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CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE ANNOUNCES SHORTLIST

PRIZE INCREASES TO \$5000

CHAPEL HILL, NC - The Crook's Corner Book Prize has named three finalists for the best debut novel set in the American South. Now in its fourth year, the prize will grow with the next winner, from \$1000 to \$5000. This year's judge is Tom Franklin, author of *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter*, among other works. The winner will be announced January 16, 2017 at Crook's Corner Café & Bar in Chapel Hill, NC.

THE SHORTLIST - The three finalists are:

MULBERRY, by Paulette Boudreaux (Carolina Wren Press)

In a small segregated Mississippi town in the 1960s, a black mother has no choice but to go with her ill baby for an extended hospitalization in a distant place, leaving her eleven-year-old daughter to protect her three younger brothers from their father, whose inability to cope with grief, shame, and alcohol exposes the children to desperate poverty and violence.

A native of Mississippi, Boudreaux lives in Los Gatos, California, where she teaches writing at West Valley College. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Northeastern University and a MFA from Mills College.

OVER THE PLAIN HOUSES, by Julia Franks (Hub City Press)

In 1939, in the mountains of North Carolina, a young wife married to a fundamentalist preacher begins to question her claustrophobic life after she meets a female USDA agent sent by the federal government to enlighten local households. After a night when her husband forces himself on her, she begins wandering the hills at midnight

to avoid his bed. Complicating matters is an unwanted pregnancy, which leads her to seek help from the USDA agent. The husband becomes convinced that his wife, possibly under the influence of the agent, is engaging in black magic, and resorts to a stunning act of violence.

Julia Franks has deep roots in the Appalachian Mountains. She lives in Atlanta, where she teaches literature and runs Loose Canon, a web service that fosters free-choice reading in the classroom.

HIDE, by Matthew Griffin (Bloomsbury)

Set in a worn-out textile town in North Carolina, HIDE tells the story of two men who fall in love shortly after World War II, at a time when being gay could mean a prison sentence. Their careful life together, isolated from society, sustains them until one partner suffers a stroke at the age of 83, when everything begins to unravel.

Matthew Griffin is a graduate of Wake Forest University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop. Born and raised in North Carolina, he is currently a visiting professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

BACKGROUND ON THE PRIZE: The book prize, inspired by famous Parisian cafés long known for their prestigious literary awards, is given jointly by the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation and Crook's Corner Café & Bar, the iconic Chapel Hill, North Carolina restaurant widely credited for launching the modern renaissance of Southern cuisine. "Food for the mind, food for the body, food for the soul," says Anna Hayes, president of the Foundation. "It's all wrapped up together, isn't it." Although she believes that Crook's Corner is the only restaurant in the United States that awards a literary prize, she says, "We'd love to start a trend."

John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance, noting that "[t]he linkages between good writing and good food and drink are clear and persistent," says, "I can't imagine a better means of celebrating their entwining than this innovative award."

NOTE ON NEXT YEAR'S PRIZE: The Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation will begin accepting submissions for next year's prize on January 1, 2017. Intended to encourage emerging writers in a challenging publishing environment that seems to change daily, submissions are welcome from self-published as well as traditionally published authors.

DISPLAY CONTEST FOR BOOKSELLERS: Booksellers will be able to enter photos of their Crook's Corner Book Prize Shortlist displays to win a \$50 prize, along with an invitation to the announcement party for the winner at Crook's Corner Café & Bar on January 16, 2017. Contest details will be available soon.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BOOK PRIZE, visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com.

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