

# SRI LANKAN AUTHOR SHEHAN KARUNATILAKA WINS BOOKER PRIZE FOR AFTERLIFE THRILLER

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Shehan Karunatilaka, left, with Camilla, Britain's queen consort, from whom he received the award in London on Tuesday. AFPTOBY MELVILLE

Sri Lankan author Shehan Karunatilaka has been named the winner of the 2022 Booker Prize for his second novel *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida*, described by the judges as a whodunnit and a race against time, full of ghosts, gags and deep humanity.

## Second Sri Lankan

Mr. Karunatilaka, 47, became only the second Sri Lankan born to win the prestigious GBP 50,000 literary prize at a ceremony in London on Monday night, after Michael Ondaatje who won for *The English Patient* in 1992.

*The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* tells the story of the photographer of its title, who in 1990 wakes up dead in a celestial visa office. With no idea who killed him, Maali has seven moons to contact the people he loves most and leads them to a hidden cache of photos of civil war atrocities that will rock Sri Lanka.

"What the judges particularly admired and enjoyed in *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* was the ambition of its scope, and the hilarious audacity of its narrative techniques," said Neil MacGregor, Chair of the 2022 Booker judges.

## 'Gallows humour'

Mr. Karunatilaka, who was born in Galle in 1975 and grew up in Colombo, says that Sri Lankans specialise in "gallows humour" and make jokes in the face of crises as a coping mechanism.

Mr. Karunatilaka and this year's other shortlisted authors, NoViolet Bulawayo, Percival Everett, Claire Keegan and Elizabeth Strout, were all in attendance at the Roundhouse in London, with Alan Garner attending virtually.

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