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**WINNER ANNOUNCED FOR SECOND ANNUAL
CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE
FOR BEST DEBUT NOVEL SET IN THE SOUTH**

January 6, 2015 CHAPEL HILL, NC – Kim Church, the author of **BYRD**, has won the second annual Crook's Corner Book Prize for best debut novel set in the American South.

“At its root, **BYRD** is about heartbreak, loss, and being lonely,” said author Randall Kenan, the judge for this year’s prize. “The triumph here is that Kim Church's remarkable skill turns these dark human realities into the stuff of praise song, and plain song, and blues song. It made me shout and holler. What a truly lyrical achievement in prose.”

The literary prize was established as a collaboration between Crook's Corner, the iconic Southern restaurant in Chapel Hill, NC, and the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation. “Our purpose is to encourage emerging writers in a publishing environment that seems to reinvent itself daily,” said foundation president, Anna Hayes. “The prize is open to self-published authors as well as traditionally published authors. Of the four novels on the shortlist this year, three were from major publishers, but the winner was from Dzanc Books, a small, independent publisher.”

Crook's Corner may be the only restaurant in the United States now awarding a literary prize. "It's an idea that we flat-out stole from the French," said Hayes, explaining that the inspiration came from the long-established tradition of prestigious literary awards given by such famous Parisian cafés as Deux Magots and Café de Flore. "The French have always understood the link between food and literature, and the connection between cafés and creativity!"

Crook's Corner is a James Beard American Classic restaurant with a rich history of supporting artists. "Perhaps we've entered the 'Age of the Restaurant,'" said Katharine Walton, Southern publicist and board member for the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation. "Culinary arts seem to be trumping literary arts in terms of media coverage, so this is a way to join forces."

From more than 45 submissions, the Crook's prize 2014 Longlist, which included 11 books, was announced last Summer. In November, the Shortlist of the prize's four finalists was released:

- **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 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, *I Shall Be Near to You* is 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, this is a story about Utina's oldest and most notorious family, the Bravos, who must reckon with new developments and atone for past sins. Smith lives in St. Augustine, FL.

- **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, IN.

THE WINNER, KIM CHURCH received a cash prize of \$1000 and, in a nod to the Parisian book prizes that inspired this award, will be entitled to one glass of wine at Crook's Corner each day she visits the restaurant during the prize year.

ABOUT OUR PRIZE AUTHOR KIM CHURCH: Kim Church made the bold move to quit her intense day job, resigning her partnership in a law firm, to devote more time to writing fiction. A Pushcart Prize nominee, she has received fellowships from the North Carolina Arts Council, as well as residencies at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Millay Colony for the Arts, and Vermont Studio Center. She lives in Raleigh, NC, and

now works part-time as an attorney, while she's at work on her next novel.

CONTINUING A RICH TRADITION OF EXCEPTIONAL FIRST NOVELS:

“Among the most memorable Southern debut novels that come to mind,” says Shannon Ravenel, Algonquin Books co-founder and Crook’s Corner Book Prize board member, “are THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER, by Carson McCullers; TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD, by Harper Lee; THE ORCHARD KEEPER, by Cormac McCarthy; LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL, by Thomas Wolfe; WISE BLOOD, by Flannery O’Conner; LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS, by William Styron; INVISIBLE MAN, by Ralph Ellison; OTHER VOICES, OTHER ROOMS, by Truman Capote; THE BLUEST EYE, by Toni Morrison.”

This year's Crook’s Corner Book Prize’s Longlist novels were recognized and featured at independent bookstores throughout the South:

- **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)**

“This grassroots effort to discover and champion books in general, Southern literature in particular, is amazing and refreshing,” said Jamie Fiocco, owner of Chapel Hill's Flyleaf Bookstore and president of the Southern Independent Booksellers Alliance. “The Crook’s Corner Book Prize Longlist is a great example of what independent booksellers have been doing for years: finding top-quality reading experiences, regardless of the book’s origin—small or large publisher. Readers trust the rich literary history of the South to deliver a sense of place and great characters; now this prize lets readers learn about the cream of the crop of new storytellers. We made a display highlighting these books as recommended reading and encourage other indie stores to do the same.”

The James Beard Foundation and the Southern Foodways Alliance have recognized the innovative Crook’s Corner Book Prize. Said John T. Edge, director of the alliance, “The linkages between good writing and good food and drink are clear and persistent. I can’t imagine a better means of celebrating their entwining than this innovative award. The only fault I find is with the beverage that will be tendered to the winner. Bourbon seems a better choice.”

BETWEEN NOW AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEXT WINNER

JANUARY 2016: The Crook’s Corner Book Prize will encourage the reading of Kim

Church's novel *BYRD*. And any reader—who like John T. Edge prefers a prize bourbon over wine—may want to try the Book Prize cocktail by mixologist Shannon Healy of Crook's and Alley Twenty Six in Durham, NC. It features the metaphorical makings of a great novel: Larceny (Bourbon), Americano (Cocchi), yes some Bitters, and, maybe, a Twist. Writers and readers, published or unpublished, can belly up to the bar and order a Book Prize.

NOTES ON NEXT YEAR'S PRIZE: To be eligible for submission, books must be the author's first published novel for adult readers, published in the United States between January 1, 2014 and June 15, 2015. Regardless of the author's residence, the book must be set predominantly in the American South.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com

And <https://www.facebook.com/CrooksCornerBookPrize>

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