

An excerpt from "The Plan"

My most wanted game in the fall of 1990 was *Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse*. I knew it was coming, as previews had started appearing in that summer's game magazines, and I did everything short of begging my parents for a copy. Then Braunle got a copy when it was released, and that sealed the deal. I had to have it.

Shortly before Halloween, I was sent to their room to get something out of the closet. As I searched, I happened to see a bag that was slightly transparent. I could swear there was an NES box inside. Throwing caution to the wind, I decided to peek in the bag.

It was *Castlevania III*. My jaw dropped. Forgetting everything, I pulled it out of the bag and devoured every bit of the cover art and screenshots. I quickly read the story. It was here, now.

But then reality came back to me in a rush. It was being hidden for a reason. Maybe it was intended to be my birthday present. Then I remembered why I'd gone in the closet in the first place. My parents would undoubtedly wonder what was taking me so long if I didn't come back soon, so I shoved it back in the bag, carefully put it back where I'd found it, then located what I was originally sent to find and closed the closet. For the next couple of weeks, every chance I got, I would sneak into their room and gaze longingly at the game for a few minutes, memorizing every detail of the cover artwork and story.

Then the first report cards of the school year were issued. My grades, while not straight As, were very close. When my parents saw my grades, they were pleased. Usually a good report card meant they'd buy me something special, like a new NES game. Sure enough, they asked me what I'd like as a reward. Hmm. I had a plan, but I didn't know if it would work. I decided to try it anyway.

"*Castlevania III* came out a few weeks ago," I said. "How about that?"



Castlevania III (NES, 1990)

My parents looked at each other. "That's the one you've been asking for, right?" Dad said. I nodded. "Well, maybe we can stop at the store this weekend and pick it up."

"Awesome," I said. "Thank you!"

I went back to where the NES was and popped the original *Castlevania* in as my parents went back to their room. I'd just gotten past stage two when Dad came back out of the room. "Robert," he said as he held up a very familiar looking bag. "Here you go."

I acted puzzled as I took the bag from him, and let out a surprised yelp when I pulled *Castlevania III* out. "Thank you!" I practically shouted.

“You're welcome,” Dad said. “Keep up the good work.”

A few minutes later, I was playing as Trevor Belmont, whipping my way through parts of Transylvania that I'd only seen briefly.

The plan had worked perfectly.

Written by Rob Strangman. This excerpt from the book *Memoirs of a Virtual Caveman: The Final Edition* is © 2024 SCAR Productions. Please do not distribute without the author's permission. Direct all inquiries to Rob Strangman at [gradiusone \[at\] yahoo \[dot\] com](mailto:gradiusone@yahoo.com).