

**TITLE:** Castalia's Cream Cake

The plan was simple. Break into the bakery and steal Castalia's Cream Cakes.

Like every other birthday, Pop didn't bother. "We're too poor. We can barely afford to buy basic rations!" That had been his excuse ever since Maa died.

But I wasn't going to let Pop bring me down. Not this time. It was my thirteenth birthday, and I was going to get Castalia's Cream Cakes. They used to be mine and Maa's favourite, back when we could afford things.

It was a full moon night, and Castalia's bakery was locked shut. No lights inside. No souls on the street. I took two rounds of the street before finally making my move. I'd been picking locks since I was eight, and breaking in through the back was a piece of cake.

I chuckled at my joke, knowing full well that Maa would have laughed at it. Miss you, Maa.

Once I was inside, the fresh doughy smells of the bakery assaulted my nose. I almost teared up, smelling leftover cream and fruits. I was so close...

I quickly gobbled some unsold bread and pastries because I hadn't had dinner. No money for rations, but Pop didn't mind splurging on his bottle.

Then, I walked up to a locked saferoom. I knew that's where Castalia baked her specialities. Including the Cream Cakes.

I put my ear to the door and started work. I had to turn the massive wheel in just the right amounts, carefully listening to the clicks. My mouth salivated just thinking of the Cream Cakes.

Almost ten minutes in, the door clicked open, and...

A roaring sound froze me as I opened the thick doors. Behind it sat... a baby dragon. "Oh fu—"

The dragon pounced forward, attacking me for entering its territory. I jumped out of the way, and the dragon rammed into a table, knocking over plates and cutlery. I tried to scramble away in the confusion, but the dragon pounced again, chomping at my leg.

The sudden burst of pain I felt froze me for a second. Just enough time for the dragon to fully jump on top of me. I turned and stopped its snout from digging into my chest, its razor teeth cutting through my hand's flesh.

I punched and kicked, but the dragon was stronger. I frantically looked around, spotting a kitchen knife. Without thinking, I grabbed it and stabbed the dragon in the throat.

Hot blood gurgled and splashed against my face. The dragon jumped off, stumbling before falling down. Blood pooled beneath it.

This wasn't part of the plan. "Oh fu—"

"WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY DRAGON!!?"

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Killing dragons was punishable by death. I heard my sentence on my birthday.

So, this was it? Thirteen puny years in this wretched world, only to pass without even turning into an adult? At least I'd be with Maa again.

What was the point? They informed Pop. Apparently, he was too hungover to respond or care. Fitting, given my rotten luck.

The jailer knocked on my cell bars, asking sombrely, "Last meal. What do you want, kid?"

My eyes sparkled with hope one last time. "I can ask for anything?"

The jailer shrugged.

I didn't even have to think. "Castalia's Cream Cakes."

THE END