

Pitchwars 2020 Wishlist for Roselle Lim and Farah Heron

Summary: Roselle Lim and Farah Heron are adult mentors, and will be looking for Romantic Comedies, contemporary romances and commercial women's fiction.

It's [PitchWars](#) Wishlist time again! We're so thrilled to be adult mentors together this year! In case you're not familiar with the program, PitchWars is a mentoring program where published/agented authors, editors, or industry interns each choose one writer to spend three months revising their manuscript with. It ends in February with an Agent Showcase, where agents can read a pitch/first page and can request to read more

This is our first year mentoring together, and we're thrilled. Now, some might say, but wait, Farah writes rom-com and Roselle writes women's fiction fabulism? Why are they mentoring together? Well, we actually have more in common than we have differences!

Case in point:

- We are both Asian Canadians from the east end of Toronto (Scarborough represent!)
- Our debut books came out on the exact same day in June 2019.
- We recently figured out that we actually lived on the same street at the same time once, but alas, we didn't know each other then. But we probably saw each other all the time, not realising that fate, and publishing dreams would throw us together one day.
- We are both passionate about diversity and equity in publishing.
- We are both really, really into talking about food.

Since we're mentoring together, we've got exactly the same wishlist (although some pictures might be different). Checkout [Roselle's wishlist on her website](#), too!

So what are we looking for this year? This year we are open to Romantic Comedies, Contemporary Romance, and Women's Fiction.

Romantic Comedies & Contemporary Romance

This is hopefully self-explanatory: We want romance genre manuscripts that are fresh, preferably funny, and modern. If it's funny, and at times irreverent, and has a satisfying, swoony love story, it's for us.

Does that mean we want only fluffy books? Nope, not necessarily. Some of our favorite rom-coms tackle serious issues. Farah wrote a whole [article on this topic](#). By the way, we'd love to see anything like the recommended books in that article. To us, **rom-com** is more about the

language used rather than zany hijinks or humiliation. Lots of banter, close friends and witty language.

Bring us something like The Kiss Quotient by Helen Hoang, The Friend Zone by Abby Jimenez, a Duke by Default by Alyssa Cole, One and Only by Jenny Holiday, The Worst Best Man by Mia Sosa or Get a Life Chloe Brown by Talia Hibbert.

Women's Fiction

This is pretty much exactly the same as above, but the focus of the story is a little more about the woman's journey than just the romance. Romance is present, but we see deeper into the woman's desires, driving force, and see her character arc stronger than the love interests. The focus is on her journey. These books tend to have only one POV, instead of the very common alternating POVs in romance.

Examples of the types of Women's Fiction we want: anything by, Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows by Balli Kaur Jaswal, Beach Read by Emily Henry, Loathe at First Sight by Suzanne Park, or The Wedding Clock by Zara Raheem.

There is a lot of overlap between these two genres. Sometimes we can't even tell where a book would fall, but if you're not sure if your manuscript would work for us, ask! More than anything, a **strong voice**, and a **satisfying ending** are the most important things for us. Mostly, we want fun, high concept, commercial projects.

More details about what we'd love to find:

- Themes and subject matter can be heavy, or deep (We get it, life is a pile of heavy right now, so let it seep into your writing). Heavy stories told with humour and a strong voice are our jam, if handled sensitively and with empathy.
- We like fluffy lighthearted escapism reading as well.
- To us, the story needs to be somewhat realistic about the actual world we live in. No unlimited Louboutin budgets on an intern's salary. No scenes in New York without diversity.
- We will take #MeToo and abuse stories. BUT- if there is any sexual abuse or assault in the story, it should not be between the main romantic pairing.
- We will consider books about abortion, divorce, drug addiction, mental illness, and racism. But we're not looking for super depressing, painful narratives. These topics are not particularly triggering for us, but we're unlikely to want to work on a project for months unless it's empowering for the characters. If you can weave humour with those topics with sensitivity, please send it to us.
- All types of consensual relationships are welcome. M/M, F/F, M/F, genderqueer, etc. So long as it's consensual adults, we're happy.

- Authors of colour writing #OwnVoices are encouraged! We know how hard it is to break into Romance as a racialized author, and we want to help in any way we can.
- Single or dual POV is fine. Past or present tense is fine.
- Historical or contemporary is fine, as long as it meets our other requirements.
- Tropes? Yes! We love tropey stuff. Favorites are: forced confinement, enemies to lovers, friends to lovers, second chance.
- Any heat level is okay, but it needs to fit the book. Rom-Com tends not to be as high heat as other romance, and WF tends to be closed door. You'll need to be open to changing your heat level.
- We're going to say it again, because it's super important to us. CONSENT is everything. Safe, healthy, sexual activity only. Enthusiastic consent during sexy times is hot. No dubious consent... even if they are already in a relationship. This is a hard line for us. Watch for power dynamics that can impact the ability to consent such as teacher/student, boss/employee, slave owner/slave, Nazi/Anyone, etc.
- Diversity! (have we mentioned that enough, yet?) All types of diversity are encouraged: racialized characters, any disability status, mental illness, LGBTQ+ characters, religious minorities, neuro-diversity, etc.
- Interracial couples encouraged!
- Resistance! Bring us your stories about fighting back against the evil isms—fascism, racism, sexism, ableism, classism, etc.
- We are serious foodies! Food themes are very, very welcome!
- The term “women’s fiction” is not limited to those assigned as female at birth. Own-voices trans women, and non-binary stories are welcome.
- We love the geeky stuff! Bring me your nerds finding love! STEM characters! Music nerds! Gamers! Cosplay! Even obscure nerdy pastimes! Pens! Barbecue! Tabletop miniature games! knitting! Needle-felting Star Wars characters!
- We’ll take New Adult manuscripts— but we might ask you to age them up to adult if we think the story and genre warrants it. New Adult works in the romance genre, so if your rom-com has early twenties characters, it might be okay. New adult is rare in women’s fiction, though. And in either genre, it would be a hard sell to a traditional publisher, so we advise you to be open to changing your age demographic if we decide to.
- We love ensembles! Found families! Big friend groups!

What We’re NOT looking for

- No genres or sub-genres not listed above. That includes, dark romance, high-fantasy, thrillers, horror, domestic suspense, literary fiction, romantic suspense, paranormal, or memoir.

- No billionaires. Farah likes to be grounded in reality. Rich characters are okay, just not unrealistic stinking-rich characters.
- No romances with white supremacists or liberal/conservative pairings. Roselle can't stomach this kind of dynamic. It's a hard no for her.
- Not overly detailed with regards to politics. We're both Canadian. American political stories will probably go over our heads.
- Please no books about serious illness, parenting challenges, childhood illness, childhood death, infertility, cancer, death of spouse or parent, or childbirth, pedophilia, and animal abuse. These elements can be present in the story, but not what the story is **about**.
- No unreliable narrators or intentionally unlikable main characters. They can be strong willed. They can swear, drink, sleep around, etc. They just can't be selfish, or a down-right mean person.
- No inspirational or religious-themed manuscripts. We don't mind religious characters, but no overall inspirational themes.
- Prefer no cops, law enforcement, or military characters, but we might budge on that for a great story. No war stories please.
- No assholes. We're not a huge fan of Alpha heroes, but sometimes they work for us. But Alphas don't necessarily have to be dickheads. We'll take Alphas. We won't take dickheads.
- Also, no cheating on significant others, please!
- No redeemed racists, Islamophobes, homophobes, etc. We're not the mentors for a story about a main character who sees a marginalized person as undeserving of human rights, even if that character is redeemed during the course of the story. (If a side character is a bigot who is redeemed, fine. Great, even.)
- No cliff-hangers. We need a full story—beginning, middle and satisfying end. (We will read your synopsis and ask clarifying questions if we have any.)
- No twisty, unstructured, literary works. We're more focused on commercial pacing.
- No series books. Standalone only. Standalone with series potential is fine.
- Nothing that's already been published. A self-published book is published. Agents won't take these books, which means they're not right for this program (But good luck, because self-publishing is hard work, and we really respect self-published authors).
- If Farah or Roselle has critiqued/read your **entire** manuscript before, you're better off getting a new set of eyes and choosing other mentors. If we've looked at a chapter, a partial or query of yours, by all means, submit. we will give no special consideration to works I've seen before.
- If we're good friends (regular DMs or coffee dates), please don't submit to us. It would be inappropriate for us to select you, so why waste a submission slot!

Our Critique Style:

- **We won't mince words.** We will tell you everything that is working about your manuscript, as well as everything that is not working. Please understand we wouldn't have picked your manuscript if we didn't LOVE it, though.

- Farah's strengths are **characterization, complex relationships, pacing, and dialogue**. She will help you increase the emotional impact of your characters, and help make their reactions believable. She's great at banter, and at adding nuance to relationships.
- Roselle's strengths are **narrative structure, continuity, character arcs, spelling** (Farah pointed this out), **worldbuilding, and setting**. She loves being able to shape and rearrange scenes if necessary for maximum impact.
- We plan to do two passes of the entire manuscript with you, so be willing to do **a lot of** work in a short time frame.
- This process will not just be copy-editing, or polishing up some grammar and word choice. It will be closer to a **full developmental review**. We may ask you to practically re-write the book. We might gain or lose scenes, POVs, and even entire subplots. We trust our instincts, and sincerely want to make your book the best it can be, but you should be willing to do major work on your manuscript before submitting.
- Be prepared to hate our edit letter at first. If you want a cheerleader, or someone to tell you that your special baby is nothing but perfection, ask your grandmother for a critique. If you're looking for someone who will be tough and won't mince words, ask Farah's grandmother. Or better yet, submit to us.
- We will communicate as much as you are comfortable with. We will probably schedule a Skype session to go over the first edit letter. We will be there for you via text or DM. BUT—like many writers, we have deadlines. We may not be overly chatty, or respond immediately, but we're still here for you. We have a busy life outside of PitchWars, but we're confident our mentee and us will find a balance that works.
- We plan to ask for **full manuscripts** from any of my submissions if we want to see more, instead of asking for partials. We may not read all of every full manuscript we request. You'll get an email from us requesting the manuscript, and asking a few questions about you and the work if we want to see it. Feedback for every request is not possible at this time because we have limited time and again, pending deadlines.

Some extra information

- Self-edited, polished manuscripts only. We'll probably make requests fast, so your manuscript needs to be ready to go.
- Appropriate word counts please! If your manuscript is under 60,000 words or over 100,000, seriously consider doing another editing pass before the submission period starts. our sweet spot (because of genre guidelines) would be anywhere between 70k and 90k.
- We're looking for people who are easy to work with, professional, and who are positive, upbeat and genuinely want help improving. There's a lot to love and hate about publishing, and it can be challenging for marginalized writers, but we're looking for optimists who are willing to keep an open mind about the progress within the industry. We will be your biggest cheerleader, and will be there for you if anxiety about this business creeps in.

If you have questions about whether something falls into our wishlist, please feel free to reach out. Our preferred communication with regards to this wishlist is for you to leave a comment below, or ask us on Twitter, rather than through the contact form on our websites or DMs.

Please keep your questions vague—no pre-pitching. For example, asking us if we’re open to women’s fiction with a 80+ year old protagonist is okay, asking if we want a story about an 80 year old woman who takes up nude sky-diving after her husband dies wrestling a bear is too specific, and is pre-pitching. (Although honestly? Farah wants to see that story. No pictures though.)

A huge good luck to everyone entering, whether or not you are submitting to us! Getting this far in your writing career is a massive accomplishment in itself, and we are rooting for you! You got this!

Good luck with your submissions! We can’t wait to see them! To see the other mentor wishlists on the [PitchWars blog, click here](#). Or check out the links below of all the Adult Mentors.