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MATTHEW GRIFFIN WINS \$5000 CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE FOR 'HIDE'

Chapel Hill, NC, January 16, 2017— Matthew Griffin's *Hide*, published by Bloomsbury USA, is the winner of the fourth annual Crook's Corner Book Prize for best debut novel set in the American South. Griffin travelled from Louisiana to his home state of North Carolina for the announcement party at Crook's Corner Café & Bar, where his parents were on hand to watch him accept his award.

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 life together on the outskirts of a worn-out textile town in North Carolina, carefully isolated from society, sustains them until one partner suffers a stroke at the age of 83, when everything begins to unravel. Filtered through their secret, the decades of isolation, the ravages of age, the difficulty of caretaking, and the undertow of regret resonate powerfully.

Matthew Griffin is a graduate of Wake Forest University and the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He is currently a visiting professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Griffin says the book was largely inspired by his grandparents. "After they died, we found their love letters, and pictures of them when they were young and, clearly, wildly in love. I started thinking about those people, about the way they struggled to take care of each other at the ends of their lives, and the sacrifices it took to build those lives together." In *Hide*, set in his grandparents' time and place, Griffin portrays these struggles in the context of a secretly gay couple's long union.

This year's judge, author Tom Franklin, says, "Where many writers would've veered into sentimentalism, Griffin never does. There's emotion aplenty, but it's always

hard-won and never, not once, easy. The characters are painfully real and at times very funny." Calling the writing first-rate, Franklin notes that the original turns of phrase and brilliant observations "are always from the narrator's voice and never the writer's, which makes *Hide* as honest a book as you'll ever find." Franklin, who teaches in the MFA in English program at the University of Mississippi, was in Chapel Hill to attend the award presentation.

The Prize, established as a collaboration between the iconic Southern restaurant, Crook's Corner Bar & Café in Chapel Hill, NC, and the Crook's Corner Book Prize Foundation, was inspired by the prestigious book awards long given by famous "literary" cafés in Paris. "Our purpose is to encourage emerging writers in today's challenging publishing environment," says Anna Hayes, president of the Foundation. The Prize is open to self-published as well as traditionally published authors. "As far as we know, this is the only café or restaurant-sponsored literary prize in the U.S., but we are hoping to start a trend." In the tradition of the Café de Flore in Paris, along with the \$5000 cash prize the winner is entitled to a complimentary glass of wine at Crook's each day of his prize year.

Hide was one of three books on the shortlist, which included *Mulberry* by Paulette Boudreaux (Carolina Wren Press) and *Over the Plain Houses* by Julia Franks (Hub City Press). Previous winners are *A Land More Kind Than Home* by Wiley Cash, *Byrd* by Kim Church, and *The Marauders* by Tom Cooper. Previous judges are Jill McCorkle, Randall Kenan, and Lee Smith.

Submissions are open for next year's Prize. Eligible books must be the author's first published novel for adult readers, published between January 1, 2016 and June 1,

2017. Regardless of the author's residence, the book must be set predominantly in the American South. For details, visit www.crookscornerbookprize.com.

Media contact: Cindy Hamel, cindyhsellers@gmail.com, 917-544-1793 or
Katharine Walton, katharinewalton@mindspring.com, 919-357-4400

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