



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heather Frese Wins Lee Smith Novel Prize



Blair is pleased to announce the winner and four finalists of the latest Lee Smith Novel Prize: *The Baddest Girl on the Planet* by Heather Frese. *The Baddest Girl on the Planet* was selected from more than 120 contest entries.

This novel is a heartbreaking, haunting, even funny portrait of the life of Evie Austin, baddest girl on the planet, native of Hatteras Island, North Carolina. The final effect is one of nostalgia in the face of life's constant changes—an effect made all the more poignant by the ebb and flow of the Hatteras Island waves. What does it mean to come of age in the Outer Banks, to love a place as deeply as you long for something more? Who are we when we don't recognize ourselves? Each chapter is another one of Evie's vividly rendered memories, and they appear one after another without regard for chronology, in the way real memories do. This protagonist is not for the faint of heart; Evie Austin, her hair stiff with salt, looks her reader squarely in the face.

“We're so excited to present this fun, fabulous, complex novel to the world,” says Blair Senior Editor Robin Miura. “We're hoping readers will be just as taken with Evie Austin and her complicated, wonderful life as we are.”

The purpose of the Lee Smith Novel Prize is to recognize and publish authors living in, writing about, or originally from the U.S. South. “The press sees this prize as a way to acknowledge Lee Smith's contributions to southern literature as a writer, teacher, and mentor while at the same time working to explore and expand the definition of southern literature,” says Miura.

Heather Frese's fiction, essays, and poetry have appeared in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, the *Los Angeles Review*, *Front Porch*, the *Barely South Review*, *Switchback*, and elsewhere, earning notable mention in the Pushcart Prize Anthology and *Best American Essays*. She received her master's degree from Ohio University and her M.F.A. from West Virginia University. Coastal North Carolina is her longtime love and source of inspiration, her writing deeply influenced by the wild magic and history of the Outer Banks. She currently writes, edits, and wrangles three small children in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Blair is a nonprofit press distributed by Consortium Book Distribution and Sales, a division of Ingram. We strive to publish quality writing, focusing on authors and subjects historically neglected by mainstream publishers, including women, people of color, authors with disabilities, and LGBTQ authors. True to our roots in North Carolina, we look to the many voices of the U.S. South—and beyond—as sources of work and inspiration.



**For more information, please contact Carla Aviles-Jimenez at (919)-682-0555
www.blairpub.com**

In addition to this year's winner, we're pleased to announce the following 4 finalists for the contest:

The Greenbrier Spy by Sarah Allen

Sarah Allen is a West Virginian, a librarian, a feminist, and a very good baker of biscuits. She lives in Nashville with her family.

Missy Belue and the Holy Men by Scott Gould

Scott Gould is the author of the story collection, *Strangers to Temptation*. His work has appeared in *Kenyon Review*, *Crazyhorse*, *New Madrid Journal*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Black Warrior Review*, *New Ohio Review*, the *Raleigh Review*, *New Stories from the South*, the *Bitter Southerner*, and many others. He is chair of the creative writing department at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities.

Molehills of Mississippi by Maggie Harrison

Maggie Harrison's short fiction publications (in *New Letters*, *Blithe House Quarterly*, *Harrington Lesbian Literary Quarterly*, *Sinister Wisdom*, and *Transfer*) include a Pushcart Prize nomination. A previous draft of her novel *Molehills of Mississippi* was named as a finalist for the PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction. She teaches writing and chairs the department of Women's and Gender Studies at City College of San Francisco.

Deep Belly of the Earth by Stephanie Whetstone

Stephanie Whetstone's stories have appeared in *Waccamaw*, *Waypoints*, *Drafthorse*, the *Anthology of Appalachian Writers*, and *Narrative*. She has been a fellow at VCCA and Hambidge and a Peter Taylor Scholar at the Sewanee Writer's Conference. She is a graduate of Duke University and UNC-Greensboro and lives in Princeton, NJ, with her family.



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