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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Legend of the Headless Horseman

Washington Irving

Once upon a time, in a quiet little village called Sleepy Hollow, there lived a tall, thin schoolteacher named Ichabod Crane. He had big ears, a long nose, and was known for his appetite and love of stories—especially spooky ones. The scariest tale of all was about the Headless Horseman—a ghostly figure who rode through the night searching for his lost head!

One sunny morning, Ichabod stood in front of his class. "Good morning, children!" he said cheerfully. "Today we're going to learn about numbers. Who can tell me what five plus five is?"

"Ten!" the children shouted in unison.

"Excellent!" Ichabod praised them with a warm smile.

After school, Ichabod loved to walk the countryside, listening to the birds sing and enjoying the fresh air. One day, he passed by a beautiful farmhouse owned by Baltus Van Tassel, the wealthiest farmer in Sleepy Hollow. There he saw Katrina Van Tassel, the farmer's lovely daughter, picking flowers in the garden.

She was kind and cheerful, with rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes. Many young men hoped to marry Katrina, and among them was Ichabod Crane.

"Good afternoon, Miss Katrina," Ichabod said, tipping his hat politely.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Crane," Katrina replied with a sweet smile. "Enjoying your walk?"

"Indeed I am," he said, his heart fluttering. "The day is as lovely as you."

Katrina giggled. "You're quite the charmer, Mr. Crane."

Ichabod felt his cheeks warm. "Well, I do my best."

As days passed, Ichabod found more reasons to visit the Van Tassel farm. He admired not only Katrina's beauty but also the delicious meals her family prepared. "Imagine living here," he thought dreamily, "with all these wonderful things and the delightful Katrina."

But Ichabod wasn't the only one interested in Katrina. Brom Bones, a strong and mischievous man with a hearty laugh, also sought her attention. Brom was brave and loved to play pranks on others. He also wanted to win Katrina's heart and

wasn't happy about Ichabod's interest in her. One afternoon, Brom approached Ichabod outside the schoolhouse.

"Hello there, schoolmaster," Brom said with a grin. "I hear you've been visiting the Van Tassel farm quite often."

Ichabod nodded cautiously. "Yes, their family has been very kind."

Brom chuckled. "Just remember, some roads are better left untraveled." He gave Ichabod a playful yet warning pat on the back before walking away.

Ichabod gulped. "I must be careful," he whispered to himself.

One crisp autumn day, a messenger arrived at the schoolhouse. "Mr. Crane, you're invited to a harvest party at the Van Tassel's tonight," he announced.

"How wonderful!" Ichabod exclaimed. "Class dismissed!"

The children cheered as they gathered their things. Ichabod hurried home to prepare. He borrowed an old horse named Gunpowder from a farmer. "Take good care of him," the farmer said.

"I will, sir," Ichabod promised.

That evening, Ichabod arrived at the party. The house was filled with laughter, music, and the delicious smell of pumpkin pie and apple cider. He spotted Katrina across the room.

"Good evening, Miss Katrina," he said, bowing slightly.

"Mr. Crane! I'm so glad you could come," she replied.

"May I have this dance?" he asked, extending his hand.

"Of course," she said, placing her hand in his.

They danced and laughed, and Ichabod felt like he was floating on air. After the dance, guests gathered around the fireplace to tell ghost stories. Brom Bones stood up with a gleam in his eye. He told tales of his encounters with the Headless Horseman, making everyone shiver with excitement. Ichabod listened carefully, his imagination running wild.

"I know many of you have heard about the Headless Horseman" Brom started dramatically.

Some guests gasped, while others leaned in eagerly. Ichabod's eyes widened.

"They say he's the ghost of a soldier who lost his head in battle," Brom continued. "He rides through the woods at night, searching for it. And woe to anyone who crosses his path!"

The room fell silent. Ichabod swallowed hard. "It's such a frightening tale," he thought.

As the party ended, Ichabod approached Katrina. "Thank you for a wonderful evening," he said softly.



"I'm glad you came," she replied with a mysterious smile. "Be safe on your way home."

"I will," Ichabod assured her, though he couldn't shake off the eerie feeling from Brom's story.

He mounted Gunpowder and set off into the night. The moon cast spooky shadows, and the wind whispered through the trees. As he rode through the woods, Ichabod's mind replayed all the ghost stories he had heard. Every rustle made Ichabod jump.

"Just stories," he told himself. "There's no such thing as ghosts."

Suddenly, he heard hoofbeats behind him. Turning around, he saw a dark figure on a black horse.

"Who's there?" Ichabod called nervously.

The rider didn't answer. As the figure drew closer, Ichabod's heart pounded. He noticed something terrifying—the rider had no head!

"The Headless Horseman!" Ichabod gasped.

He kicked Gunpowder. "Go, Gunpowder! Faster!"

Gunpowder sprinted down the path, but the Headless Horseman kept pace. Ichabod's hands trembled as he gripped the reins. "If I can just make it to the bridge by the church," he remembered, "the ghost might vanish!"

They raced toward the bridge. The Horseman's cape fluttered behind him as he reached into his saddle. Ichabod glanced back and saw the ghost holding a glowing pumpkin.

"He's going to throw it!" Ichabod screamed.

With all his might, the Headless Horseman hurled the pumpkin at Ichabod. It struck him squarely, knocking him off Gunpowder. Ichabod tumbled to the ground as darkness enveloped him.

The next morning, villagers found Gunpowder grazing calmly near his home, but there was no sign of Ichabod. They discovered his hat lying beside a smashed pumpkin near the bridge.

"What could have happened?" one villager asked.

"Perhaps the Headless Horseman got him," whispered another.

Some folks believed that the Headless Horseman had spirited Ichabod away. Others thought that perhaps Ichabod was so frightened that he left Sleepy Hollow and never looked back. Brom Bones soon married Katrina, and whenever the story of Ichabod Crane was told, Brom would chuckle to himself. This made some people wonder if he knew more about that night than he admitted.

"Do you know something we don't, Brom?" a friend asked.

Brom shrugged. "Who can say?"

Some suspected that Brom had dressed up as the Headless Horseman to scare Ichabod away. Others believed the ghost story was true. As for Katrina, after marrying Brom Bones, life in Sleepy Hollow returned to normal—mostly.

On dark nights, when the wind howled through the trees, people claimed to hear eerie sounds near the bridge. Children would whisper, "That's the Headless Horseman looking for his head!"

And sometimes, if you listened closely, you might hear the faint sound of a schoolteacher's voice carried on the breeze, singing a lonely tune.

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