

Death in Tar Mira

Morys

by Tony Graham

“Now, I can't be saying anything to your noble master, but you lads, you're mine when you come into Blue Fountain district.”

Morys' left hand held his victim's head firmly against the wooden planks of the tavern table while levering the man's knife hand in an armlock. Morys stared at the man's three friends who stood across the table.

Morys used his weight to casually hold his victim down while leaning into the arm twisted straight up behind the man's back. Trapping his victim's stiff arm with the side of his bald head and shoulder, Morys used his right hand to reach up and take the finely crafted, double-edged blade from his victim's hand.

At the victim's cry of pain, his friends took a step forward.

“Here now! Don't be making this worse.”

Morys casually stuck the blade an inch deep into the tabletop. He smiled at the three expensively dressed friends. They stopped. Morys stood, seemingly at ease, right hand hanging free, his shoulder and neck trapping his victim's arm, his left hand holding the man's head down.

“I know it's hot. The stench is high enough so's to choke a man. But that be no excuse for bad behavior. Not here. I'm watchman of this district. So these be my folk. This be my tavern. This table your friend climbed up, dropped his britches, and took a piss on? It be mine, too.”

Morys playfully ground the well-groomed head against the table. The man let out a fresh cry of pain.

“What to do with a fine man, dressed as such who knows better, what comes into my tavern and takes a piss on my table?”

“Cut his balls off!” came a woman's shout from the crowd of tavern patrons.

Morys winced. “Hear that lads? You should thank the Emperor I be here.” Morys frowned at the crowd. “No, gelding be a bit severe for taking a piss.”

Morys rubbed his bald head with his free right hand, a sign of careful thought to those who knew him well. He looked down at his victim, no trace of hostility or effort in his face or voice. “I could haul you down to the pens for the night. Make you stand up in tomorrow's court.”

An older woman, her fading charms generously displayed by her low-cut blouse, pushed forward. “Hold on, I don't want all them idlers at court laughing at my table being pissed on. Could hurt business.”

Morys grimaced. He was fond of Beatric, owner of the Happy Maiden. He hadn't considered how the story could affect her tavern. Of course, he mused, most of these tables had probably suffered worse offenses at some point. Still, seemed a bit much to drag Magistrate Fontan into the matter over a splash of pee.

“Right then.” Morys nodded to the pisser's three friends. “You lot pay the woman the price of two rounds as fine for your poor behavior.”

Beatric took the coins the rakes reluctantly surrendered.

The pisser spoke up from where his head was smashed against the tabletop. “Now let me up, toad!”

Morys smiled down at his victim, then at the man's friends. “Still got a healthy measure of salt to him.”

Morys followed Beatric's hard gaze to the doorway of the tavern. A small boy, one of Tar Mira's multitude of street urchins, stood there on his tiptoes. Beatric discouraged children, even proper ones with parents, from her tavern at night. The boy saw Morys and waved. Morys gave him a short nod, then turned back to the matter at hand.

“Let me up, damn you!” The arrogant tone brought a frown to Morys' face.

“There be salt and there be stupid.” Morys grabbed the pisser's twisted arm with his free hand and thrust his weight forward until the arm popped, dislocated from its socket.

The man screamed and fainted.

Morys let him slide to the floor and looked at the man's pale companions. “That be his punishment. When he comes round, tell him mind his cheek. I won't be so forgiving the next time he acts up in my district.”

Morys made his way to the boy at the door as the crowd laughed and jeered at the cowed rakes and their unconscious friend.

The small boy was bouncing with excitement. Morys led him outside into the night.

“Trouble at Blue House. People talking murder. Yelling 'bout magic.”

Morys stared at the urchin for a moment, rubbing his bald head with both hands.

“Alright.” Morys dug several pennies out of the pouch on his belt for the boy. “You run to the

Magistrate's. Tell 'em you give me the news, and I sent you on to them.”

The boy repeated the message, then ran.

Morys started towards Blue House at a jog. He was worried. Blue House wasn't some whorehouse, it was class. Pennies, even silver, couldn't get a body in there. That meant rich folk. Magic meant nobility. He would be over his head as soon as he arrived. Magistrate Fontan would have to be personally involved. Morys' master wasn't just a city magistrate. Ifor Fontan was an Imperial Magistrate. He could pass judgement on the nobility.

A furtive movement in the shadows of a passing alley caught his attention. Morys stopped, turning to face the alley, one hand on the truncheon hanging from his belt opposite the wire-wrapped hilt of his dagger.

“You there! Stop that lurking about, or I'll be giving you a taste.”

Morys allowed himself a smile of satisfaction at the retreating footsteps before continuing on his way. The smile died at the thought of what he would face when he arrived at Blue House.



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