

Castle Crossing (prequel)

Issue One

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PAGE ONE – FULL-PAGE SPLASH

PANEL ONE

Profile shot of Sai's avatar driving a red 2022 Lamborghini Aventador. Two cars are racing side by side in the game *Mad Avenue*. From our vantage point, Sterling's avatar is behind him in a blue 2024 Corvette Stingray. They're flying down the city street, an "urban canyon" of sorts with skyscrapers towering overhead on both sides. The boys are yelling challenges back and forth.

1 Sai: Here she comes! Watch me beat her Sterling!

2 Sterling: You are *so not* winning again Sai!

3 CAP (logo): Castle Crossing – Episode One

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PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE

The two cars come skidding to a halt in the middle of the street.

1 SFX: SkkkReeeeeeeeeEE –

PANEL TWO

Continuing the skid from last panel, the cars are spinning around to face the other direction, back the way they came.

2 SFX (continued from panel one): EEEEEEECCCH!!

PANEL THREE

The cars are stopped, and the boys rev their engines and exchange a glance.

3 SFX (from Sai's engine): Vrrooom! Vrom!

4 SFX (From Sterling's engine): Vreeeen! Vreeeeeeen!

PANEL FOUR

Similar panel to last, but a bone-shaking roar vibrates the scene, making both boys jump-scare in their cars.

5 SFX (from Vanara – off-panel): RRAAAAuuuRRRRR!!!

PANEL FIVE

Tight focus on Sterling, who has an expression of silly glee on his face.

6 Sterling: Gets me every time Sai!

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PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE

Low-angle shot looking up between the two cars and down the street as Vanara, a three-story-tall female gorilla, suddenly appeared behind them.

1 Vanara (burst): ReeUUURRRRRR!!

PANEL TWO

Vanara swats at both cars with her massive right paw.

2 Vanara (burst): ROOOAAARRRR!!!

PANEL THREE

Tight shot on Sai's foot, slamming the accelerator to the floor of his car.

3 Sai: It's **go time!**

PANEL FOUR

Pull back outside the cars to show both sets of back tires spinning, kicking tire smoke as they take off.

4 SFX: Vrreeennn!!

PANEL FIVE

The cars leap forward, with Vanara in hot pursuit – the giant gorilla is plowing through the haze of tire smoke dramatically.

5 Sai: Don't let her catch you – again!

6 Sai (small burst): Hahaha!

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PAGE FOUR

PANEL ONE

Low-angle view with the cars coming right at us and Vanara in the background charging after them. The tire smoke is swirling behind in her wake.

1 SFX: VROOOM!

2 Vanara (burst): REEOOORRR!!!

PANEL TWO

High-angle shot looking down from Vanara's shoulder at the cars, which are swerving and maneuvering to dodge obstacles in the road.

3 SFX (from tires): Skreee!

4 Vanara (burst): RAAAAAA!!!

PANEL THREE

Vanara's massive paw swipes at the cars again, narrowly missing Sterling, who is just slightly lagging behind Sai.

5 SFX: Swiiiiipp!

PANEL FOUR

Tight shot on Sai. He looks distracted by what he's hearing.

6 Maya (off-panel): Sai!

7 Maya (off-panel): SAI!

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PAGE FIVE

PANEL ONE

Vanara's paw contacts the back of Sai's car.

1 SFX: KeeeRACK!

PANEL TWO

The impact sends Sai's car careening towards a building on the side of the road.

2 SFX (tires skidding): Vrreeeeeeeeee –

PANEL THREE

Sai's car crashes into a building in spectacular fashion.

3 SFX: KEEERASHHHHH!!!

PANEL FOUR

Cut inside the "cockpit" of the car as Sai is recoiling from the crash.

4 Maya (off-panel – small burst): SAI!!

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PAGE SIX

PANEL ONE

Cut to Sai's living room, where he's yanking a headset off, and we see he's been playing a video game with Sterling.

1 Sai (small burst): GAH!

2 Maya (off-panel): Sai!

PANEL TWO

Pull back to show the corner of the room where Maya, Sai's mother, is calling his name. We see she's sitting in her "prayer room" (a small section of the living room dedicated to her daily prayer time) with associated décor. *Artist reference: <https://athenaeumreview.org/review/the-untimely-lesson-of-coco/> Overall, the room is simplified with one table and a necklace hanging off the corner of her mom's framed picture.*

3 Maya: Sai – it's time to go dear.

4 Maya: Please **turn off** the games and get your shoes on.

PANEL THREE

Change the angle a little to show Ashish, Sai's father, walking through the room on his cellphone. He's half paying attention to the call he's on, half paying attention to his family.

5 Ashish: Listen to your mother Sai.

PANEL FOUR

Ashish pauses and looks at Maya, holding his free hand out, palm up, towards her as if to receive something from her.

6 Ashish: Maya – have you seen my keys?

7 Maya: They're on the table Ashish.

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PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE

Angle back to Sai, who is putting his headset back on. Ashish is in the foreground.

1 Ashish (into his phone): Now? A-Are you sure?

PANEL TWO

Sai's back in the game, car wrecked into the building with a giant "reset" red button flashing in front of him.

2 Sai: Sterling – we're heading out but I'll log back in from my phone in a few.

3 Ashish (off-panel): Sai! Come now! You can play in the car, son.

PANEL THREE

Sai has taken the headset off, and Maya is there, putting his Grandma's necklace around his neck.

4 Maya: If Grandma saw you leave without this she would be mortified.

5 Sai: Seriously mom? Do I have to wear that everywhere?

6 Maya: Yes – you keep it around your neck. Make sure it's safe.

7 Maya: Hurry up.

PANEL FOUR

Cut to the car. We're looking through the windshield as it quickly backs out of the driveway. Sai is in the backseat, putting his air pods in his ears. Maya is in the passenger seat, looking at Ashish accusingly because of his driving.

8 Maya: Ashish! Do not drive like a madman!

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PAGE EIGHT

PANEL ONE

Cut back in the game. We see Sterling “driving like a madman,” flying down the street to the finish line.

1 SFX (from Sterling’s engine): VreeeEEEEEEEEen!

PANEL TWO

Flip the angle so we’re behind the finish line, looking back down the “race track” street. Sterling is skidding across the finish line. Vanara is in the background, roaring in frustration.

2 Sterling: ***I did it!*** Finally! Did you ***see that?***

3 Sai: No way bruh. I was AFK. Doesn’t count if I didn’t see it.

4 Sterling: For ***reals?***

5 Sai: Let’s go again!

6 Sterling: ***Bruh!***

PANEL THREE

High-angle shot behind Sai, who is racing down the street again.

7 SFX: VrrrooOOOOOOom!

PANEL FOUR

Close-up view through Sai’s windshield as he suddenly jerks the steering wheel to the right and avoids hitting a car (have this parallel the scene on page nine, panel two).

8 SFX (tires): Skreeeeee!

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PAGE NINE

PANEL ONE

Cut to the real world. We're looking over Sai's shoulder in his dad's car with Ashish still driving "like a madman." Maya is looking behind them, panicking.

1 Maya: **ASHISH!**

PANEL TWO

Same angle as page eight, panel four, but now it's the real world (not the game), and Ashish (not Sai) has swerved to miss another car in front of them in a parallel image to what we saw in the game last page.

2 SFX (tires): Skreeeeee!

PANEL THREE

Pull back and up a little to show the family car skid around a corner.

3 SFX (tires – continued from last panel): Skreeeeee!

PANEL FOUR

Cut back inside the car, looking over Sai's shoulder at Maya, who is freaking out at what she is seeing behind them.

4 Maya (small burst): Ashish! **Do** something!

PANEL FIVE

Sai turns to look behind them and goes wide-eyed. Sai has unconsciously reached up to grab his Grandma's necklace but don't focus on that.

5 Ashish (small burst): I'm **trying!**

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PAGE TEN

PANEL ONE

Flip the angle to look over Sai's shoulder. He sees an ominous 1960s-era (think Green Hornet's car) all-black sedan (black windows, the whole deal) chasing them. The sedan has a license plate that reads DRKN108, but don't focus on that.

1 Sai (almost to himself): Wha – what do they want?

PANEL TWO

Cut back in the game where Sterling is racing towards the finish line again.

2 Sterling (small burst): No way BRO!

PANEL THREE

Sterling looks in his rearview mirror, and Vanara is taking up the whole thing.

3 Vanara (burst): RRRRRAAAAAA!

PANEL FOUR

Sterling glances to his left and doesn't see Sai or the Lambo.

4 Sterling: Sai? Did Vanara get you again?

PANEL FIVE

Cut to Sai's car in the game, which has once again crashed into a building – there's a big dent in the back from Vanara's paw that swiped the car. Sai's avatar in the game is not responding. Smoke is rising from the side of the car that struck the building.

5 Sterling (off-panel): Sai?

PANEL SIX

Flip the angle to show Vanara chasing Sterling off in the distance down the road.

6 Sterling: SAI?

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PANEL SEVEN

Cut back to Sterling, who is flying past the finish line.

7 Sterling: WOOT! *Twice in a row!* Let's GOOOO!!!

8 Sterling: You *better* have seen it *that time* Sai!

9 Sterling: I beat you –

10 Sterling (small burst): *three times!!*

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PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL ONE

Cut back to the real world. Tight shot on Sai's dad, who looks terrified. He's looking up at the rearview mirror, eyes widening with terror, and is sweating bullets.

1 Ashish: Hang on!

PANEL TWO

Flip the angle so we're looking at the rearview mirror from the center of the car. On the left, we see Ashish's eyes, wide with terror. Over his right shoulder, we see Sai looking back behind them from the back seat. On the right, we see Maya, also looking back. And, dead center in the mirror, we see the black sedan, its headlights glaring menacingly.

2 Maya: Sai - get down!

PANEL THREE

High-angle shot. On the left, an SUV is entering the highway next to Ashish's car. The black sedan taps the rear bumper.

3 SFX: SkrUNCH!

PANEL FOUR

Profile shot of the family car coming to a stoplight as the SUV cuts in front of them. Ashish slams on the brakes and looks at Maya. Sai is on the floor, so we can't see him.

4 Maya: Sai- you have to get out.

5 Sai: Wa... What?

5 Maya: When the light turns green.

6 Ashish: Maya, don't –

7 Maya: Shush!

PANEL FIVE

Inside the car, Sai is crouched on the floor in front of the back seat. Maya is reaching over the back of the front seat to Sai's hand.

8 Maya: Keep the necklace safe. We love you very much.

9 Sai: Mom, I --

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PANEL SIX

Wide-angle toward the light turning green. Ashish is swerving around the SUV. Sai is tumbling onto the pavement.

10 Maya: Go! Now!

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PAGE TWELVE

PANEL ONE

Cut to Sterling's room. Sterling is calling out to Sai on his headset.

- 1 Sterling: I smoked you! Again! Ha!
- 2 Sterling: Sai?
- 3 Sterling (small burst): Sai!?

PANEL TWO

Similar panel to page eleven, panel six, but now the SUV is chasing Ashish's car at a distance. The black sedan has stayed. Sai is staggering to get up, brushing dirt off his sleeve and looking at the black sedan. Police cars are off-panel flying up the street.

- 4 SFX (police cars – off-panel): WEooWEoo

PANEL THREE

The police cars are getting closer. The sedan is still not moving. Sai turns slightly to look down the road. Around the corner of a building is a giant explosion, sending a plume of smoke and fire into the air.

- 4 SFX (police cars): WEEoooWEEooo
- 5 SFX (small burst): BOOM!
- 6 Sai (full burst): NO!

PANEL FOUR

The Sedan is pulling away as the first police cars are arriving. Sai is watching the Sedan casually drive away.

- 7 SFX (police cars): WEEEEooooWEEEEoooo
- 8 SFX (Black Sedan): Vroooooom

PANEL FIVE

Cut back to Sterling, who has taken off his headset and is walking into the dining room.

- 9 Sterling: Mom! Dad! I think something happened to Sai!
- 10 Barbara: What do you mean?
- 11 Sterling: We were playing and then he just stopped –
- 12 Sterling: I heard all sorts of noise come through his headset. Then sirens –

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PANEL SIX

Barbara and Anthony (Sterling's parents) exchange a concerned look as Barbara has picked up her phone.

11 Barbara: I'll call Maya to see if everything is ok.

PANEL SEVEN

View of Barbara's phone showing it calling Maya, but no answer.

12 Barbara (off-panel): She always answers when I call – I've got a bad feeling about this...

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PAGE THIRTEEN

PANEL ONE

Cut to a little while later. Barbara and Sterling are sitting at the table. Barbara has her hand on Sterling's, and both are looking down at the table, clearly distraught. Anthony is standing up, hands on his hips, looking at his family with great concern on his face.

1 CAP: Later that evening

2 Anthony: I'm sure everyth-

3 SFX (From door interrupting Anthony's words): >Knock Knock<

PANEL TWO

View from outside as Anthony opens the door – he's wide-eyed with surprise and concern.

4 Policewoman One (off-panel): Is this the home of Barbara Timmons?

5 Anthony: Y – yes – I'm her husband – is there something wrong?

PANEL THREE

Flip the angle. We see Policewoman One, a strong-looking African-American, at the door.

6 Policewoman One: Do you know Maya Patel?

7 Anthony: Y – yes, my wife was an exchange student in Mumbai and Aadhila – Maya's mother - hosted her.

PANEL THREE

Angle over to show Policewoman Two, a Japanese-American, standing in front of a patrol car with flashing lights on the street. Sai is with her. He has a blanket over his shoulders and looks despondent. Policewoman One signals to the car.

8 Anthony (off-panel): Their family moved here a decade ago- w-we've been close ever since.

9 Anthony (off-panel): Wh – what's happened?

PANEL FOUR

Policewoman Two is bringing Sai forward as Barbara pushes past Anthony to embrace Sai.

10 Barbara (small burst): SAI!

PANEL FIVE

Barbara is down on one knee, hugging Sai. Both look very sad and distraught.

10 Sai: I – I have nowhere to go.

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PANEL SIX

Barbara is escorting Sai into the house.

11 Barbara: Oh Sai!

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PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL ONE

Policewoman One is explaining what happened to Anthony from the porch.

1 Policewoman One: There was a crash-

2 Policewoman One: But his parents were not in the car.

3 Policewoman One: The kid insists they were being chased and another car rammed them-

PANEL TWO

Policewoman Two steps up to the porch, holding out the phone to give to Anthony. We can see the racing game on it.

4 Policewoman Two: He's probably just projecting his game experience to make sense of all this.

5 Policewoman Two: Poor kid – this is the part of the job I hate the most...

PANEL THREE

Cut inside Sterling's house a little while later. Anthony is at Sterling's bedroom door as Sterling is in bed with Sai in a sleeping bag on the floor.

6 Anthony: No one can replace your parents – Sai.

7 Anthony: But don't forget you've always been part of our family too.

PANEL FOUR

In the room, we see Adaptor and the other Action Figures all set up on a shelf over Sterling's dresser.

8 Anthony: Try to get some sleep boys –

PANEL FIVE

Sterling is looking up at Anthony.

9 Sterling: He can stay with us, right dad?

10 Sterling: They aren't gonna send him to an orphanage – or worse – back to India – are they?

PANEL SIX

Anthony is trying to look reassuring, standing up a little straighter than in the last panel and looking more confident.

11 Anthony: Let your mother and I worry about that –

12 Anthony: You two just need to get some sleep – especially you Sai –

13 Anthony: You've been through a lot today.

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PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL ONE

Cut to the dining room, where Anthony and Barbara are sitting at the table. Barbara is fighting back tears on and off. We see Barbara is a strong woman, but this is almost too much for her to hold back. On the table, we see some paperwork and pictures of her and Maya, Maya's family, and their two families together.

1 Barbara: I can't shake the feeling she knew this was going to happen.

2 Barbara: Why else would Maya give us this?

PANEL TWO

Barbara has placed her hand on a document that says, "Legal Guardianship."

3 Anthony: I can't believe they're gone –

PANEL THREE

Close-up on Barbara wipes a stillborn tear from her eye.

4 Barbara: She knew someone was after them. Wouldn't tell me who or why - but she was scared.

5 Barbara: Never seen her this scared.

6 Barbara: Even when her dad caught us sneaking out at night when we were fifteen.

PANEL FOUR

Barbara is looking up at Anthony now, concern on her face.

7 Barbara: What if whoever was after them comes after us now?

PANEL FIVE

Anthony pulls an envelope from his pocket. He opens it and pulls a letter from it.

8 Anthony: Then maybe we rethink this.

PANEL SIX

View over Anthony's shoulder, looking down at the table as he sets a letter. It's from a law firm that says Anthony inherited his uncle's estate in Wicklow, Ireland.

SILENT PANEL

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PAGE SIXTEEN

Artist Note: This page is a montage of panels as if we're looking at an old photo album or scrapbook page.

PANEL ONE

The Timmons' living room as they are helping Sai move into their home. Each of them is carrying boxes. Sai has dropped a box, and family pictures have fallen on the floor. Sai kneels to gather them.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL TWO

Sai has picked up one family photo and is looking at it, nearly overcome with grief. Barbara looks on from a distance, with her right hand clutching near her heart to show she feels his pain.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL THREE

Sai sits on the front porch and gazes upward. Sterling crouches next to him, setting Adaptor on his shoulder.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL FOUR

Sitting at the dining table, Sai, Sterling, and Anthony are finishing dinner. Barbara has come from the kitchen and is standing over Anthony's shoulder. He has the inheritance document and is showing it to the boys. The document shows "Donohoe Castle, Wicklow, Ireland: Deeded to Anthony Timmons." A photograph of the castle is on the table. Sai seems interested. Sterling has his arms folded and is turned away.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL FIVE

Cut to Sterling's room, where he and Sai are playing video games as Anthony and Barbara look in through the bedroom door like two happy parents watching their kids have fun.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL SIX

In the driveway, all four of them are getting out of the car with ice cream cones.

SILENT PANEL

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PAGE SEVENTEEN

PANEL ONE

Cut the school bus. Kids are boarding the bus, including Sai and Sterling.

1 CAP: Several months later.

2 Sterling: You haven't talked about that night.

3 Sai: I – I know. Losing my mom and dad has been hard.

PANEL TWO

Sterling is by the window on the right, and next to him is Sai by the aisle. They're talking about the car chase.

4 Sterling: Who do you think was chasing you?

5 Sai: More like what?

6 Sterling: What do you mean?

7 Sai: It sounds crazy but I got a glimpse – and it looked like Cordman from Launch Me!

PANEL THREE

The bus drives away from a public high school through a typical American suburban area.

8 Bully (Devin): Look! It's "YOGA" and his girlfriend Sterling!

PANEL FOUR

Now, Devin, an ultra-self-aware bully, approaches with a few cronies in tow. Sterling looks highly defensive in his expression, but we can see he's afraid of the bullies.

9 Devin: Sterling – the one who still plays with dolls – hahaha!

10 Sterling: They're Action Figures!!

11 Devin: Right Bro – what about you YOGA – got any dolls under your skirt?

PANEL FIVE

Change the angle to see Sterling holding his action figure, Adaptor, in his right hand underneath the window.

12 Sterling: Just ignore him Sai.

13 Devin: Yeah "Yoga" just ignore me – like your parents.

14 Sai: My name is not "Yoga"!

15 Sterling: I bet you wouldn't think it was funny if your mom and dad were gone!

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PAGE EIGHTEEN

PANEL ONE

Zoom in to show Bully Two leaned in between Sai and Sterling now.

1 Devin: Pfft! My dad left a long time ago – good riddance – jerk.

2 Bully Two: Admit it “Yoga” – your parents left cause you’re such a disappointment!

PANEL TWO

Close-up of Sterling’s fist, clenching hard on Adaptor, as Sterling tries hard not to react to the Bully. Adaptor is looking up, angry.

3 Sterling: Just leave us alone – alright?

PANEL THREE

The school bus progresses through the neighborhood.

4 Bully Two (mockingly): “just leave us alone or I’m gonna cry –“

5 Devin: Or what – you’ll throw your doll at us?

6 Bullies (small burst): Mahahahaha!

PANEL FOUR

Bully Three stands next to Sai and nudges his shoulder.

7 Sai: Come on guys – you’ve had your fun – can you just leave us alone?

8 Devin (mocking): Leave us alone guys!

PANEL FIVE

The bullies are leaning in on Sterling and Sai now.

9 Bully Two: Why? So you can do your weirdo stretching exercises?

10 Devin: Go all Hindu on us – Yo – guh?

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PAGE NINETEEN

PANEL ONE

Close-up on Sai – he looks like he’s almost been pushed to his limit.

1 SAI: My name. Is not.

2 SAI: **YOGA!**

PANEL TWO

All three bullies start laughing hysterically at Sai’s outburst.

3 Bullies: (laughing hysterically)

PANEL THREE

Now, everyone on the bus is watching them. Kids laugh loudly. A paper airplane floats by Sterling into the window.

4 Bully Two: Sure thing. **YOGA!**

5 Sterling (mumbling): Just ignore them– we’re almost home.

PANEL FOUR

Devin turns his attention to Sterling. He spots Adaptor in his hand.

6 Devin: Look!! He’s got a doll **right here!**

PANEL FIVE

Devin grabs Adaptor.

7 Sterling: Give him back.

8 Devin: What are **you** going to do about it?

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PAGE TWENTY

PANEL ONE

Sterling looks conflicted and doesn't know what to do; he fears Devin and his bully friends.

1 Devin: I wonder how long it would take to melt with my mom's cigarette lighter?

2 Devin: - maybe put a smoke out on his face!

PANEL TWO

Adaptor comes alive (unseen by the kids) and looks angrily up at Devin.

3 Bully Two (off-panel): Yes! Do it!!

PANEL THREE

Adaptor pinches the sensitive skin between Devon's thumb and pointer finger with both hands.

4 Bully Three: Maybe we could have a doll cremation-

PANEL FOUR

Devon yelps...

5 Devin (burst): Yowtch!

PANEL FIVE

...and drops a now-inanimate Adaptor to the bus floor.

6 Devin: Keep your freaky doll – freak boy.

PANEL SIX

The bus approaches the stop on the corner near Sterling's house.

7 Bully Two: Yeah! Freaks!

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PAGE TWENTY – ONE

PANEL ONE

Sterling scrambles to pick up Adaptor.

1 Sterling: **Adaptor!**

2 Devin (mocking): “Adaptor – my sweet love! You’re the only doll for me!”

PANEL TWO

Sai has grabbed Sterling’s backpack and is walking to the front of the bus to get off. Sterling is right behind Sai.

3 Sterling: Just get off the bus – don’t say another word –

4 Bullies (small burst): YOGA! YOGA! YOGA!

5 Sterling: Maybe they’ll disappear –

6 Sai: Sometimes I wish I could disappear...

7 Sai: wouldn’t be so bad to live in a castle – like Knights of the Round Table...

8 Sterling: bet they never got bullied –

PANEL THREE

The bus is pulling away, and the Bullies are leaning out the windows. Sterling and Sai are walking down the street toward their house’s driveway.

9 BULLIES (chanting): **YOGA! YOGA! YOGA!**

PANEL FOUR

The boys are walking up the driveway toward Sterling’s house, looking down at the street in dejection.

10 Sterling: maybe Devin and his boys need to move to a dungeon–

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PAGE TWENTY – TWO

PANEL ONE

Focus on Yoga's face, he looks depressed.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL TWO

Then Sterling's, who looks the same.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL THREE

Focus on Adaptor in Sterling's pocket. Adaptor looks like a hero who's about to save the day.

1 CAP: To be continued...