadya Mercik, Roseanna Pendlebury

- ***The Bone Orchard*** – Sara A. Mueller (Tor)
- ***Cast Long Shadows*** – Cat Hellisen (Luna Press Publishing)
- ***Glitterati*** – Oliver K. Langmead (Titan)
- ***The Oleander Sword*** – Tasha Suri (Orbit)
- ***Path of War*** – David Green (Eerie River Publishing)
- ***The Spear Cuts Through Water*** – Simon Jimenez (Del Rey)



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