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CROOK'S CORNER BOOK PRIZE SHORTLIST ANNOUNCED
\$5,000 Prize to be Awarded for Best Debut Novel Set in the South

CHAPEL HILL, NORTH CAROLINA, SEPTEMBER 17, 2025—Today, the Crook’s Corner Book Prize Foundation announces the three finalists for best debut novel set in the American South.

The Shortlist is:

- [Sky Full of Elephants](#) by Cebo Campbell, Simon & Schuster
- [Oye](#) by Melissa Mogollon, Hogarth
- [Like Happiness](#) by Ursula Villarreal-Moura, Celadon Books

“Every year, we are inspired by the ways emerging novelists bring new perspectives to life in the American South, and we are proud to celebrate and elevate their voices,” says Anna Hayes, Foundation President.

The winner of the \$5000 prize will be announced in January 2026. Although eligible books must be predominantly set in the South, authors may live anywhere, and all genres of fiction, except for Young Adult, are eligible.

Judging for this year's Prize is acclaimed author Clyde Edgerton. Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a book of advice, a memoir, short stories, and essays. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow and five of his novels have been New York Times Notable Books. He is a member of the Fellowship of Southern Writers and teaches creative writing at UNC Wilmington.

About the Crook's Corner Book Prize

Inspired by the literary prizes awarded by famous Parisian cafés such as the Deux Magots and the Café de Flore, the Crook's Corner Book Prize honors the iconic Crook's Corner, which for 40 years was a culinary, literary, and artistic beacon in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Sadly, Crook's Corner closed in 2021. However, the Crook's Corner Book Prize continues its annual award, a fitting homage to the unforgettable restaurant. For more information on the Prize and submission guidelines, please visit www.CrooksCornerBookPrize.com or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

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