

FOR RELEASE NOVEMBER 28

CHAPEL HILL, NC – The Crook’s Corner Book Prize Foundation has announced four finalists for the second annual Crook’s Corner Book Prize, to be awarded for an exceptional debut novel set in the American South. The winner will be announced January 5, 2015 at Crook’s Corner Café & Bar in Chapel Hill, NC.

The four finalists are:

- **BYRD**, by Kim Church (Dznac Books). Set in North Carolina, this novel tells the story of 33-year-old Addie Lockwood. Told through letters and sharply drawn vignettes, Byrd is a story about making and living with the most difficult, intimate, and far-reaching of choices. Church lives in Raleigh, NC.
- **I SHALL BE NEAR TO YOU**, by Erin Lindsay McCabe (Crown Publishing). Set in Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Maryland. Based on the true stories of more than 200 women who fought, disguised as men, in the Civil War, the novel imagines the challenges faced by the main character, Rosetta, when she insists on joining the Union Army to fight alongside her husband. McCabe lives in California.
- **HEART OF PALM**, by Laura Lee Smith (Grove Press). Set in Utina, Florida, a small town on the brink of change, Utina’s oldest and most notorious family, the Bravos, must reckon with new developments and atone for past sins. Smith lives in St. Augustine, Florida.
- **SAINT MONKEY**, by Jacinda Townsend (W. W. Norton & Company). Set in rural Kentucky and Harlem, Saint Monkey tells the story of two girls raised in hardship, separated by fortune, and reunited through tragedy. Townsend lives in Bloomington, Indiana.

“With Wiley Cash winning the first annual prize last year for his astonishing debut novel, *A LAND MORE KIND THAN HOME*, we knew we were off to a great start, and I am happy to report that our readers’ committee feels we have extremely strong contenders this year,” said Anna Hayes, President of the Crook’s Corner Book Prize Foundation.

Intended to encourage emerging writers in a publishing environment that seems to change daily, the Crook’s Corner Book Prize welcomes submissions from self-published and traditionally published authors.

TO RECAP, here’s the list of the CROOK’S CORNER BOOK PRIZE’S LONGLIST of 11 top debut novels, selected from more than 45 submissions, announced summer 2014:

- Queen Sugar, by Natalie Baszile / A Pamela Dorman Book/ Viking

- Byrd, by Kim Church / Dzanc Books
- The Resurrectionist, by Matthew Guinn / W.W. Norton
- Flying Shoes, by Lisa Howorth / Bloomsbury USA
- Remember Me Like This, by Bret Anthony Johnston / Random House
- I Shall Be Near To You, by Erin Lindsay McCabe / Crown
- Heart of Palm, by Laura Lee Smith / Grove Press
- In the Garden of Stone, by Susan Tekulve / Hub City Press
- Saint Monkey, by Jacinda Townsend / W.W. Norton
- The Ways of the Dead, by Neely Tucker / Viking
- Mother of Rain, by Karen Spears Zacharias / Mercer University

INSPIRATION FOR THE PRIZE: The concept of having a restaurant attach its name to a book prize was inspired by the famous literary cafés of Paris, which have a long tradition of conferring prestigious literary awards. Crook’s Corner Café & Bar, in Chapel Hill, NC, is a James Beard American Classic restaurant and has a rich history of supporting artists. For now, Crook’s Corner is the only restaurant in the United States that hosts a literary book prize, but the Prize’s founders hope other Southern restaurants will join its efforts and offer their own book prizes.

“This may be the age of the restaurant,” said Katharine Walton, Southern publicist and board member for the Prize. “Nowadays culinary arts are rivaling literary arts in terms of media coverage, so this is a way to join forces.”

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? From the four finalists, Randall Kenan—noted author of fiction and non-fiction and Professor of English at the University of North Carolina—will choose the winner of the Crook’s Corner Book Prize to be announced at a gala event Monday, January 5, 2015 at Crook’s Corner. The winning author will receive a cash prize of \$1000 and, in a nod to the Gallic inspiration for the award, one free glass of wine at Crook’s each day of the prize year.

“The linkages between good writing and good food and drink are clear and persistent,” said John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance. “I can’t imagine a better means of celebrating their entwining than this innovative award.”

NOTE ON NEXT YEAR’S PRIZE: When the Crook’s Corner Book Prize winner is announced, January 5, 2015, the Foundation will begin accepting submissions for next year’s prize.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com.

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