

DEAD MAN'S HAND

By

Max Groah, Todd Russell, Jerod Brennen,
Bryan Arnold, and Daniel Alan Kiely

Copyright 2009

Backward Slate Productions
admin@backwardslate.com

1 EXT. BAR - DAY

1

A gothic church converted into a bar. The STRANGER steps on a cigarette, appraises the bar, and then walks inside.

MORGAN (V.O.)

You don't realize how much you miss
a thing until its gone. Doctors,
firemen, cops... family...

2 INT. BAR - DAY

2

The door opens to reveal the STRANGER, bathed in light. MORGAN sits at the bar, writing in a journal, her satchel on the bar nearby. She doesn't look up.

The journal cover reads "Property of Morgan Frank."

The bartender cleans a filthy glass with a dirty rag. Three people sit at a card table: THE BOSS, THE GAMBLER, and THE CHEATER.

THE WHORE hovers behind the BOSS. The BOSS ignores the WHORE, fawning over a LARGE PLANT.

MORGAN (V.O.)

This place is a hellhole. Nothing
like El Paso. Crooked card games,
run by thieves. Tables full of
whores, cheats, and liars.

BOSS shoots the CHEATER, then places his gun on the table.

MORGAN (V.O.)

And murderers.

The STRANGER sidles up to the bar beside MORGAN and signals for a drink. MORGAN looks up, and then averts her eyes.

GAMBLER

Now how the hell are we supposed to
play a man short?

The BOSS notices the STRANGER from across the room.

BOSS

You're more than welcome to join
our game, stranger. But understand,
this is my place. We play by my
rules here.

The BARTENDER drags the CHEATER'S body away in the background.

(CONTINUED)

The STRANGER removes her hat, revealing a head of long, dark hair.

STRANGER
Understood.

The STRANGER moves toward the table.

BOSS
(to the bartender)
When your done taking out the trash, bring our new friend here a drink.

3 INT. BAR - LATER

3

The card game's in full swing. Morgan's still writing.

MORGAN (V.O.)
Since the world went to hell, I've seen people do horrible things to one another. Take away the comforts of society, and we're revealed as the animals we truly are. When this is all said and done, when order has been restored, we need to remember what this was like so it never happens again. Someone needs to write it all down.

The BOSS is in the middle of a story.

BOSS
-so I slit the bastard's throat and tossed his body out back for the dogs. Changed the bar's name, but not the bartender. Good help's hard enough to come by.

The BOSS spritzes his plant, caressing the leaves.

BOSS
The guy's son comes after me. Kills my Rebecca instead while she's watering this damn plant. She was the only family I had. But who needs a wife when you've got whores?

GAMBLER
You think you had it bad, losing a wife? That's a helluva lot better than what happened to me.

(CONTINUED)

WHORE

Do tell.

GAMBLER

My first wife, Rose, found out I was putting it to her sister, Lilly. They came down to the brothel on the war path. They walk in while I'm in the midst of a rub and tug. Not my usual girl, Daisy, but my other girl on the side, Petunia. A fine piece of ass from P-town. They draw steel, bullets flying everywhere. Sadly for poor Petunia, she happened to be in an unfortunate spot upon their arrival. Two slugs went in her before I could pull out. In her fury, Rose drew on her sister, who retaliated in kind. By the time I rolled off the bed, not a one of them was left alive. And the worst part... I never got to finish what I started.

BOSS

Horseshit.

WHORE

I've waxed that before. I know for sure you ain't got enough to please one lady, let alone an entire bouquet!

GAMBLER

This is the first time I've ever heard you complain.

BOSS

Quiet. We've shared our stories. I think it's time that our new friend contribute to the conversation.

The STRANGER hesitates.

STRANGER

I admit, that's better than what happened to me.

The STRANGER takes a drink.

(CONTINUED)

STRANGER

For a price, I will respond to a transgression when that response is expected to far outweigh the transgression itself.

The BOSS stiffens.

STRANGER

Some months back, I was hired to murder a family in retaliation for a dispute over stolen property. A bar, as I recall...

The BOSS drops his hand, aces and eights. He moves for his gun, but the STRANGER is faster. She produces her gun, drawing a bead on the BOSS, never missing a beat.

The BOSS freezes. The STRANGER continues.

STRANGER

I accepted the offer. A place in El Paso. I don't remember the sound of my guns. I don't remember the screams of the children. But I'm still haunted every night by those creaky floorboards.

She finishes her drink.

STRANGER

And my payment?

She's pulls back her collar to reveal a bullet scar just beneath her collarbone.

STRANGER

A bullet from a bagman, and not a dime of what I was owed. It took me some time to track down the bastard who stiffed me, but it looks like I finally found him.

The BOSS doesn't bother to wipe the sweat from his forehead.

BOSS

So what now?

The STRANGER stands. The BOSS stands with her. The GAMBLER slides away from the table, his eyes fixed on the powderkeg before him.

The WHORE clasps her hands in excitement. MORGAN pulls her satchel close, her eyes fixed on the action.

(CONTINUED)

The BARTENDER dives behind the bar and shudders as the thunderstorm of gunfire fills the room. In the calm after the storm, the BARTENDER peeks out from behind the bar.

The STRANGER stands alone in the middle of a corpse-littered floor.

The BARTENDER raises his hands, stuttering, but he's silenced by a bullet in the middle of his forehead.

MORGAN's satchel hits the floor. The STRANGER turns, only to find herself staring down the barrel of MORGAN's gun.

MORGAN

That's better than what happened to me.

MORGAN fires a bullet into the STRANGER'S shoulder. The STRANGER spins, falling to the ground, her gun sliding well beyond her reach.

MORGAN stands over her.

MORGAN

I've seen the horrible things that people do to each other. I was in the cellar when I heard my family's screams of terror. I heard the gunshots as my husband was gunned down. I watched, paralyzed, from beneath the kitchen floorboards as my children's blood seeped through the cracks, covering me, weighing me down for hours.

MORGAN hesitates.

MORGAN

I've been writing for months about the horrors that I witnessed, searching for meaning, trying desperately to avoid succumbing to this world of thieves, whores, cheats, liars...

MORGAN unloads her gun into the STRANGER.

MORGAN

And murderers.

She walks to the bar, to her journal. Blood spatters cover the open pages.

She closes her journal and walks away.

FADE TO BLACK