

## Carriage 13

In the beginning, **la-Kreinto** (an all-powerful being, parallel to your "God") made the world, Tero. The people rebelled; **la-Kreinto** made demons. The most repugnant, foul demons one could ever imagine. The people conformed; **la-Kreinto** made Infero, a blisteringly heated plain for the demons to dwell. Infero was situated away from the people, but close enough to remind them of **His** power. Only **la-Kreinto** forgot that as the people evolved, the demons evolved. And as the people grew stronger, the demons also grew stronger...

C-R-A-S-H! The walls separating our village, Acantrio, from Infero collapsed with a thunderous roar. Shrieking screams of panic erupted throughout Acantrio as masses of demons poured in, like water from a flood. I was glued to the spot in terror, forced to watch in revulsion as the repellent creatures swarmed out of the hellish pit, Infero and into the luscious forestry of Acantrio.

"Run Timema!" cried mama, her eyes locked in mine. There was so much emotion visible through her eyes that I was drowning in those deep azure pools. I wanted mama to stay, for her strong arms to hold me, for her solid body to protect me; but she ran. I watched as her figure was swallowed by the surrounding thickets, sickle in hand. I watched as she found papa. I watched as they fought the demons together. I watched as they both fell; as they both died.

Before the trauma of those scenes sunk in, I heeded my mama's last warning; I ran.

I waded through bushes and trees, my head whirling. Surrounding me was a dense army of foliage; each tree, each bush, each plant was an irate soldier out to destroy me.

Within a short time, I ran out of trees. This was alarming. All of Acantrio was vegetation. Bushes, plants, thickets, they were my life. The scarcity of verdure was disturbing.

Without warning, a giant beast flew towards me and abruptly became immobile just before me! It was letting out a low groan. Was it injured? I didn't think so. Unexpectedly, a man jumped out of the creature!

"Get in! We haven't much time. We must get as many people on board as we can. Then we can journey to safety, to *Êielo!*" he yelled. Before the last echo of his booming voice faded away, a multitude of people swarmed into the clearing, like locusts. They all clambered *into* the huge wooden beast!

The man with the loud voice approached me. Petrified, I tried to back away from him; he caught me.

"Don't look so scared. There's room in Carriage 13; you'll be safe soon!" I didn't *feel* safe with him but I meekly let him steer me onto the wooden demon, which I learned was a "train", a mode of transportation. I followed him awkwardly into the last carriage. He stalked off without even a wave. I shuffled self-consciously on the uninviting bench I was perched on, feeling the piercing gaze of the carriage's two occupants stabbing me; their eyes, daggers. With a tremendous jolt the train became mobile. I stared out the window and let my mind wander to the fleeting images rushing by...

After only 20 minutes of travelling, the lights in Carriage 13 began to flicker. A feeling of vertigo, so strong that it seemed to be sent from **la-Kreinto**, swept over us, as we were plunged into darkness. Once the light returned we found that Carriage 13 was not attached to the train! It was gone, on its way to **Êielo**; we were not. We didn't know how we got into this predicament; all we knew was that we needed to get out.

"I don't know what happened there, but if we have any chance of getting to **Êielo** before the barrier goes up, we have to start making our way there, now!" stated one of the passengers of Carriage 13. He was a boy in his late teens, who had the dreamiest eyes...

"Errmm, w-w-what barrier, Savanto?" murmured a slightly older woman.

"The train is headed to **Êielo**, the Capital of the World. A day after the train arrives in **Êielo**, giant barriers, like flood walls, will be put up, so the demons won't be able to get in. So we only have a day to get to **Êielo** before we are stuck here, at the mercy of the demons" explained Savanto (the boy) gravely.

"What will we do!?" I cried, forgetting my bashfulness. Savanto grabbed my hand and squeezed it reassuringly. I looked up into his eyes, pleadingly; he returned my look with a strong gaze.

"We'll make our own way there!" he declared. He said it with so much conviction, that I had to believe him.

And that's where you find us now; Savanto, the woman (Necerta) and me, in a forest somewhere between Acantrio and **Êielo**. Unlike Acantrio, the trees in this forest are dead; they're a poignant reminder of the irreplaceable home I once knew. We're sitting, gazing up into the stars, trying to forget the trauma of the day, but we know, we can't. I feel guilty; I haven't cried. I genuinely do feel sad; more than sad. It's as though I'm drowning in a sea of anguish. Yet, I can't cry. Is it disloyal to my parents? Would they feel as though I don't love them, by not revealing my heartache? These questions cause images of them unravel to from my mind, like thread from a reel; their smiles, their laughs, their cries.

A sudden change in the wind brings me out of my thoughts. The wind had been warm and wispy, not strong enough to be considered even a breeze. Yet now, it lets out a monumental roar, urging its brigade of icy precipitation to charge upon us. It unsettles us all. Necerta's grip on my hand tightens and Savanto leaps up and looks around, like a meerkat on alert.

A malicious howl reverberates through the woodland. A demon. Without wasting a second, Savanto throws Necerta and me to the ground and runs towards the lone demon. He charges at it, wielding a branch and jabs it in the demon's eye. The creature falls; Savanto falls.

"Savanto!" I scream, a torrent of tears pouring down my face. I reach his side and see there is a wound in his head. He is bleeding, heavily. Necerta shakes him. He doesn't move.

"He's dead" she swallows. I shake my head adamantly, gulping back my tears. He can't be; he isn't! I can tell. This isn't the end of our journey together, it's only the beginning...

**Key Stage 3 – First Prize**  
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