

Current shortlist

Science fiction

Adam Roberts - *Bête*
Andrew Hunter Murray - *The Last Day*.epub
Katherine Haake – *The Time of Quarantine*
Terry Miles – *Rabbits*

Fantasy

Eric McCormack - *The Paradise Motel*
Erika T Wurth - *White Horse*.epub
Jeffrey Alan Love - *Notes from the Shadowed City*
Marc Joan – *The Cartoon Lives* ...

Science Fiction

Adam Roberts - *Bête*

A man is about to kill a cow. He discusses life and death and his right to kill with the compliant animal. He begins to suspect he may be about to commit murder. But kills anyway...

It began when the animal right movement injected domestic animals with artificial intelligences in bid to have the status of animals realigned by the international court of human rights. But what is an animal that can talk? Where does its intelligence end at its machine intelligence begin? And where might its soul reside.

As we place more and more pressure on the natural world and become more and more divorced Adam Roberts' new novel posits a world where nature can talk back, and can question us and our beliefs.

Andrew Hunter Murray - *The Last Day*

It is 2059, and the world has crashed. Forty years ago, a solar catastrophe began to slow the planet's rotation to a stop. Now one half of the globe is permanently sunlit, the other half trapped in an endless night. The United States has colonized the southern half of Great Britain--lucky enough to find itself in the narrow habitable region left between frozen darkness and scorching sunlight--where both nations have managed to survive the ensuing chaos by isolating themselves from the rest of the world.

Ellen Hopper is a scientist living on a frostbitten rig in the cold Atlantic. She wants nothing more to do with her country after its slide into casual violence and brutal authoritarianism. Yet when two government officials arrive, demanding she return to London to see her dying college mentor, she accepts--and begins to unravel a secret that threatens not only the nation's fragile balance, but the future of the whole human race.

Katherine Haake – *The Time of Quarantine*

Lyrical, provocative, and deeply haunting, *The Time of Quarantine* takes us into a near-distant future of post-human environmental collapse to chronicle the tale of a boy raised alone in the woods by computers at the end of the world--or is it? As the sole surviving member of an ill-fated Intentional Community designed to escape world's-end plagues and convinced he is alone on earth, the boy--now a man--is determined to carry out the final wishes of his father and fulfil his stoic duties of being merely human. But when he discovers, as if by accident, that everything he's always imagined to be

true is instead a lie, he decides to leave the safety of his little spinning plot of spaceship earth and go back into the world to find out what comes next.

Terry Miles - Rabbits

It's an average work day. You've been wrapped up in a task, and you check the clock when you come up for air—4:44 pm. You go to check your email, and 44 unread messages have built up. With a shock, you realize it is April 4th—4/4. And when you get in your car to drive home, your odometer reads 44,444. Coincidence? Or have you just seen the edge of a rabbit hole?

Rabbits is a mysterious alternate reality game so vast it uses our global reality as its canvas. Since the game first started in 1959, ten iterations have appeared and nine winners have been declared. Their identities are unknown. So is their reward, which is whispered to be NSA or CIA recruitment, vast wealth, immortality, or perhaps even the key to unlocking the secrets of the universe itself. But the deeper you get, the more deadly the game becomes. Players have died in the past—and the body count is rising.

And now the eleventh round is about to begin. Enter K—a Rabbits obsessive who has been trying to find a way into the game for years. That path opens when K is approached by billionaire Alan Scarpio, the alleged winner of the sixth iteration. Scarpio says that something has gone wrong with the game and that K needs to fix it before Eleven starts or the whole world will pay the price.

Five days later, Scarpio is declared missing. Two weeks after that, K blows the deadline and Eleven begins. And suddenly, the fate of the entire universe is at stake.

Fantasy

Eric McCormack - The Paradise Motel

A virtuoso, McCormack (*Inspecting the Vaults*) holds the reader's attention as much by his style as by the story he tells.

Scotsman Ezra Stevenson recalls a story about a horrifying family crime told to his grandfather in Patagonia by one of its victims. Now a journalist happily escaped from the hard life of his childhood, Ezra tries to verify the story, tracking down the four Mackenzie brothers and sisters who had been so terrifyingly abused.

The search is suspenseful, as are the later-life stories he uncovers. Did they occur? Were these new victims the Mackenzie children grown up? The stories are both phantasmagorical and very real, and McCormack holds them together with a sophisticated prose rich in beautiful physical descriptions. Full of death and suffering, the novel exhilarates rather than depresses, its stark dourness vivifying rather than dulling the reading appetite.

Erika T. Wurth - White Horse

Heavy metal, ripped jeans, Stephen King novels, and the occasional beer at the White Horse have defined urban Indian Kari James's life so far. But when her cousin Debby finds an old family bracelet that once belonged to Kari's mother, it inadvertently calls up both her mother's ghost and a monstrous entity, and her willful ignorance about her past is no longer sustainable...

Haunted by visions of her mother and hunted by this mysterious creature, Kari must search for what happened to her mother all those years ago. Her father, permanently disabled from a car crash, can't

help her. Her Auntie Squeaker seems to know something but isn't eager to give it all up at once. Debby's anxious to help, but her controlling husband keeps getting in the way. Kari's journey toward a truth long denied by both her family and law enforcement forces her to confront her dysfunctional relationships, thoughts about a friend she lost in childhood, and her desire for the one thing she's always wanted but could never have.

Jeffrey Alan Love - Notes from the Shadowed City

Notes From the Shadowed City is the travelogue of a young man who sets off on a journey to research magical swords. He finds himself stranded in a land he does not know and enters a city with no name over which looms an ominous floating citadel. As he seeks a way home, he fills his notebook with drawings and observations of his life in this strange place. It is full of masked swordsmen, cities that walk, ancient gods, swords made from petrified trees and dragons that move mountains. There's also a mysterious woman who captures his heart.

This does not seem to be easily available. None of my usual sites have it and even Amazon only has used copies.

Marc Joan – The Cartoon Lives and Loves of a Stupid Man

As an independent comic book store owner and the heir to a pharmaceutical fortune, Philippe Favrier lives a life that straddles the real world and the realm of fiction. Struggling with mental illness, Philippe relies on his wife, Marilyne – a successful surgeon with her own haunting secrets – and a groundbreaking drug his father developed. Bound by their shared pain, they navigate their haunted lives, forever shadowed by the heart-rending loss of their baby, Antoine.

Their fragile world begins to crumble when Philippe catches a disturbing glimpse of an unfamiliar profile in the mirror. And his uneasiness is further fueled by an anonymous comic strip that arrives at his store, featuring a character bearing an eerie resemblance to him.

Is Marilyne hiding an affair? Is she connected to the comic strip that's tormenting him? As he probes deeper, Philippe is drawn into a web of deception, where the lines between reality and imagination blur – until his investigations into Marilyne and the malicious comic artist at last reveal the tragic truth.