



The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

Adapted from Washington Irving's story

Characters

(Main parts in boldface)

- Narrators 1, 2, 3**
- Ichabod Crane**, a schoolmaster
- Otto Klemmer**, a student
- Students
- Flossie Klemmer, *Otto's mother*
- Wife 1, 2
- Squire Van Tassel
- Katrina Van Tassel**
- Mrs. Van Tassel
- Brom Bones**
- Old Brouwer

The new schoolmaster was strict, ambitious, and incredibly gullible.

Scene 1

Narrator 1: In a cove on the shore of New York's Hudson River, where the ancient Dutch navigators once shortened sail and crossed themselves, praying to St. Nicholas for protection from the swirling currents, is a drowsy, enchanted place called Sleepy Hollow.

Narrator 2: Strange things have happened there. Even today, stars shoot and meteors glare across the valley more often than in any other

part of the country.

Narrator 3: And stories of haunted spots and twilight superstitions still rise each night with the fog.

Narr 1: Our story begins on a crisp autumn day in 1809 with the arrival of a stranger in Sleepy Hollow.

Narr 2: He is a tall lanky man with long arms and hands that dangle out of his sleeves...

Narr 3: ...and feet that might serve as shovels.

Narr 1: His head is small and flat on top, with huge ears and large green eyes. His long snipe nose turns his words into a harsh nasal drone.

Narr 2: He arrives carrying all his possessions tied up in a kerchief—two shirts, two stiff collars, and Cotton Mather's history book on the Salem witch trials.

Ichabod Crane: Good morning, pupils. My name is Master Crane. I

have walked all the way from Connecticut to be your new schoolmaster.

Otto Klemmer: (*whispering*) He looks more like a scarecrow who has run away from the field.

Ichabod: You! What is your name?

Otto: Otto Klemmer.

Ichabod: Please be assured, Otto, that I will do my duty by your parents if you do not pay attention.

Narr 3: With that, he swings a birch rod through the air, making it whistle.

Narr 1: Each day, the low murmur of pupils at work drifts from the windows of the single-room schoolhouse.

Students: (*reciting*) Seven times four is 28. Seven times five is 35. Seven times—

Narr 2: The schoolmaster paces back and forth in front of his pupils. Clasped behind his back is the birch rod.

Students: (*reciting*) Seven times seven is 49. Seven times eight is 56. Seven times—

Narr 3: Otto rubs a whirligig between his palms, then lets it fly. It spins upward like a giant mosquito and stings the schoolmaster behind the ear.

Narr 1: Ichabod slaps the sore spot, then reels around. The birch rod is in plain sight now, a source of terror to all.

Ichabod: Otto Klemmer, step forward.

Narr 2: Otto rises from his bench and steps to the front of the room.

Ichabod: This will hurt me more than it will hurt you.

Otto: Then you shouldn't whip me.

Ichabod: Spare the rod and spoil the child; that's what I say. My scholars will not be spoiled.

Narr 3: The way the schoolmaster speaks confuses the students. They didn't know they were scholars. They thought they were just children of country farmers.

Ichabod: One day you will thank me for this lesson on your backside.

Narr 1: Otto's back is to the class. The students do not see him wince as the birch stick sings once, then twice. But as he returns to his desk, Otto rubs his backside.

Narr 2: The schoolmaster opens a drawer and drops the whirligig in with the other distractions from knowledge he has confiscated—pop-guns, fly cages, half-eaten apples, and an arsenal of spitballs.

Ichabod: Multiplication tables

again. Begin with eight.

Students: (*reciting*) Eight times one is eight. Eight times two—

Narr 3: As the voices again rise like the drone of bees, the schoolmaster resumes pacing back and forth, his birch rod clasped in his hands behind his back.

Scene 2

Narr 1: Ichabod is strict, but he is not cruel. After classes, he plays games with his pupils or walks the youngest ones home . . .

Narr 2: . . . especially if they have pretty sisters or mothers who are good cooks. For you see, the schoolmaster's salary is meager. He must sleep on a cot behind a curtain in the schoolhouse.

Narr 3: If it wasn't for the country custom of providing food to the schoolmaster, he could not make ends meet. Each night, he dines with a different family of a student he is instructing.

Flossie Klemmer: Master Crane! Sit down! I've made a fine sausage stew just for you. Otto, go wash your hands.

Otto: Why?

Flossie: You don't want the schoolmaster to think we don't have manners, now, do you?

Narr 1: Grumbling, Otto washes his hands in the bucket on the porch. Ichabod sits down, picks up his knife and fork, and waits to be served.

Ichabod: I'm as hungry as an ox.

Narr 2: He helps himself to seconds, then thirds from the pot.

Flossie: For such a skinny man—er, that is, I mean, such a tall, lean man, you have a mighty appetite.

Ichabod: You're a fine cook, Mrs.

Klemmer. Otto is a lucky boy.

Narr 3: Otto doesn't feel so lucky as he watches the schoolmaster spear the last piece of rhubarb pie.

Narr 1: After dinner, two old Dutch wives arrive. They sit in front of the fire—where apples are roasting—and whisper stories of the haunted fields and bridges of Sleepy Hollow.

Otto: Tell Master Crane about the Hessian soldier who died in the Revolutionary War. Go on, tell him.

Wife 1: A cannonball tore off his head.

Ichabod: How dreadful!

Wife 2: They buried his body in the graveyard.

Wife 1: But they never found his head.

Ichabod: They didn't?

Wife 2: And now each night his ghost rises with the fog and searches the battlefield near Wiley's Swamp.

Wife 1: But at midnight, the ghost thunders like the wind on his goblin horse all the way down Church Road.

Narr 3: The second wife leans forward so that the firelight casts an eerie glow on her dumpling face.

Wife 2: When he reaches the bridge, he vanishes in a flash of lightning!

Ichabod: Heaven preserve us!

Otto: Do you believe in ghosts, Master Crane?

Ichabod: Indeed I do!

Narr 1: He pulls a leather-bound book from his coat.

Ichabod: According to that great New England scholar Cotton Mather, the Salem witch trials of the 1600s were—

Narr 2: Whoops and howls suddenly split the air. The thunder of horses' hooves rises in the night outside the door. Ichabod's green eyes grow as large as plates.

Ichabod: Wh-what is that?

Flossie: Oh, that's just Brom Bones and his gang.

Ichabod: (*alarmed*) Another ghost?

Flossie: (*laughing*) Gracious, no! Brom is very much alive.

Otto: He and his Sleepy Hollow boys are always ready for a fight or a frolic. They're just having some fun.

Narr 3: The howls and hooves fade to an echo. Inside, the fire is dying. Ichabod must return to his schoolhouse . . . alone.

Narr 1: The old wives' tales have fired his imagination. As he walks through the shadowy woods, Ichabod fights his fear by singing loudly the songs he remembers from his hymn-book.

Scene 3

Narr 2: At church on Sunday, the parishioners wince as Ichabod sings a bit too loudly with the choir. His nasal notes wound their ears.

Narr 3: Afterward, Squire Van Tassel and his wife and daughter approach the schoolmaster.

Squire Van Tassel: May I introduce you to the apple of my eye, my greatest treasure, my only child, Katrina Van Tassel.

Narr 1: Katrina's cheeks are soft and rosy as peaches. Her lips are as ripe as red berries.

Katrina Van Tassel: (*politely*) You have an unusual voice, sir.

Ichabod: You liked my singing?

Katrina: It was . . . (*smiling*) beyond description.

Narr 2: Mrs. Van Tassel puts a gloved hand to her mouth, smothering an amused smile as well.

Ichabod: I give private lessons. I would be happy to instruct you.

Katrina: Oh? You can teach me to sing the way you do?

Narr 3: Mrs. Van Tassel chortles, then clears her throat.

Mrs. Van Tassel: I hope you will join us in a fortnight for the harvest ball, Master Crane.

Ichabod: A party? With food?

Mrs. Van Tassel: Of course. We will have plenty to eat.

Ichabod: I'd be honored to attend.

Narr 1: Ichabod stoops to kiss Katrina's hand, then watches as her father and mother escort her to their waiting wagon.

Narr 2: Broad-shouldered and double-jointed, with hair as black as a bear's, the man called Brom Bones has been watching. Now he jabs Ichabod on his bony shoulder.

Brom Bones: You! Stay away from Miss Van Tassel.

Ichabod: (*stiffly*) Who are you?

Narr 3: Brom grabs a fistful of Ichabod's topcoat and pulls him close.

Brom: Abraham Von Brunt, and I intend to marry Katrina. Is there anything else you'd like to know, schoolteacher?

Ichabod: Ah, no, I don't think so. You've made yourself very clear, Mr. . . . Bones, is it?

Brom: (*sternly*) Von Brunt.

Narr 1: Brom lets him go and saunters away, followed by half a dozen Sleepy Hollow boys.



Narr 2: Otto scurries from around the corner of the church where he has been spying.

Otto: He's always saying he's going to marry Katrina.

Ichabod: And what does Katrina say? Has she refused him?

Otto: Nope, because he's never asked her. She'd say yes if he did.

Narr 3: Ichabod smiles, thinking. Otto picks up a dried stick.

Otto: You know why they call him Bones?

Narr 1: Otto snaps the stick in two, then laughs and runs away.

Scene 4

Narr 2: The next evening, upon invitation to dinner, Ichabod travels to the Van Tassel manor.

Narr 3: His mouth waters when he feasts his eyes on the fields of wheat, rye, and Indian corn and the orchards burdened with fruit.

Narr 1: Porkers grunt in their pens. Turkeys gobble through the farmyard. Pigeons coo in their coops.

Ichabod: One day, someone will inherit this wealth. Hmmm.

Narr 2: In his imagination, the turkeys are already stuffed. He doesn't see pigs—he sees sides of bacon; he doesn't hear coos—he tastes pigeon pie.

Ichabod: Katrina

is his only child. Hmmm.

Narr 3: During dinner, Ichabod helps himself to three servings of chicken and dumplings, all the while lecturing on history, science, and music.

Mrs. Van Tassel: A fine, educated man like yourself should have a wife. She'd put some meat on those skinny bones of yours.

Ichabod: Marriage has entered my mind, Mrs. Van Tassel. But the woman I marry must be beautiful and have a fine figure, a gentle disposition, and a fine voice. She must also be an excellent cook, of course.

Mrs. Van Tassel: (*flatly*) Of course.

Narr 1: After dinner in the parlor, Katrina plays the spinet piano and sings. Ichabod interrupts her.

Ichabod: No, no, no! Do it more like this.

Narr 2: He places his fingers on her rosy cheeks and presses her lips into a pucker.

Ichabod: (*singing*) Ooooo! Try it.

Katrina: (*singing*) Ooooo!

Narr 3: Just then, a servant leads a visitor into the parlor.

Brom: What's going on here? What's he doing here?

Katrina: What do you think is going on? Master Crane is giving me a singing lesson.

Brom: (*to Ichabod*) I thought I made my intentions very clear. I am courting Katrina.

Katrina: (*indignantly*) Courting does not mean owning!

Narr 1: She storms from the room. Ichabod smiles weakly at Brom.

Ichabod: Good night, Mr. Bones.

Brom: It's Von Brunt!

Narr 2: Ichabod fetches his hat and calls a cheery good night.

Squire: (*to his wife*) I believe both

Crane and Von Brunt have taken a liking to our Katrina. What shall we do?

Mrs. Van Tassel: Oh, fiddle! Ducks and geese are foolish things and must be looked after. But girls can take care of themselves.

Scene 5

Narr 3: Confronting Brom, Bones openly is madness. He is a local hero, known for his horsemanship. And he happens to be as burly as Hercules.

Narr 1: Skinny Ichabod is no match—at least, not physically.

Narr 2: Using the excuse of providing singing lessons, Ichabod makes frequent visits to the Van Tassel manor. He and Katrina wander together at twilight along the squire's trout-filled stream.

Brom: Every time I pay court to Katrina, that scarecrow teacher is already there, singing in her ear.

Narr 3: Brom is no singer. And he lacks the elegant manners of an educated man.

Brom: I'll tie his skinny arms and legs in knots. I'll double him over and set him on the shelf in his own schoolhouse!

Narr 1: Ichabod is too clever to give Brom a chance to strike him. He simply walks away from every challenge.

Brom: It's mighty frustrating when a scarecrow won't fight like a man.

Narr 2: Brom rubs his chin and thinks about what he can do to defeat his rival. Slowly, an idea begins to take shape.

Narr 3: The next morning, Ichabod lights the fire in the school stove. Black smoke billows into the room.

Narr 1: Soot-faced, he dashes out.

side. The smoke has drawn a crowd, including Brom Bones.

Ichabod: The chimney seems to be stopped up.

Brom: Now I wonder how that could have happened? Maybe it was the headless horseman. Maybe his rotting head got stuck in your chimney.

Otto: You do believe in ghosts, don't you, schoolteacher?

Narr 2: The students laugh.

Narr 3: Day after day, the rivalry between the bear and the long-legged crane continues. One morning, desks and benches are overturned. Another day, an owl is set loose in the school-house rafters.

Narr 1: Whenever Ichabod sings at church, Brom's dog, tied outside below the window, howls mournfully. The parishioners lower their eyes and press their fingers to their lips to keep from laughing.

Narr 2: But practical jokes do not sway Ichabod from his ambition. On the afternoon of the harvest ball, he spends an hour brushing his long locks and furbishing up his best—his only—suit of rusty black.

Narr 3: He gazes at his image in a piece of broken mirror. His green eyes twinkle.

Ichabod: Tonight will be the end of loneliness and longing.

Scene 6

Narr 1: Ichabod borrows a horse from a farmer and fancies himself a knight on a quest for his lady's hand. But the horse is a broken-down plow horse named Gunpowder, blind in one eye from some long-ago explosion.

Narr 2: Ichabod rides with short stirrups, which bring his knees nearly

up to the pommel of the saddle. His sharp elbows stick out like a grasshopper.

Narr 3: As Ichabod arrives at Van Tassel's manor, Brom arrives on his black stallion, Daredevil.

Brom: Katrina! You look lovely.

Katrina: (*ignoring him*) Welcome, Master Crane. I am so happy you could come!

Narr 1: She leads him inside, leaving Brom to scowl on the porch.

Narr 2: When the schoolmaster enters the dining room, he is at once enraptured—but not by the bevy of lovely lasses.

Katrina: We have sweet cakes, short cakes, ginger cakes. . .

Ichabod: Ohhhh! And doughy doughnuts and crullers! Ah, peach pie!

Katrina: And pumpkin pie.

Narr 3: Ichabod's eyes roll as he gazes greedily on the roast hens and hams, the preserved plums and quince.

Narr 1: The squire moves about the room, greeting his guests. He slaps Ichabod on his back.

Squire: Fall to and help yourself. Eat! Eat!

Ichabod: I will! I will!

Narr 2: As he munches and swallows and smacks his lips, Ichabod thinks happily to himself. . .

Ichabod: One day, this shall all be mine!

Narr 3: Soon the music begins. Fed and contented, Ichabod now dances like a wild man to the fiddler's notes. His every limb is in frenzied motion as he stamps and claps, shivers and shakes across the floor.

Katrina: I see you dance as well as you sing, Master Crane.

Ichabod: I don't mean to brag, but I am proud of my dancing.

Narr 1: Brom broods in the corner.

Narr 2: When the party ends, the neighboring families gather in their wagons and start for home. Ichabod calls good-bye as if it is his manor they are leaving.

Ichabod: Come again!

Narr 3: He lingers, wandering over to a knot of men on the porch.

Old Brouwer: I heard her again last night, shrieking like a tormented soul.

Ichabod: Good gracious, who?

Old Brouwer: Why the woman in white, of course.

Ichabod: Well, what's wrong with her? Is she demented?

Squire: Oh, no, Master Crane. She's dead. Froze to death at Raven's Rock during a snowstorm a few years back. Do you know the place?

Ichabod: I passed it on my way here. (*anxiously, to himself*) And must pass it again on my way home.

Old Brouwer: She's trying to find her way home. Heard her groaning myself.

Brom: (*stepping forward*) I'll tell you what happened to me last night. I met him at Wiley's Swamp.

Ichabod: Who?

Brom: The Hessian, of course! He ordered me to get up behind him on that goblin horse, and off we galloped over bush and brake, over hill and swamp, until we reached the bridge.

Ichabod: Then what happened?

Brom: He turned into a skeleton, that's what! Threw me into the brook and vanished in a flash of fire!

Narr 1: Ichabod shivers. The stories sink deep into his imagination. He has one to offer, as well. He pulls out his history book.

Ichabod: The great New England historian and scientist Cotton Mather believed that such spirits existed.

Old Brouwer: Well, of course they exist! Didn't I just tell you I heard the White Woman crying? (*He walks away.*)

Ichabod: But Mather's point—

Narr 2: One by one, the men wander away.

Ichabod: (*calling after them*) Yes, well, perhaps another time I can enlighten you on Mather's theories.

Narr 3: He spies Katrina standing alone. Now is the moment! Ichabod goes to the heiress.

Ichabod: Ah, there you are, Katrina. I must speak with you.

Katrina: It is late, Master Crane. Everyone is going home. You're the last to leave.

Ichabod: I wanted to talk to you about this fine land of your father's. One day, someone will inherit this manor.

Katrina: I shall inherit the estate.

Ichabod: Exactly! Now, it is very clear to me that you will need a man to care for you. And I, dear Katrina, am willing to marry you.

Katrina: You are *willing* to marry me?

Ichabod: (*beaming*) Indeed I am.

Katrina: You are willing to marry me?

Narr 1: Katrina's merry laughter cuts across the night. Hearing it, Brom scowls as he rides away in the dark.

Scene 7

Narr 2: It is nearly midnight. Desolate and crestfallen, Ichabod goes to the stable. With several hearty cuffs and kicks, he rouses Gunpowder from the straw.

Ichabod: Get up, you old bag.

Narr 3: The hour is as dismal as him-

self. The stars sink deeper in the sky as Ichabod begins his journey home.

Ichabod: (*muttering*) Coquettish tricks. Smiling, offering me cakes and crullers. Oh, unfeeling woman!

Narr 1: Far below him, the river spreads its dusky waters. In the dead hush, Ichabod hears the lonely barking of a dog somewhere on the river's far shore.

Narr 2: The crisp autumn air creeps inside his baggy clothes. All the stories of goblins that he has heard come crowding upon his imagination as he, folded on Gunpowder's bony back, nears Raven's Rock.

Narr 3: He hears it! The groaning!

Narr 1: The white birch trees stand like skeletons in the wood. The groaning is nothing more than their branches rubbing.

Ichabod: You see, Gunpowder? It's the wind. It isn't a ghost.

Narr 2: Still, to quiet his nerves, Ichabod begins to whistle a hymn.

Narr 3: Ahead is Wiley's Swamp. Two fallen tree trunks serve as a bridge over the murmuring brook. Gunpowder stops dead, refusing to cross.

Ichabod: Get up, horse! This is no place to linger.

Narr 1: He hears a tramp of water and twists in his saddle. In the dark grove, Ichabod spies something—



huge, misshapen.

Ichabod: Who are . . . you?

Narr 2: He receives no reply. Summoning up all his courage, he calls louder.

Ichabod: Who are you? Speak!

Narr 3: The shadowy object steps forward. Ichabod's blood turns to ice as he realizes the figure is a horseman.

Narr 1: Ichabod uses his whip to

persuade Gunpowder to run.

Ichabod: Get up! Get up!

Narr 2: But the dark figure spurs his horse as well and keeps pace.

Narr 3: When Ichabod pulls back on the reins, Gunpowder falls into a walk. So does the mysterious rider.

Narr 1: Ichabod tries to sing a hymn, but his parched tongue sticks to the roof of his mouth. He cannot utter a sound.

Narr 2: Then, on the crest of the hill, the full figure of the dark rider comes into view against the moonlight. Gigantic in height and muffled in a cloak, the rider is headless!

Narr 3: Even more horrifying—the head that should be resting on the rider's shoulders is being carried on the pommel of the saddle!

Narr 1: Ichabod rains a shower of kicks and blows upon Gunpowder's gaunt ribcage.

Ichabod: Go! Go! GO!

Narr 2: Away Gunpowder dashes, stones flying and sparks flashing at

every bound. Ichabod's garments flutter in the air as he stretches his lanky body away over the horse's head.

Ichabod: Faster! Faster!

Narr 3: Ahead, the whitewashed church appears out of the gloom.

Ichabod: If only I can make it to the other side of the bridge, I will be safe!

Narr 1: Just then, the girth of the saddle gives way. Ichabod clings to Gunpowder's neck as the saddle falls to the road.

Narr 2: The goblin is close on Gunpowder's haunches. Ichabod hears the black steed panting. He feels its hot breath on his neck.

Narr 3: Gunpowder clatters onto the boards of the bridge. He is almost across.

Narr 1: Ichabod glances over his shoulder to see if the horseman will vanish in a blaze of fire.

Narr 2: But he doesn't. The Hessian rises in his stirrups . . .

Ichabod: No! No!

Narr 3: . . . and hurls his head.

Ichabod: NO!

Narr 1: It smashes Ichabod's cranium with a tremendous crash. He tumbles over Gunpowder's neck and into the icy stream.

Scene 8

Narr 2: The next morning, Gunpowder is found—minus his saddle—cropping the grass at his master's gate.

Narr 3: Ichabod does not appear for breakfast. The boys and girls gather inside the schoolhouse, but no schoolmaster arrives.

Narr 1: An inquiry is held into the disappearance. The neighbors find traces of the mystery: the fallen sad-

dle; horses' hoofprints deeply indented in the road; and on the bank of the stream where the water runs deepest, Ichabod's hat.

Narr 2: Near the bank, curiously, is a shattered pumpkin.

Squire: It is clear. He fell off his horse and drowned.

Narr 3: The body is not found. The squire supposes Ichabod was carried downstream to the Hudson River and lost forever in its depths.

Narr 1: A few weeks later, church bells ring, celebrating the marriage of Katrina and Brom Bones. She suspects he knows more about the disappearance of Master Crane, but Brom only laughs when she mentions his name.

Scene 9

Narr 2: A few years after this peculiar incident, Old Brouwer travels to New York City and brings back an amazing tale.

Old Brouwer: He's alive. I tell you! Married to a well-to-do woman who runs a tavern. I seen him with me own yes, I did!

Narr 3: But the old Dutch wives, who are the best judges of these matters, believe something else. It is their favorite story to tell around the fire.

Wife 1: He was carried away like the mist over the river, like snow melting into the ground.

Wife 2: On autumn nights, you can still hear the fearful singing as the headless horseman chases the ghost of Ichabod Crane all along Church Road. ■