

# SLEEPY HOLLOW

The Curse of Headless Horseman

by

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## ACT ONE

**TIME:** The present, 1775 and 1820

**PLACE:** Sleepy Hollow, New York

**SET:** The famous bridge. Van Tassel kitchen. A hill. A rock wall running beneath the hill with a quick exit trap. A cemetery with an accessible but hidden grave. The trunk of a large tree on wheels with an egress on one side for quick entrances/exits. Upon the tree there is a large knot with "André" carved across it.

### AT THE

**RISE:** A wolf howls. A flash of lightning. The wind rustles long dead leaves. Rumble of thunder. Lights up on the graveyard. The cawing of crows. Literally crawling out of a grave is DIEDRECH KINICKERBOCKER. Long since dead, DIEDRECH is the story teller of Sleepy Hollow past. NOTE: DIEDRECH we will find out is really Ichabod Crane.

DIEDRECH (finding his way to center)

Good evening. Come for a scary story, have you? One that'll make ya jump outta yer skin? Send a shiver or two down your back. Make ya check under the bed before you sleep. (wolf howls) Now I know many tales of terror. But which one to tell on this special night, the scariest night of the year, Halloween night. The night of the dead. The night people wear masks to keep the spirits away and lay out a banquet of goodies to keep the lost souls happy. But which story to tell ya? Hmm. Is it to be ghost pirates?

(PIRATE leaps out of nowhere scaring some audience members. THE GHOST BRIDE comes out in a dance.)

PIRATE

Have you got my gold! Where is my buried treasure!

DIEDRECH

Or should it be a tale of cursed witches?

(Cackling of a witch followed by the appearance of the a WITCH)

A WITCH

My spells can shatter a man's heart, destroy kingdoms or leave you in the dark.

DIEDRECH

Funeral trains carrying the dead to destination unknown.

(BRIDE and VAMPIRE GIRL "walk" down the aisle. MUSIC: Wedding)

DEAD BRIDE

I was beneath a tree -- about to say I do -- when a large branch snapped in two. It fell on my head, rendering me dead. My story is tragic tenfold and deserves to be told.

VAMPIRE GIRL

I'm just a little girl (curtsey) who likes blood.

PIRATE

I'm the Flying Dutchman scourge of pirates. I am the terror of the seven seas!

DIEDRECH

Ah, they're telling your story next year, shudda up! (The GHOSTS DANCE)  
Around these parts there's only one tale people wants to hear. The mystery of the disappearing schoolmaster. Better know as, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.

(Lightning and thunder)

DIEDRECH

That's what I'll tell ya tonight.

ALL GHOSTS (disappointed. Exit)

Awe.

DIEDRECH (shooing them away)

Ooo shudda up, and get along.

(DIEDRECH will pick someone from the audience and ask their name. He proceeds to ask them to dance, the waltz. The audience member twirls Diedrech and dips him while DIEDRECH ad libs how painful it is to be dead. He sits the audience member back down and proceeds.)

DIEDRECH

We haven't been properly introduced. My name is Diedrech Knickerbocker. I lived in a place not far from Sleepy Hollow. I was a ten pound judge in my day. And a writer in my elder years. I died where I lived, and was buried . . . well, you saw where I came out. The first time I heard the legend of Sleepy Hollow was on the morning following the disappearance of Ichabod Crane. You know his name. You know his story. (laughing and then dead serious) You think you know his story. My story begins in 1775. The American Revolution. Three friends fleeing for their lives caught in the war of Independence.

(LIGHTS FADE. SOUNDS in dark. LIGHTS come up slowly to a hill in 1775 in Sleepy Hollow during the American Revolution. Smoke is in the air. We are at war. SOUND CUE: Gun fire. Orders being called out. A cannon fuse. More Gun fire. TWO HESSIANS enter running barring their rifle bayonets. They survey the area. When they feel safe. HESSIAN ONE (WILLAM VAN TASSEL) whistles. He rushes to meet a small young woman, ROSE IDA VAN TASSEL)

HESSIAN ONE (WILLIAM)

It's safe, Rose

HESSIAN TWO (ANDRÉ)

For the time being.

ROSE (to WILLIAM)

We're going to have to find a camp for the night, Will.

ANDRÉ

We'll never get passed the front at this rate. (to ROSE) You should have stayed with the colonists, you would have been safe there with yer son. Thank God both our sons are safe.

ROSE

I am not deserting my husband.

WILL

Please. Both of you. Shhh.

ANDRÉ

Aw, Rosey, I'm sorry.

ROSE

I know, André. I know. But I'm not like your Angelique was. I'm stronger. I'm faster. (beat) I'm a witch with good magic behind me.

WILL

Oh, what my mother would say upon hearing that her daughter-in-law confesses to being a witch.

ROSE

I can't wait to meet her.

WILL

May we live to see the day.

ANDRÉ

We've got to get as far away from the Redcoats as possible. (beat) We could use a bit of magic to cross the river.

ROSE

I'm not that kind of witch.

WILL

Joining their war were easy -- it's getting out that's proving difficult.

ANDRÉ

This war is useless.

ROSE

All war is useless.

ANDRÉ

Aye to that.

WILL

It's not useless. We were just fighting on the wrong side. The Colonists are fighting a good war.

ROSE

We are indeed. Thanks be my father is dead. For I cannot imagine what he would say upon discovering I married a Hessian.

WILL (taking ROSE in his arms)  
Ex-Hessian. (they kiss) We're even.

(They kiss again. SOUND CUE: Loud Cannon explosion.)

ANDRÉ (turning to ROSE & WILL)  
That was close. The Redcoats are improving. (sees them kissing) Oh, would you two stop, you make me miss my Angelique.

WILL (consoling)  
Oh, my friend we all miss Angelique.

ANDRÉ (jokingly)  
I suppose you wouldn't want to leave this handsome donkey, Rose, and be my wife, would ya. Mend my broken heart?

WILL  
Only you could say that without bein' skinned alive.

(all three laugh -- such good friends.)

ANDRÉ  
You know I only jest. We'll camp here. Under that big tree.

ROSE (picking up a leaf)  
It's the tallest tree I've ever seen. (picking up a leaf) Its canopy is frozen in time.

ANDRÉ  
You are a romantic.

ROSE (stuffs the leaf in her bodice/bra)  
No. No - no. This place . . . is . . . enchanted.

ANDRÉ  
I'm going to climb that tree and get us a bearing.

(SOUND CUE: Gun fire. General war. ANDRÉ exits down the hill)

WILL  
Ya haven't had any visions lately. That's good.

ROSE

My visions can be bad but they can be good too.

WILL

Aye, but they're mostly bad.

ROSE

I'm under a curse. I can say nothing more.

WILL

André says the same of himself.

ROSE (interrupts)

I'd not heard this. He's cursed?

WILL (picks up a large branch)

I promised to keep quiet. But I suppose the mother of my son can be told the truth. André Van Brunt, my best man, has a passion for trees.

ROSE (she finds this amusing)

A passion for trees?

WILL

Angelique understood him. Ya see he thinks he's got to carve his name on special trees.

ROSE

Special trees?

WILL

As young boys when we slept out in the forest he'd ask a tree to protect us during the night and then he'd carve his name on the tree to claim it as his own.

ROSE (honest)

That . . . is magic. So why is he under a curse?

WILL

I meant he's charmed. I am surrounded by people who are charmed.

ROSE

That is a very good thing . . . most times.

WILL

Well I don't care. I love you, Rose Van Tassel. And I love our son. And I will see us all to safety.

ROSE (throwing her arms around him)

I love you, now and forever. (beat) (giggling) I love you so much when I die I'm going to haunt you.

WILL (giggling)

Haunt me my love. Haunt me.

(They laugh together for a few beats. SOUND CUE: BANG!  
A cannon has been fired. WILL and ROSE jump. Rose almost faints)

WILL

Rose? A vision?

(Suddenly ROSE is struck by her "power".)

ROSE (having a vision)

Death cometh.

WILL

For whom?

ROSE (in pain)

Comes by air, propelled by fire.

(a soft whistling sound can be heard)

WILL (looking in the skies)

Where??!!

(Intense music begins)

ROSE

There!!!!

(ROSE and WILL see the firey cannonball coming at them and scream together. BLACKOUT Whistle turns into an explosion. LIGHTS UP We are now in 1820. EDWIN is finishing a story. Listening to his story

are IDA VAN TASSEL, JACOB and KALEB)

EDWIN (dramatic)

And that's how the headless horseman lost his head.

IDA

A cannon ball to his head?

JACOB

What a headache he must have had.

KALEB

He died, ya toad!

EDWIN

Took his head clean off.

IDA

Is it necessary to go into sordid details, Mr. Edwin?

EDWIN

I apologize, Miss Ida.

IDA

I'm not one to complain but I don't see how this story has anything to do with our studies.

EDWIN

Well, I'm not a schoolmaster, I'm just a vicar in training.

IDA

It is just a tall tale to spook children. What importance could it possibly have. We should have been discussing history. I mean, real history.

KALEB (to IDA)

You just keep talking on and on, don't you.

EDWIN

It was just a little scary story to past the . . . .

IDA

When is the new schoolmaster due to arrive?

EDWIN

Tomorrow. Lunchtime.

IDA

I'm not one to be picky but childish Halloween stories bore me. None of them are true.

JACOB

It scared me.

KALEB

Geese scare you.

JACOB

It's those bills they have. They peck at you. Peck. Peck. Peck. It's frightening.

IDA

It's getting dark and I think we should go home. Shall I lead the way?

EDWIN

Yes, yes of course. (beat. aside) Your royal majesty.

(IDA exits. It begins getting dark here)

EDWIN

She's very sure of herself, isn't she.

KALEB

You have no idea.

(JACOB is looking around for geese. KALEB comes up behind him and "HONKS"! JACOB jumps.)

JACOB

Don't do that.

EDWIN

On your way, boys, or Queen Ida will chop off yer head.

JACOB

I could be another headless horseman.