

MICHAEL D. YOUNG

BOOK #2 OF THE CHESS QUEST SERIES

NEW BOARD.
NEW ENEMIES.
SAME GAME.
HIGHER STAKES.

NEMESIS:

KNIGHT

FOR ONE THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY,
CHECKMATE IS ALWAYS A MOVE AWAY.

Chapter 1: A Dozen Distractions

Rich stared at the ceiling fan in his room, trying to slow his breathing to its normal rate. Ever since his grandmother had forbidden him to look for his dad, he couldn't focus on anything else. His schoolwork and even his quest seemed like nothing next to that.

He kept his feelings inside until he felt like he might burst like an overfilled water balloon. Rich jumped off his bed and wheeled on Aaron, his guide through his quest, who still lay on the other bed. His anger gave an uncomfortable sting to his eyes. "Aaron, do you know what my grandmother's talking about? This place where my father went missing? You do, don't you?"

Aaron's lips twitched, and he glanced furtively to the side.

"Aaron," Rich said, "what aren't you telling me?"

Aaron glanced around as if afraid someone might be listening.

Rich shot forward and grabbed Aaron roughly by the robe. "Aaron, listen to me. I've had it. Now tell me what you know, or so help me, I'll leave now and go after him myself. How would you like that?"

For once, it took Aaron a moment to find something to say. "All right," he squeaked. "Do you think you could put me down first?"

Rich put him down and looked away. "Oh, wow. I'm sorry, Aaron. I really don't know where that all came from. I'm not usually..."

"It's okay. I know," Aaron said. "This place where your father has gone—it's a labyrinth called the Corridor of Keys. It's a massive maze with thousands and thousands of doors, each one linked to a key. When someone goes in, chances are, he doesn't make it back out."

Rich's heart beat faster as he tried to image what a place that would look like. "Where is it?"

Aaron shook his head. "It's deep beneath the earth, and it moves around. I'm not sure any other knight has been there for some time."

Rich jutted out his jaw, feeling determined. "There has to be a way to find it. If my father found it, and my mother found it, I can too."

Aaron shook his head even more violently. "Even if you could, do you really want to become as lost as your parents are? That would be a disaster. Our family might never recover."

Rich caught himself. He was about to yell "I don't care!" but the fact was that he did care, and he knew that his actions could affect many people. So he sighed instead. "If it's so dangerous, why did my father go there in the first place?"

"It's anyone's guess," Aaron said. "Perhaps he needed something that was lost. Lost objects and even people have a habit of showing up in the Corridor. Maybe one of the Nemes family lured him there." Aaron came over and placed a comforting hand on Rich's shoulder. "Don't worry, Rich. Your father is so important that we are bound to go looking for him. We just need to do it in the right away and at the right time. Remember what your mother said."

A yawn snuck up on Rich like a hand creeping into a cookie jar. "After all that, I'm really going to need some rest. Who knows? Maybe Arlenen will know something else

about all this.”

Aaron cocked his head to one side and raised an eyebrow. “Did you say ‘Arlenen’?”

Rich took a small step backwards. “Yeah. The old guy in my dreams. Comes out of the mists. It’s actually kind of spooky.”

“And you are sure he said he was Arlenen?”

Rich nodded. “Yeah. I’ve already seen him several times, and it’s always been interesting.”

Aaron’s face turned ashen, and deep lines appeared in his forehead. “I’m sure it was. He comes to us all eventually.”

“Wait—you mean he’s come to you, too?”

“No,” Aaron admitted, his eyes suddenly misty. “I died too young. He only visits us at a certain time in our lives, and I . . . never reached it.”

“What time?” Rich asked. “Like a birthday?”

“No, no. Not like that. It’s a certain event, which comes at a different time in everyone’s life. Arlenen is supposed to explain it himself.”

Rich racked his brain for any big events that had happened in his life recently. There wasn’t really anything to think about, except...

“Some guys at school just started having to shave, but I’m guessing that’s not it. Arlenen hasn’t sent me on a quest for a magic razor or anything.”

Aaron remained silent and didn’t meet Rich’s gaze.

“Well,” Rich probed, “what is it, then?”

Aaron’s head wagged from side to side. “I don’t want to talk about it. It makes me sad.”

Rich expelled all the air from his lungs in a rush. If patience was a virtue, he was running dangerously low on virtue. "I get it," he said with just a hint of sarcasm. "The whole need-to-know thing again, like I couldn't possibly think about more than one thing at a time."

Aaron's hand ran slowly through his thick hair. "Go to bed, Rich. I have said too much already. Try not to bother Arlenen if he appears to you. He's a bit grumpy if you don't cooperate, and I don't blame him."

Rich was about to ask why, exactly, that was when Aaron collapsed on his cot and immediately started snoring. Rich crept over and shook him, but the boy remained fast asleep.

Rich admitted defeat and lay down as well. He fell asleep quickly, wondering how soon he could speak with the mysterious man from the mists.

Arlenon never came. Rich woke up as usual to his alarm, disoriented. He rolled over and saw that Aaron was still snoring. Rich snuck back over, wondering if he'd get lucky and Aaron would start talking in his sleep.

Unfortunately, the only noise Aaron made sounded like a cinderblock being fed into a wood chipper, and Rich quickly decided that it wasn't worth the chance. He nudged him, first softly, and then harder and harder. "Come on, you old lump. Just because you're dead . . ."

Aaron groaned and pulled a pillow over his head with a grunt. Rich threw off the covers, leaving Aaron exposed. "Come on," Rich said, his tension rising. "Don't forget—I've got a crazy imagination, and I'm not afraid to use it."

Just as Rich got ready to put the full force of his imagination to good use, Aaron stirred and then sat up. "Why you people plan your classes at such an unsuitable hour, I will never know."

Rich rummaged through some drawers and pulled out clothes for the day. "That's how it is, like it or not. Me—I'd love it if I could just be going to a regular day at school. But no, in addition to the usual stress, I've got to worry about the impending doom facing everyone I know if I don't figure out this quest thing."

Aaron yawned and shrugged sleepily. "No need to be so dramatic. You'll be fine. I mean, look at what you've accomplished so far. You haven't disappointed us."

Rich finished pulling a sweatshirt over his head. "Speaking of that, shouldn't I have some new power today? I mean, I did complete another part of the quest." He took two steps closer to Aaron. "And if you even mention the word 'distraction,' I just might jump out the window."

Aaron shot to his feet. "Don't do anything so stupid! I will tell you. It's not a problem."

One corner of Rich's mouth climbed up. "Hey, it's just a figure of speech. I'm not going to do anything that dumb."

Aaron's breathing returned to normal, and he continued, "This power is an enhancement of your empathic abilities. Now, not only will you be able to put yourself in someone else's shoes, but you will be able to help them. You have the power to fix things."

Rich leaned forward. "What kind of things? 'Cause the sink's been dripping for a long time."

"You could fix it, if you really want to," Aaron admitted. "But it's really intended to be used on people. Whether they have physical wounds, or ones that aren't as easy to see, you can use your own energy to heal them. It's a wonderful thing, but not an easy one."

"My own energy? I don't know if I like the sound of that."

Aaron looked around for his clothes and started dressing, "Whenever you heal something, a bit of power will go out of you. It's an uncomfortable process, and it can be dangerous if you're not careful. Give too much of yourself, and you might not have anything left."

"So I shouldn't go around trying to cure everyone's cancer."

"No, I wouldn't try it if I were you." Aaron's eyes brightened. "When is breakfast?"

Rich rolled his eyes as he led Aaron out of the room and down the stairs. Only Aaron could move from cancer to breakfast in the same thought.

Laura treated them to an impressive stack of waffles with her creamy buttermilk syrup. She then prompted them to brush their teeth. Aaron fared considerably better this time around, though the amount of toothpaste he used was only barely visible to the naked eye.

In another minute, Rich had collected his history project, and they were out the door and into the chilly air of the winter morning.

"So, an act of great wisdom," Aaron said. "Have you given much thought to it?"

Rich nodded. "Yes. There's a spelling bee today. I figured I could prove my skills there." Aaron stared at him blankly, and Rich added, "I'm pretty good, you know."

"I must admit," Aaron said, "that I'm not sure what you're talking about."

Rich wished, not for the first time, that his grandmother had trusted him with a modern guide. "It's not some sort of talking insect, if that's what you're thinking. It's, uh, like a contest to see how well people can spell things. It's like a test of memory and skill that proves whose mind is the

sharpest.”

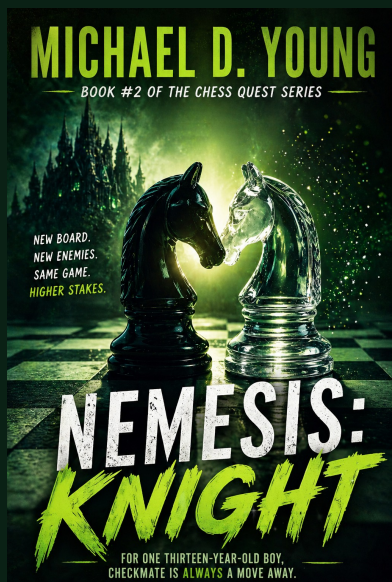
Aaron went from clueless to doubtful in an instant. “Another contest? You know how that turned out last time. Are you sure you want to go through that again?”

Rich squared his shoulders, “That was with something I’d never done before. I’m not a good runner, and I probably won’t ever do anything like that again. This is something I’m actually good at. It’ll be fine. You’ll see.”

They walked in silence for the rest of the way. As they approached the school, a figure broke off from the crowd and came rushing toward them at full force. “You!” yelled a voice. “I’m going to kill you!”

THE NEXT MOVE IS YOURS

End of Sample



Rich wants answers about his father, but every answer points toward a place designed to test knights - and break them.

CONTINUE WITH THE COMPLETE NOVEL

Nemesis: Knight



SCAN TO FIND IT ON AMAZON

READ THE WHOLE FIVE-BOOK CHESS QUEST SERIES

Every move matters. Every choice counts. Every quest changes everything.

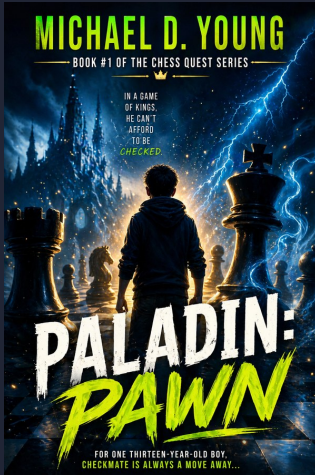
authormichaelyoung.com/the-chess-quest-series/

CONTINUE THE QUEST

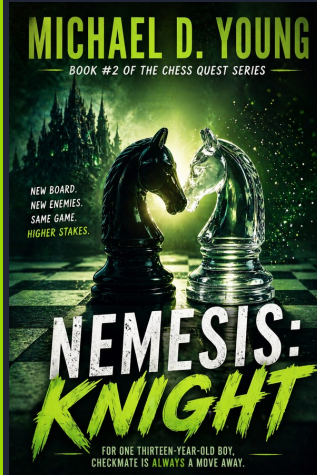
The Chess Quest Series

Read all five books in order.

YOU ARE HERE



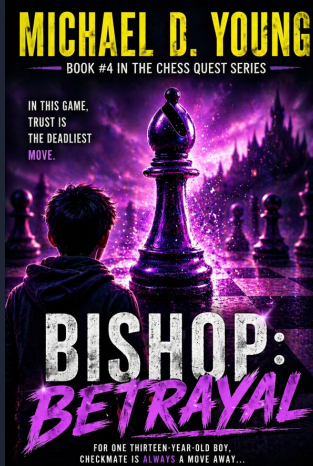
BOOK 1
Paladin: Pawn



BOOK 2
Nemesis: Knight



BOOK 3
Rook: Revenge



BOOK 4
Bishop: Betrayal



BOOK 5
Sovereigns: Song

KEEP PLAYING THE CHESS QUEST

Find the complete five-book series on Amazon

authormichaelyoung.com/the-chess-quest-series/

MORE FROM MICHAEL D. YOUNG

Stay in the Quest

Find more books, reader extras, maps, games, and series resources at the official author website - and join the reader newsletter for release news and freebies.



AUTHOR WEBSITE

Books, series pages, freebies & more

www.authormichaelyoung.com



EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Reader news, updates & bonus material

Free story + reader signup

MICHAEL D. YOUNG

Author of the Chess Quest series

Every move matters. Every choice counts. Every quest changes everything.