

THE GOLDEN ARCHES

Written by

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INT. BACKSEAT - DAY

REGGIE (9) and MARIO (9) sit in the backseat of a typical mommy-van. Their legs swing in the captains' seats and they look out the windows wildly.

REGGIE
(pointing excitedly)
There! There! That's my church!

MARIO
Aw man! But we're almost there!

REGGIE
(smirking)
I know.

MARIO
What does that put you to?

REGGIE
I had 7 so that's 8. What do you have?

MARIO
...3. Ugh you're so good at this.

REGGIE
(earnestly)
Don't worry. Counting churches probably isn't a super important skill. You're good at plenty of other stuff!

Mario turns away and blushes. He opens his mouth to speak but then Reggie's stomach GURGLES loudly.

Mario and Reggie both whip their heads to one another and laughing profusely as they mimic the sound to one another.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
(calling to the front seat)
Hey mom? I'm hungrier than a...
(thinking to himself)
rhinoceros!

MARIO
(joining in)
Or a lion!

REGGIE
Or a t-rex!

CUT TO:

INT. A CANDLE-LIT FANCY RESTAURANT. - NIGHT

A RHINO, a LION, a T-REX, and Reggie all sit around a circular table studying the menus. The lion passes his reading glasses to a squinting rhino. The rhino nods cordially. A WAITER stands by ready to take orders. Jazzy piano plays in the background. Glasses and silverware CLINK together.

T-REX
Hmmm. Just the soup and salad for me.

The rhino and lion both nod in agreement. Reggie looks distraught.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR INTERIOR - DAY

Mom interrupts the cut scene.

MOM
(from the front seat/offscreen)
This will only take a second honey.
We're almost there

Reggie scrunches his nose. Mario looks back out the window and practically leaps out of his seat.

MARIO
(pointing frantically and looking back at Reggie)
THAT'S MY GRAVEYARD!

REGGIE
NOOOOOOO!

MARIO
I win! 3 to 0!

REGGIE
(sorely)
I know what the score is.
(MORE)

REGGIE (CONT'D)

No need to rub it in! Mom, can we
get food after?

MOM

(gently)
We have food at home.

Reggie looks thoroughly unimpressed.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Reggie and Mario are sitting in the exact same positions in the exact same framing but now in what looks to be waiting room chairs. Reggie is still very unamused. Clerical sounds echo around the bland room. Mario is aimlessly looking around, legs swinging in his chair, and notices Reggie's disposition. Mario gets an idea.

MARIO

(smiling and looking
around)
I spy something... yellow!

Reggie sparks into the game.

REGGIE

Is it something round?

MARIO

No!

REGGIE

Is it something on the floor?

MARIO

No!

REGGIE

Is it something I'm wearing?

MARIO

(pausing to think)
Uhh... yes!

REGGIE

(looking confused)

Can I get a hint?

MARIO
Uhh... it's... hmmm. Soft!

REGGIE
(looking at down at his
outfit, he begins
scratching his head)
Is it... Oh wait!
(hopefully)
It's my hair?

Mario beams at him.

MARIO
Your turn!

Reggie smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSEAT - DAY

The pair kick their legs in the backseat, back in the mommy-
van again. Mom drives.

REGGIE
(slyly)
So mom.

MOM
(humoring him)
So Reggie.

REGGIE
It's so hot today.

Mario looks at him confused.

MOM
Reggie?

REGGIE
Oh yeah. Totally burning up today.

MARIO
(whispering to him)
It's like... 65? Isn't that nice?

REGGIE
(whispering back)
Follow my lead.

MARIO

Huh? Oh yeah. I've been sweating bullets all day!

REGGIE

What does sweating bullets mean?

MARIO

(shrugging)

I dunno, it's what my older sister says when she gets back from runs.

REGGIE

Oh, then, yeah! Me too. I have sweating bullets too.

Beads of sweat appear on both of their faces, which redden. They pantomime panting and wiping their brows. Mom giggles from the front seat.

MOM

If you're hot, I can crank the A.C.

REGGIE

What? No! I just mean, boy I could use a nice cool beverage to take the edge off.

MARIO

Oh yeah me too.

REGGIE

Nothing like a McDonald's sprite on a hot summer's day.

MARIO

Oh yeah, a McDonald's sprite'll really getcha going.

(beat)

In fact I feel kind of faint.

REGGIE

You know what would help with that?

MARIO

(smiling)

A McDonald's sprite?

REGGIE

And a large fry and McFlurry to wash it down.

MARIO

I can already feel the color coming back to my face just thinking about it!

REGGIE

Oh yeah you look better already!
(to his mom)
Whatd'ya say mom? We can't let Mario go on like this! We gotta help him out!

MOM

Oh I'm so sorry boys but I have to get back for a conference call that starts in 10 minutes. We don't have time today. But I promise next time, okay?

Reggie and Mario both melt back into their seats glumly at the news.

REGGIE

Yeah. Okay mom.

CUT TO:

INT. REGGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Reggie and Mario stand in a kitchen facing an open cupboard, dissatisfied with their options. Mario picks up a sardine can and reads the label, then realizing what he's holding, he throws it to Reggie in disgust. The pair play hot potato for a second before it lands back in the pantry.

REGGIE

(whining, but not in an annoying way...)
Ugh it's just not the same.

MARIO

Ugh I know I know.

REGGIE

I really had my heart set on a Big Mac.

MARIO

(staring off longingly)
I know. Me too. They have a new line of toys in the happy meals right now.

(MORE)

MARIO (CONT'D)

Each one comes with an actual
shrink-ray! Like that works and
everything!

CUT TO:

CARTOON COMMERCIAL:

A yellow, comic-book style drawing comes to life on screen.
POW! It's the happy meal! A McDonald's ad demonstrates the
all-new shrink-ray in action! ZAP!

CUT TO:

INT. REGGIE'S KITCHEN - DAY

Reggie is struck.

REGGIE

You know what?!?! No!!
(Beat. Reggie has new
found resolve.)
I'm gonna get you that happy meal
if it's the last thing I do.

MARIO

What? But your mom's on a
conference call.

REGGIE

I'm not talking about getting my
mom to drive us.

MARIO

Then what are you talking about?

REGGIE

We have feet. I'm gonna get us
there without her. C'mon! We can
bike there! And I have a twenty
dollar bill that my grandma sent me
last week.

MARIO

Well then what are we waiting for?

CUT TO:

INT. REGGIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A montage follows showing the boys preparing for their journey. Some beat-driven popular rap song plays in the background. Like 21 Savage or something. Not age appropriate but it's for the vibe.

MONTAGE:

Reggie grabs a fanny pack of his mother's out of a drawer.

Mario straps on knee pads and elbow pads.

Reggie puts on knee pads and elbow pads.

Reggie picks up the card laying on his desk from his grandmother. He reads it silently to himself and removes a twenty dollar bill. He kisses his hand and gestures to the sky as if grandma is somewhere watching him.

Reggie and Mario stand over a glass piggy bank. They wear science experiment goggles. They share a look and nod to one another. Mario hands Reggie a hammer. They both grimace and look away as the hammer falls. The heinous slaughter is not shown. Shards of ceramic and glass fly.

Mario pours coins into the fanny pack and Reggie delicately folds the twenty dollar bill, setting it on top.

The pair stand in a mirror putting on eye-black. Except it's sunscreen.

EXT. GARAGE - DAY

A garage door opens painfully slowly. Reggie and Mario wait on the other side standing like bosses, holding helmets. Their swagger is palpable. Once the door is finally open all the way, the walk outside towards a pair of bikes.

It's time.

REGGIE

Okay now game plan.

Reggie hunches over a dirt spot in the lawn and draws a "playbook"-esque diagram in the mud with a stick. Mario focuses intently. The bikes can be seen behind them.

REGGIE (CONT'D)

(drawing the McDonald's
"M" at the intersection
of two lines.)

Now here is McDonald's.

MARIO

(pointing)

Then these two streets are Commerce
and Clairemont.

REGGIE

Right. Wait how do you know that? I
suck at knowing the names of
things.

MARIO

(shrugging)

I dunno? I like street names I
guess.

(pointing)

Oh, and my sister worked at the
bookstore here last summer.

REGGIE

Perfect! So do you know the way
there?

Reggie hands the stick to Mario. Mario marks a little book
icon in the ground, meant to be across from the McDonald's.

MARIO

Umm. I think so? More or less.
There are three streets we need to
take.

(He continues drawing as
he speaks)

We are here, your house is on the
corner. We need to go up this
street. Turn right here and walk
down this long street. That will be
most of the trip I think. Then we
need to cross this street and walk
a block or two and we are there. At
least I think.

REGGIE

(looking excited)

That's great! What kind of
obstacles do you expect we will
encounter, private?

MARIO

Well sir, we've received reports
that Mr. McElroy's dog, Bowser, has
been let out and is patrolling his
yard.

REGGIE
 (dropping the general act)
 Oh no, really?

MARIO
 (sheepishly)
 Yeah I saw it outside on the drive
 home.

REGGIE
 Yikes. Okay well we will keep an
 eye out for Bowser.

Reggie and Mario shudder in unison.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 Anything else?

MARIO
 (pointing at the map)
 Well over here on Clairemont,
 that's where all those big trees
 are. Do you know what I'm talking
 about?

REGGIE
 The ones with the squirrels??

MARIO
 (nodding somberly)
 The ones with the squirrels.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. SIDEWALK LINED WITH TREES - DAY

A slightly smaller, screaming Mario runs away from flying
 squirrels pelting acorns at him.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. REGGIE'S HOUSE - DAY

REGGIE
 (looking at his feet)
 You weren't the same after that.

MARIO
 (starring off)
 No. No I wasn't.

The air is somber and thick for a moment. Then as if the past 30 seconds never happened, the two move on simultaneously without a care in the world.

REGGIE

(smiling)

So overall, not too bad at all!

(looking back down at the map and pointing)

What's this street that we will need to cross?

MARIO

(looking concerned)

That's the last problem. This street right here... This one is Scott Boulevard.

Dun. Dun. Dun.

Reggie looks at Mario absolutely horrified.

REGGIE

THAT'S SCOTT BOULEVARD?

MARIO

(meekly)

Yeah...

REGGIE

(yelling)

THAT'S--

(suddenly whispering)

Scott boulevard????

(yelling again)

THAT'S PRACTICALLY A HIGHWAY!

MARIO

(shaking his head)

And what a shame too. Right in the middle of a bustling pedestrian-commerce zone.

REGGIE

That's four lanes of traffic.

MARIO

Yeah. You think we can do it?

Reggie thinks for a minute. The pair look intently at one another.

REGGIE

Yeah. Yeah I do. Mario, mark my words. By the end of the day we will be eating our weight in impossibly small McFlurries shrunken with our new shrink-rays.

The pair smile widely. And they are off.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE OPEN ROAD - DAY

A thrilling drum solo cues rock music which presses Reggie and Mario on their way.

The sun is shining, and the wind blows through their hair. The pair smile jovially, joking and laughing.

They race one another, trying to stay ahead but for the most part, they are evenly matched. The world zips by them.

The area is a typical suburban neighborhood.

The sequence is interspersed with sporadic visions of a cartoon map, mimicking the one drawn in the dirt. It shows their progress towards McDonald's.

The music suddenly turns ominous however. Mario, who was just ahead skids to a stop and freezes suddenly. Reggie whips his head around to see why and slows to a stop.

Mario's face is white and Reggie looks forward to see what's scared him.

As he turns his face, he sees that his nose is now inches away from a metal mailbox jutting into the sidewalk.

In big, black lettering it reads "J. L. McELROY"

Dun. Dun. Dun.

The pair gulp in unison.

REGGIE

(whispering)

It'll be fine. We'll just hop off our bikes and walk them past. If we are quiet, maybe Bowser won't notice?

Mario nods and the pair gingerly dismount. They begin to tip toe past the white fencing that marks McElroy's yard.

To their horror, they realize the swinging gate is open.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 (still whispering)
 Follow my lead.

Reggie peeks around the corner, peering inside the lawn. We do not see Bowser, only the back of Reggie's head.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 (still whispering)
 He's facing the porch, we're good.
 Just stay low and stay quiet!

Mario nods firmly. He crouches and follows with the bike.

The pair have almost made it past the open gate when Mario's shoelace catches on his pedal.

MARIO
 (falling a little and
 wobbling to catch
 himself)
 Gahh-Woahhh!

Mario and Reggie's heads whip towards the open gate. They are frozen.

We still cannot see Bowser.

REGGIE
 I don't think he heard.

The pair sigh a loud "PHEW". Bowser GROWLS ferally from off screen.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 OH SWEET MARGUERITE HE'S COMING
 THIS WAY!

Mario is frozen in fear unable to move. Reggie turns to run.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 C'MON HE'S COMING!

Mario still does not move. The shadow of a dog appears on the fence and slowly grows as the figure stalks forward towards them.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
 MARIO!

Mario snaps out of it and looks around wildly, panicked.

Bowser's shadow is HUGE on the fence. A four-legged Godzilla. Finally he emerges in the frame of the screen and lunges towards Mario.

Bowser is the shrimp-iest shaking chihuahua you've ever seen. Probably more ferret than dog. Absolutely minuscule and absolutely freaky-looking. Bug eyes too. The whole nine yards.

Just as he is about to tackle Mario, the white gate slams shut, knocking Bowser back with a dog-toy sounding SQUEAK. Reggie's face appears just on the other side of Mario, having just shut it to save his friend.

MARIO
 (throwing his arms around
 Reggie)
 Oh my gosh I thought I was a goner
 for sure!

REGGIE
 (hugging back)
 I did too! Now let's get going
 because I'm 90 percent sure he can
 work locks!

As if in response, Bowser howls and barks from the yard.

The pair begin to mount their bikes when Bowser begins to jump up and down on the other side of the fence. He jumps once, twice! A third time! And on the fourth and final time, he leaps over!

MARIO & REGGIE
 (taking off)
 AHHHHHHHH

Bowser is hot on their tails.

MARIO
 This way!

He hangs a left down a small dirt alley between two houses. Reggie follows and unfortunately, so does Bowser.

REGGIE
 (looking back)
 We didn't lose him!

MARIO
 What do we do?

Reggie looks around and smiles.

REGGIE
FOLLOW ME! I GOT AN IDEA!

Reggie speeds ahead. The pair follow behind a large white van, with lettering that reads "MOBILE VET! WE SPAY & NEUTER".

Reggie and Mario speed up to the van and each grab a door handle, letting it pull them.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
You ready?

MARIO
Yep!

MARIO & REGGIE
ONE... TWO... THREE!

They twist the handles and the doors fly open. The van slows down simultaneously, approaching a stop sign. Bowser is moving too fast to slow down and is thrown into the back on the van.

The boys shut the door quickly behind him.

Somewhere an oven timer ticks quickly. Ding! The doors to the van pop open and Bowser wobbles out, seeming high. He is wearing the cone of shame.

He stands between the two boys dazed, slobbering everywhere. He looks down and yelps. Then he feints from shock.

MARIO
(looking at Bowser, to no
one in particular)
Do you ever think about the moral
implications of the non-consensual
treatment of our pets?

REGGIE
C'mon! Let's go before he wakes up!

The two dash away laughing. They giggle and yell to one another "did you see when I" and "it was awesome when you". Their silhouettes and voices fade.

We watch them ride some more and see more of the map. Their icons move showing us their progress. They are about half way there.

MARIO
Hey Reggie?

REGGIE

Yeah?

MARIO

We are coming up on the nest of the squirrel squadron soon.

REGGIE

Don't sweat it! We can make it! Or have you already forgotten our first K.O. of the day??

MARIO

(shakily, unconvinced)
Yeah... I guess so.

The pair zip along side walks until they reach a portion lined with tall oak trees and acorns scattering the ground.

Mario is shaking and Reggie has lost his bravado. They roll side by side to a stop where the section begins. Mario is visibly terrified and Reggie looks at him with concern.

Reggie sighs, shaking his head at Mario and softens. He nudges Mario with his elbow and gives him a reassuring smile. Mario blushes and looks ahead with uncertainty but nods with hope.

REGGIE

You can do it. Besides, the coast is clear, I don't see any squirrels out today.

MARIO

Yeah, you're right.

REGGIE

Show those squirrel's who's boss.

Mario seems to have some renewed determination. The pair slowly begin to move forward, gradually picking up speed, but gently cruising for the most part.

As they move, Mario's confidence slowly increases, as there aren't any ferocious flying squirrel squadrons around to hurl acorns.

About a half block ahead of them. A tiny, inch worm scoots along the pavement, crossing the side walk humming to itself.

Mario begins to zoom as he is conquering his fear of the stretch.

Reggie lags behind, smiling contentedly at his friend.

Mario zooms by the inch worm, missing it by about a foot.

The inch worm rears up in surprise but is fine.

INCH WORM
Jibber jabber jib jabbity jibbit!!

The inch worm's captioning reads "Bikers!! No respect for pedestrians these day!"

Mario reaches the end of the section. The side walk becomes sunny as there are no more trees to provide shade and the ground is free of acorns. He jumps off the bike and leaps up and down celebrating!

Reggie, still riding, sees his friend ahead and cheers him on.

He is distracted and approaching the inch worm quickly. The inch worm screams.

INCH WORM (CONT'D)
JIB JABBBBB!

The Inch Worm's captioning reads "AHHHHHHH".

Reggie sees the worm.

REGGIE
AHHHHH!

He swerves to avoid it and just narrowly misses it. But in doing so, he hits a nearby acorn and is thrown off the bike which crashes into a tree, shaking it. The bike wheel is bent and therefore unusable,

Reggie is on the ground, scraped up but for the most part, the helmet and pads saved him. He is dazed, lying on his stomach but all his fingers and toes are accounted for.

A flying squirrel wearing a tiny coach's whistle peeks out of a hole near the top of the shaken tree and rubs his eyes, as if he's been rudely woken up.

The squirrel sees Reggie on the ground and blows a series of sharp blasts into the whistle. PHWEEET PHWEEET PHWEEEEEET.

A dozen flying squirrels wearing tiny football helmets and carrying acorns run out of the hole and take to the skies. They begin dive bombing and dropping acorns.

At the same moment, Mario spins in a circle, completing his victory dance and his eyes fall on Reggie, who is still laying on the ground, now panicking.

MARIO

Reggie!

Reggie's eyes widen in terror as he realizes what's about to happen.

In SLOWWWWW MOTION Mario springs onto his bike and into action. He grabs an old umbrella leaning against a trashcan and speeds towards Reggie. The image is reminiscent of a knight wielding a sword and charging into battle on horseback.

Acorns begin to fall like little atomic bombs. Reggie curls into a ball and ducks his head beneath his hands.

The first acorn thrown is 6 inches from Reggie's head. Mario isn't there yet. 4 inches. He's close but not quite. 3. Mario reaches out his hand. 2. He grabs Reggie. 1. He yanks him unto the back of his bike and umbrella pops open like a shield.

The pair charge out to freedom and safety.

They take a moment to catch their breath and absorb their surroundings.

REGGIE

(breathing hard)

THAT... was... terrifying.

MARIO

(bent over, eyes closed)

Agreed.

REGGIE

But you saved me!

MARIO

Well I couldn't let you get
bombaraded with tiny grenades! And
besides I had to return the favor.

REGGIE

You were incredible!

MARIO

(blushing)

Thanks, I guess. Are you okay?

REGGIE

Thanks to you! Now where are we and
where's McDonald's?

As if by magic, the pair look up and right across the street it's there. The beautiful, majestic Golden Arches. For a moment it seems like the clouds part a little more, the sun shines a little brighter, and somewhere perhaps an angel is singing.

They've made it! Well almost.

Four bustling lanes of traffic stand between them and mass produced shrink-rays and impossibly small McFlurries.

MARIO

We made it!

REGGIE

Well almost. That's four lanes of traffic right there. How are we going to get across??

MARIO

We'll have to time it just right.

CUT TO:

FROGGER - DAY

Cut to a stylized, pixelated high-way version of frogger. Reggie and Mario ride Mario's bike together, jumping from lane to lane avoiding cars and dodging obstacles. They land on medians and watch the stop lights change colors. After a couple VERY narrow misses, they are finally within reach of the end.

The last jump, they are almost there. But no. At the last second a semi comes out of no where and flattens them like a steam roller.

The avatar does a barrel roll and their eyes become Xs. Dead. The last heart breaks. Game over. Wamp. Wamp. Wamp.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCOTT BOULEVARD - DAY

Reggie and Mario stare at each other perplexed. Mario looks around.

MARIO

Or we could use the crosswalk.

Reggie presses the button and the pair patiently wait for their turn to cross the street.

CUT TO:

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

Reggie and Mario are each handed a happy meal and a McFlurry. Something triumphant and jubilant plays like Mozart's "Little Night Serenade".

They each look happy as clams.

They walk towards the door carrying their treasure.

Then we hear a loud BOOM. The pair stop dead in their tracks. We can't see what they see but we hear:

MOM

OH MY GOD THERE YOU TWO ARE! WHERE
THE HECK HAVE YOU BEEN?! I'VE BEEN
WORRIED SICK! I ALMOST CALLED THE
POLICE. DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT--

Reggie's Mom continues yelling as the boys turn to each other.

REGGIE

Yeah... I knew we forgot to do
something.

MARIO

Y'know now that you mention it, I
had a nagging feeling too.

CUT TO:

INT. MOMMY-VAN - DAY

Reggie and Mario sit silently in the back seat as Reggie's Mom keeps yelling.

They each hold a happy meal in their lap and are each armed with the "as-shown-on-tv" shrink-ray.

Gradually, music fades in and drown's out Reggie's Mom's yelling.

MARIO & REGGIE
(fist bumping)
Worth it.

FADE TO BLACK.