

Title: The Future Fire

Issue: Issue 2016.36

Editor: Djibril al-Ayad

Web address: <http://futurefire.net/index.html>

What they publish: They publish speculative fiction with a focus on socio-political elements. They also favor feminist, queer, postcolonial, and ecological themes; writing by under-represented voices; and stories outside the Anglophone world. They also publish poetry and artwork.

Submission guidelines: Word limit preferably under 10,000 words. Use common, easy-to-read fonts like Times New Roman or Palatino. No simultaneous or multiple submissions accepted. Send stories through email as .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .odt files.

Description of publication: Website menu is intuitive to navigate, and there are free back issues containing all the stories published by the magazine. As the site points out, you can support them by purchasing one of the print or ebook anthologies published by Futurefire.net Publishing. Staff information is also readily available.

Prose per issue: ~5 prose stories per issue, ~20 fiction stories annually

Patterns: Stories here can be dark, and both stories I read dealt very much with social elements that critically affected the story. Both stories also had main characters who struggled against a much larger and unjust government/economical authority, while only “Embedded” dealt with queer themes.

Prose review:

In “Embedded” by A.J. Fitzwater, black channellers are the contemporary hackers of their time who carry out hits on Ink, a supposed net-neutrality corporation that works to shape the internet into a restrictive, regulated experience. The main character, who goes by the nickname Click, gathers his two accomplices to carry out a strike against Brandon Gaytes, the son of a higher up at Ink, and attempts to manipulate him to gain access to the corporation. Gaytes ends up having a seizure at the same time that Click realizes one of his partners has set him up. Click meets his betrayer in real life to confirm the end of their friendship.

Although the clipped dialogue and descriptions mirrored the quick, nervous pace that black channellers like Click experience when on a strike, it sometimes made the plot hard to follow. Important pieces of information would pass in a sentence fragment, and that missing information would usually be helpful in understanding later concepts. Character relationships, especially how carefully Click had to evaluate his accomplices with gracefully paranoid interruptions, was wonderfully handled. Though I got a good image of the pod Click rested in, the setting was rarely described in sufficient detail.

“Vengeance Sewn with Fey Cord” follows a seamstress named Saysa tasked with sewing a wedding vest for the queen, who murdered Saysa’s family and burned her village to the ground years ago. As Saysa makes the vest, she also works on a chimeral suit of hides sewn together from different animals in accordance with a prophecy of revenge. At the night of the queen’s wedding, Saysa arrives in her mantle and murders the queen and her most powerful subjects.

Although the story is a revenge tale, the imminence of the main character’s victory is suppressed by the emotional, mental, and physical discomforts she endures. In fact, the story’s opening scene did well in establishing how poorly Saysa is treated. The mood in this story was very strong. It was dark, built through brief descriptions of the plague-stricken land and the ill-treated civilians. Important character relationships also came through simultaneously in those descriptions. My biggest complaint is the ending when Saysa faces the townsfolk; it would benefit from a tad of slowing down—just a little bit more reaction time between the two sides.

Rating: 7. Future Fire publishes many stories a year, with their issues devoted almost exclusively to fiction stories ranging in length from flash to novella. The quality of the writing is considerable, but a practiced emerging writer should have a fair chance landing a story here.