

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE ONE

PANEL ONE

Low-angle establishing shot. It's a rainy day in Ireland. We're out in the front yard, looking at the castle as it looms above us, almost menacingly. The boys are excited about this new chapter of life and racing to get inside and explore.

- 1 Sai (small burst): Sterling! Hurry!
- 2 Sterling (small burst): Look out!!
- 3 CAP (logo): Castle Crossing – Episode Three

PANEL TWO

Inside the castle, Movers are carrying boxes into the foyer. Sai and Sterling are running in. Sai is ducking under a large box, narrowly missing his head as a Mover sets it down near a wall.

- 4 Sai: **Hurry!**

PANEL THREE

Cut to Anthony in his new office on the main floor, just off the foyer. Trying to get things placed where he wants them. He's setting a few boxes on his desk.

- 5 Anthony: **Barbara** – have you seen my box of architectural books?

PANEL FOUR

View over Anthony's shoulder, looking out of the office to Barbara in the foyer directing the Movers to take boxes into a room off-panel.

- 6 Barbara: No dear – I'm sure it's here **somewhere.**

PANEL FIVE

Change the angle from where Barbara is to show Sterling and Sai as they run up the grand staircase.

- 7 Sai: This place is **HUGE!**

PANEL SIX

The boys race down a long hall towards their "wing" of the castle. Sterling points at a dusty old Drawing Room.

- 8 Sterling: **This** could be **the game room!**
- 9 Sai: **YES!!**

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE TWO

PANEL ONE

Sterling enters his room on the right side of the hall, directly across from Sai's room.

1 Sterling: Gotta get unpacked – find Adaptor's friends!

PANEL TWO

Sai comes out of his room and hollers into Sterling's room.

2 Sai: I'm gonna keep looking around.

PANEL THREE

Sai goes down the hall, away from our vantage point, towards the library room at the end of the hall. We can see into that room and tell that its walls are lined with bookcases full of dusty old books.

3 Sai (to himself): How many books does a castle need?

PANEL FOUR

Once Sai is out of sight, Sterling races after him. We see he opened a box marked "Adaptor's People" on a side table.

4 Sterling (to himself): I can unpack the rest later –

PANEL FIVE

Sterling comes into the library, but Sai is nowhere to be found. He looks quizzical, puzzled that he can't find his friend. There's a door inside the library, seemingly a storage area or closet, barely visible on the edge of the panel. It is slightly ajar, so we see it, but it isn't a focal point for the panel.

5 Sterling: uh –

PANEL SIX

Sterling has walked over to the door and calls out to Sai. Through the door is just darkness.

6 Sterling: H-hey –

7 Sterling (small burst): Sai?

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE THREE

PANEL ONE

Cut to Sai, who is moving through a secret passageway behind the bookcases in the library. It's dingy, dusty, and full of cobwebs – like something out of a haunted house. Faint light is barely coming in through small cracks here and there in the wall boards. We can see the dust particles dancing in the stray beams of light.

1 Sai (to himself): Shoulda brought a flashlight.

PANEL TWO

The passageway takes Sai into a tight wooden hallway that leads to stairs that go up.

2 Sai (to himself): Whoa –

PANEL THREE

He comes to a landing that goes right.

3 Sai (to himself): What a maze.

PANEL FOUR

Sai finds himself in front of another staircase, which descends to the left, just a short flight below him.

4 Sai (to himself): I thought the library was at the side of the castle – this doesn't make sense.

PANEL FIVE

Sai gets to another set of downward stairs, a tight spiral staircase that seems to descend forever.

5 Sai (to himself): – looks like it goes into the depths of the Earth.

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE FOUR

PANEL ONE

Sai gets to the bottom of the stairs, and there's a door in front of him, along with two empty side hallways in front of the door.

1 Sai (to himself): "What's behind door number one?"

PANEL TWO

Sai steps towards the door but collides with Sterling, who is coming from the right-side hallway. Back behind Sterling, we see a staircase leading to the end of this hallway, which shows that Sterling climbed the stairs to get there.

2 Sterling: **GAH!**

3 Sai: **Watch out!**

PANEL THREE

The two boys look at each other, very confused.

4 Sterling: How did you get all the way up here?

5 Sai: 'Up here'? We're down in some kinda sub-basement –

6 Sai: – by my count we have to be four or five stories underground.

7 Sterling: Bruh – I just climbed five flights of stairs to get here –

8 Sai: **What?**

PANEL FOUR

Sai leans against a wall as Sterling presses against it to catch his breath.

9 Sai: How do we get outta here?!

PANEL FIVE

Suddenly, the wall they're leaning on revolves into the room on the other side of the wall, like a secret doorway.

10 Sterling: **Wh-**

11 Sai: **Gah!**

PANEL SIX

View looking at the boys from the room they are now in. They both look shocked and perplexed by what they're seeing. Don't let the reader see it.

12 Sterling: wait –

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE FIVE

PANEL ONE

Flip the angle to see what they're seeing. The wall led back into the library, where they had started.

1 Sai: Bruh –

PANEL TWO

They've stepped out into the library, bewildered that the passageway led them in a circle.

2 Sterling: Wait – this is where we started?

PANEL THREE

The boys are now watching as the closet/ storage door has swung shut on its own. *Artist note: draw some curved motion lines to show they watched the door as it closed.*

3 SFX (from door closing): >k-CLK<

PANEL FOUR

Sterling is now trying to open the door, but the handle won't turn. It's locked from the other side, but the handle doesn't have a lock.

4 Sterling: Was it locked before?

5 SFX (Door handle): >jiggle<

6 Sai: Let me try!

PANEL FIVE

Focus on Sai's hand as he tries to turn the knob, but it won't turn for him either.

7 SFX (Door handle): >jiggle<

8 Sai: Really?!

PANEL SIX

Pull back down the hallway, and the boys are walking out of the library towards our vantage point.

9 Sterling: I wonder if this whole place is full of secret passageways?

10 Sai: So cray –

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE SIX

PANEL ONE

Cut to that evening. The boys are playing MID.evil (a *Maze Runner*-like game in a medieval castle) in the dusty old Drawing Room in their “wing” of the castle. The room has old Victorian-era furniture, a large mirror over a dresser, some chairs, and a tall, narrow window overlooking the grounds outside. Our view is from the hallway, as both boys have their gaming headsets on and are intent on their game.

1 Sai: *This way!*

PANEL TWO

Cut into MID.evil. The boys are running as fast as they can down a stone corridor while the wall behind them chases them, gaining ground.

2 Sai: Hurry Sterling!

3 Sterling: I am – I am!

PANEL THREE

The boys see a door in front of them on the side wall and are racing to it. The door looks oddly similar to the kitchen door in the castle they now live in.

4 Sai: There it is!

5 Sterling: Go *Go!*

PANEL FOUR

View from inside where the door leads as the boys jump through, just as the chasing wall flies past.

6 SFX (from moving wall): SWUUUSSSHHH!

PANEL FIVE

Flip the angle as they turn around, and the room they’re in looks an awful lot like the castle’s kitchen. The only distinction is that this version looks much older, like several centuries ago. There is no plumbing or electricity. The room is lit with candles instead of light fixtures, and a bowl of water sits where the sink is in the modern-day kitchen.

7 Sterling: Wait – are we in the *kitchen?*

Castle Crossing (prequel)

Issue Three

© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PANEL SIX

Same view as last panel, but there's a brilliant flash that saturates the entire image with bright light.

8 SFX: FwAAssshh

PANEL SEVEN

The game jumps back to the Menu screen as if it glitched.

9 CAP (on-screen): LEVEL SELECT:

- MID.evil
- Sci-Fi Ship
- Ancient Pyramid
- WWII Battlefield
- Dinosaur Run
- Halls of the Samurai
- Shiva's Citadel
- Cyberpunk City

10 Sai: Wait –?!

11 Sterling: *What happened??!*

PAGE SEVEN

PANEL ONE

Cut back to the dusty old Drawing Room from page six, panel one. They both have yanked off their headsets and are looking at each other in bewilderment.

1 Sai: Did you see that?

2 Sterling: Bruh!

PANEL TWO

Angle over to show Anthony, leaning around the corner from the doorway.

3 Anthony: Hey boys – should have the internet working tomorrow so you can play.

4 Sterling: But – we were just playing.

5 Anthony: Love that imagination of yours!

PANEL THREE

Both boys share a bewildered glance.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL FOUR

They both put the headsets back on.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL FIVE

Same panel as page six, panel seven, but the display reads something else now.

6 CAP: No network connection – Please connect to the internet to play.

7 Sai: What the – ?!?

8 Sterling: ...

PAGE EIGHT

PANEL ONE

Cut to the next day. High-angle shot. Sterling and Sai are walking down the sidewalk through the local town. It's a lovely little storybook town like The Dingle Peninsula. *Background information:* <https://www.ireland.com/en-us/destinations/regions/dingle-peninsula/> The town seems frozen in time with 19th- and 20th-century architecture and technology. We can see various shops and restaurants, including an ice cream parlor. A video game arcade stands out from the rest of the businesses as if it were something modern dropped in an old museum.

1 Sai: Bro – ***Ice cream!***

2 Sterling: ***Sweet*** – but check the arcade!

PANEL TWO

Cut to them going into the arcade. It looks like a coffee shop for kids, filled with various video games. We can see several local kids playing games past the drink counter, including a girl we later learn is Colleen.

3 Sai: This place ***rules!***

4 Sterling: Bet we flex on these iPad kiddies.

PANEL THREE

The boys find an arcade machine with a *Maze Runner*-style game they play on their headsets. Colleen is playing it, and she's on level sixty-six – a level the boys have never seen before.

5 Sai (excited whisper): Level ***Sixty-Six?!***

6 Sterling (small): >gulp< maybe not –

PANEL FOUR

As the boys stand there in awe, Colleen keeps playing and strikes up a conversation without missing a beat in the game.

7 Colleen: Are you the two gits who moved into Donohoe Castle?

8 Sai: What's a "git"?

9 Sterling: Y-yeah – m-my dad is renovating it. I'm Sterling – this is Sai.

10 Colleen: I'm Colleen – and do all Yanks like to live in haunted castles?

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PANEL FIVE

She challenges them to a game, and the boys laugh it off because she's a girl, but we can see from their expressions that they are not so sure they will win.

11 Colleen: Wanna play?

12 Sai: Y-yeah

13 Sterling (interrupting Sai): N-not sure that would be fair –

PANEL SIX

They play the game, and she is clearly kicking their butts. But they bond.

14 Sterling: So Colleen – what's wrong with the castle?

15 Colleen: Well they say people stay a while and then they disappear –

16 Colleen: –and are never seen again –

17 Colleen: Ever.

PANEL SEVEN

Sai is playing now, trying to catch up to Colleen's higher score. Sterling is side-eyeing her as she is looking at Sai.

18 Sai: Oh come on – that's crazy made-up Irish stuff.

19 Colleen: Believe what you want to believe Sai.

20 Colleen: But nobody who's lived there has come back to prove me wrong.

PAGE NINE

PANEL ONE

Large panel. View from the hall looking into Sterling's room that night – Adaptor and action figures are on a shelf in the background. We're looking over Anthony's shoulder as he's leaned in the doorway to tell them about the internet. The boys are looking at him excitedly.

1 Anthony: The internet is working boys – you can play now!

PANEL TWO

Cut to the dusty old Drawing Room as the boys are putting their gaming headsets on.

2 Sai: Come on! We gotta get back to that kitchen room!

3 Sterling: Right!

PANEL THREE

On the game selection screen, they chose MID.evil, which they had played earlier in this issue.

4 Sai: Wonder if Colleen ever found this room?

PANEL FOUR

They enter and start playing the game but are in the Sci-Fi Ship.

5 Sterling: Sai – you picked the wrong one. Again.

6 Sai: No I didn't! This game's been buggin' ever since we left Florida.

PANEL FIVE

Cut to a profile shot of the boys with their headsets on. They're in the dusty old Drawing Room and have their hands raised to show they're interacting with the virtual game world.

Unbeknownst to them, a shadowy image floats by the window behind them.

7 Sterling: Sure – blame the game.

8 Sai: Bruh! The headsets must be glitchy!

PANEL SIX

Sterling has pulled his headset off to look at it because he's confused about why it went into the wrong game – but catches a glimpse of the Dullahan in the mirror as it's passing by the window outside.

9 Sterling: Lemme look –

10 Sterling (burst): -what the?!

Castle Crossing (prequel)

Issue Three

© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PANEL SEVEN

The Dullahan looks like it's walking down some stairs outside the window.

11 Sterling (off-panel): Did you see that?!!

12 Sai (off-panel): See what? Hold up! I'm winning this –

13 Sterling (off-panel): Something went down the stairs out there.

14 Sai (off-panel): What stairs.

15 Sterling (off-panel): **Come on!**

PAGE TEN

PANEL ONE

The boys race into the yard towards the dusty old Drawing Room window. The room's window is on the second floor. It's dark and foreboding outside.

1 Sterling: *This way!*

PANEL TWO

Largest panel on the page. Low-angle shot – the boys are standing in the grass looking up at the castle – which looms over them menacingly, seeming darker, larger, and scarier than it's ever looked before.

2 Sterling: *That's it!* That window!

3 Sai: But you said *'stairs.'* What stairs?

PANEL THREE

Barbara has come out after them and is looking at them with a concerned, motherly expression.

4 Barbara: Sterling – Sai – *what* are you two doing out here?

PANEL FOUR

The boys share a bothered glance.

5 Sterling: Nothing Mom.

6 Barbara: *Come on* – get back inside – it's almost time for bed.

PANEL FIVE

They're going back inside. Both boys are looking back toward the second-floor window with worried expressions.

7 Sterling (small, to himself): *Never* gonna sleep *now* –

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE ELEVEN

PANEL ONE

Cut to the next day: Sai and Sterling are walking home from school down a path along the edge of a forest. It's a dreary day. As this scene progresses, it gets more foggy/cloudy.

1 Sai: I cannot wait til we don't have to go to school anymore.

2 Sterling: Right? At least it's over for today.

PANEL TWO

Sai is fingering his necklace and says he remembers his grandma telling him of its destiny.

3 Sai: Couldn't concentrate – just keep thinking about my parents – and my grandma.

4 Sai: Wonder why my mom thought this necklace was important.

5 Sai: When she told me, I just blew it off as some dumb old fairy tale – but maybe it wasn't?

PANEL THREE

Sai and Sterling have stopped by a pond and skip rocks across the water as they enter a deep, thoughtful conversation. Sai is skipping a rock in this panel.

6 Sterling: Ever wonder where fairy tales come from? I mean – giants – talking animals – aliens –

7 Sai: Ever think there's more to the world than we think? Like what you saw last night?

8 Sterling: For sure! You?

9 Sai: I don't know exactly but I feel something tugging at me.

PANEL FOUR

Similar panel to last, but change the angle and switch so Sterling is skipping a rock now. Sterling's rock doesn't skip as far as Sai's did.

10 Sterling: Think it's aliens? Martians? Maybe something from a galaxy far, far away?

11 Sai: Bruh. Be serious.

PANEL FIVE

Similar panel to last, but change the angle and switch so Sai is once again skipping the rock, and it's gone further than Sterling did in the last panel.

12 Sai: Sounds cheesy – but I feel like I have a destiny.

13 Sterling: Probably just all those Curly-Wurllys you ate at lunch.

14 Sai: **Come on** bruh.

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE TWELVE

PANEL ONE

They continue skipping rocks.

1 Sterling: Ok – so what about that thing last night?

2 Sterling: Was it a ghost? An alien? Does Ireland even have Bigfoot?

PANEL TWO

Sterling has his arms raised in the air with his hands turned down like he's pretending to be a monster. He looks silly in a Calvin & Hobbes sort of way.

3 Sterling: Or would it be Bigfeet since there's more than one?

4 Sterling (small burst): RaaaRR!

PANEL THREE

Sai skips a rock and blows off Sterling's line of thinking.

5 Sai: Dude – seriously - stop with the make-believe – we're almost teenagers ya know.

PANEL FOUR

Sai continues skipping rocks with a wistful, melancholy expression on his face.

6 Sai: It's weird – sometimes I feel like my mom is sitting beside me.

7 Sai: Like I can feel she's here.

PANEL FIVE

Zoom in closer on Sai's face to show his conflicted emotions.

8 Sai: And that makes me so happy.

9 Sai: Then I feel terrible – they're gone and I shouldn't be happy –

PANEL SIX

Pull back to a similar shot to page eleven, panel one, as Sai skips another rock while Sterling looks at his friend and has a sad expression since he can't do anything to help him with this feeling.

SILENT PANEL

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE THIRTEEN

PANEL ONE

Both boys have sat down now and are staring at the sky as more clouds drift in, then fog. It's darker now, indicating that time has passed. They discuss child-like fears.

1 Sai: When I was a kid, I was always worried there were monsters in my closet.

PANEL TWO

Switch the angle up a bit.

2 Sterling: I used to be really scared of water after mom and I were in that boat that crashed.

3 Sterling: Had nightmares for a long time that a sea monster made us wreck.

PANEL THREE

Switch the angle up again.

4 Sterling: Maybe if there's no Irish Bigfoot – there's a Creature from the Black Lagoon?

5 Sai: Bruh you watched way too many of those hokey old horror movies last summer.

6 Sterling: But what if...?

PANEL FOUR

The boys stop and stare at each other. Sterling has an expression that looks like he's trying to get Sai to believe him, and Sai looks very skeptical.

7 Sai: What's next? Talking monkeys and headless horsemen?

PANEL FIVE

Both boys suddenly turn to look behind them as a noise startles them. Our view is straight at the boys, so we can't see where they're looking.

8 SFX (faint, from behind them, off-panel): >>kruhkk<<

PANEL SIX

Flip the angle to show where they're looking. They're both getting on their feet now. All they see are trees and fog.

9 Sterling: Whatwasthat? The horseman?

10 Sai: N-no way – maybe Colleen is messing with us – can't believe her trying to scare us with that haunted house junk.

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PANEL SEVEN

Similar shot to panel five, but zoom in and show the boys are now wide-eyed.

11 SFX (louder now, off-panel out in front of them): >KrUkk<

PAGE FOURTEEN

PANEL ONE

Flip the angle so we see what they see: the Dullahan partially obscured by fog and shadow. Make it seem as if he could be made of fog and shadow. Is their mind playing tricks, or is this real?

1 Sterling: ...

2 Sai (whisper): bruh–

PANEL TWO

Switch back to a panel similar to page thirteen, panel seven. The boys look at each other in terror.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL THREE

Similar angle to panel one, as both boys look back at what they saw. However, where the Dullahan was, there are only branches and fog in his shape.

3 Sai: St-Sterling. D-did you see that?

4 Sterling: Yeah! **Last night!**

5 Sai: Screw this! Let's get outta here!

PANEL FOUR

The boys start walking as fast as they can away from the pond, continuing down the path toward the Castle.

6 Sterling: Right!

PANEL FIVE

Zoom in on their faces from out in front of them as they go wide-eyed again.

7 SFX (as loud as before, from behind them, off-panel): >KrUKK<

PAGE FIFTEEN

PANEL ONE

Similar panel to page fourteen, panel seven, but pull back and widen the view so we can see behind them. They've turned to look. This time, the Dullahan is charging at them down the path.

1 Sterling (burst): GAH!!!

2 Sai (burst): RUN!!!

PANEL TWO

Panels two, three, and four are page-wide panels in silhouette. The scene is a profile shot of the boys on the left and the Dullahan on the right. The boys are panicking and running down the path as the Dullahan is pursuing them. From our point of view, the path borders the edge of the forest, which we see in the background behind them.

2 Sterling (burst): AHHH!!!

PANEL THREE

Similar panel to last, but Dullahan is closing the gap.

3 Sai (burst): Faster **bruh!**

PANEL FOUR

Similar panel to last, but Dullahan is closing the gap even more.

4 Sterling (small burst): He's gonna **catch us!**

PANEL FIVE

Normal panel. Sterling is pointing at a narrow path through the trees.

5 Sai (small burst): **In there!**

6 Sai: He's **too big** to go through that!

PAGE SIXTEEN

PANEL ONE

View over the boys' shoulders, looking back towards the trail from in the woods. They've stopped and turned around but don't see Dullahan anywhere.

1 Sterling: I think we lost it!

PANEL TWO

Flip the angle to show the boys are suddenly freaking out! Sterling is pointing past our point of view at what they're seeing.

2 Sterling (burst): **GAH!!**

PANEL THREE

Similar angle as panel one, but lower from our viewpoint, so we're looking up slightly. The Dullahan has appeared and is coming right at them! It's towering over our viewpoint menacingly.

3 Sai (burst off-panel): **BRAH!!!**

PANEL FOUR

A ghostly clawed hand from the Dullahan is reaching out for them as if to clutch them.

4 Sterling (burst): **AAHH!!!**

PANEL FIVE

Same angle as panel two. Focus on the boy's faces. Each has closed their eyes and are recoiling in fear!

5 Sai: ...

PAGE SEVENTEEN

PANEL ONE

Pull back from the angle on page sixteen, panel five. The boys are backpedaling slowly.

1 Sai (small burst): Don't let it touch you!

PANEL TWO

Small panel. Low to the ground shot of Sterling's foot hitting a hole in the ground behind them.

2 Sterling (small burst, off-panel): Whu-

PANEL THREE

Small panel. Close up on Sterling's face. He yelps as he's falling down into the hole.

3 Sterling (burst): GAH!!

PANEL FOUR

Sai turned to him and grabbed a nearby tree branch with one hand and Sterling's hand with the other.

4 Sai: *Hang on* bro!

PANEL FIVE

Sai glances back where the Dullahan was, but it's as if it was never there.

5 Sai: I got you!

6 Sterling (small burst, off-panel): SAI!!!

PANEL SIX

Close up on their hands slowly slipping apart.

Silent panel

PANEL SEVEN

View over Sai's shoulder. They've lost their grip on one another, and Sterling is falling back into the blackness of the hole.

7 Sterling (burst): SAAAAIIIIIIIIIIII!!!!

PAGE EIGHTEEN

PANEL ONE

Sai lunges forward to grab his friend, losing his grip on the tree.

1 Sai (burst): STERLING!!!

PANEL TWO

View over Sai's shoulder. He has overextended and finds himself falling into the hole as well. Sterling is nowhere to be seen, swallowed by the blackness.

2 Sai: WHU?!

PANEL THREE

Profile shot with the ground at the top of the panel and a vaguely viewable hole/tunnel angling down below the ground. Sai is tumbling down a dark slope inside the hole.

3 Sai (burst as he falls bounces down the hole): >Gah-whhof-Ouww<

PANEL FOUR

Black panel with nothing but Sai's eyes visible. He looks scared and in pain. He has landed in total darkness.

4 Sai (wobbly): Is this what it feels like to be dead?

PANEL FIVE

Similar panel to last panel, but it's slightly brighter to show Sai's eyes are adjusting to the darkness.

5 Sai: Servants of Yama – If you're here – I can't see you in the dark.

PAGE NINETEEN

Artist note: with each successive panel, a multicolored glow increases, making each panel brighter and brighter until they reach page twenty-two/twenty-three. The glow is coming from ore veins in the tunnel walls. Make them almost invisible at first so the reader doesn't notice them right away, but grow thicker/brighter with each successive panel.

PANEL ONE

It's even lighter now, showing that their eyes are adjusting to the dark more, and the glow is slightly visible. In very faint light, we can see Sai landing near Sterling. They're in a system of caves, covered in cobwebs, roots, and dripping water. The cave scenes continue to have a dusty, moldy, dank, and creepy vibe.

1 Sterling: Sai – is that you?

2 Sai: Yeah bruh. Where are we?

PANEL TWO

Sterling presses himself up and shakes his head, brushing leaves from his hair.

3 Sai: Bruh – why'd you let go? I was trying to save you –

4 Sterling: I couldn't help it – my hands get sweaty when I'm scared –

5 Sterling (frantic): **Whatwasthatthing?Whereditcomefrom?**

6 Sterling (frantic): – **whereditgo?Howdowegetoutthere?**

7 Sai: Bruh. Calm down – whatever that thing was didn't follow us down here at least.

PANEL THREE

In the very dim light, they look around and see the fall has deposited them in the catacombs under the castle. There are crudely carved walls that look like this system of tunnels was made in the medieval age.

8 Sterling: Looks like we're in some kinda dungeon.

9 Sai: 'Dungeon' is a bit dramatic—it's just a slimy, smelly old basement.

10 Sterling: It's a **dungeon**, stop calling it a basement!

11 Sai: Whatever –

PANEL FOUR

They've started walking in the direction Sterling thinks leads back to the Castle. Bats come flying at them, and they duck.

12 SFX (from bats): **>SCREEEEEEEEEE<**

13 Sterling (small burst): **GAH!!**

Castle Crossing (prequel)

Issue Three

© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PANEL FIVE

They recover and keep walking.

14 Sterling: That was close!

15 Sai: I-It's almost like Deja Vu. There's something familiar about this.

16 Sterling: Right? Totally reminds me of level fifty-seven in MID.evil last night!

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE TWENTY

Artist Note: As they move, they start to see the glow from small “veins” in the walls of different-colored gems. The glow gets brighter, and the veins become more numerous, larger, and more frequent. The art and visuals need to up the “magical” feeling of this as they move along.

This page is a series of panels that look the same, like in a funhouse mirror. Each panel has them going around a left turn with another left turn in front of them. Think of the hallway scene in Alice in Wonderland, where things become visually warped as if the viewer is almost hallucinating. (Alice hallway: <https://www.shelidon.it/?p=12943>)

PANEL ONE

As they take a left turn, the path seems to twist and turn in unnatural ways, and we see another left turn ahead of them.

1 Sai: Check out these glowy lines in the walls – weird huh?

2 Sterling: Yeah – but did you notice – It’s like we’re going round in circles –

3 Sai: If we were why aren’t we back where we started?

PANEL TWO

The path continues to make left turns. Sterling looks confused, and Sai seems determined.

4 Sterling: Bruh – we’re lost.

5 Sai: No way – see how the glowy lines are getting bigger and brighter?

PANEL THREE

The path continues to make left turns. Sterling is looking at the wall, where the veins are noticeably larger than before.

6 Sterling (whisper): Whoa –

PANEL FOUR

The path continues to make left turns. Sterling is looking at the wall, where the veins are noticeably larger than before.

7 Sai (almost to himself/thinking aloud): It’s like that staircase behind the library –

PANEL FIVE

The path continues to make left turns. Sai is looking at the wall, where the veins are noticeably larger than before.

8 Sai (almost to himself/thinking aloud): So weird –

Castle Crossing (prequel)
Issue Three
© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

PANEL ONE

The path continues to make left turns. Sterling is looking at the wall, where the veins are noticeably larger than before.

1 Sterling (in response to Sai, mirroring Sai's balloon from page twenty, panel five - almost to himself/thinking aloud): riigghhhttt

PANEL TWO

The path continues to make left turns.

2 Sterling: Sai – maybe Colleen was right.

3 Sai: What? That this place is haunted?

PANEL THREE

As they move along, the corridor hits a T. One direction seems to return the way they came, and the other has a noticeably brighter glow. In the other direction, the glow is fading the further it goes. Sai is looking toward the lights while Sterling is looking down the darkened corridor.

4 Sai: This way! Basement lights! Told ya!

5 Sterling (to himself): Yeah – totally not going that way!

PANEL FOUR

We're in front of the boys now, watching them as they look past our point of view. They have stopped, awash in the glow of the Map Room (we can't see what they're seeing yet). Their faces are full of happiness, amazement, and wonder.

6 (small, hushed burst from both boys in unison): WHOOOOAAAAAA!

PAGE TWENTY-TWO and TWENTY-THREE

PANEL ONE

Double page splash. Reverse the angle to see what the boys see, revealing the Map Room in panel one, with other panels inset across the bottom of this panel. The room is almost blindingly, brightly lit by the most prominent and numerous gem veins in the walls and ceiling. There's a wall with several 12" square cubby holes filled with rolled maps. A map is on an easel near this wall. From another wall is a narrow side room with maps made of upholstery hanging on the walls. (*Artist note: See Vatican hallway reference; <https://castlecrossing.com/maps>)*

As their eyes adjust, they see Miniature City displayed in the center of the room. The exposed parts of the city are coated in years of dust, and the rest is covered with an old tarp made from burlap material from the Dark Ages. In the middle of the city, the town square has noticeably less dust. (*See Miniature City reference doc for layout and further description.*)

A reinforced door like the one in the castle's kitchen is on the other side of the room.

PANEL TWO

Sterling is pointing towards the Town Square – we can't see what he's geeking on just yet.

1 Sterling: **BRUH!** Check this **OUT!**

PANEL THREE

Alone in the Town Square is one very old wooden statue, about the size of an action figure. It's Darknel, but they don't know that yet.

2 Sai: We **totally** gotta bring your action figures down here!

3 Sai: This can be their secret base!!

4 Sterling: Yeah it can! **Let's go get 'em!**

PANEL FOUR

Sterling turns towards the reinforced door.

5 Sterling: This has to be the way out!

6 Sai: I sure hope so.

PANEL FIVE

A moment later, the boys emerge from the kitchen door after ascending a flight of stairs between the two doors. (*Artist note: show a hallway behind the bottom of the staircase.*)

7 Sterling: **Gotta show my dad!**

Castle Crossing (prequel)

Issue Three

© 2024 Terry John Barto – All Rights Reserved

PANEL SIX

The boys have Anthony in tow now, back down in the Map Room as they tell him what they found.

8 Sterling: *See?!*

PANEL SEVEN

Anthony marvels at it and wonders about its age and origins. Then he mentions that it looks like a city he read about in an old book on mythology he found upstairs. He tells the boys it's dinner time, and they'll come check it out more tomorrow.

9 Anthony: Wow – this is quite the find boys.

10 Anthony (to himself): I wonder *how old* it is?

11 Anthony (to himself): Looks like that conclave from the mythology book.

12 Anthony: We'll have to check this out more tomorrow – right now, it's time for dinner.

PAGE TWENTY-FOUR

PANEL ONE

Cut to late that night, Anthony is in the kitchen, the mythology book in his hand, almost forgotten. We can see a full moon outside the window, the only light source in the room. A siren song is coming from the now-ajar basement door. He has a trance-like expression on his face.

1 SFX (from basement door - singsong): AhhhhhAAAhhhhh

PANEL TWO

Anthony has opened the door and is washed in a glow similar to that from the caves.

2 SFX (from basement door. Louder now - singsong): AhhhhhAAAhhhhh

PANEL THREE

Anthony is stepping into a blinding flash that's coming through the doorway from the basement.

3 SFX (from basement door. Even louder now - singsong): AhhhhhAAA—

PANEL FOUR

Similar panel to panel one. But the basement door is closed, and Anthony is nowhere to be seen.

SILENT PANEL

PANEL FIVE

Cut to the next morning. The sun is shining through the kitchen window instead of the full moon from the previous panels. The boys and Barbara are eating breakfast at the small table in front of the window.

4 Barbara: Have you seen your Father?

5 Barbara: It's like he didn't come to bed last night.

PANEL SIX

Sterling and Sai share a worried glance.

6 Sterling (small): n-no

PANEL SEVEN

Both Boys are looking at the basement door.

7 CAP: To be continued...