

A Young Man of The Name of Mors

By BYLAND BELL.

The stagecoach drew up in front of a tavern in New Mexico. A young man with light hair and a mild blue eye alighted and was going into the house when a man with a red bloated face covered with a stubble beard stopped him and said:

"You're the purtiest boy we ever seen in these parts, and them clothes air jist too beautiful for an angel. Come in and have a drink."

"Thank you. I've never touched a drop of liquor in my life."

"Well, it's time you begun. Come on."

He took the young man by the arm. The youngster resisted and struck the ruffian in the face. There was a report, and the youngster fell.

Two weeks after that the man with the red face and stubble beard was standing on the tavern porch when the daily coach drove up at the same time of day that the blue eyed boy had arrived. The door opened, and the same boy got out. He was very pale, but he had the same light hair and blue eyes as the other. The man with the red beard gave back a step or two as though he had seen a ghost.

"I'm looking," said the new arrival in a voice that seemed to come from the tomb, "for a man called Hawkins. Can any of you gentlemen tell me where I can find him?"

The stranger's attention was directed to the man with the red beard.

"Would you like to have me drink with you, sir?" asked the newcomer.

Hawkins seemed tongue tied. A pallor stood on his usually red face, and he was trembling.

"I don't feel like a drink jist now," he said.

"Perhaps you would like a game. My name is Mors. It's a name taken from a dead language. I've come to this country for the man who killed another two weeks ago because he wouldn't drink with him. Either Mors or Hawkins must cease to live. Cards are an easier way of settling the matter than guns. Come; let's have a game of euchre."

Taking Hawkins by the arm, he led him into the barroom. Hawkins seemed bereft of the power to resist and seated himself at the same table with the stranger. A pack of cards was produced, and Mors fixed them for euchre, mixed them, cut them and dealt a hand for himself and the man before him. Hawkins took up his cards mechanically, but did not see them. His eye was fixed on the man who had come back from the dead, he doubted not, to drag him down into the grave.

"The best three in five wins," said the stranger.

The first game he won, for Hawkins played without giving any attention to the game. The second Hawkins made an attempt to pull himself together, but did not succeed. The stranger won again. In the third game Hawkins played his cards without looking at them. He lost.

Mors deliberately pulled a pistol from his pocket, keeping his eye on the other, and as deliberately pointed it at Hawkins, who seemed paralyzed, making no effort whatever to draw his weapon. The stranger, keeping his eye fixed on him, said:

"You've played a game with death and lost. My twin brother came out to this country to locate here, and you killed him. I was told that there was no law in this country except gun law,

so I came out to get the man that murdered my brother. I didn't see any use in a gun fight when we could settle the matter by a game. Hands up!"

The last two words were spoken at seeing in Hawkins' eye a change. The murderer had been in doubt whether he was not talking to the ghost of the man he had killed till he learned that he was flesh and blood. His eye indicated that he had regained some of his equanimity, and he was about to put up a fight. The avenger saw it, and his own eye indicated that at the slightest motion to draw his weapon he would be shot. He sat immovable.

"Gentlemen," said the stranger, "I would much prefer that you would relieve me of a disagreeable duty. I was very ill when the news of my brother's death reached me and have not yet recovered. Don't you think that your town would be well rid of this fiend and that as respectable citizens it is up to you to do what is not a fit task for a sick man? Say the word. Shall I shoot him, or will you take him out and swing him?"

A man standing behind Hawkins, who had suffered from him, but feared him, jerked Hawkins' gun from his hip, then said to the dozen men standing about:

"Gents, will you let this sick boy do what it has long been our duty to do? This desperado has killed five men in four months, and for no good reason. Come on."

The speaker pinioned Hawkins' arms to his side; the others sprang forward, and the murderer was hustled out, the crowd assisting or following.

"Give me a bracer," said the man who had called himself Death, and when liquor was set before him he drank it off and, setting down the glass, said:

"That's the first liquor that has ever passed down my throat, and it will be the last. I needed it."

When the crowd returned they thanked the stranger for having accomplished what they had never dared to do themselves.

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