

WHEN THE PAWN BECOMES THE QUEEN

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FADE IN:

EXT. ABANDONED NEIGHBORHOOD - AFTERNOON

where contemporary HOUSES are mostly shells- bullet ridden and gutted out. The lawns haven't been tended to in years and are overgrown.

PAWN is running, weaving through the rows of HOUSES.

She is dirty and bruised from a recent skirmish. Her fatigues (not a uniform- something she has put together for fighting and surviving) shows much wear. Underneath the hard exterior are traces of twentysomething beauty and sophistication that belonged to another world.

On her FOREHEAD is a finely etched tattoo of a Black Pawn.

She has been running for awhile and the strain is showing as she jogs past HOUSE #1.

PAWN (VO)

Oh, God, I'm so tired... keep going, just
keep going... not much farther... run,
run...

The tall GRASS looks so cool and inviting.

INSERT - PAWN, IN FRONT OF HOUSE 1

lounging in the GRASS, eyes closed dreamily.

PAWN (VO)

No!

BACK TO SCENE

as she rounds another corner and starts across another backyard.

PAWN (VO)

I can't stop... keep going...

She glances at the PATIO as she runs by.

INSERT - NEW PATIO OF HOUSE 2

where a family BBQ is going on. Everything is brand new and the PEOPLE are having a good time.

BACK TO SCENE

PAWN shakes her head. It is a vague memory- the way things were and the way things should still be.

PAWN (VO)

...Dreaming of another world to escape this
bloody reality...

Before she turns the CORNER, PAWN glances back.

BISHOP has just entered the HOUSE 2 BACKYARD. He's still on her. He still has her gun.

He is as grubby and worn as she is. Also twentysomething, he shows more experience from fighting many battles.

PAWN runs between the HOUSES and starts across the front of HOUSE 3. There is a trace of admiration on her face.

PAWN (VO)
...It's not you, personally, really... We
are just Pieces playing out their Game...
It's too bad only one of us can come out
alive...

She glances back again before rounding another CORNER.

PAWN (VO)
...He must be desperate... he's got to know
I'm leading him into a trap...

PAWN comes around the back of HOUSE 4 and dashes across the BACKYARD.

PAWN (VO)
...Almost there... over soon... then I can
go back Home... a hot bath... a massage...
food!...

With a renewed burst of energy, she sprints between the HOUSES and across the front of HOUSE 5.

PAWN (VO)
...Here it is!

Between HOUSES 5 and 6 is a steep INCLINE with a TOOL SHED at the bottom.

She skids to a stop to catch her breath for a second.

PAWN (VO)
The ammo stash should still be in there...
I'll hide and he'll come down...

PAWN starts down the INCLINE in a zig-zag pattern.

PAWN (VO)
...The poison will start and...

Suddenly, her leg dips in a HOLE. She screams as she's pitched forward- grabbing the air for balance.

PAWN tumbles down the INCLINE to be slammed up against the shed.

Dazed, she slowly rolls up onto her hands and knees to wait...

FADE TO:

EXT. BACKYARD OF HOUSE 2 - AFTERNOON

BISHOP passes the same PATIO, but he is beyond dreaming.

BISHOP (CONT VO)
She's leading me into her territory... I
can't be wrong...

His FOREHEAD details a Red Bishop.

He follows her between the HOUSES and starts in front of HOUSE 3.

BISHOP (CONT VO)
...A girl... they set me up against a
girl... an inexperienced little Pawn...

INSERT - BISHOP AND PAWN - MORNING

at the neighborhood PLAYGROUND where they had their skirmish. They are fighting and PAWN is evidently winning. BISHOP's gun is far out of reach. Finally, BISHOP manages to wrestle her gun from her. PAWN takes off for the HOUSES before he can use it on her.

BACK TO SCENE

BISHOP smiles with a trace of admiration.

He crosses the front of HOUSE 3.

BISHOP (CONT VO)
...and I thought it was going to be easy...

He's keeping the pace and follows her through the BACKYARD.

BISHOP (CONT VO)
Where the hell is she going?!

BISHOP rounds the CORNER and crosses the FRONT OF HOUSE 5.

He is startled by the sudden appearance of the INCLINE and skids to a stop before going over the edge.

PAWN is waiting for him at the bottom on all fours like a tigress facing a hunter.

BISHOP (CONT VO)
What the hell?!... why is she out in the
open...?

BISHOP hits the ground expecting HOUSES 5 and 6 to open fire on him.

He waits for the inevitable.

After a moment, he risks raising his head to see if she is still there.

PAWN hasn't moved.

Puzzled, BISHOP levels his gun on her. If they take him out- she's going down as well.

Slowly, he gets up as he keeps her heart in the sight of the gun.

BISHOP (CONT VO)

Why doesn't she move?... One shot and I'm the Victor.

Then he sees she's not really focused on him- not focused on anything.

He moves the sight a few feet from her hand and pulls the trigger.

A SHOT rings out. PAWN sways slightly and then just collapses on the spot.

BISHOP starts down the INCLINE, the gun still leveled on her.

He stops HALF WAY down and fires another SHOT close to her. Either she's really out or has nerves of steel.

BISHOP comes down the rest of the way and kneels next to PAWN and rolls her over.

Suddenly, PAWN's leg comes up to his stomach and kicks BISHOP back hard. He loses the gun.

PAWN pounces on him, but her moves are sluggish and lack the finesse she fought with earlier.

PAWN's nails are long and sharp. Desperately, she claws him as BISHOP fights back.

Finally, he pins her. BISHOP watches as her eyes roll up and she loses consciousness.

He gets off her as he shakes his head, completely perplexed.

BISHOP opens one of PAWN's eyes, then the other. The pupils are uneven and dilated.

BISHOP

Drugs?... she was so alert earlier...

He falls back on his haunches and looks her over. The answer is found in a slashed boot oozing BLOOD.

BISHOP looks up the INCLINE and he is shocked.

The INCLINE is riddled with HOLES set at such an angle so they are invisible from the top.

He is amazed he made it down.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

That was the trap... probably poisoned spikes...

BISHOP feels for a pulse. She is still alive.

He rips off one of her sleeves. BISHOP binds up the gash as best he can without touching the boot.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Doc can test it for any residual poison...

Now that she is squared away, he takes stock of his own injuries. He notices the numbness forming around the long furrows on his face, his neck and every where else she clawed him. It's an odd feeling.

He picks up her nearest hand and studies the nails. They are razor sharp and hard as diamonds. He brings her fingers up to his nose and sniffs- more admiration.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Figures... more poison. We don't have anything like this... haveta show Doc...

BISHOP retrieves his gun. He looks around one more time. No ambush. He clicks the safety-catch back on the gun and puts it in his belt.

He picks up PAWN up and slings her over his shoulder in the fireman's carry. BISHOP starts up the INCLINE.

The sun is starting to SET, but he should make it back before dark.

FADE TO:

INT. RED SQUARE STORAGE ROOM - NEXT DAY

DARKNESS

where voices float in from no where.

DOC (VO)

She'll live, though I don't know how the others will feel- you using the last of the antidote on the enemy.

BISHOP (VO)

I don't care...

POV - PAWN

as she slowly opens her eyes. She has trouble focusing. BISHOP's head is in front of her.

DOC's face is above her upside down. His forehead is marked with a Red Rook.

PAWN (VO)

I'm alive... why? It was supposed to be a fight to the death...

BACK TO SCENE

PAWN is laid out on an army-like COT up against the SOUTH WALL.

Her HANDS are tied together to a COT LEG with the arms up and bent at the elbows over the edge.

Her GOOD LEG is tied down as well. The BAD LEG had been cleaned up and bandaged. It didn't need to be tied down as it's still numb and useless.

BISHOP is sitting beside her on the COT. DOC is standing behind it, bending over her.

PAWN looks around. The place also doubles as a hang out. Several RED PAWNS hover in the b.g.. She feels sluggish and dizzy.

BISHOP

So what do you think?

DOC

From what you have told me...

PAWN's FINGERS fumble around the rope. She tries to cut through them- then realizes they managed to clip her nails.

DOC (CONT'D)

...it's a great possibility. There's only one way to find out. I don't like it, though.

DOC turns to the TABLE behind him and digs around in his medic bag. At the same time, BISHOP brushes the stray hairs from her forehead. He takes her head in his hands to anchor it.

PAWN's eyes grow wide in horror as she hears the CLICK AND HUM OF A LASERKNIFE.

PAWN (VO)

...Oh my god... they know... they know...

She struggles, but the ropes and BISHOP'S HANDS hold fast.

BISHOP looks up questioningly at DOC.

DOC turns back with the LASERKNIFE in hand.

DOC

We have to burn off this tattoo to expose the one underneath. If we're right- she'll be alright. If we're not...

(hopeless shrug)

well, the scaring...

BISHOP looks back down at PAWN. He doesn't want to hurt her, but...

BISHOP

We have to know. Then we Win and this bloody Game will be over and we can go home.

DOC motions for RED PAWN #1 to bring him a chair. He sits down at the head of the COT.

DOC

Don't move. It'll only make it worse.

PAWN tries to break away from the ropes, all the while screaming a silent protest.

PAWN (VO)

No!...no. Don't touch me... no...

BISHOP

Stop it! Stop struggling. We've got to know! It's over- don't fight it.

DOC

You won't feel a thing if you don't move.

PAWN freezes, afraid to move as the LASERKNIFE comes closer.

POV - PAWN

as the LASERKNIFE descends on her. This is it...

INSERT - PAWN'S FOREHEAD

as the LASER starts to burn away the pawn tattoo.

BACK TO SCENE

Triumph breaks on BISHOP's face with the CLICK OF LASERKNIFE GOING OFF.

DOC falls back in the CHAIR in awe.

DOC

"When the pawn becomes the queen, the game is won..."

INSERT- PAWN'S FOREHEAD

where the intricate details of a QUEEN TATTOO shows under the remains of the PAWN.

DOC (VO)

...but she is on a red Square and so she is done."

BACK TO SCENE

PAWN looks at one and then the other. Again she struggles against the ropes. Finally, her throat clears a little.

PAWN

(hoarse, weak cry)
No...

DOC looks at BISHOP with mixed feelings. They've Won, but he doesn't want to kill her.

FADE TO:

INT. RED SQUARE STORAGE ROOM - DAY

BISHOP sighs as he gets up. He turns to the RED PAWNS.

BISHOP
(pretending victory)
Well that's it, we can go Home! You all can
get packing. We'll take care of her.

DOC gets up dejectedly and goes back to the TABLE. He throws the
knife aside and rummages in the medic bag for a lethal injection.

RED PAWNS HOWL and CHEER as they file out quickly.

BISHOP waits and listens till the last of the CHEERS fade down the
hall. Then he closes the DOOR and locks it.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Doc?

DOC finds the hypo and pulls it out. He checks the dosage in the
tube for air bubbles.

DOC
Yeah, yeah, she won't feel it. It'll be
like going to sleep. It's almost instant
death-

DOC turns around to see BISHOP standing by the COT shaking his
head.

PAWN is puzzled as she watches the two. Why don't they finish it?

DOC doesn't get it either. He looks down at PAWN then back at
BISHOP.

BISHOP shakes his head again as he pulls a switchblade from his
pockets. He cuts the ropes.

Then it dawns on DOC, who grabs BISHOP's arm to stop him.

DOC (CONT'D)
Are you crazy!?

BISHOP shrugs off DOC's grip and finishes cutting the ropes.

DOC (CONT'D)
The Losing Pieces have to be destroyed!
That's the Rule.

BISHOP helps PAWN up to sitting position. She is still weak and
slumps up against the WALL, but her shock is unmistakable.

DOC (CONT'D)
Do you know what They'll do to you?! You
know what they'll do! They'll skin you
alive! And her- her-

DOC throws up his arms and turns away in disgust. He goes back to his MEDIC BAG and starts packing up his stuff.

DOC (CONT'D)

You're crazy... absolutely crazy. You've been in this tooooo long. I don't even want to be around...

BISHOP grabs DOC.

BISHOP

Doc, listen to me! I've got it all figured out. I can hide her. To hell with the Players!

BISHOP goes back to the COT and sits next to PAWN.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

We're going to put you to sleep. You'll be easier to hide that way. Don't worry, everything's going to be okay.

DOC

You want me to put her under?

BISHOP

That's right.

(back to Pawn)

Everything's going to be alright.

DOC shrugs, resigned. He finds another hypo and checks the dosage. He goes over to the COT, takes PAWN's arm and injects her.

PAWN's eyes close before she can even protest...

FADE TO:

DARKNESS

BISHOP (VO)

She'll fit in the trunk. No one will look in there. How long will she be out?

DOC (VO)

I can't believe I'm going along with this.. at least 24 hours...

FADE TO:

INT. CONTEMPORARY LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

where an ornate BLACK AND RED CHESS set is on a COFFEE TABLE. A game is in progress with the black side obviously winning.

A POST CARD is next to the set on the TABLE.

INSERT - POSTCARD

"HERE IS MY MOVE: BISHOP TO PAWN SQUARE THREE. NO MORE JOKES ABOUT MY NAME. I STILL MIGHT WHEN YET. SINCERELY, TOM BISHOP."

BACK TO SCENE

The TV SET is on, showing some rerun.

A plain, homely looking woman (PAWN) is in a house coat and dozing on the COUCH.

DOC (VO)

...I hope you know what you're doing. I
really, really hope so. If we get caught...

PAWN wakes up with a start. She is slightly disoriented as she fumbles for her thick, horn-rimmed glasses.

PAWN

Oh! I must've dozed off. What time-?
(looks at watch and gets up)
Damn, it's late and I have to work
tomorrow. Oh, my. I hope I can get to sleep
now...

She goes and turns the TV off. She yawns, stretches, pushes her glasses back up. She goes to turn the light on the END-TABLE off when something catches her eye on the floor.

She bends down to look.

Nestled in the CARPET is a BLACK QUEEN with a RED BISHOP and a RED ROOK.

She picks them up and looks back at the board puzzled.

PAWN

Now, how did these get over here...?

FADE OUT

THE END