



## **Risking It All for the King** *By Mr. Hodgson*



*Dedicated to the sixth grade class of 2006  
Thank you for being such creative and wonderful writers!*

I had just settled down to the possibility of a long game of Risk with my friends, Alex, Chris and John. It was raining outside. In fact, it had been raining for days now. We all felt water-logged, and the four of us were going a bit stir crazy. My mom had finally had enough of us chasing the cat into closets, tossing water balloons at my little brother, and causing general trouble. She had turned down our demand for a ride to McDonald's down the street and gotten even angrier when she caught us playing catch with a bowling ball on the roof outside my bedroom window.

Fed up, she yelled at us, "Find something useful to do or I will have you boys on your hands and knees, cleaning bathrooms for the rest of the day."

Now, we were all 12 years old and tried not to listen to our parents all that much, but even we understood the tone of her voice. She was serious about the toilets. So we carted out the game of Risk and began to think of world domination, one country at a time. The last time we had played, Alex had plowed his armies through South America, then across the water to Africa and all through Europe until the only country I had left was tiny Australia. My little outpost Down Under was no match for Alex's raging armies and the game ended with a tragic defeat of my last few plastic soldiers. One of the best things about Risk is that you can use secret portal paths to cross from one continent to another, allowing your armies to almost transport across the oceans. I always loved that part of the action, and imagined my armies walking through some force field that magically moved them into battle thousands of miles away.

We set out the board and got the game going, with John quickly staking out North America while Alex and I were each trying to take and hold Europe. Chris was doing his best to carve out Australia, which we all knew was impossible to hold in the long run. Alex was even moving some armies that way. It was during one of our battles over Ireland that we first heard the voice.

"Did you hear that?" Alex asked.

"What?" I said. "My mom? Ignore her."

"No. It wasn't your mom. It was a voice. It sounded like it was coming from the game. Serious."

We looked at him as if he were a bit nutty. He is a bit nutty, to be honest, but he seemed very serious. I looked down. All I saw were colored game pieces and the cards showing countries. The attack dice and the defender dice were just off to the side of the board. Nothing unusual. Chris just laughed at him.

"Oh, sure. A voice. Nice try. I am NOT giving up Australia," Chris said. "Go ahead. Give it your best shot, dude. I can take it. I've got the kangaroos and wallabies on my side."

That's when I heard it, too.

"Help!"



I jumped up from the floor.

“Yikes!” I shouted, pointing at the game. “Something *is* talking.”

Now all four of us were on our feet.

“See, I told you,” Alex said.

John crouched down.

“Look! The face on that card. The mouth. It’s moving!” he shouted, and we all moved down to see what he was talking about. The face did seem to be moving. The soldier on the card seemed so different from the others. It was more, well, medieval. Instead of a rifle, the man seemed to be holding a sword and shield, with a picture of a lion on the shield. I noticed the country was Great Britain. I had used that card many times in Risk and had never noticed that it was different from the others. Strange, I thought. The face moved again and we all immediately jumped back.

“No, don’t go away,” yelled the tiny voice. “I need your help, young men.”

“Who ... who are you?” I stammered.

“I am your king, of course,” the card said. “Somehow, I am trapped by some magic. You must help me. The castle needs defending.”

Alex turned to me.

“Our king? What does that mean?”

“I have no idea. This is just *so* random,” I answered.

“I am King Arthur,” the card called up to us. “Merlin has been able to deliver to me a magical bird which has whispered instructions on how to get out of here. But I can’t do it myself. You must help me.”

King Arthur? He was the legendary king of Britain and leader of the Knights of the Round table. I had watched a movie about him just last year. Merlin was the magician who assisted King Arthur, if I remembered correctly. We all looked at each other.

“How are we going to do that?” John asked the man on the card. “Help you, I mean.”

John was actually talking to the card. He shrugged his shoulders and whispered to us, “Just trying to be polite. He’s a king, you know.”

“Roll the attack dice three times,” King Arthur’s face commanded. “If three sixes appear, you must yell out ‘Excaliber’ and join me here in this game. We don’t have much time, young heroes. They are about to take the castle and I must warn my Knights of the Round Table of the danger to them.”

“Who is taking the castle?” Chris asked.

“The Dark Knight of Spain. He has returned! And he intends to take Britain, if he can. That’s why he put me here, in this strange place, with magic,” the voice answered, in a way that caused my skin to crawl.

The four of us hesitated. Join King Arthur? In a game of Risk? What was going on here anyway?

“Let’s try it,” Alex said, grabbing the dice. “We can still decide not to shout out Excaliber if we get the right roll of the dice.”



Chris looked at him as if he were crazy. Alex rolled. A three, a two and a five. I took the dice and rolled. A six and five, and the last one rolled into a six before it stopped. I gulped. Chris whispered some good luck charm into his fist and threw the dice. Up popped a two, five and another five.

“Hurry,” shouted King Arthur. “We don’t have much time. I can hear the horses.”

I handed the dice to John and gave him a look, as if saying, give it a try. He paused and cast the dice out across the board. A six. The other dice spun on a corner and we all held our breath, waiting for it to stop. Then it did. Another six. The third die had rolled beneath Alex. He lifted his leg. A third six.

“Uh-oh,” I muttered, as I grabbed the three dice in my hand.

“Let’s not say the wor...” John started to say, but Alex yelled out: “Excaliber,” and suddenly we were standing in a large swamp, swords in our hands, noticing three giant black horses racing right towards the very spot where we were standing.

“Quick!” we heard the voice of King Arthur. “Get out the way. Over here.”

My heart was pounding as loud as the hoof beats of the horses, yet somehow, I was able to turn my head and see a face peering over a large rock just off to the side of the swamp. I made a mad dash and my friends were right on my tail, too. I could hear Chris sobbing, “What is going on here? What is going on here?”

There was no time to answer and luckily for us, the horses seemed to be wary of walking through the bogs of the swamp. Maybe they were worried their hooves would get stuck in the mud, which was so thick I could feel my shoes starting to get pulled down into the black earth. I ran without thinking and looked back over my shoulder only once. Towering above the three black horses were three black knights, dressed in armor that looked as if it had been hit by battle axes and swords in many battles. It was a frightening sight. The knight in the middle began shouting out commands to the other two, and they urged their horses on through the muck of the swamp.

We reached the rock, out of breath, and King Arthur turned to go, waving his arms in a signal that we should follow him. We all rested our swords on the ground, our muscles aching from the weight of the weapons that had appeared in our hands. Alex turned to me.

“Okay, so maybe I should have held off on saying the magic word,” he said.

“Why did you say it, anyway? I thought we were going to wait,” Chris shouted at him. “Now we’re going to get killed by some crazy knights inside of a board game. How they find our bodies?”

“Let’s worry about that later,” I said, and pointed to the figure of King Arthur moving through the swamp. I picked up my sword, which I noticed was covered in emerald gems. The blade was razor sharp. “We’ve got more important things to do, like get out of here before we really do get killed. Come



on.”

The three of them, with swords in hand, fell in line behind me as I trudged through the bogs in search of the king. I noticed that the three dice from the game were clicking around in my front pocket. Maybe the dice that got us in here would be the key to get us out, I thought. Every now and then, I would turn and see if the black knights were gaining on us and they were. It was the sounds off in the distance that made me most scared. I could hear the stomping of hooves and the chopping of trees and bushes by sword, along with the periodic war cry.

“In here,” King Arthur shouted.

He had led us to a sort of wooden cave. It was more like a hollowed out tree stump that led downward. We followed him inside and then noticed that the hole opened up into an underground cavern, with plenty of room for the five of us.

“Quiet,” King Arthur whispered. “We must elude the Dark Knight on this day.”

I sat there, listening to my heart pumping and my lungs gasping for breath, and looked around the cave. It was dimly lit, with sunlight coming through cracks in the ceiling that were actually spaces within tree roots. Some unlit torches lined the walls. I noticed the skins of some animals on the floor and I assumed King Arthur had done some hunting for food and for blankets.

“Look at that,” John whispered. “He must have been here for a long time, to have so many animal skins.”

“Longer than I would have liked,” King Arthur whispered back. “Too long, but I sense the way out of here is now at hand with the arrival of you four heroes. You are a most welcome sight.”

The king had a commanding voice that no doubt came from years of leading armies on the battlefield. He held up his hand again for silence. Above us, the ground shook as a horse galloped past us and the clomping faded off into the distance.

“Young heroes, we must head off on a quest,” King Arthur said suddenly. “All of our lives depend upon it.”

“Not to be rude, but, um, what kind of quest? We’re just kids, you know,” I answered, not sure at all how to talk to a king.

“You are not children! You are young men. Our quest is to find the magic portal that is hidden in the Great Arch. The Dark Knight and his men are also on the same quest and so we must get there first. Oh, he would like to get rid of us, if he can, but he also wants to return home to continue his attack on Britain,” King Arthur explained. “He is out for my blood.”

“I don’t understand,” Chris asked. “How did you get in here?”

“Yeah,” John stammered. “And how did the Dark Knight get here, too?”

“It’s quite a story and one I will gladly tell on our journey to find the arch,” the king answered. “I am glad you have joined me. Hold your swords high, young heroes, for we must leave immediately.”



With that, he moved swiftly towards the opening of the cave and was gone.

“We can’t stay here,” I said, taking charge. “Let’s go.”

“On a quest? To an Arch? In the game of Risk?” Chris muttered to himself. “I’d rather be back at your house, cleaning toilets.”

We ignored Chris and darted through the opening of the cave. King Arthur was there, waiting, and then he took off at a quick pace. We moved to catch up to him and John asked again, “Sir, how did the Dark Knight get in here?”

King Arthur remained silent for a few seconds and then explained, “It was magic, although whose magic, I don’t yet know. The Dark Knight and I were having a joust and I was surely winning. One more hit and the knight would have toppled off his horse. I believe one of his assistants was a magician with powerful spells. As I approached and raised up my lance, there was thunder in my ears and, just like that, I was here, in this strange country. Later, I found that the Dark Knight was also here, although I do not know if he is trapped, as I am, or if he is using this,” King Arthur waved his hand, “strange place to hunt me down. Perhaps his magician does not yet understand his magical powers and made an error, sending me *and* his master, and two assistants, into this world by mistake.”

“But how did you contact us?” I asked, which is what I had been wondering about ever since we landed here.

King Arthur stopped and turned to me.

“During my first few hours here, I noticed a Golden Eagle soaring over my head. Finally, it landed and spoke to me. It said it was a messenger from Merlin, my magician. Although Merlin could not break the spell, he could provide me guidance to find my way out. The eagle said that first I must make contact with the Ones Above and explained that only with their help in reaching the Arch could I escape and that I must contact the Ones Above through this,” and King Arthur produced a playing card from Risk. It was a card from North America, and instead of a soldier, it had a picture of an arch that looked somewhat familiar, but I couldn’t quite place it. “For many days, I did not know what to do with this card. Today, however, when I looked, I saw a face peering out of the arch. It was you,” King Arthur pointed to Alex,” and so I yelled up. I could hear your voices. And you, thankfully, have taken the challenge and joined me in this quest. The Eagle has said that the arch contains a portal that will bring us back home and that the Ones Above will know how to access the portal.”

We looked at each other. Not one of us knew how to access a magical portal.

“I think that may be a problem,” Chris said. “We don’t know anything about magic. The closest I’ve come is the Magic Kingdom and that’s not real magic, just some hocus-pocus Disney mirage.”

King Arthur considered this for a moment.

“I have faith in Merlin. If he says you will be able to access the portal,



then I believe it will be so. Come on. We must go. The Dark Knight is also on the move. I overheard him talking to his men about the arch. His own magician must have also sent word about the portal.”

The swamp soon gave way to forest land, and the traveling became easier, although the swords in our hands got harder and harder to hold. Still, we didn't dare let them drop. Who knows when we might need them in battle. Which was odd to think about. How were four 12 year old suburban kids going to survive a head-to-head encounter with three huge knights on horseback? I tried not to think about.

“Ahhh,” I heard a voice behind me scream. I turned around and saw that John was being dragged off into the woods by a man in a long, flowing cape. The man had his arm around John's neck and a short knife in his other hand. King Arthur turned and we moved behind him as he approached the kidnapper.

“Free the boy!” King Arthur commanded, and then his body shifted into a fighting stance. “Free the boy or suffer a terrible punishment!”

I could see the man trembling and John looked completely frightened, his face all white with fear. John had dropped his sword on the ground and was defenseless.

“I say again, release the boy or there will be terrible consequences!” King Arthur bellowed.

Surprisingly, the man did as King Arthur demanded, and John fell to the ground, crying. The man dropped his knife, and held up his hands, as if admitting defeat.

“Sir, have mercy, sir. I am on the run from the Dark Knight, sir, and I do not know where to turn,” the man said, in a voice just above a whisper. His eyes scanned the woods. “I thought that the taking of the boy might convince you to listen to me, your highness. I thought I might have some leverage over you. I now see how wrong that was. I am no kidnapper. Have mercy, sir, have mercy.”

“Explain yourself,” King Arthur shouted, now holding his sword. “Or you shall die a quick death.”

“I was the Dark Knight's sorcerer,” the man began talking quickly, as the blade of the sword moved closer, “and I was the one who cast the spell to deliver your highness to this place. Alas, I am not well-versed in transportation magic and along with you, your highness, I delivered the Dark Knight, his two assistants, and, alas, myself to this strange world.”

The man took a breath as King Arthur slowly removed the blade from his throat.

“The Dark Knight did not take too kindly to being trapped here and turned on me as soon as I conjured up the source of the return portal. Hah! I was quicker than he thought, however, and escaped, although just barely.”

I stepped forward.

“What is your name?”

He bowed in my direction.

“I am Wallster the Magnificent, a conjurer of magic from a long line of



magicians.”

King Arthur turned to us and signaled a meeting. When we were together, he said quietly, “Perhaps it would help us to have such a person on our quest. What do you think?”

John was still shaking but he spoke first.

“We will have to keep an eye on him. I don’t trust him at all.”

“Fair enough,” King Arthur said.

We walked back to Wallster the Magnificent.

“Come along, sir, and together we will search for the portal to get us out of here, But be warned: any sign of deviousness will be met with the end of my sword. Is that clear?”

Wallster bowed low, his eyes cast down to the ground.

“I understand. I will prove myself worthy.”

“Then let us be off and find this arch and the portal,” King Arthur said, and we followed him back into the woods.

Again, I felt the three dice moving in my pocket. I reached in and pulled them out, weighing them carefully in my hand. Alex noticed me and moved to where I was standing.

“Are those the dice that brought us here?” he asked.

“Yeah. I guess I had them in my hand when we landed here. Do you think they could get us out?”

Alex considered this for a second.

“Who knows? Let’s ask the magician,” he said, and then called for Wallster. “Um, Mr. Magician, sir, could you come here?”

The entire party now stopped and Wallster moved closer. I held out my hand and showed him the dice and explained, “These are the objects that helped us transport into this game. Do you think they can be used to get us out?”

Wallster’s eyes grew larger as he looked at the dice. I offered them to him to examine, but he took a step back from me. He held up a hand, gesturing to me that I should not move any closer.

“Sir, those cubes are powerful magic,” Wallster said. “You must be careful. The Number Cubes hold many secrets of the Universe and are the tools of very powerful sorcerers. I dare not touch them.”

We all looked at the little red dice with numbers on them. They didn’t seem so powerful to us.

“But can they be used to return us to our time?” Chris said suddenly.

“It is possible. It is said that the Number Cubes, when aligned with the moon and sun, can move fabric of time and space. I believe the numbers must align to a correct combination for the magic to occur.”

“Any idea what combination it might be?” I asked.

Wallster shook his head. “No,” he answered.

“It is possible that I know the answer to that query,” King Arthur said, interrupting our conversation. He had been watching us with interest. “The Golden Eagle of Merlin did have one more thing to say but I did not understand



the words until now. It was a riddle and I have never been fond of Merlin's riddles. But that is the way of these magicians. The bird's riddle from Merlin was this:

*'Three squares of power  
used in the darkest hour  
with single swords showing  
will transform the arch to glowing.'*

The words tumbled around our head for a minute.

"Perhaps the three squares of power are those -- what do you call them? -- dice that you hold in your hand," King Arthur suggested.

I repeated the riddle in my head but could not make sense of it. What did single swords showing mean? And I did not like the idea of needing to use them in our darkest hour. That sounded dangerous to me.

"Any ideas?" I asked my friends, but they all shook their heads.

"Maybe we need to roll another three sixes," John suggested. "That got us here and maybe that will get us out."

"Maybe," I said. "It's worth a try."

I found a flat rock and rolled a few times. Nothing. Chris took over, and then John, and finally Alex. Nothing. King Arthur and Wallster refused to even touch the dice and pulled away from me when I approached.

"Got it!" John yelled and we looked at the three sixes landed flat on the rock. I was expecting the sky to open up, or the ground perhaps, or maybe a magical door to suddenly appear that we could walk through and get home. Heck, even the arrival of a Golden Eagle would have been nice at that moment, but nothing happened at all.

"It's not sixes," I said, sighing, and King Arthur now began to get impatient.

"We must move. The portal is not far over the horizon. It is located just beyond the edge of the forest. Perhaps the answer the riddle will come to you at the right moment," King Arthur said.

"Perhaps," I muttered.

"And if it doesn't? Then what?" Chris asked.

"Then, I suppose we're doomed," John answered, in a grim voice that silenced our entire group as we trudged further into the forest. "Utterly doomed."

The rhyme kept dancing in my head as we walked. Three swords showing. The four of us were carrying swords in our hand but what did that have to do with dice. No, it must be something else. I tripped over a root and almost fell on my face, but Wallster grabbed my elbow to keep me steady.

"Sometimes, magic is strange and unknowing," Wallster explained. "You must approach your thinking from another direction. It is unlikely that the riddle is meant to be interpreted literally."

Three swords showing. Dice. The words remained in my head.

King Arthur held up his hand so that we would stop, and crouched down low behind a rotting tree stump. He pointed out to a field. Just beyond the line of



trees were the three black horseman, pacing back and forth. I could see steam rising from the noses of the horses and felt a chill go up my spine. There was a loud noise coming from the field, like the hum of a machine. Just beyond the Dark Knight and his men was what could only be termed an arch and it was unlike anything I had ever seen before. It appeared to be a massive swarm of giant bees swirling around three trees latched together to form an arch, and the noise of the bees was intense and getting louder. We watched as one of the Dark Knight's assistant tried to approach the arch, only to be attacked by a group of bees in what could only be termed an aerial assault. The man cried out in pain and galloped away. The bees returned to the swarm around the arch.

"Ahh, the guardians!" Wallster whispered. "They are strong, fierce and potentially deadly."

Oh, wonderful! I thought, and my friends turned to me. They all knew what I was thinking, mainly, that I was deathly allergic to bee stings and that there was no Epipen in this world that could save me if I were stung and went into shock. "It had to be bees," I groaned, and fell to the ground in frustration. "It couldn't have been dragons or goblins. It had to be bees."

King Arthur turned, with a very stern face, and gestured for me to keep quiet, but it was too late for that. The three knights had seen us and now began to approach, swords drawn and ready for battle. King Arthur, the only hero of us, really, jumped forward and raced off to face the three armed men. The rest of us just stood there, jaws open and eyes wide, as the entire scene unfolded in slow motion before us.

There was the terrible clanging of metal as King Arthur quickly moved on the offensive, charging at the horse of the Dark Knight himself, who defended his horse and armor with quickness and skill. There was a spark from where the two swords met and a small fire began in a pile of decaying grass to the right. The other two knights moved in, circling around the man on the ground like a vulture to its prey.

"Come on," Chris said suddenly, grabbing my arm and yanking me forward. "We've got to do something."

"What?" I shouted. "What can we do?"

"We've got swords, don't we? Use them!"

My sword, which had felt so heavy, now became as light as a feather as Chris and I charged into battle, followed closely by Alex and John. We moved towards the two assistant knights, ganging up on them in pairs and slashing in their direction as best as could even as we ducked our heads to avoid having our heads removed by the swinging weapons from above. Without armor, we were not very well protected. On the bright side, the lack of heavy armor allowed us to move faster than our attackers and we darted in and out of the fighting as best as we could. Out of the corner of one eye, I could see the bees on the arch swarming faster and faster. With the other eye, I could see Wallster the so-called Magnificent just standing there, watching. I could still smell smoke from the small fire, too.



“Use magic!” I yelled to Wallster. “Magic! You’re the magician. So show it!”

My words seemed to hit Wallster hard and he looked as if he were yanked out of a dream. He nodded to me, and raised his hands up to the sky. His voice echoed out above the thrumming of the angry bee guardians.

“Zamarkus McGowan,” Wallster commanded. It was as if the sky opened up and an invisible hand reached down to hold the two Dark Knight assistants in place. They immediately froze, standing there like statues where a minute before they had been in fierce motion. King Arthur, meanwhile, still had his hands full with the Dark Knight, who had knocked the king to his knees.

“The dice!” Alex shouted to me. “Roll the dice!”

I took the three cubes out of my pocket.

“What should I roll?” I asked, as if I had power over the objects.

“Who cares – just roll them and see what happens,” John said.

I tossed the dice to the ground. A one, a two and a four. The sound of the bees suddenly increased. I picked the dice up and rolled again. Two sixes and a five. The bees calmed down. I rolled a third time. Two ones and a four. The bees got angry again.

“It’s the ones,” Wallster shouted. “The ones!”

Of course! Three soldiers standing! Three single number ones on the dice. I tossed the dice again and came up with a pair of threes and a two. Wallster ran over, and touched my forehead, mumbling some words. He handed me the dice and said, “Roll.”

I did and watched as three ones stood standing. Snake eyes, three times. Now the hum of the bees was so intense I had to cover my ears. I gasped as the insect swarm moved in my direction. If I hadn’t been so scared, I would have bolted for the trees. It was as if I had concrete blocks on my feet. I couldn’t budge an inch and yet I knew that one sting of any of the thousands of flying fighters coming my way would likely be a painful death. I knew it, yet couldn’t do a thing about it.

The swarm came in, swooping down, and then shot off towards King Arthur and the Dark Knight. It paused over King Arthur, as if considering him, and then, as one cloud, it descended upon the Dark Knight. I could make out a scream of fury, followed by pain, and the horse, now in a panic, bolted off through the woods at a speed I would not have thought possible of a four-legged creature. Off in the distance, I could hear the knight still howling in pain. We looked at the other two, still frozen. Alex went up to one and poked the knight in the leg with his sword. Nothing happened.

“One of the few spells I know that actually work,” Wallster explained. “The Zarmakus McGowan stupefies one’s opponent for 24 hours. They come out of it all right, although the side effect is a set of black teeth, for some reason.”

King Arthur had pulled himself up off the ground.

“Good work, young heroes,” he said proudly. “Well done. In the darkest



hour, indeed. Now, shall we see about this arch. And we must move fast. The fire is out of control.”

I looked over. The arch had changed since the bees had departed. There was a faint pink glow coming from the opening in the middle of the arch. All around us, it was getting hotter and hotter.

“Is that where we go to get home?” I asked quickly, pointing to the opening. “Is that the portal?”

“Yes, indeed,” Wallster said. “The magic doorway to faraway lands, guarded by the fierce tribe of bees known as the Buzzillions. Only the magic cubes have the power to allow visitors to trespass through the portal.”

The dice were still in my hand. They felt normal, yet I now knew otherwise. I moved them to three ones again and they tingled in my palm. The magic was still there. I shoved the dice into my pocket.

“Lads, it is time for us to be off,” King Arthur announced. “I must return to Camelot and tell my own knights of this adventure. You have not only rescued me, but you have also rescued Great Britain. The Dark Knight is unlikely to return anytime soon.”

“What about them?” Chris asked, pointing to the frozen knights.

“This does not seem like such a bad place to live, once the fire dies down. The magic of our sorcerer will no doubt protect them, strangely enough, from the heat of the fire,” King Arthur said. “Perhaps they will mend their ways and ponder the decisions they make in the future. They have caused great terror near and far, and I have no merciful feelings towards them, other than that they should perhaps live and not die. Let this be the place where they remain.”

We nodded in agreement.

“Farewell, then, until we meet again, if we meet again,” King Arthur said, and starting walking towards the arch. Wallster ran to catch up with him.

“Sire, if you would put a few good words in with Merlin, I would be most appreciative. It is clear I still have much to learn,” the magician was saying, as the two of them walked into the arch and disappeared.

“Well, I guess this is it,” I said, looking at my friends. “Let’s get back home.”

“Do you think this was all real? And not a dream?” Chris asked.

“Who knows? Do you think it’s possible we all are dreaming the same dream?” I answered.

“Like a multi-player game. You know, like Runescape, but in our minds. Cool,” Chris answered.

The fire suddenly raged and the four of us darted towards the arch. It hummed with energy. I moved forward, about to launch myself through.

“Wait!” Alex said. “Let’s go through together.”

The four of us squeezed together and walked as one through the arch. You might expect some explosion, lights or something amazing to happen. We’re talking about magic here. In fact, we were sorely disappointed. We walked in one side of the arch and just walked out the other ... and found



ourselves just outside a McDonald's about two blocks from my house.

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew it looked familiar," I said, as soon as I got my bearings.

"What are you talking about?" John asked.

"The arch!" I waved my hands. "The McDonald's golden arches!"

My friends stared at me as if I had lost my mind. Maybe I had.

"Hey," Alex said, rubbing his stomach. "As long as we're here, let's get some fries. I'm starving."

We all laughed and wondered what my mom would be thinking back at my house when she came into my room and found it empty except for a complete game of Risk set up on the floor. Well, except for the dice. Those were tucked safely inside my pocket. You never know when I might need them again. You just never know.

*The End*

