

Rip Van Winkle

by Washington Irving

(Adapted book. Beginner level)

Chapter 1. The Van Winkle Family

The Catskill Mountains are west of the Hudson River in the British colony of New York. The colors of these beautiful mountains change with the seasons. There are many legends and stories about them.

The year is 1765. Rip Van Winkle lives in a village at the foot of the Catskill Mountains. The village is of Dutch origin.

Rip lives in an old, ugly house. He is a simple, kind man. Everyone in the village loves him because he is friendly and helpful. He plays with the children and makes things for them. Rip's wife is very harsh with him. She nags him all the time.

However, he is patient and obedient. He never gets angry at his wife. He simply keeps away from her.

Rip has only one bad point: he doesn't like working. He only does the things he likes. He sits on a rock and fishes all day. He walks in the forest and hunts animals. He builds fences for his friends. He helps the women in their homes and gardens. He does everyone's work but not his own. His farm is the worst in the village. He never looks after his land, his garden or his house. His fences are broken. His cow eats the vegetables in his garden. His children's clothes are old and dirty.

Mrs Van Winkle nags him about his laziness. Poor Rip never says anything. He has a dog called Wolf. Mrs Van Winkle doesn't like Wolf and Wolf doesn't like her. She often throws things at the poor animal.

Rip often goes to the village inn. It is called "King George the Third" in honor of the British king. There is a picture of King George outside the inn.

The men of the village sit outside the inn during the summer. They talk and drink. They listen carefully to the school teacher, Derrick Van Bummel. He is an educated man and uses long words.

Nicholas Vedder is the innkeeper. He sits outside the inn from morning until night.

Rip likes going to the inn and talking to his friends. He's happy there. But Mrs Van Winkle doesn't like the inn or his friends. "This is a place for lazy men!" she says. "You must never go there again, Rip!"

Chapter 2. A Strange Afternoon

One autumn day Rip goes up the Catskill Mountains. After walking for many hours he feels tired. He sits on a green hill and looks at the majestic Hudson River and as he is looking at the sky he says, "It's almost evening. I must go home. My wife always gets angry when I'm late."

As he's going down the mountain he hears a voice, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"

He looks around but he sees no one. He hears someone call, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" again. Then he sees a very strange man. He is climbing up the hill with something on his back. Rip thinks, "Who is this? No one ever comes here. Perhaps I can help him."

Rip walks toward the man and is very surprised. He sees a short, square old man. He has long, white hair and a beard.

Rip thinks, "How bizarre! He's wearing very old clothes. They are Dutch clothes of the 1600s! Who is this man!"

The old man is carrying a small barrel on his back. Rip helps the man and carries his barrel. Together they go up the valley. Rip can hear the thunder but he can't see the storm.

Rip follows the strange man. He thinks, "Where are we going and why?" Suddenly, they walk into a small amphitheater. It is made of big stones and trees. There are some strange men there. They are all wearing Dutch clothes of the 1600s too and they all have beards. There is a captain, he is wearing a captain's hat. He is a big, fat, round man.

They are playing ninepins. The balls sound the same as thunder. No one is speaking. The mysterious silence and the cold eyes of the men scare Rip. The old man points to the barrel and to the other old men.

"These men want to drink," Rip thinks. He serves them and then they continue playing again.

Rip drinks from the barrel too. It is very strong but Rip likes it. He drinks again and again. Soon he falls asleep.

Chapter 3. The Next Morning

Rip wakes up the next morning and says, "It's morning!" Then he remembers the old man with the barrel, the game of ninepins and the strong drink. "My wife will be furious. What can I tell her?"

He looks for his gun and finds an old gun in its place. He calls his dog, but the dog does not come.

"Those old men have my gun and my dog. I must find them."

He gets up and tries to walk. "It's difficult to walk. My poor legs!" he thinks.

He cannot find the old men or his dog. He is very hungry and decides to go home. He starts going down the mountain and when he is near the village he meets some people.

"How strange! I know everyone in the village, but I don't know these people. Their clothes are very different," thinks Rip.

The people look at him and his clothes. They are surprised and they touch their faces.

"Why are they touching their faces?" Rip thinks. He touches his face and is surprised. He has a very long beard!

When Rip arrives at the village the children point at his gray beard and the dogs bark at him. The village looks different. It is very big. There are new houses with new names on the doors. He sees new faces everywhere. Everything is changed. Poor Rip is very confused.

"How is this possible? This is *my* village. I can see the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River. But everything is different. It must be the effect of the strong drink," Rip thinks.

He finds his house and goes in. It is abandoned and all the windows are broken and there is no door. There is nothing in the house anymore. He calls for his wife and children. But they don't answer him.

"What is happening? Where is my family?" he thinks. He goes to the inn. He sees a big hotel in its place. Rip reads the name on the door:

Jonathan Doolittle
The Union Hotel.

He sees a tall pole in front of the hotel. On the pole there is a flag. There are stars and stripes on it. He goes inside the inn and looks for the picture of King George. He finds it but it is different. King George is wearing a blue coat instead of a red one and he is wearing a hat instead of a crown. Under the picture Rip sees the words "George Washington".

Chapter 4. The Spirits of the Catskill Mountains

There are some people standing near the door of the Union Hotel. But Rip does not know anyone. They are not quiet, slow and sleepy. They all seem noisy and fast. They talk quickly in loud voices.

"Where are my old friends?" Rip thinks.

Rip sees a thin man with many papers in his pockets. He is talking about political elections, liberty, the war of seventy-six and Congress. These new words confuse Rip.

"What is this man saying? What is 'Congress'? Is it a town? What war of seventy-six?" Rip thinks.

Soon everyone is looking at Rip's long beard and strange clothes. The thin man asks him, "Are you a Federal or a Democrat?"

Rip does not understand these words. An old gentleman asks Rip, "Why do you have a gun? Do you want to fight?"

"Oh, no, no!" says Rip. "I am a poor, quiet man, and King George is my king."

"What! King George!" the people cry. "This man is a spy! He's not an American. Who is he? Call the police!"

The old gentleman asks, "Why are you here?"

"I'm looking for my friends. But I can't find them," Rip says.

"Who are your friends?" asks the old gentleman.

"Nicholas Vedder," says Rip.

"Nicholas Vedder? He's dead!"

"And Brom Dutcher and Derrick Bummel."

"Dutcher is dead and Bummel is a Congressman," says the old gentleman.

Rip is unhappy and confused. "I am alone in a strange world and no one knows me. Does anyone know Rip Van Winkle?" he cries.

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" cry two people. "Yes, he's sitting under that tree."

Rip looks and sees a young man with dirty old clothes.

"Is that me? Then WHO am I?" asks Rip.

They look at him and say, "He must be crazy."

Then a young woman carefully looks at Rip.

Rip asks, "What is your name?"

"Judith Gardiner."

"What is your father's name?"

"Rip Van Winkle! Twenty years ago he went away and he never returned," she says.

"Where is your mother?" Rip asks.

"She is dead."

Rip embraces his daughter and says, "I'm your father. I'm Rip Van Winkle. I'm old now."

He turns to the crowd and says, "Does anyone remember Rip Van Winkle?"

A very old woman says, "Yes, this man is Rip Van Winkle senior. I remember him."

Rip tells his incredible story. The people of the village can't believe his story is true. They ask old Peter Vanderdonk. He is the oldest man in the village. He knows all the legends and stories of the Catskill Mountains.

Peter Vanderdonk says, "Mysterious things happen in the Catskill Mountains. There are strange spirits living there. People say that every twenty years Henry Hudson returns to see his river and that he and his men play ninepins in those mountains."

It is late and the people of the village go home. Rip goes to live with his daughter and her family, and his son visits him every day. He is very similar to his father. He does everyone's work but not his own.

Rip makes some new friends. Everyone likes him. He doesn't really understand the American Revolutionary War or the new nation called the United States of America. But he is a happy man now. He sits outside the Union Hotel and tells stories about the past. He also tells travelers about his twenty-year-long sleep. Some people believe him but some don't.

- THE END -

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