

Short Story

# The Board

THE STORY OF A PAWN

---

Arashk Azizi

# The Board

The Story of a Pawn

By:  
Arashk Azizi

I don't remember much of where I was before. My first memories are all from here. My childhood started with war, and it still continues. Nobody knows when it may end. Some say that it may never end. Our leader always says that war is the only reason that we are alive. I just don't like to believe him. Although sometimes I think he may be right. I don't know anything but to kill or be killed. That's the meaning of life to me. Our life is based on a repeating pattern. We wake up, start to fight, try to kill, and whether we kill or be killed all happens the same the next day. It really matters not if you succeed or not, the end is the same for all of us, and the next day we start from the same place again. As one of my friends said it seemed like each of us is a Sisyphus. Some of us like to think better of our lives. They all try to end their daily task and reach the end of their line. everyone who can finish their line in a day will be prised like a queen. One time it was just happening to me too. I killed so many enemies on that day, there were just six of us against six of them. Two of my friends and I tried to escape enemy lines. First, we arranged our lines with a tactic that the leader called Orion. I don't know the meaning of that, but it is the name we have trained to do whenever a leader wants it. In this tactic three of us will get together, the middle-man, goes one step forward and two others protect him from beside and back. Then some more powerful forces like knights or even bishops will go in front of us and make a union attacking the heart of the enemy, with our support, and of course, the leader will be two or three steps behind us. On that particular day, we managed to line up a perfect Orion, Then we fought bravely, and finally, I could break enemies line and reach the end of my line. I was going to be a queen, but for some reason, it just didn't happen. I was one step away from my destiny but everything just stopped there. It was like a nightmare for me after all these years, after all, those training, it was finally my time to feel the sweet taste of victory, but it just didn't happen and the next day I had to start it all over again. Actually, that day changed my life a bit. Before that, I always wanted to be the winner, to finish the line, to reach the furthest lands and conquer what was my right and was taken from us by force. I wanted to be on the right side and destroy the enemy. But that day made me think, what if I could

succeed. What then? Still, it would be the same as before. Even if I would finish it, even then I would start like before the next day. Actually, there have been times in my life that I was just in front of the queen, and sometimes I could just dare and talk to her. Many may disagree with me, but I think even she and the leader are a bit tired of their repeating days. We don't even know why we are fighting. Yes, yes there are things like our lands and other nationalistic things, but who said that the other side is ours? They can live on their own side and we can live on our own side. I don't think we need much more space than we already have, what do we need to do with the extra space? We don't do anything special with the land we already have, what if we finally destroy our enemy. What if one day we wake up and see that there is nobody on the other side, what would we do then? We have been fighting for so long that all of us, even our leaders, forgot what we should do when there is no war. Maybe that's the real reason we have to fight, because if the fight ends, then nobody knows what to do next. Then our leader will have no more power over someone like me. The only reason that they are more powerful, the only reason that we all accepted that they should be leaders, is the war. Without the war, their power has no meaning and they have no advantage over other of us. After all, it is us that make sacrifices just to let the king stay alive. Our lives don't matter against his. Yes, they say if he dies we all will be the slaves of enemies, but what are we now? Slaves of ourselves? Slaves of the leaders?

And I think the same thing is happening in our enemies' life. We have been trained to think of them as white beasts, but is that really true? Are they not really like us just with different skin colors? Every time that I kill one of them I just think that he is just like me, the same height, same shape, and even the same eyes, the only difference is that I'm a little darker and they are a little brighter. That's it. How are they beasts and we are normal? I bet they think the same about us too. I bet when they come to kill us on the battlefield they come to kill the dark beasts or black beasts or anything that their leaders may have told them.

I really don't know if our leaders believe in what they say or they just say it to stay leaders. I think after all this time, even the leaders can't say if they believe it or not, they just believe it because they have been told to believe it, not because they know it so. One day before the war began, there was a knight behind me, suddenly he said, what if we are not thinking for ourselves? That made me think for a while, what if he is right? What if we don't have the will of our own, what if I don't really move and some hidden force in the universe moves me. What if the choice I make every day for my every movement is made before me by someone or something else and I am just here to do that and see the consequences. And I think that I made that choice while it has been made for me before I even want to make it. What if even the consequences of what I don't concern me. I am here to do what something else has decided to make a consequence that relates to something else. Of course, that's just nonsense. When I think about this stuff out loud I just realize how silly they are. The bottom line is even if there is some other force making me do what I do, still it is me that does what I do. Unless that I don't exist, and that can't really be happening, If I don't exist then who is killing all those white beasts every day? Even if that's all in my mind and none of them are real, still, I am thinking about all this stuff. I am thinking right now, so I can't just do not exist, it's not like someone else is thinking on my behalf and I think that I'm thinking about what he is thinking.

I remember a day when my best friend and I had some time to talk on the battlefield. She was a little concerned with the same idea. But after some thinking, we came to a conclusion. We agreed that if we are not real and someone or something is thinking on our behalf and we are just something like a memory for them, they could also be someone's thinking. It means that someone is thinking what I'm thinking, and this chain can go on for eternity. So even if that's true, the best way to deal with it is not to think about it and go kill some white beasts. I remember that day my friend could finish her line, she became powerful and killed a lot of those inhuman white beasts. We won the battle that day, it was a nice day for all of us. Of course the next day we started fighting the same beasts in the same battleground

again. But still, every victory counts. My friends always tell me to do what you are best at, don't try to be someone you are not. I think they are right, I should just keep on fighting and don't let these kinds of thoughts make me doubt our beliefs. We are fighting for the truth and that's all that matters. Even if the leaders are abusing us, what then? If we come to peace with our enemies, it's not just our leaders that have no idea what to do next. I don't know what to do next. And honestly, I don't know anything else but fighting.

Sometimes I would consider breaking from these lands, maybe there are some other lands outside our known world. Maybe there is a better life there. I don't think that we are the only species alive. There may be some other kinds of intelligent life outside the world we know. Maybe they will be so different, maybe their body is not made out of wood, maybe they can walk on some other materials than wood. We don't know what other things are out there. Many of my friends and especially our leaders are not interested in other worlds. They think there can't be any other materials than what we already know. Maybe they are right, I don't know. Maybe our life is not enough to know everything, we must just stick to what we know and live our lives purposefully, though our purpose may mean nothing, it is our purpose, not the universe's purpose, I don't care about the purpose of the universe and I'm sure the universe does not care about me too.

In the end, all of these could not stop me from trying to find new borders. I am an adventurer at heart and I must accept that. One day I tried to leave our troops to find new lands and even new worlds. I was so close to the edge, I could just jump out of our land, but I couldn't do that, I don't know why. When it was time I couldn't do that. I was so ready to leave here, but something made me stay and continue as always. The next time I saw the king after that day, he just looked at me and smiled, He then started talking to me. I was nervous, usually, the king does not speak directly to small soldiers like me, unless of course there is danger near and no one else is around. But he talked to me even before the battle started. He turned to me and said with a smile, "I know what you were trying to do the other day" I couldn't talk back, I was just staring at him, everyone was looking at us.

Then he continued, “you cannot leave here, you shouldn't leave here, not because of yourself, but because of all of us, because of your friends and all the ones that you love. We all depend on each other. I know, you may think that you are just a soldier that has no power compared to most of us. but believe me, it's not just the power that matters, it's the unity that is between us, without you, we are not the same system we were. It may seem like nonsense to you, but it is true. Think about our bodies. Your foot may think he is not as important as your head, but can he just leave your body and go away?” I was still just staring at him. Everyone around us cheered him. I could just nod at him in agreement and not so long after the battle started. No coincidence that I was the first man to go toward the enemy that day.

That day as I was fighting like every other day, I thought to myself, is that it? Is that the king? Is that the supreme leader? What he just said to me was like the cheapest thing I have ever heard. That's where the borders of his knowledge end? And by the applause around us, I think anyone else is also that dumb or they were just kissing his ass that either way it means they are stupid. What was that? We are a system, don't leave us, your leg will not leave your body. Oh my god. I think I am trapped between some morons. And those morons decide how I should live. That's like the worst prison you can ever be in.

After that I got a little distracted, I couldn't live like before. My friends didn't feel good be around me and one by one they stopped talking to me. there was nobody I could really talk to. Not because they didn't want to talk to me. But because I couldn't talk to them. Most of my friends were more and more intelligent than the king, but they didn't care at all. My best friend was the only one whom I could speak to from time to time. Even though we parted away after a while, still, she was the only friend left for me. One day I told her that I decided to leave our lands again. She didn't react much. It seemed that there is a combination of sadness and rage coming out of her eyes. Actually, that was the last time we talked. Or better to say I talked to her. I know what everybody thinks. We have a good life and our land is so vast. But it's not just for the big or small land. For me, it's the answer that

matters. The answer to many questions. Maybe I don't find any answer at all, but at least I will know that I did my best.

Maybe even the king is right, maybe if I go nothing stays the same, maybe I'm that important. But I really don't care anymore. We have lived the same day over and over again for many years, I think it's time to change our way of life. Even if my absence results in changing everyone's life, I am ready to accept that risk. I don't think anybody will have a more boring and devastated life than they already have.

After some time finally, in a battle, I was near the edge again. I tried my best several times. Still, it seemed that something is controlling me and doesn't let me go. But finally, I could do it, I could jump out.

There was nothing beyond. I just could see some shapes that had no meaning to me. Mostly I just saw the same colors and lights and darkness. Complete darkness. I don't know if I forgot everything or I just was in the dark. But anyway, after some time I could see some familiar shapes again. It was the battlefield again, but it was not the same as before. I could feel that it is not wood under my feet anymore. It seemed as the land is different and smaller than our own land. I turned and saw there were others too. They all looked like each other but different than me. Their bodies were more shining and a lot simpler than mine. Like they had no detail in their bodies. The scary part was when I realized nobody here has a face. There was nothing, no eyes, no hair, no nose, no lips, nothing. I tried to talk to them but it seemed as if they don't understand me. I could see their movement, it seemed they were looking at me, but I couldn't tell for sure since none of them had eyes. The only thing common between us was our color. We all were black. Of course, I was blackish and they were dark shining black. I was just looking around when I heard a sound. It was one of them in the middle. I think it was their king. The funny thing was that if he was the king I was almost as tall as him and almost taller than anyone else. Anyway, the sound was something like an invitation to war. And there I was again, in the middle of a battlefield fighting for something. This time I was sure that I don't know what I am fighting for. It was just the atmosphere. Everybody was fighting. Although they all looked the same to me, their

enemies were white, like my old enemies. It reminded me of those white beasts and I just went to kill them. And I could kill some too. The land here was smaller and it was harder to keep on the same path for long. It was one of the hardest fights I have ever been. I was not comfortable with the soft stuff under my feet. The color of the land was different. Everybody was scared, even the ones who were helping me in the battle were scary.

I fought in the new land several times. After a while, I got used to the new land and new non-faced people of this land. But still, I couldn't speak their language. We couldn't understand each other so well. I missed talking to people. There was nobody to talk to for a long time, and when I don't talk to somebody I start thinking, and I don't usually think about the good stuff. So after not much time, I decided to leave this land too. Now I know there are other lands, so why stop here. Another battle began and I jumped out of the land near the end of the battle. This time it was easier to escape the land. Again the same thing happened. I saw some unfamiliar shapes, then some colors and lights, although slightly different from the last time, and complete darkness again.

I had no idea how much time was in the dark but it seemed more than before to me. I think after a long time I saw myself in a new land. and yes, it was the same pattern and I was sure it was another battleground. It seems that all the words are in battle all the time. There is nothing but war. I think none of the other lands know what and why they are fighting for. But that was it, no matter where I was, the same pattern was repeating, some had the power and led their people to a war they didn't know what it was for. Maybe there were other things than war in the universe, but it seems that I can only be on battlefields. Other things are so blurry to my eyes or even they seem completely dark to me. I wish I could experience a life where there is no war.

The new land seemed bigger than the last one. Almost as big as my own land. And there was definitely wood under my feet. It was a little weird since it seemed that I was in the middle of the field. There was an army on my right and an army on my left. From that far, I could guess that their body is also from wood, like myself. I couldn't see for sure if they had faces,

since they were far from me, but it seemed that they were mostly like the people from the last land I was in. and though they had different colors, they all seemed light-colored to me. The army on my right was a little darker than the army on my left, but compared to me they both were from a white family. And it was at this moment that it made me scared. They all looked like the white beasts to me, and I was not in any of their armies. I was in the middle. Maybe they all want to attack me. It was so scary, even scarier than the first time I saw those no-face people. I didn't know what to do. I tried to jump out of the land but I was in the middle, I could not jump out. Two armies on my sides were waiting to attack me. I don't know what they were waiting for, but it has been a while since I have been standing here and nobody started to walk toward me.

Time passed by, I don't know how long it was, but it was a long long time since I was just standing in the middle of the battlefield and armies were ready to attack me. But it didn't start. Maybe this was it. This was a land with no war. But if there was no war, why are they ready to fight? Why don't they just do something else? What am I doing here? What will they do with me? I was too scared to move even a little bit. I preferred to stay here and don't move for a long time than to fight two armies at once.

I tried to speak loudly to both sides, but there was no answer. There was more distance than my voice could go. And also even if they could hear me, it is very possible that they can't understand me. So after lots of shouting, I got nothing, no one from either side answered me.

So this was it. A land without war. The same thing I was looking for. I thought maybe I should go toward one of the armies and talk to them. If they are in peace then we can do many things together. But what if there is no peace. They are just waiting for me to choose aside. Oh, that's not good. Maybe I should standstill. I didn't like my situation at all. At least before I knew who the enemy was, I had a leader and a lot of friends, it was hard to fight but I knew what I was doing and that made me go forward. Although I would do the same thing every day, I was doing something. At least it felt like I was making some progress in my life. Now I just don't know what to do and it seems that the best thing I have decided so far is to

do nothing. And I don't know if I decided to do anything or something else decided it for me. What if I want to move and I can't? Is it really me who decided to do nothing and stand still here? What am I a statue or a decorative piece? I am a warrior who fought many battles. I killed many enemy soldiers, so I can move on to my own decision.

It has been so long, maybe even years. Still, I'm here deciding to move and the armies waiting for a sign to attack. Every moment passes with a lot of stress, and so far it was my decision to stand still and not move at all. I am waiting for them to make the first move. till then I will be standing here like a statue.

19 September 2019

Tallinn