

# 2015 MCC Creative Writing Contest

## Fiction Category

**Second Place:** “*Sami and Amira*,” by Amber Dimond

Sami felt his father wrap him in another blanket. Then another. And another. Everything still felt cold. His ears felt cold. The blankets pushed roughly against one side of his face. A crackling din coming from outside grew louder. And louder. Finally it crescendoed into a bright, hot clap against his skin. He snapped upright and looked around his dark tent. His sleeping mother’s raspy breathing pulsated steadily beside him.

Instead of trying to go back to sleep, he carefully slipped out of bed, rubbing his cheek where the rough mattress had left an imprint. He gingerly made his way to the other side of the tent, anxious that his small, chubby footsteps on the dirt floor would wake his mother. The darkness was no hindrance to his objective. Every solid object in the small enclosure had imprinted itself onto his mental map a long time ago. His hand reached the smooth wooden box he wasn’t supposed to touch. Inside, he felt the familiar wrinkled paper. He quickly snatched it and snuck outside.

The early gray sun illuminated the warm vapor of his breath as he plopped down beside a tent pole. His father smiled at him from the tattered photograph in his hand. When he closed his eyes, he could feel the frozen moment in the picture. His aunt said it was too long ago for him to remember, that he was too little. But Sami disagreed. He could sense the warmth of his father’s arms around him; he could hear his laugh.

A million undifferentiated dwellings stretched out in front of him. No matter which direction he turned, all he saw was endless canvas. It looked like an indefinite beach, covered in little peaks of white sand. His mother told him this wasn’t their real home. Their real home lay empty in Aleppo. But he couldn’t feel their real home when he closed his eyes, not the way he could feel his father. Their tent felt like his real home. This camp was his real city. For all of the birthdays he could remember, this was where he woke up.

“What’s in your picture?” asked an unfamiliar, pretty voice behind him. When he looked over, he saw a girl, a little older than him. Her dark ringlets twisted out of her ponytail, rebelling against their restraints, fighting for the freedom to bleach in the sun. She knelt down beside him and craned her neck toward his photograph. Sami moved it closer so she could see.

“Is that your papa?” she asked.

yours?”

“Sami.”

“Nice to meet you, Sami. Do you know all of the people in these tents?” she asked, making a sweeping gesture.

