

An Anthology of

the ccn
young muslim

**WRITERS
AWARD**



2011

WINNERS & FINALISTS

Foreword

The CCN Young Muslim Writers Awards is designed to identify young boys and girls in the Muslim community with exceptional literary talent and to bring their remarkable work to a national audience through these national awards.

The over 100 entries received from many parts of Australia were subjected to a rigorous two-stage blind-review judging process based on creativity and originality and technical competence. The judging panels included a University English and Communications lecturer and an author and historian.

Crescents community News (CCN) takes great pleasure in showcasing the work of our young talented writers and poets in this anthology compiled from the entries of the winners and finalists in this year's inaugural CCN Young Muslim Writers Award.

We are sure that you will enjoy reading these submissions as much as we and the judges have.

We also take this opportunity thank the following community organizations and institutions who most generously sponsored the prizes, certificates and gifts:

Griffith Islamic Research Unit (GIRU)
Islamic Council of Queensland (ICQ)
Islamic Women's Association of Queensland (IWAQ)
Muslim Business Network (MBN)
Queensland Muslim Historical Society (QMHSoc)
Crescents of Brisbane Inc.

We hope, insha'Allah, that these awards continue to grow with increased participation from students and partners across the country.

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If there is a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it.

Toni Morrison, author of *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*.

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Short Story (13 to 16 years)

Afrah Hammadi

(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Winner

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Poetry (7 to 10 years)

Nature

Birds fly high,
In the beautiful light blue sky,
Where the sun shines bright,
Bathing the earth with light.
Creatures pop up to say hello,
And beautiful flowers in the garden grow,
Rivers stream with a nice flow,
Come on, get up and we will go.
Look at what you see in sight,
There's a honey bee taking flight,
Slowly approaches the dark night.

Musab bin Tariq Anzar

(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Poetry (7 to 10 years)

About Prophet Ibrahim (a)

Ibrahim (a) was a messenger of Allah.

“Be a Muslim”, said Allah to Ibrahim (a).

Rose Ibrahim (a) to tell the message that Allah told him.

“Allah can do everything but idols can’t do anything,” said Ibrahim.

He broke the idols, then he was thrown into a fire.

In the fire he did not get burnt because Allah told the fire to be cool and safe for Ibrahim.

Muhammad (pbuh) followed the path of Ibrahim (a).

Sumaiyah Gedik

(Australian International Islamic College, QLD)

Winner

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Poetry (10 to 13 years)

The Unexpected Truth

Dear pathetic diary
I have a new teacher
I won't look at his personality
I'll look at his feature
I'm curious to know
Does he have a big nose
Big eyes, ears
Or gigantic toes
I really want to know
Does he like pies
Or is he a non trustworthy person
Who tells really big lies
Does he like to stare in the mirror
Or does he know about the latest style
Does he like to pose
Or is his name Mr. Kyle
Mathematics and English are so boring
But let's have a little fun
What is the past tense of doing
He started laughing and he said done
Silly me I'm really crazy
I already knew that
I feel so embarrassed right now
Let me just smile and give him a pat
I'm so dearly sorry
I'll go and make you a cup of tea
If you just show me mercy
Please forgive me
I should have looked at the personality not looks
And you were really right
You have taught me to use manners
Which is called polite
So there you go I'm sorry
I already regret what I said
I should never try to cut smart the teacher
I knew it from the start that you have always cared

Hamza Nabeel

(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Poetry (10 to 13 years)

Jihaad

Men with light and wisdom
Stuck within the ruined trenches
I see them in foul dug-outs gnawed by harmful thorns
Soldiers are sworn to action they must win
Hearts made of rich gold
Bounded by the blessings of paradise
Hearts with their bloom of spectacle,
Enriched with the blessings of our provider,
Engraved with the words of Almighty
I see them battling through the fury of their opponents
Armed with the greatest strengths in all of mankind
Like a lion with all of its pride.
But I see the believers with the help
Of our Rabb

Verily they are the victorious ones.
Bang! Bang!
And away they go, battling through the mountains of doom
Tears of agony they hate to face
Endeavour they put to fulfil their grace.
Their help is within the hands of All Knowing
The storm begins; the wind howls like wolves
The trees rustle like rocks in cans
Continuing with their battle
Dreaming of going to work in a train
Dreaming of things they did with bats and balls
Basic life is their will
They think of fire lit homes,
Wife, children and clean beds
Sacrificing themselves for the Umaat
These men are citizens of deaths grey land

Aneesa Ali

(Australian International Islamic College, QLD)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Poetry (10 to 13 years)

Ramadan

Ramadan, Ramadan don't go away while you were here
No wrong did we say
Ramadan, Ramadan don't go away while you were here
So much did we pray
Ramadan, Ramadan don't go away while you were here
We read Quran all day
Ramadan, Ramadan don't go away while you were here
We shared from our tray
Ramadan, Ramadan don't go away
Ramadan. Ramadan, moon in the sky
Ramadan. Ramadan, fasting I try
Ramadan. Ramadan, imaan is high
Ramadan. Ramadan, for iftar there's pie
Ramadan. Ramadan to heaven I fly
Ramadan. Ramadan, never I lie
Ramadan. Ramadan to Allah I cry
Ramadan. Ramadan from bad deeds I shy
Ramadan. Ramadan I bid you goodbye

Dihni Farah Matan

(Langford Islamic College, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Poetry (13 to 16 years)

Understanding Our Youth

Confusion and selfishness
Has a tight wrap on us
One so tight it makes us breathless
To the point when people start to fuss
Peer pressure and popularity
Makes us want to blind our eyes
No matter what nationality
We are covered with lies
Craving to be cool and so 'it'
Is probably what kills our souls
Is probably what blackens our hearts
And probably why most of us have a bad fall
They say being a teen is the worst
Which probably is the truth
Because it is the time when we commit our 'firsts'
When all our regrets start to brew
The trouble first starts
When our iman weakens
When the fear of God leaves our hearts
When our love of the world deepens
When our sins start to grow
When we think disobeying our parents is cool
When we befriend our biggest foe
When we decide to ditch school
Don't be surprised about this issue
It is what some of our youth do
There is no use in blaming who
But trying to fix the error at hand
Will probably show our youth
The beauty of Islam and the oneness of Allah!

Khadijah Ameen

(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Winner

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (5 to 7 years)

Kindness

I like being an Australian-Muslim because my religion teaches me how to be kind. I think kindness is good for everyone. In Australia we have people from different religions and countries. Islam teaches me to be kind to all of the people. If someone is old or they cannot walk I can be kind by giving them my seat. I can be kind to small babies by giving them a hug if they are crying. Animals and insects need kindness too and we should care for them.

We can give animals food and we can be careful not to step on insects. Trees and plants also need kindness. It is good to give them water and the sunlight. It won't be kind if we chop all of the trees. I like to drink clean water so I need to be kind to the rivers. I can be kind if I don't throw rubbish in the river. These are just some of the ways Allah teaches me to be a kind Australian.

If everyone is kind we will all be happy. The Prophet Muhammad taught us kindness to parents. He said to a man three times that he should be kind to his mother and then after that the next person is the father. If all families are kind then the whole of Australia will be kind.

Israa Gutta

(Warrigal Road State School, QLD)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (5 to 7 years)

Little Blue Riding Hood and the Aliens from Planet Israa

A thousand years from now there lived a lot of aliens and a little girl named Little Blue Riding Hood.

Near her treehouse was an Alien School.

Early one morning she was skating, she skated so fast on her blue, sparkly roller blades that she skated right into the alien school and knocked over Captain Angry Alien.

Ooh! Big trouble! “Who dare disturbs my big bubbly breakfast?” exclaimed the jumpy Captain.

“Captain, Captain don’t get so angry” said small happy alien.

“I-I-I am s-s sorry for the trouble, I’ll just skate outside the door”.

“Aw it’s alright, I like your blue, sparkly roller blades, come in and have breakfast with us.”

Ghulam Mustafa Ansari
(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Winner

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (7 to 10 years)

The School of Doom

There lived a boy named Jordan. He had just moved in town and his parents had not decided which school to send Jordan. So Jordan was worried. Finally his mum telephoned a school for naughty students so he would straighten up a little. The school's name was New York Military School. Jordan had a little sister named Amanda. She was really annoying. The first day of school for Jordan was not so bad, but real trouble started the second day.

"Hey Jordan, want to play softball after school," asked Josh Anderson. "Ok see you there," replied Jordan. As Jordan reached the softball field, he saw that the game had already begun. He ran over to Josh's team and joined the game.

After the second inning the player with the bat swung too hard and it hit his head with a loud thunk. Jordan could not look but to his surprise the player didn't scream at all. Instead he signalled for the next ball.

Jordan dragged himself home but two blocks away from home he stopped to have a look at the graveyard. "It would be more scary if I looked after dinner," he thought.

He went home to find dinner was already ready and on the table was sitting their neighbour, Mr. Dawes. "Hello Jordan, having fun are you?". "Yeah lots," said Jordan.

After dinner Jordan sneaked out the back door. In the graveyard Jordan walked up and down the grave stones. Jordan screamed as he saw the name on the grave stone.

It read Josh Anderson.

"Whoa get a hold of yourself," said Jordan.

He read some more grave stones and found out what was going on. All the students at school were ghosts.

Maybe the whole town was full of ghosts, so he tried to find Mr. Dawes' name but he couldn't find it.

So that explains the bat incident. He once read in a book that if you sprinkle garlic on ghosts they disappear. So Josh put his plan in action.

Next morning was Thursday so he got up early and went to the kitchen to get the garlic bottle. He found it on the top shelf, grabbed it and went to his room to get dressed.

In school, when everyone went out for break time Jordan got the garlic bottle and went to sprinkle garlic on everyone.

He sprinkled it on Josh and he instantly disappeared.

And no one noticed at all, so he went behind a girl and sprinkled on her and got the same results.

He went around school and sprinkled it on everyone. No one was left except a 9 year old boy and asked him why everyone was a ghost. The boy replied "An accident happened at this school, a boy had somehow got an acid bomb and it exploded in the school."

Jordan sprinkled some garlic on the boy and he disappeared. He went home and found out that his mum had booked him for another school. He hoped it would not be Haunted!

Asiya Haji Ali

(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (7 to 10 years)

The Golden Diamond

“Hey, quick search for that diamond, I wanna get it before Alex that little twerp,” barked Jordan. Jordan was the School bully, him and his gang were the top dogs of the school. Their number one rival was a little kid called Alex who was a very smart boy that always outwitted Jordan and his boys. One day on the news, there was a report about a very mysterious and precious gold diamond. The people who had found the precious jewel were on their way to the Brazilian museum when the gold jewel just vanished with a shimmer of sparkles.

They were flying over the Amazon rainforest when the jewel had disappeared, the people thought that the jewel must have been attracted by something in the forest. The jewel was thought to have some magic powers and so it was very popular. The other reason why the jewel is so special because there is no such a thing as an actual golden diamond. Alex used to go to a school in Belem, Alex had a lot of friends but his only best friend was a very strong kid called Olin. When they heard about what was going on, Alex, Olin and one other friend called Samuel went out of Belem and they went searching into the Amazon Rainforest.

When Jordan found out about the Diamond, the first thing that came into his mind was getting rich. He called all of his friends and told them about his plan, so all the boys set off to find the diamond. Alex knew that they were also searching so he told his boys not to make much noise while searching, or else they might annoy the animals or they might attract Jordan’s attention. While Alex was searching, he told Samuel to go in one direction and Olin to come with him.

As soon as the boys had parted, Alex heard a very low grumble from right under his feet, and from the look on Olin’s face, he realized that he had heard it too. The boys asked each other what was happening but none of them had the least bit of an Idea what was going on. Suddenly, the ground that they were standing on gave way and they found themselves falling down a deep dark hole. The hole kept on going forever and they thought that they were going to land on the earth’s crust which would be where they would meet their fate but they had the wrong ideas.

They had landed on something very soft and squishy and when they looked down, they found themselves sitting on a huge plant and they were so happy. But then Olin suddenly jumped up and held onto the wall on the side of the hole. Then he looked down with a frightened look on his face and he started stammering. He then started poking his fingers

at the plant which they had landed on. Alex looked down and with a frightened gasp he started struggling. They had landed on a sort of plant which could swallow a whole person. The plant had wrapped tendrils around Alex and he was being pulled down. With a croaky voice, he told Olin to whistle and as soon as Olin began whistling, the tendrils let go of Alex. On the side there was a door and they didn't know how to get to the door.

As soon as the plant let go, Alex jumped onto the door and he wrenched it open. Inside he found a lot of diamonds and inside the whole pile of diamonds, there was one sparkling gold one. They ran through the diamonds and jumped on top of the gold diamond and they put it on their hands tightly.

The problem was how they were going to get out?

To Be Continued...

Radia Aimen

(Al Hidayah Islamic School, WA)

Winner

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (10 to 13 years)

Possessed!

The luminosity peered into the room while the curtains brushed the dust away. The windowsill glistened in the thin, silvery moonlight. I felt the cold wind touch my warm face. I suddenly felt a cold chill run down my shivering spine. I tightened my sleeping robe with the fear of coldness. My hands were shaking from the fresh, cold dawn air in the breeze. I adjusted my eyes in the fresh dawn light and, my lungs to the fresh dawn air. It felt like I had never taken a breath before! I yawned and stretched my arms in the air. I hugged myself tightly and rotated my warm hands in a circular motion, around my shoulders. My neck had a ferocious ache that affected my fear of coldness. The wind got colder every second, brutal every minute and misty every moment.

The wind blew hard this time and now, it swept the curtains towards my kneeled legs. I wrapped my hands just below the knees and peeked out the transparent window. I could see my dishevelled garden covered with lifeless grass. I was so uncertain that if we were ever going to renovate our daunting lawn. Just then, an unusual figure appeared and roamed the haunted lawn. I got up and stuck my face on the glass and took a closer look. I got its attention and it stared at me with googly eyes, it had a purple outline and a crooked smile, it had a huge nose which was covered with brown goo. The goo oozed off the transparent soul.

The picture wasn't too clear but I could imagine what it looked like. The creature turned away, and surprisingly it disguised itself as grass. I didn't exactly see what miracle it used, but all I could say was „OH MY GOD!“ I actually couldn't believe it. I was speechless! I stared with my wide-opened mouth and pondered the ghoul outside. The three questions I couldn't answer stayed in my brain, why would any soul disguise itself? Why wouldn't it disappear in front of my eyes? What made it come here?

I kept on muttering these questions but I didn't have an exposition. I brushed my thoughts away and considered this as a nightmare, but I couldn't forget it or at least try to forget it! I didn't let the dawn breeze enter and cool the room. I shut the window slowly and steadily. The curtains came to its place.

I was at the edge of the most infuriating bed when I realized that I was going to skid. I got up and tiptoed to the creaky, old door. I opened it and hoping to see everyone asleep I walked into the empty, cob-webbed lounge room. I walked in, with the loud thudding of my feet and the heavy breathing. I roamed around hoping to see the water. I walked around the creaky, rutted tiles. As my eyes searched for the mineral water I spotted it at the edge of the divider in the kitchen I ran towards it and my elbow hit the bottom of the plastic glass and the glass tipped forward and fell. Oh gosh. So much for drinking water. I got the nearest cloth I could find, and as I wiped the water of the floor.

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAOOOOOOO” the shriek pierced the calm night. I panted. I tried to recognise the eerie howl. It sounded familiar but, I couldn’t put my finger on it. I ran towards the corner of the wall and just then my brother jumped out. “Just my new awesome wolf toy!” he whispered in laughter.

His grin aggravated me the most, his yellow decayed teeth were sticking out. “Why, you little brat” I screamed in a high-pitched voice. “It’s not my fault that I got such an annoying sister like you but, I have to admit you should’ve seen your face.” he laughed. “What did I do to deserve this?” I asked. “You.... You.... You took my.....” he stammered. I knew he was too absurd to answer that question and so he was. “So, you don’t know the real reason, do you?” I sneered “No...Uh... yes...uh... no ...I mean yes I do but, not now” He stammered with fear. “You’re wasting my time” I said. “Who do you think you’re messing with?” He asked. “I think, I am YOUR SISTER messing with an outrageous brother like you!” I shouted at the top of my lungs. “Why don’t you just get lost somewhere else?” I added quickly. My brother just turned away ignoring my words of truthfulness and hummed softly as if I never existed. “Going somewhere?” I asked, gripping his shoulders and pulling him towards me. “Yes, indeed I am” He said in a weird voice and surprisingly he was able to shove my hands away from his shoulders.

I think he was tired, he always acts weird when he feels tired. My brother and me never get along very well we always have to squabble over something. I still couldn’t figure out why he just hurried away to his room. My brother never acts that weird, I mean usually he is so careful about touching me and now he just shoved me away. It didn’t make sense. I nearly fell down but, then I came back to Earth. I creaked open the dirty bedroom door and entered worriedly. Maybe he was angry because of my temper. I am very short-tempered and I always shout at my brother. I was still near the door when I decided that I should go to my brother. It was very nice of me. It had been a long time since I ever talked to him personally! We used to share secrets when I was about 11 but, then when his friends all knew about it, there was only one person to blame! I opened the door hoping to see a pleasant face when I entered his room. My brother’s room is a metre away from mine.

I was going to knock when I heard him speaking to something or someone. I heard some shopping bags rustling in the wind. That’s so weird! My brother never dares to open his windows. I peeked from the distance between the door and saw my brother packing his bags for leaving. LEAVING! Was he being controlled? Or possessed? Or he probably couldn’t take it here? “You better get that.....or else you will have to suffer the consequences” something whispered, some of the message was muffled in the air. I was so disheartened, what had I done! I was so rude and now my brother wanted to leave me! “You might have to commit suicide or kill someone” I heard someone order my brother. “Ok” my brother nodded and replied. “Now let’s start our.....journey!” it said. Suddenly a flash of red light shone, the whole room was sparkling with beauty. It stopped just a few seconds later. I slammed the door open and shouted “Leave my brother alone!” when I couldn’t see anything in front of my eyes. He had really gone! Could this get any worse! The windows weren’t open and neither were there any shopping bags and amazingly his bed was neat. I was really over-whelmed to see no-one in the room.

All that happened in front of my eyes. I couldn’t deny it! It was hard to gulp in but it had to be true. I panicked and bent down to look under the bed. Nothing. I hurried to the door, slammed it open and ran to my parents’ room except for knocking, I barged in. “Mom, Dad” I panted depressingly. “Well, young lady next time you come here....” my mom scowled. “No time for rules Mom, at least not right now!” I shouted and pulled her out of bed. “Oh, please...Don’t tell me it’s one of your jokes again!” My dad cried. “Young lady tell me right now what are you doing?” My mom sighed. “No, dad I know I have been lying and joking since last week but please. Can you believe me now?” I shouted back as I pulled him towards the door. “Stop, right now!” my dad shouted crossly. Was I ever going to convince my parents that my baby brother was lost without any explanation? Or was I going to be

grounded for not telling them the reason even if it happened without one? If god wills I might even get the second biggest room for telling the truth! I love that room! It has three beautiful lanterns covered with colourful streamers around but, my dad said I was never going to get it until I do something truly helpful.

“You know what Henry, I don’t believe your 16 year old daughter anymore!” my mum remarked. What?! Now my own mum didn’t believe me! How could this night get any worse! The more I thought about it, the worse it got. Just then, I left my dad’s hands and I ran to my room, slammed the door shut and started sobbing on my bed. I cried as I cursed myself with the most illogical of words. What had I done? My own brother loathed me and so did my parents. My tears landed softly on my bed. I again, peeked outside the window and spotted a caravan and some storage right outside it and then again I saw the same ghoul outside half in the caravan! And this time he had my brother! Wait, was that the ghoul that was in my brother’s room teaching him something? Maybe. Maybe not. I rubbed my eyes just in case it was a vision but, it wasn’t. I don’t think I got enough sleep, dawn seemed to last forever! I opened my window and stuck my face out to get a closer sight. My brother had a feeling that he was being stared at and he was. So, just to make sure he looked up that instant and I hid abruptly.

I peeked at the edge of the window and at the same time he turned his attention back to his work. I nearly looked back when I heard a hoarse voice. “Young lady, you tell us now what are you doing peeking out the window?” dad asked suspiciously. “Dad...uh... Harry is doing something outside. I stammered depressingly. “How are you sure of that?” he asked. “Dad, why don’t you believe me?” I cried. “Because, you have been lying since last week!” he screamed. His voice shook the room. “Your brother is in his room darl.” My mum said softly while putting weight on dad’s shoulders as an indication of “calm down”. That always works. “He couldn’t be” I screamed. “Honey, you’re probably stressed, you might see things the opposite way” my mum said trying to calm me down. I sometimes can’t reject myself. “Maybe,” I said as I sat and rubbed my tears away. “But, I have to make sure” I said hurriedly. As I made way for myself through the doorway and ran to my brother’s room. He wasn’t there, I looked back to see my parents” they weren’t there either. “Probably in their room.” I mumbled. I ran back to my room to get my nightgown. I had to rescue my brother. He was in big trouble. I didn’t want to distress my parents”. I borrowed a torch on the shelf in the cob-webbed lounge room, tightened my sleeping robe and ran to the nearest door I could find, the backdoor. I hurried down the stairs and twisted the door knob.

I tip-toed to where I remembered my brother was. There I saw him still loading stuff on his caravan. I was quite near him when I heard the same ghoul order him to load up rapidly. Astoundingly, he did do it rapidly. I saw him looking around himself to make sure he wasn’t being spied, just then he saw half of my face looking at him curiously. I suddenly started a run for the door and locked it. I decided that I didn’t have to be such a prissy so I unlocked the door and ran to the corner of the shed (where I was earlier) and peeked out to see if Harry had changed his mind about being normal again. He hadn’t even improved. “Harry, whatever you are doing is gullible” I screamed. “No, Harry don’t listen to her, remember a true warrior never gives up.” The ghoul demanded quietly but, I could still hear it in the calm night. Harry nodded and continued with his work. What!? My brother was a warrior. This couldn’t be happening. My brother... warrior... so didn’t go together. I had to do something but, what.

My parents didn’t believe me, Harry is acting weird and the ghoul is distressing me! What could I do? I had nothing to think about, nothing to do and totally no ideas! I ran back to the backdoor and up to my room. One of the nails in the backdoor caught hold of my sleeping robe. I tried to snatch it away but, while I was doing so, I heard my skin rip and an abrasion formed. I ran to the spare room, next to the backdoor, to look for a band aid. I found one and quickly applied it over the abrasion. I ran up to my room with my torn sleeve. I abruptly remembered something. I once read somewhere that the

best way to un-possess someone was to act like you didn't know what was happening and act like nothing ever happened to the person that is being possessed. But, how could I do that when I wasn't ever going to calm down and act like nothing happened? But, I had to do so. I have to try. At least once... just this once. I crept back to the backdoor with the torch in my hand. I turned the door knob but the door wouldn't budge. "Oh, no!?" I thought. I twisted the door knob in every angle but nothing happened. I pulled the door towards me and something creaked. The door. I had forgotten that you had to pull the door! I realized how much I was stressing I even forgot how to open the door.

"Ha ha ha" I laughed "Funny, how it didn't budge" I was pushing except for pulling. „OOF How dumb could I get?" I wondered.

I ran to the garden as fast as I could. Luckily, Harry didn't notice that I was there. I hid behind an oak tree. I spotted the other oak tree, decided to run there and the moment I started to run, I stopped. I saw three more ghouls! What?! I rubbed my eyes to get a better view. Nope, I was right, there WERE three more ghouls. I kept on watching. As I did so, one of them kept a very close eye on Harry. The other two were playing UNO.

Now what. "Hey you!" I whispered to one of the ghouls. All of them looked up. One of the ghouls that were playing UNO dropped its cards. "Intruder! Intruder! Intruder!" "I am not an intruder! Okay. I live here" I screeched. Oh, God. This was getting abstruse. "We did not talk to people for a long time" one of them whispered back. "Wow, that's just great" I answered. "I know! It is so amazing how we don't talk to earth.....lin.....ling....." it stammered "Earthlings?" I completed. So I get it they were from another planet? Probably. But for now I had to have a way to convince them to stop the ghoul from possessing Harry. Only if I knew how. "Ok, in this world we call ourselves people" I taught them with the basics. I felt like an obnoxious loser but if that is what I have to do to save my brother then I will. All of them stood up and stared at me. "People?" they all asked "People." I answered. "Ok, so how do we know who you are?" One of them asked. "Simple. Just listen to what I say" I smiled and told them my plan.

"You guys try to get that ghoul distracted and don't worry about me, ok" "Ok, but are you sure you can do it by yourself?" "Yup, just don't worry about me" I ran back to the backdoor. I grabbed the rope, in the spare room, and ran up to my room. I opened my window slowly but, steadily. I grabbed the rope and threw it down at my brother. The rope hit his head, he looked up, but didn't hold the rope. "Harry!" I whispered. "Hurry up" I added. The ghoul that was working with me really distracted the other ghoul. Suddenly, Harry looked around and sighted no ghoul so he grabbed the rope and I pulled him up. "Hurry! He's coming" Harry squealed. He goes squeaky when he has goose pimples or goose bumps. I guess he had goose bumps because it was such a cold night. "Ok" I replied. Harry pulled himself up and in a second or two he was inside my room. "Are you alright" I asked breathlessly. "Yeah I guess" he replied. "I'm sorry" I cried and hugged him "I am really so sorry" I repeated. "I didn't know how important you were. I am sorry Harry I am so sorry." "I didn't know how I treated you like I am such a fool" I remarked. "It's okay Rachael. You know I learnt the dumbest thing ever that you are a great sister!" He laughed.

Ibrahim Mohamed Barre
(Langford Islamic College, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (10 to 13 years)

When Lightning meets the Waves

“My child will be your best student” Zeus said in the most boastful voice. “He is superior to these half-bloods!”

“Now honey let’s not insult his future mentors.” Hera said, rub her pregnant stomach. Hera was now 8 months pregnant expecting their son, Thaddeus, whose destiny is to become the greatest warrior, according to The Oracle of Telia. The Oracle was a beautiful sight, a tall, slim and blonde creature with flawless skin and sea green eyes dressed in a long white robe. In the city of Telia, The Oracles temple is the best construction in miles. Zeus and Hera trusted the oracle for she warned them that Hades, one of Zeus’s three brothers, would be jealous of his son and try to kill Thaddeus. But Hades didn’t know his ingenious plan had been discovered and deep down in the heart of his woeful castle in The Underworld he continued to plot.

“Tell me, Exodia my faithful warrior, what do you think of this plan?” Hades asked, eagerly pacing around the enormous throne room.

“Master I think it is wonderful to kill the son and mother together leaving Zeus shattered, but how do you attempt such a thing with Hera guarded round the clock by other gods” Exodia replied in his usual deep, fear inflicting voice. Exodia is a demi god Knight that used to be in Zeus’s army, until he joined his father Hades, he is never seen out of his armour of pure gold. Hades recruited him due to his ability to kill from any distance because of his skill in spell casting.

“Yes, you are correct it is virtually impossible to attack her before birth, but what about after birth” Hades exclaimed mischievously. Hades hated his brother as much as he hated the world. After Zeus sent him to the Underworld, Hades had to fend for himself not even Poseidon could help him.

“But master how would we achieve killing a God?”

“Isn’t that simple, we don’t kill her we lock Hera up, you Buffon” Hades snapped, suddenly angered by Exodia’s many questions.

“Of course master, I’ll be on my way”

“Don’t forget, after the birth.” Hades knew Exodia got it the first time but he enjoyed correcting him.

Zeus burst into Hera’s quarters to find that baby Thaddeus and Hera missing. He called for an emergency meeting of the gods and goddesses it was attended by everyone except Poseidon and Hades. Poseidon was having war but Hades had no excuse. Little did he know that Exodia had mercy on his son and somewhere faraway his son struggled to survive.

Thaddeus could just hear the noise of a boat ahead over the sounds of the waves. *Help* he thought to himself, as the baby of two gods his brain was far more developed so he was able to think but not say.

Thaddeus had been floating on a piece of driftwood he woke up on this morning. Thaddeus hated the sea even though his uncle is god of the sea, Poseidon. *It's getting closer!* He thought *maybe I can find out where Mother is.* As his excitement grew so did his recklessness, he paddled with his tiny baby feet and fell off *How cliché* he thought as drifted on his back, away from the boat.

Honk, Honk the boat screeched to a halt beside a small floating body. Some of the crew strip naked and jump of the side to retrieve the baby from the freezing water. I watched as they lift it aboard dripping but silent. "Who wants this thing, aye" The captain said as the foot soldier passed the boy to him. There was silence until I put my hand up "Of course, Lord Montage, his all yours" the captain said hurriedly, with a small courteous bow, and half jogged half walked to bring the baby to me.

"Peace Admiral Edmund but don't tell Jacquelyn you gave away a fit and strong baby boy or you'll be on the street looking for another wife!" I laughed, awkwardly followed by the rest of the passengers. *Too much respect that we can't even have fun* I thought to myself as the sailor rushed away to get milk for the boy. I walk gracefully below deck to my wife, Lady Eleanor, and my cabin.

"My dearest Eleanor, Admiral Cartwright found a baby boy floating on the ocean he gave it to me" I cried as I entered the room. Eleanor fell to the floor and wept, this was amazing since she couldn't bear children. She spent the rest of the trip playing and feeding the child. Finally we arrived at Yorkenshire. Yorkenshire was host to the biggest war in history, it was regarded as The War for the Roses due to Yorkenshire's Gardens. I have spread my cavalry and soldiers through this war to assist King Farthermore's Troops already strained by Greeks attempts to capture England.

"Ah, Sir Elorwyn, how are your troops coping with the overwhelming forces of Leonidas" I asked as we strolled through camp.

"Not well lord Montage, I've lost 301 men and 59 horses it seems as if North England is crawling with Leonidas's men" he replied with a hint of remorse in his voice. He was used to the death of men but this time it seemed as if the Spartans were looking for something and would do anything to get it. He has heard rumours that Lord Montage's new son was of Greek decent and that was what the Spartans were after. "My Lord, may I visit your son?" The general asked cautiously.

"Why may you want to visit my little wise ruler, Elorwyn?" I asked curiously, wondering what the general is thinking. *He's probably trying to be friendly* I thought to myself. Sir Elorwyn was my strongest and most trusted of all my generals he wouldn't hurt me. It has been almost a year since I found Audric, that's what I've named him, but he still mutters the word Thaddeus which is the Greek word for gift of the gods, the little boy has the characteristics of a warrior Eleanor says. Its true dark storm coloured eyes, large bones and a loud voice. He has long wavy white hair.

"Spartans are attacking, soldiers prepare yourselves all those important flee to Lord Montage's ship make haste, make haste" shouted Lord Lieutenant Jason, while scurrying down to get his sword and shield. I rushed to get my own when Eleanor stoped me. "Please Oliver, we've got a child now don't risk your life!" she begged

"I have to" I replied, trying to steel myself from her pleas. I call my squire to dress me, arm myself with a sword and went out to face the Spartans. As usual each Spartan Hoplite was armed with a short sword and a Doru, large spear, wearing their Corinthian helmets with red horse hair on top, red tunic, covered by their muscle cuirass and greaves all in bronze. It was a truly terrifying sight

watching the mass of the army we are going to face but we stood our ground. A Spartan general rode out of the ranks to meet us signalling for peace. "Oh my friends, let's not spill any more good blood, we came here looking for something and that something is finally here, Thaddeus" he said to my surprise, I guess he saw the surprise on my face because he called me and said "Take me to him!" he snapped.

"NO!!!" I bellowed with all my might. I guess my soldiers to this a battle cry because all around me I heard the sound of clashing steel and the agonised cries of falling men. I ran as fast as I could to the ship not bothering to see if I was being followed. A costly decision for when I reach the ship three Spartans appeared out of nowhere lead by the general I shouted at.

"Ah, brave warrior we meet again," he said in an amused tone, "let me introduce myself I am the legendary King Leonidas of Sparta and this is my son Pleistarchus and this a my favourite warrior Herlomot, we have come to take what is rightfully the gods blessings to the Spartans."

"Please don't do this my wife can't bear children this is the first time I had seen her smiling since we meet" I begged. The next thing I heard was Leonidas's jeered chuckle, the screech of a sword being drawn and excruciating pain in my side. I gaged as I watched the blood flow from wound and slither across the deck, inking the sea. I stared as they ran below deck and listened to the screams of Eleanor and the cries of Audric.

Little did Audric (I can't get used to calling him Thaddeus) know that high above on Mount Olympus I watched him grow and grow into becoming a king mightier than any Sparta ever had. Unfortunately the world had, in time, forgotten this legend I hope some will remember the Legendary Thaddeus.

Fatimah Hashim

(Cambridge Primary School, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (10 to 13 years)

Sarah's Wish

Sarah stared out at the empty darkness through the window glumly. Her ears were ringing and she had a massive headache. Right now, she would do anything to escape the dining table and rush into her room, slamming the door behind her. "Will they stop shouting?" Sarah wondered to herself. Sarah was an 8 year old girl. She was the only child to her parents. She had caring parents, yet, sometimes she found it tough having a mother as a catholic and a father as a Muslim.

"Let her choose her own way of life when she grows up" her mother argued. "I want Sarah to grow up as a Muslim" her dad sighed. This is the subject of their routine argument at the dining table. As usual Sarah was always in confusion. She buried her head in her hands. Sarah wanted to have a normal lunch time with her parents. She wanted to enjoy a calm and peaceful lunch without an argument.

"May I be excused?" Sarah asked her parents calmly. "Of course, dear" her mother replied softly. Sarah pulled back her chair and trudged up the stairs to her room. She noticed as she was leaving, her mum and dad exchanged guilty looks on their faces. Sarah was very tired as it was a school day. Soon, she found herself slowly closing her eyes.....

Sarah's dad and mum have been married for nearly ten years now. At the time of their marriage they didn't much worry about their cultural and religious differences. Her dad became a practicing Muslim when Sarah was four years old. It was an unexpected turning point in her dad's life. A couple of days after Sarah's fourth birthday she developed an unusual medical condition. Day by day she became weak. Sarah's parents worried so much for Sarah's health. They took her to several doctors to find out the cause of her illness. They tried a lot of medicine and treatment methods. Yet, nothing helped Sarah to recover.

The situation made Sarah's dad to turn back to Allah. He started daily prayers and he gave up some of his bad habits including smoking. He would wake up in the middle of the night and pray to Allah and beg for His help for his only child. Allah didn't let his prayer go in vein. Miraculously Sarah's health condition improved in the next few days. After three weeks Sarah was back to normal life and she started playing as a healthy girl.

"Wake up Sarah. You have school" Sarah was opening her eyes, to find the bright sunshine pouring onto her eyes. She shielded her eyes away from the open curtains. Her mum was folding the blanket neatly and Sarah realised that she hadn't slept under the sheets. It was freezing winter in Melbourne. Now she was very cold as she put on her robe. She got ready to go to school. Sarah was sure that her parents would continue to argue but she never lost hope. She believed in the power of the god. She

could remember how god helped her to recover from her illness. She prayed everyday to her god, making dua for her parents.

“We’re here” Sarah’s mum called to the back seat, where Sarah was sitting. Her mum had noticed how quiet she was being this morning. Before her mum could ask any more questions, Sarah got out of the car and slammed the door shut. What was troubling her was that there was the Multi-Cultural Day at school. The children were asked to dress up in a way that would represent their culture or religion. Sarah was afraid that her parents were going to argue over which culture she should go as.

The day went by in a whizz. Sarah’s teacher was upset about her constant daydreaming during the day but she understood what Sarah had been going through. Her teacher dismissed her and she walked home silently. The noise of cars passing by and a breeze were the only things she had. So here Sarah was, at home and listening to music. Her father would come in and say: “too much music is haraam, sweetie; it is time for reading Quran”. And then her mother would come in and say: “What song are you listening to now, honey? I can update the latest song if you want”.

The next morning, Sarah had revealed the news to her parents. “I must represent my religion” Sarah said glumly. Sarah has already become attracted by her best friend Hafsa’s good manners. Hafsa has always been there not only as a close friend but also as a role model in every good thing. She always wears modest dress. Sarah wanted to dress up as Hafsa does.

“I know exactly what you can wear! I have this adorable little veil that you can wear!” her mother called as she got up from breakfast to collect the garment. “Who said she is going in this attire?” her father asked in an angry tone. They both argued until Sarah got up and said: “I would rather not go as anything” and she left to dress in her normal school dress.

Everyone at school was dressed up. Sarah was unhappy. Thinking on how she was missing out on wearing a lovely traditional dress made her feel glum. Her teacher understood what was happening and let Sarah also take part in the activities. Hafsa’s support and comfort gave her peace of mind.

“I’m home!” Sarah called. “As salaam u alaikum!” her father called from the lounge. Sarah walked home from school every day. She found it peaceful to walk.

Ramadan was coming closer and she was really excited. She wanted to fast but she didn’t know what her mum would say about it.

Sarah had begged her mother to allow her to fast and so far, her mother hadn’t decided yet. But she was patiently waiting and tomorrow was the starting of Ramadan.

“We have decided that you can only fast on weekends” Sarah’s mum said sternly while having tea.

That was good enough for Sarah. She sipped up the last of her tea and danced to her room. She stroked her kitten that was sleeping on her bed. “Oh Mittens” Sarah said to her cat. “I am so excited!”

The day had come. It was Saturday morning, early at dawn. Sarah was very tired but excited at the same time. She washed her hands and sat down at the dining table. She ate her food slowly and tried to get used to all the rules she had to follow at suhoor. She finished eating before the time was up and she was very full. She prayed Fajr and went back to sleep.

Sarah was feeling very hungry. Her parents had asked for her to break her fast. She said no. But now she gave in. "I am too hungry" she said sadly, sipping a glass of water. "Don't worry. It was your first time fasting. You can do it next time" her father said kindly. Sarah thanked her father and mother for letting her try and she slipped back to her room. "I will try again tomorrow...." she said to herself quietly before dozing off to sleep.

"It's nearly time for iftar!" Sarah cried excitedly. Sarah had surprised herself by sleeping in until noon from suhoor. Now she was preparing for her first iftar. "Allahu Akbar Allahu Akbar....." the adaan filled the house. The adaan was so beautiful and sweet that even her mum paused her work to listen to it.

"No Sarah! First you must eat a date. Sarah was reaching for the donuts but as soon as she heard her father's words, she snatched her hand back. "I am so hungry that I will eat anything" Sarah moaned. Her father handed her a date and she took it eagerly. She took a nibble and waited for the sweetness to flood through her taste buds. "Mmm... Small but filling!" Sarah grinned. Her father laughed. "Are you sure you aren't hungry?" Sarah's mum asked for the third time. "Mum! I am very full!" "Oh no! I forgot to pray!" Sarah rushed to the pray. At the end, she asked dua along with a wish.... After Ramadan, Eid.....

Sarah was going to the mosque with her parents. Sarah was surprised. Her mum never came to the mosque. Then Sarah's mum got up and went to the front of the lady's section. She stood up and faced the crowd. Sarah's mum's friend Bushra auntie was standing next to her. Then she did the most amazing thing that Sarah could ever imagine.

"La illaha Illallah.....Muhammadu Rasullallah"; she declared her shahadah in front of the ladies.

Everyone was silent. Then all the ladies stood up and start shaking hand and hug her mum. There was joy and happy at everyone's face. Sarah ran up to her mum, overwhelmed and her eyes gleaming. "I was touched by your heart for Islam little one" her mother said admiringly. "You have yourself to thank for me becoming a Muslim. Sarah was very proud of herself. She found tears of joy streaming down her face. She never wanted to forget this moment.

Her mother had finally realised the true path and had become a believer of the one and only god, Allah. Sarah was especially happy that Allah had made her Ramadan wish come true.

Sarah was still in shock from her mum's conversion to Islam. When they got home she asked "mum, what had made you change your mind. She told Sarah: "I read some books on Islam and I found that you and your father had developed a peace from this religion. I was attracted and wanted to become a Muslim".

"Alhamdulillah, my wish came true. Allah didn't disappoint me. Thank you Allah....." Sarah said to herself.

Zuha Ali

(Islamic College of Brisbane, QLD)

Winner

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award
&
Writer of the Year

Short Story (13 to 16 years)

Reminiscence

Indo-Pak War, 1965

There is a knock at the door. "Excuse me," the old woman says, placing her cup of green tea on an antique table and shuffling out of the room, leaning on her carved wooden walking stick. I hear her murmuring to a man who replies in hushed tones. Suddenly, there is a wail and I hear the crash of china. Immediately sensing that something is wrong, I stand up and make my way towards the front door to find the woman on the ground in a crumpled heap, her eyes wide with shock next to a broken vase. The man at the door seems startled but I politely ask him to leave.

"Aunty, what's wrong?" I enquire, "Is he—"

"Dead." She finishes the sentence for me.

"Killed in war as he fought against those bloodthirsty wretches! I hate them! That is how they are—the whole lot of them. I hate those Indians! How dare they take my one and only son?" she sobs.

There is silence as I consider my means of consolation.

"No Aunty, some of them may be as you have described— perhaps even most of them, but not all of them," I tell her, my voice shaking with surprise at my own courage. I help her get up and lead her to one of the leather armchairs in the immaculate living room.

Her already teary eyes are now overflowing as she stares at me in a mixture of astonishment and anger. I have never told anyone of my traumatic experience of the Indo-Pak partition, but now I feel the truth trying to burst out of me and my mind flashes back to 1947 when I was just a twelve year old girl.

I feel as if my body has been possessed by my twelve year old spirit and begin to speak, "I know of a girl who had to endure much pain during the partition." She still has her face in her hands but I know I have her attention as she does not protest.

"It began on the morning of Eid. She had just woken up and dressed in her brand new green and red salwar kamiz. Her arms were adorned with multi-coloured bangles that chimed as she was welcomed by the aroma of steaming hot sweet vermicelli in milk. She greeted her mother with "Eid Mubarak" and helped her prepare the breakfast they would never be able to enjoy.

The festive atmosphere was shattered by screams and the early arrival of the girl's father and brother from the Eid Salah. „We must leave now, they are coming“, her father commanded. The girl's mother scrambled around in frenzied panic collecting the family's most precious possessions only to drop them as she was dragged away by her pleading children.

As they rushed through the village the screams of innocent girls being choked to death to protect them from a fate much worse still ring in the girl's ears, along with the yells of attackers who were gaining on the little family. *Who could be so cruel*, the girl wondered and turned around to a shocking and unexpected sight, causing her to halt. She saw the faces of friends and neighbours.

There was Aman Singh who would give her free sweets at the corner shop, but instead of bearing a friendly smile, his face was contorted with rage, intent on killing those travelling to Pakistan. *Intent on killing me*, she thought. Her father and brother were tugging at her arm, begging her to move but she could not. As they attempted to persuade the young girl to hurry, they were unaware of the coward from the group of Hindus and Sikhs who had snuck up behind the father and son duo.

The girl turned to her father and saw the man- a knife in his outstretched hands.

“Abu!” she yelled, but it was too late. The knife plunged into her father's back, blood staining his pure white new salwar kamiz. Her Brother's expression of shock remains etched in her mind as he too experienced the same fate seconds later.

She scrambled to catch up with her mother, hatred building in her heart towards herself and towards the killer- the chief of the village named Raj Kumar. She ran through the village as faces of friends she had grown up with stared at her from behind closed windows and doors.

By nightfall, they were fatigued and had reached a camp set up just outside a nearby village. Exhausted, the girl lay down in a tent shared with around ten others as hungry babies wailed around her. Upon regarding the scene, the girl realised her own hunger and remembered the food she had been cooking just this morning, although it had felt like weeks before. Recalling her father's and brother's deaths the girl burst into tears and was cradled in her mother's reassuring arms as she was repeatedly comforted. Slowly her eyes drooped and she fell fast asleep.

The girl awoke to the sound of gunshots mingled with screams. Thinking she may have been abandoned, she crept out of the tent to a scene of complete chaos. Amidst the raucous, the girl spotted her mother who was helping a young woman with two infants and three young children. She made her way towards her mother, who said, „You are young and healthy, quickly, help this poor woman with her children and leave, I will be right behind you with food.“ The girl stopped to argue but her mother cut her off with a heartfelt hug and kiss on the forehead. “Do not worry,” she whispered. With no choice the girl helped the woman escape from the camp and continued to run until she was sure it was safe. She turned around, expecting to see her mother but saw nothing except the burning camp in the distance, with bodies sprawled around it. One of them was her mother's.

The next few days felt like a nightmare. The girl had lost everything and wondered through villages aimlessly, anticipating an attack to reunite her with her family while none came.

Then one day, she heard the blissful sound of jeering, meaning an attack but before she could fully relish the opportunity, she was pulled into someone's house, a hand covering her mouth.

A woman's voice spoke, “Please do not fear, I want to help you.“ She turned around to the familiar face of Priya Kumar, the wife of her father's and brother's killer, realising she was back in her home

village. The girl desperately looked for a knife to kill this evil woman but saw none. The woman sensed her fear and apologised for her husband's behaviour and promised to help the girl.

This must be a trick, the girl thought but nodded silently as there was no escape. Priya offered the girl a meal, promising that it was not poisoned.

Like I really believe you, the girl thought, but eventually her hunger gave in and she devoured it quickly.

The sound of approaching footsteps became evident and Priya quickly ushered the girl into a cupboard.

He entered and ordered his wife to give him his meal. As he ate, Raj Kumar boasted of all the Muslims he had killed, or "traitors" as he called them and with each name more anger bubbled inside the girl, but when he cursed her father she could take it no more. She leaped out, yelling more furiously than ever before and uttering words she didn't even know she could say. She expected him to stab her or beat her with a spoon, but instead he turned around and viciously beat his wife, repeatedly calling her a traitor. Gasping her last breath, Priya uttered, "ticket!" to the girl, pointing to her dressing table where there lay a train ticket to Lahore, Pakistan. The girl grabbed it and ran to the station where she took the train to her destination, the Land of the Pure. *I don't deserve to be going to such a place*, she thought.

How am I pure when I have caused the deaths of so many?

Upon arriving at the station, the train that followed carried not a single living soul and the girl heard those around her mutter in disapproval about "all those cursed Hindus and Sikhs". But she disagreed; they were not all evil, as Priya Kumar had shown. This one girl had to endure so much pain, loss and suffering but never forgot Priya's sacrifice. She was only twelve.

"You were the girl," the old lady says after I finish. "Although you are younger than me, you have lost many more to war: Your mother, father, brother and now your husband- my dear son but you still acknowledge the good that put themselves at risk for your sake."

I nod silently, tears welling in my eyes.

"They say "Dulce ET Decorum EST Pro Patria Mori"- it is sweet and fitting to die for one's country and so many have done so. They have believed this and sacrificed their lives for this country," I whisper, my cheeks now wet with tears. And together we sit and cry on each other's' shoulders, reminiscing about the limited days of our lives that have not been ruined by war.

Suraiya Khan

(Upper Coomera State College, QLD)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (13 to 16 years)

The Time of the Crusades: Diary Entries of Aaliyah

November 29th 1098

Subahanallah! Glory be to Allah! Father has finally managed to produce crops and is making great profit. However, I am extremely worried about something. Last night, I snuck out of my room to fetch a small snack when I overheard Father and Mother talking about something called the *Crusades*. At first, I did not approach the door as it is bad manners to eavesdrop, until I heard Mother's voice become frantic. I could not get enough information, as Adhila started to cry. That, and Ahmed nearly caught me! Only Allah (S.W.T) knows what would have become of me if he found me out of bed. Sometimes I think my big brother does not like me that much.

January 17th 1099

Alas! Great disaster has befallen us! I have found out more of the Crusades from the village women and men. They are soldiers who fight and kill for a non-Muslim religion. They are making their way to Jerusalem as we speak to come and take their "Holy Lands" back! Oh Allah (S.W.T) save us! Grant us mercy! Tears are now starting to well up in my eyes, threatening to spill over at any given moment; Father and Ahmed have been asked to prepare for some upcoming battle. Mother is rather upset, but dares not show it and tries to encourage them. She tells me that if they die they will be martyred and sent to Jannah. Adhila is far too young to understand, but I do. Although it pains me, I have to allow my brother and father to fight without a fuss or smart remark. But for now I must leave, as Father will become very angry if he sees me writing in this Kitaab and not reading the Quran.

June 9th 1099

Allah (S.W.T) helps us! The Crusaders have passed the town of Pamleh and are now camping outside the gates of Jerusalem! Mother says to thank Allah (S.W.T) that the small town was notified and was able to flee before the soldiers reached them. Fatimah, my friend believes that the gates will not stay strong forever, but I beg to differ. Our city defences are quite good and our leader has ordered all Christians out of Jerusalem. Father had said that all the women, children and elders have to leave soon. Mother protested and ARGUED with Father. Can you believe it? Mother, actually ARGUING with my Father, the man of the house. I have never heard of such a thing. However, I commend her for her bravery as I do not want to leave either. Ahmed saw me today sitting on the hill and watching the stars. He came to join me; I think he is scared. He told me stories and we sat there for what felt like hours. He has never been this open and caring towards me before, he was usually just indifferent and ignored me. But I am not one to be ungrateful, as I now cherish the small moments I spend with my older brother, because it may be the last time we see each other again, until the Day of Judgement. Oh no, I am starting to tear up again. I must go now, Mother has some guests visiting and we must be good hostesses.

June 21st 1099

I have finally managed to take a peek at the men's armoury and weaponry. The metal on the armour is the finest I have ever seen. Encrusted with jewels, intricate colours and Islamic calligraphy, it looks more like jewellery than a piece of protective gear. My father's, I believe, was imported from either Iran or Turkey where Islamic armour is extremely popular. The armour, instead of having layers of metal, has a shirt of steel plates with areas of mail. The plate is often confined into the helmet, with short arm defences and lower leg defences. This allows the armour to be lighter for speed. Our soldiers usually have round shields of metal with Javelins, battle axes, maces, re-curve bows and sabres. It is unusual for a female Muslim, such as me to know so much about war, but Ahmed has fed my curiosity and answered my millions of questions. More news has finally come at last; apparently a "vision" came to the most dedicated Crusaders in which a man called Bishop of Le

Puy has given instructions to the men telling them to walk around the walls of Jerusalem, barefoot for approximately nine days. Doing this, they believe Jerusalem shall fall. Rumours have been circling the city that the Crusaders are low in numbers and are calling in reinforcements. They also seem to be suffering in the heat and their supplies must be running short. I know somewhere deep down at the bottom of my heart I feel pity for them, but right now I am more concerned about the wellbeing of my family to worry about Christian Crusaders I know nothing about.

July 12th 1099

The women, children and elders have been evacuated. Only those who wished to stay were allowed inside the gates. My party was the third-last party to leave. We are waiting desperately for any news of what has been happening in the city. I sit here; clutching the beautiful necklace my brother gave me for my birthday praying to Allah (S.W.T) to keep our loved ones safe. Mother has become quite reserved now, holding on to Adhila as only a protective mother should. I worry for her; she has been depressed ever since leaving Jerusalem. Perhaps it's the knowledge that her husband may never return, or maybe it is that her first born child and only son is out there possibly fighting, exhausted and on the verge of death and may never come back into her arms.

July 15th 1099

This will be my last entry. Over some time I have poured my heart into this little black book, sharing my secrets, emotions, thoughts, dreams and so much more. But now, I cannot find the determination to hold my quill upright. Just yesterday the Crusaders lead their main attack on Jerusalem breaking through the entrances. They attacked from all sides, while our men, seeing that their defences were broken fled to the Temple Dome of the Rock. No Muslims or Jews were spared in the Crusaders slaughter, all killed mercilessly. Mother has been weeping and mourning ever since, but I cannot find the strength to cry. What I feel is beyond crying, I know my life will never be the same again. And so, I bid thee farewell ready to accept my new life, just after we bury our dead.

Maryam Mahmoud

(Islamic College of Brisbane, QLD)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (13 to 16 years)

Imprisoned

With the blood pounding in my chest, and sweat trickling down my forehead, I anxiously glanced around the wall that acted as the only barrier between the pursuing soldiers and me. The deafening footsteps of nine Israeli soldiers literally made the ground vibrate and I feared the wall would collapse and reveal my hiding place for all see. But gradually, the rhythmic stomping of the soldiers' feet, became muffled footsteps, and then finally, they were gone. I cautiously peered around the wall, and almost collapsed when I saw the ghastly scene that lay before my eyes.

An overwhelming sense of anguish flooded me, as I set my eyes on hundreds of lifeless bodies, piled on top of each other. It was unbelievable that the Israelis were able to massacre so many people in just a few minutes. But of course, with the hatred of war, anything to do with death is possible, no matter how gruesome. Pools of fresh blood engulfed the ground that was once a park, but had now become a graveyard, home to thousands of dead people. It is astonishing how a place that was once abundant with lush green shrubs and trees, with gleeful children running around, could now be a place where corpses lie, reeking with the smell of blood. I remembered the times my family and I, used to have picnics here; it was my favourite place to be. It was my haven. But now it was nothing more than a piece of dead land, with the severed limbs of innocent victims scattered around, like moths scattered on a lamp. Clearly, the Israelis made no effort to spare the life of a pleading young child, or the life of a crippled old man, or even the life of a desperate mother trying to protect her baby. I paced through this gruesome sight, silently mourning the many bodies that died in the merciless hands of the Israelis.

The Israelis! I hated them with all my heart, and nothing would ever let me forgive them. Right then, I was stopped in my tracks. There, amongst the masses of deceased people, was someone, whom I certainly did not expect to be there. Someone who meant the world to me. Someone, whom without I cannot survive. Someone, whom I would sacrifice my life for. My brother. For a moment I was unable to breathe, speak or do anything. My heart skipped a beat and my legs went completely numb. I was deaf even to the blood-curdling screams and shouts in the distance. I was drowning in my own emotions. My heart was scarred with grief, despair, depression, hatred, anger, and even nostalgia.

Memories of our childhood flashed before my eyes. I remembered the day we parted- that was the last day I saw him alive before we were forced to flee in our own separate ways.

"Big brother?" I croaked, although I knew it was no good. Fresh tears rolled down my cheeks and I made no effort to wipe them. I couldn't help it, I knew weeping would make no difference, it certainly wouldn't revive my brother and bring him back to life, but still I cried until my eyes were blood-shot.

Suddenly, there was a deafening scream, in fact a dozen of them that I could not ignore, despite my situation. I smelt something funny in the air, something strangely similar to the smell of the candles on my 7th birthday cake. But this was no celebration. And indeed in the distance, was a cloud of ashy smoke, rising rapidly, until the sky was but mere soot. My eyes smarted and stung, and I coughed helplessly like a hag. Despite my hazy eyesight, I got down to my knees, and feebly crawled towards the nearest bushes and trees, to escape the devouring flames the Israelis had set.

Once I reached the clearing, I started to sprint as fast I could. As I ran, I glanced over my shoulder, knowing it would be the last time I would ever see my brother. I loathed the Israelis, and started cursing at them under my breath. But what I despised even more than the Israelis, was war. War had brought nothing to us but trauma, destruction, devastation, grief, loss of loved ones, anger, hopelessness, a sense of defeat and death. War is the spreader of hatred and murder. The destroyer of peace and liberty. With war, no one is free. Everyone is imprisoned.

Hadiyah Jacqueline Stephens

(Homeschooled, WA)

Finalist

2011 CCN Young Muslim Writers Award

Short Story (13 to 16 years)

Nothing but a lie

Everything is a lie. Simple words, yet so complex.

I stare at my reflection, the ebbing river making ripples across my face. The pale face, fair hair, hollow-like features; nothing but a lie.

From where I kneel in the grass I can hear children's laughter. Looking up I catch a glimpse of them playing on the other side of the river. Their mothers are chatting, but their watchful gaze follows the children, making sure they don't fall. They see happiness and youth in their children, not the transparent facade that the unseen use to screen their work-in-progress.

I watch too; their faces seem innocent, carefree. Nothing harmful has touched their lives, not yet. But soon their innocence will be stripped from them, only to be replaced by the evil of the world. Closing my eyes I feel a tear drop from my face. Hear the soft splash as it hits the water.

Why does life seem so unfair? Some people don't seem to realise the presence of the jinn that haunt the human mind. Others are all too aware. Whispers fill their senses, never letting them go.

Some struggle against the voices; others embrace them, sinking deeper and deeper until it seems they can't sink any further. But they do, because there is no end, not until you reach the burning flames that lick at mankind's heels, taunting them in with false promises of warmth and comfort.

Turning away from the laughing children I retreat back into the bushes. The shadows that lurk here are but tricks of the sun, deceptions used to confuse. However, they also are nothing but a lie.

Branches scratch my face and hands, drawing thin trails of blood. I scarcely notice them, the sting only serving to distract. I absently rub my hands together, brushing away the blood.

I emerge in a small clearing, the town just ahead. I'm unsure where to go next. Do I return to the town, or do I move on? The sun is setting and the upcoming night whispers and consoles. But the whispers are lies. Everything in this world is a lie; that is the only thing that is the truth.

As the last rays of sunshine disappear behind the horizon I feel the jinn come out. The whispers surround, softly spoken promises filling the ears of those foolish enough to forgo the safety of their homes. I watch the town from a distance; observing wryly that it is the young and drunk which are still out. The fools don't know that they are risking a lot more than a clear sense of mind by being out so late. They are risking their sanity, their very souls.

I don't belong here. I don't really belong anywhere anymore. I can't protect the ones that will not protect themselves.

Turning from the sight of a drunkard practically stumbling into a jinn's embrace I climb up and over the small wall that protects the town from the river. I hesitate, uncertain where to go. The whisper of happiness reaches my ears and I almost succumb. But at the last minute I turn away. The path ahead of me is strewn with thorns and debris, but I know that in the end I will emerge victorious.

I shall be truly happy, but in the true sense of the word, not in the way these false assurances promise.

As I walk away I know I am leaving souls that are corrupted and blackened by the jinn's lies. But they have to learn; everything is a lie.

Everything but the truth.

THE END

"The more you read,
the more things you will know.

The more that you learn,
the more places you'll go."

Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"