

# The Board of Exact Opposites

By Matthew Ellul.

The board was set. My life was sitting before me, on a black and white chess board. In each of the white pieces, I could see all the faces of my family and friends. Opposing them, in the black pieces, I could see all the faces of those who were my enemies, and the creatures that frightened me as a young child. The mysterious cloaked figure sitting opposite me, who had brought me to this dark place, signalled with his hand. I moved my first piece. It had begun.

The figure and I played for what seemed like an eternity. Each move took a lifetime to complete, and made the opposition think long and hard on their next move. Each piece that was taken brought a memory to mind. When a white piece was taken by a black one, I remembered a horrible memory of great sadness and pain, but when a black piece was taken by a white one, the memory of sadness and pain was replaced by a memory of great happiness and joy.

The images going through my head caused me conflicting feelings and emotions. On one level of consciousness, I was playing a compelling game of mental strategies with an equally compelling opponent, but on another level of consciousness I was reliving some of the most treasured and feared memories of my life. One moment, I was playing with my brothers in a beautiful nature reserve, and the next instant, after a particularly devastating move by the mysterious figure, I was lost in a dark forest, with nothing to show me where to go, or how to get home. Next, I beat back an opposing rook, and I was sitting before a fire, with my mother and father on either side of me, enjoying just being in their presence, but in the next instant, they were both standing over me, angry and yelling at me for something I didn't do. This pattern of memories struck me each time a move was made, and caused me to feel a horrible mixture of happiness, misery and anger, that each of the memories brought with them.

After an indeterminable amount of time, I felt a need to break the silence that had built between us. I had thought long on what I would ask when I finally decided to talk, and so I asked that question now.

“Who are you?”

With a voice like ice, he pierced my little remaining lethargy from the memories.

“I am the person who knows you as well as you know yourself. I am all the anger, all the fear, all the misery, all the pain you have ever felt, in one being. I am your exact opposite, your mirror image, your darker side.”

The figure lifted his hand and pulled back his hood, revealing a face I knew all too well. With a voice as though from my own mouth he said,

“I am you.”