

WILLOWBOROUGH:
Sleep of the Dead

By Steve Garry

info@integerentertainment.com
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FADE IN:

EXT. CHURCH - HENDERSON, NEVADA - NIGHT

September. Warm. A full moon over a small church set amid trees and a cemetery. Compared to impersonal, post-modern concrete slabs that some are nowadays, this Building of God still has a sense of "cathedral", yet seats only about 75.

The last of a sparse crowd disperses after a midnight mass.

INT. UNMARKED POLICE SEDAN - NIGHT (PARKED)

Framed by the windshield, the church is across the street.

At the wheel, DET. JONAS DICKSON, 32, smokes over a coffee. In a jacket and tie, he's a tall, fit, and good-looking guy. Maybe even a bit too much primping at home at the mirror.

Dickson's instrument panel clock flips from 12:49 to 12:50. Indistinct, staccato dispatches pour forth from his radio, till an urgent-sounding call comes in and he ups the volume.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered over radio)
11-79 at north east corner of
Myrtle and Fifth near Canyon. Fire
department en route. Possible
pregnant driver in the minivan.

Unmotivated by the call, Dickson flicks the volume back down, shifts in his seat, and raises binoculars to his face.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT (SCOPE MATTE)

Dickson trains his view on the windows and walkways, on both sides of the church, and then the cemetery and trees beyond.

Back at the door, a final patron exits to a wave from FATHER ANDERSON, 30. The door shuts, and the overhead light dims.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

As Fr. Anderson douses candles, moonlight pours through the stained glass windows to illuminate images of Christ taking on the Devil, and reliefs showing the Stations of the Cross.

At the front, a JANITOR, 65, pushes a mop bucket past the pulpit, before he disappears through a side door.

The pews are empty and dark. Silence and stillness abounds. Fr. Anderson shatters the quiet as he empties a donation box - the coins tinkle musically - before the silence resumes.

Till a moan echoes from a confessional booth. Fr. Anderson opens it to see a man crumpled in the priest's compartment.

It is DET. PETER BARDOLI, 50, and like Dickson he's on the Henderson force. He pours out from the box, onto the floor.

Peter is drawn and sweaty. His hair is dishevelled and his bloodshot eyes are ringed. He stammers, and whimpers, and even growls, as he cowers from what dim light there is.

PETER
No, no, no. Leave me alone...

FR. ANDERSON
(calls away)
Father Shelly, come see!

Rapid, light footsteps signal the approach of FATHER SHELLY LAMAIRE, 65, but we do not see him at this point.

FR. SHELLY (O.S.)
(French-Canadian accent)
Father Anderson, what is it?!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An upper middle-class home rests on a manicured grade. The drive is full of vehicles, and more stretch down the street at the curb. One of them is a van for a local T.V. station.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Three Days Earlier"

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

The place is set up for a wake, with candles and soft light. Flower-draped photos of a pretty, smiling, teen girl with dark hair adorn the shelves and tables and fireplace mantle.

A dozen guests, aged 16 to 76, wear dark colors suitable for the occasion... yet, chatter and the tinkle of glasses and teacups belies the mood. There are even boisterous laughs!

Because the focus of the celebration, RACHEL WESTCOTT, 16, the girl in the photographs, is here alive and well.

She sits in a wheelchair, crumpled up with bony limbs askew. Though mostly expressionless, she doesn't resist as people all around make toasts, pat her head, and peck her cheeks.

VOICES (OVERLAPPED)

We came for a wake, and look what we got! Oh, what a darling she is. Can you believe it? Your mum and dad must be so relieved, dear. Rachel? Oh, I'm so happy, honey!

Parents CHARLES and REBECCA, 45, stand at Rachel's side. He acknowledges guests with grins. Rebecca, with tears of joy.

Also here is a TV News REPORTER, 30, and CAMERAMAN, 35. An ASSISTANT, 25, nudges a path clear to the star of the show.

REPORTER

We all set? Quiet please. Okay...
(straightens for camera)
By invitation of the Westcott family, we're taping an exclusive of a major medical discovery right before our eyes. This one's hard to believe. Real Frankenstein stuff. But here in Henderson, Nevada, a research scientist has reanimated his deceased daughter.

As most guests listen, some still chat up or pamper Rachel.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

That's right. Rachel Westcott was in a coma - persistent vegetative state - after a car accident two years ago. On Friday, she was taken off life support and subsequently declared dead --

VOICES (OVERLAPPED)

(with sarcastic laughs)
Doesn't look dead to me. I look worse every morning when I wake up.

REPORTER

So the burial and this wake were scheduled but, simultaneously, in conjunction with a research partner in St. Louis, Dr. Charles Westcott injected his daughter with a serum, created in part from experiments on animal hibernation. Is that right?

Charles lifts his head from whispering to Rachel, and nods.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Hibernation: I get the connection. So experimental was the drug that the hospital didn't authorize it. But Dr. Westcott went ahead anyway, after Rachel flat-lined, wherein this new therapy was administered.

The Cameraman zooms in on Rachel's face: Happy, but tired.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Well, the patient's brain activity resumed, and she was returned to life support. Still, a certificate of death and preparations for organ donations and burial proceeded, till life signs improved just last night and the patient - as we said, Dr. Westcott's daughter Rachel, sixteen - finally came off support, though she remained unconscious.

The crowd applauds and cheers, as Rachel finally smiles big.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

(has to shout)

Still, given the controversy over this treatment - is it true that the burial of the empty casket went ahead? What was that, supposed to be symbolic or something? More on that with our live interview with Dr. Westcott tonight at six. I know you won't want to miss that. But it was this morning that part two of the miracle played out: Rachel woke up! And tonight, with overwhelmed family and friends full of gratitude and joy, the young lady was welcomed back home. She's unsteady, and seems a bit reserved, but alive, and by all accounts --

We leave the crew, and an indistinct din takes over. Guests are getting downright rowdy. Rachel flinches when a drunken man swarms her with an embrace. Mom Rebecca leans down to her with a whisper, and comes back up with an announcement:

REBECCA

People! Everyone? My baby's tired and has to get some rest!

VOICES (OVERLAPPED)

She's been asleep for two years.
C'mon! Yeah, it's time to party!

Charles furtively takes Rachel's pulse, and pipes in.

CHARLES

No no, there's lots of time for that. Rache just needs to get back to a normal routine, including a regular, good-old natural sleep. But only eight hours, okay honey?

Rachel grins, and gets a few final pecks and caresses as Charles unlocks the chair. But as he turns, he waves back.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

But you don't have to go home.

REBECCA

No no, we'll be right back. Let's just keep it down a bit, okay guys?

VOICES (OVERLAPPED)

Yeah yeah, sure sure. We'll shut up. Oh, man-oh-man, just amazing!

CHARLES

We have to come back to talk to the news media folks, anyway.

VOICES (OVERLAPPED)

Okay, bye-bye Rachel! We're so happy you're better now. That's right! Night Rache. See you soon!

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/RACHEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

In her chair, at the bed, Rachel tries to move her limbs but she's shaky. Dad lifts her in as mom pulls back the covers.

RACHEL

Can you leave the light on?

CHARLES

Eh? Sure, dear.

They take turns to kiss her. Charles collapses the chair and rolls it into a corner, as Rebecca kneels at the bed.

REBECCA

We're so, so happy to have you back, honey. We love you so much.

CHARLES

A good night's sleep though.

RACHEL

Thanks mom. Dad. I love you.

REBECCA
 Nighty-night, Rachel.

At the door, Charles and Rebecca, arm-in-arm, wave to their smiling daughter. And dad forgets and flicks off the light.

CHARLES (V.O.)
 Oh, sorry honey.

When he flicks it on, Rachel is glaring blankly, wide-eyed at them. But she blinks softly when the light envelops her.

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As the parents set up on the couch for an interview, the guests, some now quite tipsy, gather round to listen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/RACHEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

A middle-aged woman GUEST peeks in from the door. When she notices the overhead light on, she reaches in slowly...

TO RACHEL

Rachel lies peacefully, and faces us with her back to the door. She is in deep REM sleep, and her eyeballs twitch, when the light switch clicks softly and all goes black...

A ray of window light touches upon Rachel's face: We watch her eyes bulge open, and her pupils dilate unnaturally fast.

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

As the reporters pack up and again well-wishers congratulate Charles and Rebecca, everyone freezes at an enduring hellish scream-growl from Rachel's room at the end of the hallway.

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/RACHEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rachel's parents arrive at the door: The light is back on and the Guest stands just inside with her hands to her face.

REBECCA
 Rachel? Baby? What's wrong!?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UNMARKED POLICE SEDAN - NIGHT (TRAVELLING)

Det. Peter Bardoli, from the first scene but here hale and hearty, wheels through a silent suburbia. A 9-1-1 call:

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
(filtered over radio)
415 at 49 Christopher Road. Any
officers in the area, respond.

The Westcott house. Peter reacts - as he passes that very address! Indeed, we see all of the cars parked at the curb.

He slows and reaches for his radio, but reacts to breaking glass back at the house - which he's now passed. He stops in the middle of the lane and leans back: A fire flickers in a window. Peter whirls his car around a corner, to park.

EXT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter affixes a badge to his lapel, as he reaches the front yard. A male NEIGHBOR, 70, crosses the road with his phone.

NEIGHBOR
Jeez, you got here quick. I just
called in about all the yelling.

Both men scale the three steps to the veranda, but Peter holds the Neighbor back. The cop peeks in a window and sees a small fire that laps at furniture and the curtains.

PETER
You say you heard screams?

NEIGHBOR
They had some sort of thing going
on. See the cars along the street?

Peter tries the door. Jammed. He trots along the veranda to a window. Secured. Around a corner, he spots a slight, mid-size person gallop through the back yard. He turns and collides with the Neighbor, who stands an inch behind him.

PETER
Don't try to go into the house.
Call 9-1-1 again, for the fire.

NEIGHBOR
Wha... sure, okay Officer.

Peter gives chase into the back yard. But as the neighbor readies a call, he tries a side door: It's open, and he peeks in. He hesitates, but something draws him inside...

INT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Ahead of Peter, his fleet-of-foot suspect flies across the dim road and dips in and out of street lights. Traversing somebody's front yard, a motion detector lamp goes off.

Peter squints to make out what he or she is - it seems the person is barefoot and in light clothing, maybe pyjamas. He readies a shout, but his speedy prey disappears into shadow.

INT. THE WESTCOTT HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (SAME TIME)

The Neighbor creeps in to the scene of a slaughter: Walls spattered with blood, furniture tipped, no one standing.

He coughs from the smoke, buckles from the sight and smell, and stumbles back out the door with his phone to his ear.

EXT. CHURCH/CEMETERY - NIGHT

Peter is 100 feet behind his suspect, when she or he passes through a gate into the church cemetery - the one we saw earlier. Peter follows, breathless, and pulls his revolver.

The moon is bright, but Peter loses his quarry among shadowy gravestones and mausoleums. He scans about: A tall fence securely surrounds the property, so it'll be hard to escape.

PETER
Police Officer! Hello? Whoever
you are, stop and show yourself.

He reacts to the patter of feet over paths and flat markers. He doubly-reacts to the sound of a groan, almost a growl.

He moves to and fro, peeks around the larger tributes, and noisily tips a spade that leans against a gravestone. Far off is a siren, from a fire truck or another cop en route.

Peter freezes: Ahead of him, something. He relaxes the grip on his pistol and holds up a hand, palm forward.

A frail-looking teen girl, in PJs, with dishevelled hair, glares at him from behind a gravestone: It is Rachel.

PETER (CONT'D)
Hello? Young lady?

Her head bobs a bit, as if she's afflicted with nystagmus - where she can't control her eye movement from side-to-side.

She emerges and starts forward - slow, then fast. She dips left, right, around graves and hedges, in and out of shadow.

PETER (CONT'D)
That's it. Come to me. Slowly,
now. Slowwwly...

She's close enough now, to see her clothes are dark stained.

PETER (CONT'D)
Are you... okay, Miss. Miss?

Past her final obstruction, Rachel charges straight at him. With it comes a sustained growl, and outstretched hands.

Peter crouches tentatively and raises his gun - but doesn't point it. Too late: Rachel, barely 100 pounds, piles into him, at 170 pounds, at full speed and with a vicious snarl.

He grunts as he is thrown back from her force and fury. His gun flies away when he hits the ground. She shrieks with a crazed bared-teeth look hardly visible behind her wild hair.

This is not the wheelchair-bound invalid we first met: Fast and coordinated, she pummels, scratches and overwhelms him.

Peter is reluctant to strike a female, but even when he finally grabs her and delivers a slap, she's relentless.

She bites his wrist savagely, which lets her squirm free of his grip. He cries out - and gives up. She straddles him, grabs his collar, and lifts and slams his head up and down.

Peter is almost unconscious when, above him, behind Rachel, her father Charles appears! He is limping, and bleeding.

He jabs Rachel in the shoulder with a sedative shot. She spins, snarls and launches scratches and punches at him till with soft moans, she slumps, semi-conscious into his arms.

Peter, stunned and still flat on his back, has a sustained view of Rachel's profile: Pretty, petite and peaceful.

And as Charles, bloody and grim, holds her there, he glares down at Peter. Till Charles half-drags, half-escorts Rachel away, and they disappear into darkness beyond the Church.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH VESTIBULE - NIGHT

Peter jolts awake: He stands upright, and leans against a pillar. He inhales sharply, as if he hadn't been breathing.

Several sirens now echo outside, and are very near.

A few lights are on in the church proper, but here it's dim, and lit only by candles. Peter staggers for the exit.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Peter shuffles slowly up to his sedan. The Westcott house, visible to us through a back yard, is quiet and dark, except for a little white smoke that curls up from one wall.

As he drops behind the wheel, flashing lights arrive at the house, accompanied by screeching tires and wails of sirens.

INT. PETER'S UNMARKED POLICE SEDAN (IDLING/TRAVELLING)

Peter puts it into gear and pulls out. He seems almost too weak to turn the wheel. Barely a block along, he pulls over when he's blinded by a carnival of oncoming flashing lights.

A horn-honking fire truck flies past, followed by two patrol cars. Seconds later, another. Three ambulances pull into traffic up ahead. All with sirens wailing, flashers going.

Peter ups his radio to a cacophony: Frantic call backs from officers, nearing or at the scene, overlap the Dispatchers.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
Fire and Ambulance en route, Code
20. Stand by. 11-41 Ambulance.
10-49 proceed fire, 49 Christopher.
Stand by. 10-22 disregard last.

COP CALLER #1 (V.O.)
This is car 12! Just pulled up.
11-44's reported?

DISPATCHER (V.O.)
10-45D - multiple homicides
reported on 9-1-1 call.

COP CALLER #2 (V.O.)
This is 42 at the scene. It's a
fucking slaughterhouse! No
suspects on the scene, over!