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Authors Give Voice to Small Town Canada

The second paid fiction contest from *Blank Spaces Magazine* and Chicken House Press culminates in the publication of a powerful short story collection

Eight Canadian authors are being represented in an anthology of short stories titled *Small Town Summer Nights*, releasing April 30, 2023 from Chicken House Press.

The writers—Crystal Randall Barnett, Daryl Bruce, Finnian Burnett, Alyssa Bushell, Casey Fehr, Jennifer Moffatt, Noa Padawer-Blatt, and Karen Walker—were all participants in a 2022 fiction contest hosted by *Blank Spaces*, a literary arts magazine from West Grey, Ontario.

The contest opened in June of 2022 and a longlist was determined by Alanna Rusnak, owner of Chicken House Press and editor-in-chief of *Blank Spaces* magazine. The twenty stories that progressed beyond the first stage of the contest were pored over by a judging panel of *Blank Spaces* team members and past contest winners. Through thoughtful discussion and debate, the team decided on a final list of eight that were sent on to a guest judge—Marina L. Reed of Orangeville, Ontario (author of *On the Edge* and the *Remember It's OK* series)—who took on the responsibility of awarding a cash prize of nearly \$215 to the top story.

During a live Zoom event in December, Reed awarded the prize to Crystal Randall Barnett of Waterloo, Ontario for her compelling story, “Glass Panes,” saying it “had a momentum within the story and a simplicity, and yet, great depth.”

Barnett’s story, along with the other seven selected by the judges, appear within the collection, presenting wildly unique takes on the broad theme of ‘Small Town Summer Nights,’ resulting in a thought-provoking read that oscillates between tender and wrenching.

“These short stories hit close to home,” says early reviewer Emma Radstake. “With references to Canadian places and twists that leave the reader on edge, the authors have done a good job articulating their individual stories.”

“To be included in this anthology you would have had to make the decision to dive deep into your soul and explore those zones of discomfort: in order to captivate your reader; in order to bring your character to life; in order to make an impact,” Reed cites in the foreword of the book. “In the age of everything technology we still crave the experience of holding in our hands a story that will transport us; that will answer our questions or open new ones we need to be asking. The short story can be vibrant and needed now more than ever. So don’t just read these stories because they are all Canadian, read them because you want a reprieve from a screen. Read them because you want to explore a piece of yourself left hidden. Read them because they are too good to miss.”

Small Town Summer Nights is available in paperback from the publisher at chickenhousepress.ca or Amazon. Ebooks can be obtained through Amazon, and Kobo.

Store owners and distributors are invited to register with Chicken House Press as a retailer of titles to enjoy a wholesale discount on copies of the book.

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