

# 2017 MCC Creative Writing Contest

## Fiction Category

### **First Place:** “The Mountain Lion” by Brooke Dimond

“I think we have everything!” With a breath of satisfaction, Lucy crossed her tiny arms triumphantly.

“Excuse me?” Lucy’s mother turned around to see her daughter sitting on the floor, beaming at an eclectic mix of books, candy, games, and other items she had carefully piled in the middle of an outstretched blanket. “You know, sweetie, you don’t have to take everything with you right now. Your friends can always come inside if they need something.”

“No, Mama, we can’t just come inside to get stuff. This is a wilderness survival adventure. We must be prepared and have all our supplies with us.” Lucy explained as she struggled to tie the four corners of the blanket around a stick.

“Well, your dad set up the tent in the woods a little ways behind the house. I’ll leave the porch light on for you girls after it gets dark.” Her mother watched as Lucy wrangled with the stick and blanket. “How about I get you a bag for that?”

“I can’t use a bag. This is how explorers always carry their supplies, and we don’t need the light on. We have our survival skills to get us through the night, and we have Dudley.” Lucy muttered as she struggled to maneuver her blanket stick contraption through the narrow back door. Several minutes later, the door swung back open.

“Do you need something?” Lucy’s mother glanced up from her paper work.

“My stick broke and the blanket came untied.” Lucy sighed. “We still don’t want a bag, though.”

“Hmm, what about a yard stick and some duct tape?” Her mother asked.

“Perfect!” Lucy exclaimed as she got to work rearranging her luggage contraption. “Thanks Mamma, we will return after our travels!”

Lucy’s mother sighed. “You’d better go with them, Dudley. They need all the help they can get.” A large, old hound dog slowly hoisted himself off the ground and followed Lucy into the tent.

“Okay everyone, I think I have everything we need.” Lucy dramatically emptied the contents of her blanket onto the sleeping bag.

“Wow, you have all kinds of things!” Sophie pushed her glasses up as she stared in amazement. “What will we need this for?” She held up a dictionary of Latin root words and prefixes.

“You never know who we might meet out here, we have to be prepared for anything” Lucy explained.

“That’s right.” Emma whole heartedly agreed. “That’s why I brought a bird whistle and some tin foil.”

“Oh, right.” Sophie nodded, pretending to understand the seemingly obvious reasons why these items were necessary. “Can we play a game now?”

"I won again!" Emma through her arms in the air and fell backwards on her pillow. "This is the third time in a row!"

"I won three times, too, you know." Lucy shuffled the deck of cards.

"How do they make pudding jiggy?" Sophie asked, scrutinizing her spoonful of pudding.

"I think they have to use some sort of... Wait- did you hear that?" Emma's pudding explanation was cut short.

"It was probably just Dudley, he snores sometimes." Lucy looked down at the dog sprawled across the three sleeping bags.

The girls sat quietly, listening for the noise. Then they heard it. A loud, ear piercing shriek.

"What was that?" Lucy whispered. "Maybe a cat?"

"No, that was way too loud to be a normal cat." Emma replied, rapidly glancing at every surface of the tent.

"Perhaps, maybe it was an... *abnormal cat.*" Sophie's voice shook as she pulled the blanket tighter around her shoulders.

"Like a bobcat?" Lucy questioned.

"I still think it's something bigger." Emma slowly shook her head. "It could be a mountain lion."

"Mountain lion? Do we have mountains in Michigan?" Lucy began flipping through her wilderness guidebooks.

"You do live by a pretty big hill, it could be mistaken for a mountain. Maybe it's just a confused mountain lion." Sophie reasoned. The girls pondered this theory.

"Are mountain lions still dangerous if they're confused ones?" Emma sat with chin rested on her fist.

"Hey, maybe they're not! I mean, my kitten is usually confused, and she's not dangerous." Sophie began to perk up.

"I don't know about that. Maybe we should still go outside and look." Lucy shut her book and eyed the door.

"Hey, I brought my perfume with me." Sophie announced. "See? The scent says 'Sparkling Mountain Breeze.' If he's confused and looking for a mountain, we can lure him away with the scent."

"I think we'd be better off with the bird whistle. I have never actually been able to attract any birds with it, so it must not sound very realistic. They mountain lion might think it's something scarier and run away." Emma stood, surveying their available resources.

"Well, I'm bringing a light." Ever practical Lucy started untying the flash light they had strung to the ceiling. Carefully, Lucy unzipped the door and stepped outside. The other two cautiously followed, each carrying their preferred tools.

"You'd better stay inside and keep watch over the tent." Lucy whispered to Dudley just before she zipped the door back up. Dudley rolled over onto his back, perfectly willing to comply with his assignment.

"What are you doing?" Lucy and Sophie turned around to see Emma kneeling in front of the tent.

"Tin foil!" She proudly held up her silver roll. "I'm stretching it out in front of our door. My mom uses this stuff to keep deer away from her garden, so it would probably keep a mountain lion away from our tent."

The two girls waited for Emma to complete her task before the trio marched bravely into the woods. As they got further from the tent, Sophie started spraying her perfume and Emma sounded her bird call.

“Did you hear that?” Lucy froze. “I heard a stick snap, there’s something else here.” The girls stood completely still for a moment before screaming and tearing toward the house. Lucy stopped to quickly unzip the tent and grab a blanket.

“Come on, Dudley! We have to go!” she yelled behind her. Dudley stretched his legs and proceeded to follow the frantic trio into the porch.

“There, this is still kind of like a wilderness adventure. The porch is screened in, so it’s not like we’re inside.” Lucy reasoned, trying to catch her breath.

“Yeah, we are still in the wilderness. Let’s just sleep here.” An exhausted Emma flopped to the floor. The three girls spread the blanket out and started to shut their eyes.

“Hey, you guys, are you asleep?” Sophie quietly squeaked.

“No, not really.” Lucy yawned.

“You know how I said my kitten was confused? Well, I just remembered that my tiny, confused kitten can destroy a screen really fast.” Sophie continued. The girls’ eyes widened as they had their moment of frozen silence. Then they began to frantically run for their lives again, this time through the house and up the stairs. With a sigh, faithful Dudley got up and followed.

“In here, everyone.” Lucy ushered them into a bathroom. “This is the only room upstairs that locks, so we should be safe in here. It’s nice and big too, my dad is remodeling it. The only thing he has left to do is put in the...” Lucy gulped. “Put the glass in the window.”

The three girls stared wide eyed at the curtains in front of the glassless window, swaying from the breeze. How high can mountain lions jump?

## **JUDGE’S COMMENTS:**

This story shows a sure command of many of the elements necessary to create good fiction. The opening mother-daughter conversation efficiently establishes the characters, the pre-teen eager to establish her independence and the mother savvy enough to guide yet not be overly protective. Dialogue advances the action, allowing readers to identify with the characters and live in to the scene. Realistic details, including a guardian hound dog, lend a sweetly comic touch. Like all good fiction, this story is driven by conflict and suspense. The mountain lion is the most frightening kind of menace – a foe conjured within the minds of the protagonist and her friends. All these components, presented in polished, understated prose, make “The Mountain Lion” a satisfying reading experience.

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