David McGuirt of Charlotte is the winner of the 2009 Doris Betts Fiction Prize for his story "Blind Faith." McGuirt will receive a prize of $250 from the North Carolina Writers' Network.

Noted for honorable mention are Marjorie Hudson's "The High Life," Melanie Raskin's "Waiting for Azrael," and Kuruvilla Verghese's "A Life in the Shadow." Of these three and the winning story, final judge Kat Meads said, "I thought the characterizations were solid, the descriptions economical but resonant, and the image linkage – whether symbolic or no – very well done."

Meads says of McGuirt's winning story, "'Blind Faith' is fiction that mercilessly observes and indicts by the means by which all good fiction indicts: plot, pacing, powerful imagery, and characters who stay with the reader long after the reading is finished." She describes Verghese's "A Life in the Shadow" as "an economical, dexterous tale of the plight of a Brahmin widow, age twenty-two, whose life is at the mercy and whim of others until she takes back control by the only means at her disposal: suicide." Meads' description for "The High Life" praises Hudson's "hardscrabble story of a wise-beyond-his-years 'thrown-away' teen who manages to construct for himself something like a second family with the members of a traveling carnival … Dip's angst, longing, and discoveries are effectively delivered in the staccato rhythms of lessons learned quickly – and painfully." Of "Waiting for Azrael," Meads "appreciates and applauds the humor of Raskin's story and its characterizations, particularly brother Adrian." Meads also noted Steve Mitchell's "Platform," "with its 'I am the terrorist' twist," and Gregg Cusick's "ambitious" "A Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions."

Meads, an eastern North Carolina native now living in California, is the author of the short story collections *Not Waving* and *Little Pockets of Alarm* and the novels *Sleep* and *The Invented Life of Kitty Duncan Benedict Roberts*
. She chose the winning stories from finalists selected by the
North Carolina Literary Review
from the original 106 submissions, up from 62 in 2008. Meads noted that she "was impressed by the quality of many of the finalists."

The winning story will be published in the 2010 issue of the *North Carolina Literary Review*. Some of the finalists will also be invited by the
NCLR
editors to revise and resubmit for publication consideration. The 2008 Betts first- and second-place stories, as well as a play by and an interview with Kat Meads, will be in the 2009

issue of
NCLR
, due out this summer. For information on subscribing to
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