

DEADER

BY

Gary D. Rademan

grademan@new.rr.com

FADE IN:

OLD WEST GRAVEYARD - DUSK

The gravedigger, DIGGER (late 20s), a simpleton, leans on his shovel and stares at the plot in front of him.

A coffin lies freshly uncovered.

The grave marker reads: JAMES KENDALL 1832-1852.

DIGGER

Didn't I bury ya yesterday?

James, front on the ground, muddy and exhausted, sits up looks at Digger.

JAMES

You, fool. Yes, you buried me yesterday...alive!

DIGGER

I did no such thing. You a deader. Snake bit.

James rubs his neck. He doesn't look as exhausted as a moment ago.

JAMES

I am not a "deader"...you idiot!

DIGGER

You a deader and...

Digger quickly raises his shovel and viciously hits James in the head.

DIGGER (CONT'D)

...you gonna stays that way.

A thin red line of blood trickles down James' head.

JAMES

Why in the hell did you do that?

James wipes the blood on his finger. He looks at it in the moonlight, fascinated.

DIGGER
(reverently)
The dead shall remain dead.

Digger turns and runs towards the distant church. The warm light of candles fills the windows.

JAMES
You better run, because when
I catch you, it'll be a fine
day in Hell. Ignorant fool.

James kicks up some dust with a boot and lags after Digger.

INT. CHURCH LIVING QUARTERS - MINUTES LATER

FATHER MACK (late 40s) sits in candle light at an old table and eats a simple supper, patient as he cuts his food.

Digger bursts in. Agitated. He respectfully waits to speak.

FATHER MACK
So, Digger. What brings you
to my quarters and interrupt
my dinner?

DIGGER
Got a deader who ain't dead
no more! Strong one.

FATHER MACK
Calm. Digger. Calm.

James limps up to the door, waits and lets out a slow breath.

Father Mack stands, draws a slow breath and motions for James to come in.

JAMES
Let me reintroduce myself.
James Kendall. I may look
like the Devil...

James brushes himself off.

JAMES (CONT'D)
But, I've been bit by a
snake, buried alive, crawled
out, got hit on the head with

JAMES (CONT'D)
a shovel, and told by Digger
here that I am a "deader".

DIGGER
Father, he ain't right...

Father Mack holds up his hand.

FATHER MACK
That will be all for now
Digger. And don't tell anyone
about this. Understood?

Digger catches his glance, nods. Watching James, he exits.

DIGGER
Rabbit sticks.

GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Digger smiles as he trots back to his shack.

FLASHBACK

A younger Digger has several tame rabbits alive in a pen at his outdoor camp.

Digger holds a rabbit wrapped in his arm. Digger talks to the animal to calm it.

A pile of sharpened sticks sits nearby. He grabs one and thrusts the point, just once, into the rabbit's chest.

Digger's expression approaches rapture.

Digger's expression quickly changes when a hand grabs him by the collar. One of the fingers has an odd looking ring.

FLASHBACK ENDS

Digger frowns as he hurries back to the church with his bag of rabbit sticks.

INT. - CHURCH LIVING QUARTERS - LATER THAT NIGHT

FATHER MACK
James, please, have some food
and drink.

James picks at his food. The drink remains untouched.

Minutes pass in silence. James is not feeling well.

FATHER MACK (CONT'D)

Thirsty? More food? By the way, why do you think that God chose you to be a deader?

JAMES

Hell, you know as well as I do Father. I wasn't really a "deader". Just lucky.

James starts to sweat, pulling at his collar.

FATHER MACK

Uncomfortable here in church James? Now Digger...

JAMES

Digger, he's a hoot.

FATHER MACK

Now Digger! Do it now!

Digger wraps his arm around James, takes the rabbit stick and thrusts it, just once, into James' heart.

JAMES

You stupid...

James stands up confused falling over his chair as he collapses.

DIGGER

You a deader now.

Digger's expression approaches rapture.

FATHER MACK

The dead shall remain dead.

Father Mack looks at James' corpse, then smiles and puts his hand on Digger's shoulder.

Father Mack's odd looking ring reflects in the candles' light.

FADE OUT

THE END