

# The Dead Alive;

*Or, The Mendicant Robber of Orleans*

By Edward Lloyd

In 1747, a man was broke alive upon the wheel at Orleans, for a highway robbery, and not having friends to take care of his body, when the executioner concluded he was dead, he gave him to the surgeon, who had him carried to his anatomical theatre, as a subject to lecture on. The thighs, legs, and arms of this unhappy wretch had been broken; yet, on the surgeon's coming to examine him, he found life reviving, and by the application of proper cordials, he was soon brought to his speech.

The surgeon and his pupils, moved by the sufferings and solicitation of the robber, determined on attempting his cure; but he was so mangled that his two thighs and one of his arms were amputated. Notwithstanding this mutilation and loss of blood, he recovered, and in this situation the surgeon, by his own desire, had him conveyed in a cart fifty leagues from Orleans, where, as he said, he intended to gain his livelihood by begging.

His situation was on the road side, close by a wood, and his deplorable condition excited compassion from all who saw him. In his youth he had served in the army, and he now passed for a soldier, who had lost his limbs by a cannon shot.

A drover returning from market, where he had been selling cattle, was solicited by the robber for charity, and being moved by compassion, threw him a piece of silver. "Alas," said the robber, "I cannot reach it—you see I have neither arms nor legs," (for he had concealed his arm which had been preserved behind his back) "so for the sake of heaven put your charitable donation into my pouch."

The drover approached him, and as he stooped to reach up the money, the sun being shining, he saw a shadow on the ground which caused him to look up, when he perceived the arm of the beggar elevated over his head, and his hand grasping a short iron bar. He arrested the blow in its descent, and seizing the robber, carried him to his cart, into which having thrown him, he drove off to the next town, which was very near, and brought him prisoner before a magistrate.

On searching him a whistle was found in his pocket, which naturally induced a suspicion that he had accomplices in the wood; the magistrate, therefore, instantly ordered a guard to the place where the robber had been seized, and they arrived there within half an hour after the murder of the drover had been attempted.

The guard having concealed themselves behind different trees, the whistle was blown, the sound of which was remarkably shrill and loud: and another whistle was heard from under ground, three men at the same instant rising from the midst of a bushy clump of brambles, and other dwarf shrubs. The soldiers fired on them, and they fell. The bushes were searched, and a descent discovered into a cave. Here were found three young girls and a boy. The girls were kept for the offices of servants, and purposes of lust; the boy scarcely twelve years of age, was son to one of the robbers. The girls in giving evidence deposed, that they had lived nearly three years in the cave, had been carried there by force from the high road, having never seen daylight from the time of their captivity; that dead bodies were frequently carried into the cave, stripped and buried; and that the old soldier was carried out every dry day, and sat by the road side for two or three hours.

On this evidence the murdering mendicant was condemned to stiffer a second execution on the wheel. As but one arm remained, it was to be broken by several strokes, in several places, and the *coup de grâce* being denied, he lived in torture nearly five days. When dead, his body was burnt to ashes, and strewed before the winds of heaven.