

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

by Washington Irving

(Adapted book. Beginner level)

Chapter 1. The Headless Horseman

Greensburgh is a village on the Hudson River. Near this village there is a silent valley called Sleepy Hollow. It is the quietest place in the world. The inhabitants are always a bit sleepy there. Some people say there are bizarre spirits in this valley. Others say there are strange voices in the air.

The people of Greensburgh believe there is a ghost in Sleepy Hollow. It is the ghost of a headless man on a big horse. Legend says it is the ghost of a soldier of the American Revolutionary War.

His body is buried in the cemetery near the church.

Every night he rides his horse and looks for his head. He rides in the valley, near the river, in the forest and on the roads. He always returns to the cemetery before daylight. Everyone calls him the Headless Horseman of Sleepy Hollow.

Chapter 2. Ichabod Crane

Ichabod Crane lives in Sleepy Hollow. He is a school teacher and comes from the state of Connecticut. He is tall and very thin. His legs and arms are very long. His feet are very big. His head is small with big ears, green eyes and a long nose. His clothes are always too big for him. Ichabod is always hungry and loves to eat.

Ichabod is a good but strict teacher. His school is in the middle of the country. It has only one big room for all the pupils.

After school Ichabod plays ball with the older boys and on his free afternoons he walks home with some of the younger ones.

He always chooses the boys with pretty sisters or generous mothers.

Ichabod does not have much money, so every week he lives with a different family. He eats and sleeps at their house and keeps them company. When he changes family he puts all his things in a big handkerchief and carries it with him.

The farmers like him because he helps them with their work and the mothers like him because he plays with the small children.

Ichabod also teaches singing. On Sundays he is the director of the church choir. He is very proud of this.

The school teacher is an important person among farmers and their families. Everyone respects him because he is educated and the women consider him a gentleman. Ichabod likes gossiping and being the center of attention. He also likes eating all the good food the women prepare for him.

Ichabod loves reading books. One of his favorite books is History of New England Witchcraft. Ichabod believes the stories in this book. They are about ghosts and witches.

During the winter Ichabod often visits the old women. They tell him terrible stories about ghosts, haunted houses, haunted trees and the Headless Horseman. When he returns home at night the sounds of the forest scare him. He thinks there are ghosts everywhere. So he sings church songs. Ichabod always sings these songs when he is afraid.

Chapter 3. Katrina Van Tassel

Katrina Van Tassel is one of Ichabod's singing students. She is the daughter of a rich farmer. She is eighteen years old and is very beautiful. She has rosy cheeks and a lovely smile. She always wears pretty clothes.

Katrina's father has a big home with beautiful furniture. He also has a fine farm, many animals and lots of good food. Ichabod likes her father's riches. He also likes Katrina very much and wants to marry her.

"Oh, how I like Katrina!" he thinks. "How can I win her heart?"

Katrina has many admirers. They often visit the Van Tassel house. Who does Katrina like? No one knows. One day she is nice to one young man and the next day she is nice to another.

Brom Bones is the hero of Sleepy Hollow because he is tall, strong and handsome. He has broad shoulders. He is a bit rough but always cheerful. He is an excellent horseback rider and a courageous fighter. Everyone likes Brom but sometimes he is mischievous and plays tricks. He is Ichabod's big rival. Brom often visits the Van Tassel house and courts Katrina. When his horse is outside the Van Tassel house, other admirers stay away.

Ichabod also visits Katrina often because he is her singing teacher. He and Katrina sit together under the big tree singing and talking. Or they walk together along the river in the evenings. Ichabod slowly wins Katrina's heart.

Brom is very angry because he wants to marry beautiful Katrina. He decides to fight Ichabod. But Ichabod doesn't want to. "Brom is big and strong. I cannot fight him and win," Ichabod thinks.

Brom tries to make Ichabod angry. One night he goes into his school and he throws the tables and chairs about. The next day Ichabod goes to school and says, "Oh, no! This is where the witches meet at night!"

Brom is very mischievous and teaches his dog to make terrible noises. Then he tells Katrina, "Listen to my dog. His singing teacher is Ichabod Crane!"

But nothing can make Ichabod fight, so Brom is furious with him. "I must find another way," Brom thinks.

Chapter 4. The Invitation

One autumn afternoon Ichabod is teaching at school. A messenger brings him a letter. It is an invitation to dinner at the Van Tassels' house. Ichabod is happy and excited. His pupils are happy too because they finish school early.

He puts on his best clothes: an old dark suit. Then he looks at himself in a broken mirror. "I want to be handsome for Katrina," he thinks. "This is an important occasion for me."

Ichabod is staying at Van Ripper's farm this week. So, after school Ichabod returns to the farm and asks Van Ripper, "Can I use your horse this evening?"

"Yes, you can use Gunpowder. He is old now and not very handsome. He has only one eye. But he is still a very good horse." says Van Ripper.

Ichabod thinks "Gunpowder is better than nothing." Then he looks carefully into Gunpowder's only eye and thinks, "I see the devil in his eye! He is still a lively horse."

Ichabod and Gunpowder look funny together: Ichabod in his old suit and Gunpowder with his one eye. They leave Van Ripper's farm, cross the forest and ride along the Hudson River.

Autumn is a beautiful season in Sleepy Hollow. There are many different colors: green, red, yellow, orange, purple and brown.

It is sunset and the sky is the color of gold. Along the road Ichabod sees orange pumpkins and apple trees. All he can think about are the delicious pies and cakes.

Ichabod finally arrives at the Van Tassels' house. All the farmers are there with their families. They are wearing their best clothes. Everyone is talking and laughing. It is a happy evening.

Brom is there too. Everyone admires his horse, Daredevil. Daredevil is a big, black horse. Only Brom can ride him because he is a dangerous animal. Brom is very proud of Daredevil.

Ichabod is delighted when he sees the delicious food on the Van Tassels' table. His big eyes move from one dish to the next. There are all kinds of cakes: sweet cakes, ginger cakes and honey cakes. There are also pies, meat, fish, chicken, vegetables, fruit and lots of milk.

"This is a royal banquet!" he thinks. "When I marry Katrina I can have all this food, this beautiful home and lots of money. I can laugh at Van Ripper and his old horse. I can laugh at everyone." Ichabod eats and drinks and is very happy.

Chapter 5. The Ghosts of Sleepy Hollow

After dinner a small orchestra plays music. Ichabod dances with Katrina. He says sweet things to her. Katrina smiles at Ichabod and he smiles at her.

Brom isn't dancing. He is sitting in a corner. He is watching Katrina and Ichabod. He is angry and jealous. "Ichabod is a good dancer but I can't dance. What can I do to win Katrina?"

After the dance everyone goes outside and sits under the trees. They talk about the American Revolutionary War.

"When I look at the river I remember the battles between the British and the Americans. I fought alone against the British with my small sword!" says an old farmer.

A young farmer says, "When the British saw my new musket they ran away!"

"We are all heroes of the American Revolutionary War," says another man.

They also talk about ghosts.

"Raven Rock is haunted. There's the ghost of a woman in white. I always see her ghost before a storm. She's scary!" says a young woman.

"When I pass by the big tree near the church I hear terrible cries. It's the ghost of Major Andre," says a boy.

"The Headless Horseman is the most horrible. He gallops on his big black horse and follows you. Sometimes he takes you away! When there is a full moon you can see him clearly!" says a tall man. Ichabod listens to these stories and believes them.

Soon the farmers and their families start going home. Ichabod wants to stay and talk to Katrina. "This is the right moment. I must ask Katrina to marry me," he thinks.

No one knows what happens between Katrina and Ichabod. But he is very sad when he leaves the Van Tassel house. Does Katrina prefer Brom?

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Ichabod gets on Gunpowder and starts riding to Van Ripper's farm. It is a very dark night. Clouds cover the stars. Ichabod thinks about the ghosts of Sleepy Hollow. He hears a strange noise in the

forest. Is it the voice of a ghost or is it the wind? Something is moving in the sky. Is it a witch? Is it the ghost of the woman in white?

"What a mysterious night!" Ichabod thinks. He is lonely and sad. He rides very quickly.

He comes to a brook with a small bridge. It is very difficult to cross the bridge. On the other side of the brook Ichabod sees some enormous trees. It is dark and he is afraid.

"Major Andre's ghost lives here," he thinks. "I must cross this bridge quickly."

Ichabod kicks Gunpowder and says, "Come on, Gunpowder. Cross the bridge quickly!" But the old horse does not move. Ichabod kicks Gunpowder again and again. Finally the horse moves but then he stops suddenly. Ichabod nearly falls off. He is very nervous.

"What is happening to me tonight?" he thinks.

Then he hears a strange sound on the other side of the brook. In the shadow of the trees he sees something big and black.

"Oh, no, something is waiting for me. It isn't moving. It is waiting for me. I cannot go back. What must I do?" he thinks. His heart is beating fast. His hair is standing up. His mouth is dry and his hands are very cold.

"Who are you?" Ichabod asks.

There is no answer.

"Who are you?" he asks again. His teeth are chattering. There is still no answer.

Ichabod closes his eyes and starts singing a church song.

At that moment the big, black thing moves again. It jumps out into the road and Ichabod opens his eyes. The night is dark but he can see a horseman on a big, black horse.

Chapter 6. The Night Ride

Ichabod forces the horse to gallop. The horseman follows him. Ichabod thinks about the horrible stories of the Headless Horseman.

Gunpowder gallops fast but the horseman gallops fast too. Ichabod wants to sing a church song but his mouth is dry.

They gallop up a hill. Against the night sky Ichabod sees the horseman. He is headless! He is carrying his head on his saddle. Ichabod is terrified. He hits Gunpowder again and again. He wants the old horse to gallop fast. But the Headless Horseman follows him with his big, black horse.

The road to Van Ripper's farm is on the left. But Gunpowder turns right. This road goes to the church bridge and the church cemetery.

Ichabod and Gunpowder gallop down the hill. Suddenly Ichabod's saddle falls off, but the horse does not stop. "Oh, no!" thinks Ichabod. "That is Van Ripper's best saddle!"

Ichabod clasps Gunpowder's neck. He tries to stay on the horse. The Headless Horseman is behind him. Ichabod is very scared. His teeth are chattering.

"The church bridge is near here," he thinks. "Ghosts usually disappear after the church bridge. I must cross the bridge, then I am safe!"

Ichabod and Gunpowder gallop across the church bridge. Ichabod looks back and the Headless Horseman is still there! He has a big round object in his hands. He throws it at Ichabod.

"It's his head!" cries Ichabod. The big head hits Ichabod and there is a loud thud. Ichabod falls to the ground and Gunpowder gallops away.

* * *

The next morning Gunpowder arrives at Van Ripper's farm but Ichabod isn't there for breakfast. Ichabod isn't at school and he isn't at Van Ripper's farm.

"Where is Ichabod," asks Van Ripper, "and where is my best saddle?"

Van Ripper and his friends look for Ichabod everywhere. They find the saddle on the road near the church. They find Ichabod's hat and a broken pumpkin near the river. But they can't find Ichabod's body.

"It's the Headless Horseman. Poor Ichabod Crane!" says Van Ripper.

"Yes, it's the Headless Horseman. Oh poor Ichabod!" say his friends.

* * *

Years later an old farmer returning from New York says to the people of Sleepy Hollow, "Ichabod Crane is alive and well! Now he is a Congressman. He left Sleepy Hollow because Katrina wanted to marry Brom Bones."

Katrina hearing this asks her husband Brom, "What do you know about Ichabod Crane and the pumpkin?"

Brom laughs loudly.

At Sleepy Hollow people say that only Brom knows the true story of Ichabod Crane and the Headless Horseman. It is Brom's secret.

Now, on winter evenings the old women tell the terrible story of Ichabod Crane and the Headless Horseman.

- THE END -

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