

2020 Scotiabank Giller Prize Longlist

October 6, 2020



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"One stop...endless possibilities"

Highlighted items are the 2020 Scotiabank Giller Prize Short List contenders.

The Winner of the Scotiabank Giller will be announced on November 9, 2020.

Adamson, Gil. Ridgerunner

Part literary Western and part historical mystery, *Ridgerunner* is the follow-up to Gil Adamson's award-winning and critically acclaimed novel *The Outlander*.

Set against the backdrop of a distant war raging in Europe and a rapidly changing landscape in the West, 'Ridgerunner' follows a notorious thief who is determined to steal enough money to secure his son's future. But his 12-year-old son was left in the care of Sister Beatrice in the town of Banff, Alberta, who keeps the boy secluded in her home. His father is coming for him. The nun won't let him go.

Bergen, David. Here The Dark

From the streets of Danang, Vietnam, where a boy falls in with a young American missionary, to fishermen lost off the islands of Honduras, to the Canadian prairies, where a teenage boy's infatuation reveals his naiveté and an aging rancher finds himself smitten, the short stories in *Here the Dark* explore the spaces between doubt and belief, evil and good, obscurity and light. Following men and boys bewildered by their circumstances and swayed by desire, surprised by love and by their capacity for both tenderness and violence, and featuring a novella about a young woman who rejects the laws of her cloistered Mennonite community, Scotiabank Giller Prize-winner David Bergen's latest deftly renders complex moral ambiguities and asks what it means to be lost--and how we might be found.

Coady, Lynn. Watching You Without Me

After her mother's sudden death, Karen finds herself back in her childhood home in Nova Scotia for the first time in a decade, acting as full-time caregiver to Kelli, her older sister. Overwhelmed with grief and the daily needs of Kelli, who was born with a developmental disability, Karen begins to feel consumed by the isolation of her new role. On top of that, she's weighed down with guilt over her years spent keeping Kelli and their independent-to-a-fault mother, Irene, at arm's length. And so when Trevor — one of Kelli's support workers — oversteps his role and offers friendly advice and a shoulder to cry on, Karen gratefully accepts his somewhat overbearing friendship. When she discovers how close Trevor was to Irene, she comes to trust him all the more. But as Trevor slowly insinuates himself into Karen and Kelli's lives, Karen starts to grasp the true aspect of his relationship with her mother — and to experience for herself the suffocating nature of Trevor's "care".

Crocker, Eva. All I Ask

A little before seven in the morning, Stacey wakes to the police pounding on her door. They search her home and seize her computer and her phone, telling her they're looking for "illegal digital material." Left to unravel what's happened, Stacey must find a way to take back the privacy and freedom she feels she has lost. Luckily, she has her friends. Smart and tough and almost terrifyingly open, Stacey and her circle are uncommonly free of biases and boundaries, but this incident reveals how they are still susceptible to society's traps. Navigating her way through friendship, love, and sex, Stacey strives to restore her self-confidence and to actualize the most authentic way to live her life — one that acknowledges both her power and her vulnerability, her joy and her fear. *All I Ask* is a bold and bracing exploration of what it's like to be young in a time when everything and nothing seems possible. With a playwright's ear for dialogue and a wry, delicate confidence, Eva Crocker writes with a compassionate but unsentimental eye on human nature that perfectly captures the pitfalls of relying on the people you love.

Donaghue, Emma. The Pull of The Stars

Dublin, 1918: three days in a maternity ward at the height of the Great Flu. In an Ireland doubly ravaged by war and disease, Nurse Julia Power works at an understaffed hospital in the city center, where expectant mothers who have come down with the terrible new Flu are quarantined together. Into Julia's regimented world step two outsiders--Doctor Kathleen Lynn, on the run from the police, and a young volunteer helper, Bridie Sweeney. In the darkness and intensity of this tiny ward, over three days, these women change each other's lives in unexpected ways. They lose patients to this baffling pandemic, but they also shepherd new life into a fearful world. With tireless tenderness and humanity, carers and mothers alike somehow do their impossible work. In *The Pull of the Stars*, Emma Donoghue once again finds the light in the darkness in this new classic of hope and survival against all odds.

Ekwuyasi, Francesca. Butter Honey Pig Bread

Butter Honey Pig Bread is a story of choices and their consequences, of motherhood, of the malleable line between the spirit and the mind, of finding new homes and mending old ones, of voracious appetites, of queer love, of friendship, faith, and above all, family.

Francesca Ekwuyasi's debut novel tells the interwoven stories of twin sisters, Kehinde and Taiye, and their mother, Kambirinachi. Kambirinachi feels she was born an á»?gbanje, a spirit that plagues families with misfortune by dying in childhood to cause its mother misery. She believes that she has made the unnatural choice of staying alive to love her human family and now lives in fear of the consequences of that decision.

Good, Michelle. Five Little Indians

Taken from their families when they are very small and sent to a remote, church-run residential school, Kenny, Lucy, Clara, Howie and Maisie are barely out of childhood when they are finally released after years of detention. Alone and without any skills, support or families, the teens find their way to the seedy and foreign world of Downtown Eastside Vancouver, where they cling together, striving to find a place of safety and belonging in a world that doesn't want them. The paths of the five friends cross and crisscross over the decades as they struggle to overcome, or at least forget, the trauma they endured during their years at the Mission. Fuelled by rage and furious with God, Clara finds her way into the dangerous, highly charged world of the American Indian Movement. Maisie internalizes her pain and continually places herself in dangerous situations. Famous for his daring escapes from the school, Kenny can't stop running and moves restlessly from job to job -- through fishing grounds, orchards and logging camps -- trying to outrun his memories and his addiction. Lucy finds peace in motherhood and nurtures a secret compulsive disorder as she waits for Kenny to return to the life they once hoped to share together. After almost beating one of his tormentors to death, Howie serves time in prison, then tries once again to re-enter society and begin life anew. With compassion and insight, *Five Little Indians* chronicles the desperate quest of these residential school survivors to come to terms with their past and, ultimately, find a way forward.

Kellough, Kaie. Dominoes at the Crossroads

In this collection of stories, Kaie Kellough's characters navigate race, history, and coming-of-age by way of their confessions and dreams. Through the eyes of jazz musicians, hitchhikers, quiet suburbanites, student radicals, secret agents, historians, and their fugitive slave ancestors, Kellough guides us from the cobblestones of Montreal's Old Port to the foliage of a South American rainforest, from a basement in wartime Paris to an underground antique shop in Montréal during the October Crisis, allowing the force of imagination to tip the balance of time like a line of dominoes.

King, Thomas. Indians on Vacation

Meet Bird and Mimi in this brilliant new novel from one of Canada's foremost authors. Inspired by a handful of old postcards sent by Uncle Leroy nearly a hundred years earlier, Bird and Mimi attempt to trace Mimi's long-lost uncle and the family medicine bundle he took with him to Europe.

"I'm sweaty and sticky. My ears are still popping from the descent into Vaclav Havel. My sinuses ache. My stomach is upset. My mouth is a sewer. I roll over and bury my face in a pillow. Mimi snuggles down beside me with no regard for my distress.

'My god,' she whispers, 'can it get any better?'"

By turns witty, sly and poignant, this is the unforgettable tale of one couple's holiday trip to Europe, where their wanderings through its famous capitals reveal a complicated history, both personal and political.

Lyon, Annabel. Consent

Saskia and Jenny are twins who are alike only in appearance. Saskia is a hard-working grad student whose interests are solely academic, while Jenny, an interior designer, is glamorous, thrill-seeking, capricious and narcissistic. Still, when Jenny is severely injured in an accident, Saskia puts her life on hold to be with her sister.

Sara and Mattie are sisters with a difficult relationship. Mattie, the younger sister, is affectionate, curious and intellectually disabled. As soon as Sara is able, she leaves home, in pursuit of a life of the mind and the body: she loves nothing more than fine wines, sensual perfumes, and expensive clothing. But when their mother dies, Sara inherits the duty of caring for her sister. Arriving at the house one day, she finds out that Mattie has married Robert, her wealthy mother's handyman. Though Mattie seems happy, Sara cannot let this go, forcing the annulment of the marriage and the banishment of Robert. With him out of the picture, though, she has no choice but to become her sister's keeper, sacrificing her own happiness and Mattie's too. When Robert turns up again, another tragedy happens. The waves from these events eventually engulf Sara and Saskia, sisters in mourning, in a quest for revenge.

Consent is a startling, moving, thought-provoking novel on the complexities of familial duty and on how love can become entangled with guilt, resentment and regret.

Mootoo, Shani. Polar Vortex

Priya and Alexandra have moved from the city to a picturesque Countryside town. What Alex doesn't know is that, in moving, Priya is running from her past—from a fraught relationship with an old friend, Prakash, who pursued her for many years, both online and off. Time has passed, however, and Priya, confident that her ties to Prakash have been successfully severed, decides it's once more safe to establish an online presence. In no time, Prakash finds Priya and contacts her. Impulsively, inexplicably, Priya invites him to visit her and Alex in the country, without ever having come clean with Alex about their relationship—or its tumultuous end.

Prakash's reentry into Priya's life reveals cracks in her and Alex's relationship and brings into question Priya's true intentions.

Are we ever free from our pasts? Can we ever truly know the people we are closest to? Seductive and tension-filled, *Polar Vortex* is a story of secrets, deceptions, and revenge.

St. John, Emily Mandel. The Glass Hotel

Vincent is a bartender at the Hotel Caiette, a five-star lodging on the northernmost tip of Vancouver Island. On the night she meets Jonathan Alkaitis, a hooded figure scrawls a message on the lobby's glass wall: "Why don't you swallow broken glass." High above Manhattan, a greater crime is committed: Alkaitis is running an international Ponzi scheme, moving imaginary sums of money through clients' accounts. When the financial empire collapses, it obliterates countless fortunes and devastates lives. Vincent, who had been posing as Jonathan's wife, walks away into the night. Years later, a victim of the fraud is hired to investigate a strange occurrence: a woman has seemingly vanished from the deck of a container ship between ports of call.

Seth. Clyde Fans

Twenty years in the making, *Clyde Fans* peels back the optimism of mid-twentieth century capitalism. Legendary Canadian cartoonist Seth lovingly shows the rituals, hopes, and delusions of a middle-class that has long ceased to exist in North America—garrulous men in wool suits extolling the virtues of the wares to taciturn shopkeepers with an eye on the door. Much like the myth of an ever-growing economy, the Clyde Fans family unit is a fraud—the patriarch has abandoned the business to mismatched sons, one who strives to keep the business afloat and the other who retreats into the arms of the remaining parent.

Abe and Simon Matchcard are brothers, the second generation struggling to save their archaic family business of selling oscillating fans in a world switching to air conditioning. At *Clyde Fans*' center is Simon, who flirts with becoming a salesman as a last-ditch effort to leave the protective walls of the family home, but is ultimately unable to escape Abe's critical voice in his head. As the business crumbles so does any remaining relationship between the two men, both of whom choose very different life paths but still end up utterly unhappy.

Seth's intimate storytelling and gorgeous art allow urban landscapes and detailed period objects to tell their own stories as the brothers struggle to find themselves suffocating in an airless city home. An epic time capsule of a storyline that begs rereading.

Thammavongsa, Souvankham. How to Pronounce Knife

A young man painting nails at the local salon. A woman plucking feathers at a chicken processing plant. A father who packs furniture to move into homes he'll never afford. A housewife learning English from daytime soap operas. In her stunning debut book of fiction, O. Henry Award winner Souvankham Thammavongsa focuses on characters struggling to make a living, illuminating their hopes, disappointments, love affairs, acts of defiance, and above all their pursuit of a place to belong. In spare, intimate prose charged with emotional power and a sly wit, she paints an indelible portrait of watchful children, wounded men, and restless women caught between cultures, languages, and values. As one of Thammavongsa's characters says, "All we wanted was to live." And in these stories, they do--brightly, ferociously, unforgettably.

A daughter becomes an unwilling accomplice in her mother's growing infatuation with country singer Randy Travis. A boxer finds an unexpected chance at redemption while working at his sister's nail salon. An older woman finds her assumptions about the limits of love unravelling when she begins a relationship with her much younger neighbour. A school bus driver must grapple with how much he's willing to give up in order to belong. And in the Commonwealth Short Story Prize-shortlisted title story, a young girl's unconditional love for her father transcends language.

Unsentimental yet tender, and fiercely alive, *How to Pronounce Knife* announces Souvankham Thammavongsa as one of the most striking voices of her generation.