

# Plays for Young Audiences

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## *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

By  
**Frederick Gaines**

From the Story by  
**Washington Irving**

*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* was originally produced by the Children's Theatre Company in the 1969-70 season.

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**Characters:**

ICHABOD CRANE  
WIDOW WINETRAUB  
HILDA WINETRAUB  
CORNWALL  
BROM BONES (BROM VAN BRUNT)  
KATRINA VAN TASSEL  
PASTOR  
VAN RIPPER  
MIRROR-IMAGE OF ICHABOD  
TOWNSPEOPLE  
STUDENTS  
RUSTIC LADS (BROM'S GANG)

**Setting:** It is autumn, early 1800s, New England.

Notes on the Play:

In the opening scene, Ichabod Crane - schoolteacher and singing master - lectures against illogical superstition, but it immediately becomes apparent that superstition rules the life of Sleepy Hollow. Ichabod is never safe from the whispers of fear which pursue him; though the fears seem fanciful and the fun intentional, their effect on Ichabod is, ultimately, devastatingly real. The playwright's cinematic style emphasizes the dreamlike flow and pace of poor Ichabod's nightmare.

The basic scenic design of the play is a sweeping boardwalk, steeply raked at the center. The boards are weathered like those of an old bridge. A large tree rises along the SR proscenium, branches extending across the proscenium. Another tree stands upstage SR, behind the boardwalk. The stage palette is of warm autumn color. A leaf bag and silent fan occasionally set dry leaves swirling across the platform. No stage furniture is used; two boards in the left slope provide benches for the schoolroom and Katrina's porch. Very few props are used; the actors pantomime the majority of props. Costumes are based on the exaggerated silhouettes of the colonial Dutch.

## Scene I

House lights and stage preset fade to blackout. Music: The Headless Horseman theme, just a few measures, a flash of lightning reveals ICHABOD CRANE hurrying to C of ramp, huge thunderclap. Lights slowly rise, birds. ICHABOD stands DSC and addresses audience.

ICHABOD           As schoolmaster of this village . . . (A low, hollow moan causes him to stop and listen for a moment.) As schoolmaster, I deal in simple fact, and the simple fact is that there's no such things as gho . . . (Another moan; his voice breaking. Pause.) That is, "ghosts." (He clears his throat.) Ghosts . . . are superstitious explanations for unexplainable phenomena, but I, as a dealer in simple fact, say to you that behind these phenomena . . . (Another moan. ) Yes. Behind the phenomena is a common, everyday occurrence . . . (Again moaning, accompanied now by the sound of creaking boards. ICHABOD "giggles" uncomfortably.) Now there are some who would hear in that melancholy sound the footsteps of a ghost, but I, of course, hear nothing . . . like . . . it. (The sound has grown nearer. ICHABOD whirls fearfully to confront the ghost; a young man strolls past the terrified schoolteacher, blowing across the neck of a cider jug. ICHABOD exhales with great relief. ) As I said before: an everyday occurrence. Yet - despite my attempts at education -the residents of this sleepy village persist in the belief in the supernatural. The neighborhood abounds with tales, twilight superstitions, haunted spots. Stars shoot and meteors glare oftener across their valley than in any other part of the country, and the nightmare - with her whole ninefold- makes it the favorite scene of their gambols. There is even a legend about a Headless Horseman, but as with all the rest: it is nonsense.

WIDOW WINETRAUB and HILDA have entered and pantomime setting a picnic, spreading the cloth with ICHABOD'S help.

WIDOW           Nonsense, Master Crane? Nonsense? What I could tell you! But a man of your importance has other things to think of, I'm sure. Nonsense? If my poor departed husband were here, "Nonsense," he'd tell you, I'm sure! Hmph!

ICHABOD           Oh, but Widow Winetraub, could a legend have hurt him? Oh, no - it seems unlikely.

WIDOW                    Yes, yes, I told them that - cider, Master Crane? - but who would listen to me, a simple woman. You've met my daughter, Master Crane?

WIDOW indicates HILDA who is seated slightly US of the other two. ICHABOD nods and doffs his tricorner hat in gentlemanly fashion. HILDA giggles and blushes. She is a very stupid girl.

WIDOW                    Died of fright, they say - cinnamon, Master Crane? Died of the sight of the Headless Horseman.

ICHABOD                 Died of the . . . ?

WIDOW                    *(nodding emphatically)* Well, I laughed. Laughed right out loud. But there he lay, Master Crane, white as flour, Master Crane . . . *(ICHABOD mouths the question "White as flour?" WIDOW nods once, sharply.)* White as flour, Master, and not a mark on him! Hilda made the cider, Master Crane.

ICHABOD                 *(Eating with desperate energy borne of constant appetite and some fear.)* Oh, did she? Very good, very good indeed . . .

WIDOW                    So what was I to say, Master Crane, with all of them against me, poor widow that I am, and my only daughter still unmarried? What was I to say, Master Crane? Well, I don't know. "Master Crane says there's no such things as ghosts and that to you!" I should have said, but could I think of that? Pass the man some cakes, Hilda; don't be such a bump.

ICHABOD                 Well, Widow Winetraub . . .

WIDOW                    That's all very well to say, Master Crane, but I've not your learning your way with words and arguments. My daughter admires you a great deal, Master Crane, a great deal, don't you, daughter?

HILDA                    *(blushing)* Ma!

WIDOW                    I know that if I had the power of tongue I've heard you so often display, I should have disputed them in a minute, but I, speechless

and defenseless, so to speak. You do understand what I mean, Master Crane?

ICHABOD *(mouth full of cake)* I believe I do, Widow Winetraub.

WIDOW I should have said what you've said to me, but with a poor, cold, stone-dead husband lying there who was hale and hearty an hour before . . .

ICHABOD Hale and hearty . . . ?

WIDOW Hale, Master Crane . . . *(ICHABOD, unable to speak the portentous word, mouths it.)* And hearty. Well! It would have sounded stupid as all get out, Master Crane. Have a pipe, Master Crane? *(She thrusts a clay pipe towards him - actual prop.)*

ICHABOD Oh, I don't know, Widow Winetraub.

WIDOW Don't myself, but my poor husband, poor frightened-to-death man!, always felt fondly toward the habit. I like to put a man a ease, Master Crane; smoke .

ICHABOD Thank you very much, Widow; but you see, my voice . . . the singing lessons. You understand. *(He sings a line from "The Lord Sings Out" quite terribly.)*

WIDOW Yes, heard you sing. *(Slight pause.)* Doesn't seem likely it'll do great harm, Master Crane.

ICHABOD Well, a pipe's a fond pleasure after such a fine meal . . . *(WIDOW thrusts the pipe between his lips.)*

WIDOW Good for digestion, Master Crane: rheumatism, melancholy, and sour stomach. My husband's own blend.

ICHABOD *(Eyes bulging.)* The pipe's . . . your husband's?

WIDOW Last thing he did before he died: smoked it!

ICHABOD                   *(Pulls it from his mouth in terror.)* Thank you all the same, but it's a long ride. Hardly enough time now. *(ICHABOD stands and hands the pipe back.)*

ICHABOD                   Widow Winetraub . . . *(He makes a move to exit. )*

WIDOW                    You forgot my daughter. Smile at the man, Daughter.

*WIDOW and HILDA rise and curtsey. In twos and threes, TOWNSPEOPLE begin to wander on, ignoring the three DS.*

ICHABOD                   Hilda - I can only say, I wish my appointed rounds were less strict. Widow -your cider, your pipe, your daughter all tempt me, but psalmody calls me.

WIDOW                    I think you're some kind of a fool, Master Crane.

*All the TOWNSPEOPLE are onstage and only a few steps away from chorus position by the time ICHABOD says "their eyes following my baton."*

ICHABOD                   I thank you for the hospitality, the food, but could I disappoint them? They await my instruction, their voices poised, their eyes following my baton . . . And music is born!

*Organ chord. Lights change to broader interior reading.*

## Scene II

*One of the last TOWNSPEOPLE to enter has shifted on a music stand upon which ICHABOD taps his "baton"; the singing master stands C with the others positioned on the ramp in a semi-circle. They burst into song, pantomiming their hymnals and bobbing up and down slightly as they sing.*

CHORUS                   THE LORD SINGS OUT!  
THE LORD SINGS OUT AND HIS BOUNTY FALLS UPON US!  
THE LORD SINGS OUT!  
THE LORD SINGS OUT AND HIS BLESSINGS FALL UPON US!

CHORUS  
SING OUT HIS PRAISE  
SING OUT HIS PRAISE  
SING OUT HIS PRAISE, JERUSALEM  
SING OUT HIS PRAISE!  
THE LORD SINGS OUT!  
THE LORD SINGS OUT AND...

ICHABOD cuts off their singing by tapping on the stand.

ICHABOD Please, please! Excellent voice, people - full of spirit - but-we-must-learn-to-sing-to-gether. Each word must be clipped and e-nun-ci-ated! Understood? Good. Now - to the art of singing psalmody. Many will say that song . . . *(He calls for organ to provide a note; all hum; he cuts them off.)* . . . is song. But, of course, there is art to the psalmody of psalm singing. Now voice is, of course, pleasant to listen to, but more important than voice is pitch. As thus. *(Organ gives a note; ICHABOD sings "hmm" completely off pitch but entirely satisfied with his effort.)* Yes! Now you, please. *(He calls upon a member of the chorus who sings the note perfectly. ICHABOD gives a grudging approval. He sounds the note again, off pitch.)* "Hmmm! Now all . . . *(The chorus sings a full, rich chord. Abrupt cut off by ICHABOD.)* Yes, well . . . ahem . . . Where - we must ask ourselves -where does music begin? And the answer, of course, is within the nose! *(A few members glance at one another with raised eyebrows.)* The nose. In the nose is a vibrating chamber which we, in music, call the nasal drum. *(He steps up to a BOY who has been whispering to his neighbor.)* What do we call it?

BOY Uh . . .drum.

ICHABOD *(To a little GIRL.)* What?

GIRL The nasal drum.

ICHABOD That's better. *(ICHABOD notices KATRINA in the choir; he bats his eyelashes and flirts with her.)* Oh, Miss Katrina: pudding and plum, eh? . . . pudding and plum . . . *(She averts her eyes with a shy smile; ICHABOD returns to his stand.)* When the nasal drum is set into vibration: hmmmymmmmy... *(It is an awful sound but the choir try to duplicate it anyway. ICHABOD cuts them off.)* . . . the sound begins

here and travels through here, into the cheeks, perimeterates the lips, and out the mouth. *(He has indicated the journey using WIDOW WINETRAUB as a model; she is most flattered indeed. ICHABOD whirls to the BOY he questioned earlier.)* Out the what?

BOY Mouth.

ICHABOD The mouth. Thus. *(He demonstrates the sound yet again, showing the progress of the nasal whine on himself. Choir follows his example.)* Now, in the psalm . . . *(He taps on the stand to silence them so he can be heard.)* Now, in the psalm "The Lord Sings Out"... *(CORNWALL rushes into the midst of the choir, trying to be unobtrusive.)* You're late.

CORNWALL Yes, sir, sorry, sir.

*ICHABOD waits conspicuously for CORNWALL to settle himself.*

ICHABOD Now. In the psalm "The Lord Sings Gut," the nasal drum - or "cavity" as we in the anatomical anthropology call it - plays an important role . . .

CORNWALL *(Whispering to his neighbor.)* Brom Bones raced against the Headless Horseman!

*Members of the choir begin whispering, passing the news along as ICHABOD continues his lecture with his back towards them.*

ICHABOD Beginning with the sound "rrrd" in "Lorrrd" . . . *(He turns around at the sound of whispering but the people have stopped and act as though nothing bad happened.)* And into the "ying" sound of "singggg" . . . *(He catches them again; he is most annoyed but tries to maintain control. He turns away.)* . . . the hard consonant "rrud," or, as we in phonics call it, the "rud" sound: We allow the nasal tone to build and increase . . . *(He is attempting to overhear the gossip and loses the thread of his lecture. )* . . . multiplying in propensity, resonating in pitch and fiber, the fourth phonic, or robusto, as we in the stage art refer to it . . . If that is so, then we must ask ourselves: wherefore the Dielanzzo? *(Rapping on the stand with his pipe.)* People! People, please! *(Pointing for CORNWALL to step forward.)* Young man!

CORNWALL Yes, sir?

ICHABOD What trifle of gossip could possibly be so edifying and full of import...?

CORNWALL *(Announcing to entire choir.)* Brom Bones raced against the Headless Horseman!

*Choir gasps. BROM BONES enters and strolls through to C.*

ICHABOD *(To audience.)* Brom Bones!

CORNWALL *(With wide-eyed admiration. )* Hello, Brom. *(BROM pats CORNWALL on the head and the boy returns to his place.)*

BROM It was nothing.

*The following is presented in the style of a choral reading.*

WOMEN Where was it?

MEN *(Echo)* . . . was it?

BROM Sleepy Hollow graveyard.

MEN The covered bridge?!

BROM Yes.

WOMEN &  
CHILDREN Did you see him?

BROM I saw him.

CHILDREN Did he have . . . *(They are afraid to finish.)*

BROM *(Shaking his head.)* He had no head!

CHORUS *(Echo.)* . . . head . . . ead . . . ead . . . ead . . .

Music chord. Lights dim and add to suspense and terror.

MAN                    It was dark as sin and not a sound . . .

WOMAN                Midnight...

WOMEN                Bats flapping . . .

CHORUS                *(Whisper) Bats flapping . . . bats flapping . . . (They mimic the sound through their lips.)*

ICHABOD              Bats flapping?!

WOMEN                Owls hooting . . .

CHORUS                Hoo . . . hoo . . . hoo . . .

MAN                    Who came?

MAN                    And along he came, poor Brom Bones into the graveyard. You could hear the graves a-moaning .

All moan. ICHABOD moans too, but his is one of sickness born of growing terror.

WOMEN                But not a sound . . .

CORNWALL            . . . from Brom?

WOMEN                . . . from Brom!

BROM                    *(With false modesty.)* I was kind of sleepy . . . dozing a little...

BOYS                    And then you heard . . .

CORNWALL            . . . hoof beats!

A member of the choir begins to slap his knees to make the sound of slow, menacing hoof beats. All lean in closer to BROM.

WOMEN                What did you do?

BROM                    Oh, I kind of turned, to see what's what.

MEN                     And there . . . in the shadows . . .

MAN                     . . . was a man on a horse!

CHORUS                (*Echo*) . . . a horse . . . horse . . . horse . . .

MAN                     Standin' eighteen hands . . .

ICHABOD              Eighteen hands !

*Hoof beats build in speed.*

CHILDREN             Breathin' fire!

MAN                     Black as coal!

MAN                     His eyes red-yellow!

MEN                     Hooves of steel!

MAN                     A-sittin' him as calm as Death . . .

MAN                     . . . is a hooded shape!

CHORUS                Ahhh! (*Silence.*) No-o-o-o head! (*Individuals repeat "No head." Pause.*)  
Sloooowly . . . slowly . . . slowly . . .

MAN                     He raised himself . . .

MAN                     Standing in his stirrups . . .

MAN                     And he pointed his hand off toward the bridge.

CHORUS                The bridge! (*Hoof beats and music enter again.*) Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!  
Hurry!

WOMAN                The Horseman and Brom, side by side . . .

MEN Brom and the Devil, ridin' for a prize . . .

ICHABOD Ridin' through the woods of Sleepy Hollow!

WOMEN In the middle of the ride . . .

MEN Old Brom bellows . . .

BROM *(Shouting)* A bowl of punch to the winner!

CHORUS Ahhhh!

*Drumming of hoof beats is even faster now: a fully extended gallop. CHOIR pants the lines.*

MEN Three furlongs . . .

WOMEN Two to go!

MEN Two furlongs!

WOMEN &  
CHILDREN One to go!

ICHABOD Covered bridge is just ahead . . .

WOMEN Brom's horse is pulling ahead!

MEN Twenty yards. . .

WOMEN ...ten to go!

MEN Ten yards . . .

CHORUS Five . . . to . . . go!!!

*Music swells as ICHABOD, totally caught up in the account, clings to BROM. Blackout. Lights rise to initial setting immediately.*

BROM                   *(Calmly, deflating the climactic moment.)* Brom crosses the line.  
*(ICHABOD collects himself as choir snickers quietly.)* And he was gone.  
Not a trace. Smell of brimstone and fire, nothing more.

CHILDREN           No punch?

BROM                   *(Laughing.)* No punch. But I beat him square. He won't ride this  
way for a while. *(Choir murmurs in approval.)*

ICHABOD           I don't believe a word of it! *(Laughter.)* I don't! All that nonsense of  
Headless Horsemen and riding phantoms is nonsense. It's all in the  
book I have: Master Cotton Mather's book. *(People pay no attention;  
they start to exit as organ plays recessional: "The Lord Sings Out.")*  
You've only to sing a psalm, Master Mather says, and the very  
Devil will run from you. Sing a psalm loud and clear, and the  
strongest of ghosts will turn tail. *(He tries to get their attention,  
following them out.)* As schoolmaster, I feel it's my duty to instruct  
you in such matters and to warn you against . . .

*KATRINA and BROM are alone. KATRINA starts to exit, but BROM takes her arm and turns  
her toward him.*

KATRINA           You're very familiar, Master Van Brunt!

BROM               As familiar as a smile from your singing master?

KATRINA           That is none of your concern.

BROM               I make it my concern.

KATRINA           Do you, Master Van Brunt?!

BROM               You've called me "Brom" before . . .

KATRINA           In the past.

BROM               There's been nothing to change that.

KATRINA           My mind has changed.

BROM                   And it's been changed by that gangly Crane!

KATRINA               Master Crane is not a gangle! He is a gentleman, and that is considerably more than some storytellers that I know.

BROM                   There's no harm in a story.

KATRINA               There is harm in a lie. You sat in our parlor till midnight or past, Master Van Brunt, and I doubt you met up with any "ghosts" there.

BROM                   *(Hedging.)* It might have been a bit after midnight . . .

KATRINA               Ah, but the stories you tell are that the ghost never rides past midnight.

BROM                   Past dawn . . . past dawn is that I've always said!

KATRINA               Oh, you can think up the answers before I can think up the questions! Good day, Master Storyteller. *(She turns and exits abruptly.)*

BROM                   I meant no harm with it; you know me better than to think that . . .

*BROM follows her off just as ICHABOD enters.*

### Scene III

*ICHABOD has Cotton Mather's book opened and is quoting a passage to the choir members who are obviously quite distant now.*

ICHABOD               "Diverse incidents lead us to believe in the . . ." *(He moves SL and sees KATRINA and BROM in the distance.)* Miss Katrina? Katrina? *(He sees that he is alone.)* Gone. And with Brom, too. I should have read him such an argument . . . Cotton Mather's book . . . well... *(The wind blows some leaves across the ramp.)* Chilly. . .

*ICHABOD puts the book under his arm, claps his hat on his head, and starts back toward SR. Whistling, he pretends not to notice the darkness around him. As he reaches the central area of*

*the ramp, he steps upon a loose board that emits an organ tone. He stops, uncertain where the sound has come from. He slowly retraces his steps and again hits the board: the organ note sounds again and ICHABOD jumps back. He slowly extends his foot and gingerly touches the board and the note sounds. Reassured., almost playfully, he depresses it several times with his foot, then carefully straddles it, leans over, and plays it with his finger. Smiling, unafraid again, he starts to walk on past the board, but halfway down a thought begins to pester him; he returns to the approximate area, no longer certain which is the loose board. He finally steps on the board, it sounds, and he quickly steps to the far side of it. That board, too, sounds the next "stop" on the organ keyboard. ICHABOD tries to avoid the protesting boards, but no matter where he steps the organ sounds a note which corresponds to the placement of the board to the "stop." He finds his legs straddling further and further apart, running up and down the scale. He stands, perched on tiptoe, at the top of the ramp, the organ shrilling; he loses his balance and tumbles down the keyboard and the organ cascades with his descent. He rests at the crotch of the ramp DSC as the organ thunders a chord and he pulls out his book by Cotton Mather and hurriedly thumbs through its index. Lights have dimmed to a tight pool on ICHABOD and the organ fades as he speaks.*

ICHABOD "Screams, " "sirens," "sobs," "sounds" . . . ah! "sounds in the night!"  
"See the case of the Salem witches." (He quickly tries to find the page.)  
Salem . . . Salem . . . Here we are: in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1691 .  
. .

1<sup>st</sup> STUDENT (Entering the pool of light and standing beside ICHABOD) The witches were hung.

*ICHABOD looks at the boy; the STUDENT tries to clarify his statement as lights warm to reveal classroom seated on a couple of raised planks of the boardwalk.*

1<sup>st</sup> STUDENT In 1691, sir. The Salem witch trials. Governor Danforth . . .

ICHABOD (Picking himself up, annoyed.) Not another word. There are no witches! Period! End of discussion! (ICHABOD shoos FIRST STUDENT back to his place on the bench.) Now where were we?

2<sup>nd</sup> STUDENT History lesson, sir.

ICHABOD Ah, yes. History. (Shifts into sing-song history quiz.) In 1492 . . .

STUDENTS Columbus sailed the blue!

ICHABOD            In 1493, he...

STUDENTS            . . . sailed across the sea!

ICHABOD            *(Pointing to one student after another as he calls out dates.)* Seventeen hundred and seventy-five . . .

3<sup>rd</sup> STUDENT        At Bunker Hill we came alive!

ICHABOD            Seventeen hundred and seventy-six . . .

4<sup>th</sup> STUDENT        Repel Old George . . .

STUDENTS            ... with stones and sticks!

*ICHABOD has totally recovered from his earlier fright; in superb form now he singles out the STUDENTS with his walking stick, using it also as a sword, dancing through fencing positions.*

ICHABOD            Seventeen hundred and seventy-seven . . .

5<sup>th</sup> STUDENT        Articles of Confederation!

ICHABOD            Seventeen hundred and seventy-eight . . .

1<sup>st</sup> ROW              America and France form an alliance!

2<sup>nd</sup> ROW              Force the British to compliance!

ICHABOD            And how do we spell "compliance?" *(No volunteers. ICHABOD emits a little laugh for his benefit.)* You don't know because I haven't taught you yet! *(Another little laugh at his joke, then abruptly shifts back into tempo and pints to CORNWALL.)* Seventeen hundred and seventy-nine . . .

CORNWALL         Uh . . . *(Slight pause. ICHABOD parries with his walking stick touching CORNWALL'S chest.)*

ICHABOD            Seventeen hundred and seventy-nine? *(CORNWALL still hesitates. ICHABOD dances backward and forward, playfully.)* Seventy-nine?

*(Pause. ICHABOD changes subject for a moment, addressing 1<sup>st</sup> STUDENT.)* Do you like apples, William?

1<sup>st</sup> STUDENT            Yes, sir.

ICHABOD                So do I. *(Another queer little laugh. Back to CORNWALL.)* Seventeen hundred and seventy-nine! *(ICHABOD lunges with the walking stick.)*

CORNWALL             *(Desperately.)* Major Andre in the pine! *(STUDENTS gasp. ICHABOD is stunned.)*

ICHABOD                Who, Master Scholar, who?!!

CORNWALL             Major Andre, sir. He's in the book.

ICHABOD                And what did he do?

CORNWALL             Died, sir.

ICHABOD                What, sir?

CORNWALL             Died, sir.

ICHABOD                Why, sir?

CORNWALL             Spy, sir. Please, sir, with Benedict Arnold, and they caught him.

ICHABOD                Twenty lashes!

CORNWALL             *(Protesting.)* By the tree, sir, in Sleepy Hollow, sir, and they hung him high . . . *(All freeze for a moment. Silence.)* By the neck, sir. Till he was dead. And his ghost, sir . . .

ICHABOD                Twenty lashes!!! *(ICHABOD pantomimes dragging through a door; he turns in warning to the other STUDENTS.)* And not a word from any of you. Not a word. *(He continues toward SL and "slams" door shut behind him. STUDENTS run CS and gather, ears to the "door" as ICHABOD brandishes a small tree branch.)* Twenty lashes . . .

STUDENTS              . . . four, five, six . . .

ICHABOD            Twenty lashes . . .

STUDENTS            . . . seven, eight, nine . . .

1<sup>st</sup> STUDENT        Ichabod Crane can't hurt a flea!

2<sup>nd</sup> STUDENT        Ichabod Crane can't hurt me!

3<sup>rd</sup> STUDENT        Ichabod Crane's a skinny chicken!

4<sup>th</sup> STUDENT        Sits in the kitchen, talking to women!

5<sup>th</sup> STUDENT        Ichabod's skinny nose itches . . .

STUDENTS            . . . when he hears a sound like witches!

ICHABOD            Twenty lashes . . .

STUDENTS            Four to go, three to go, one . . . (*Strike.*) ... to... (*Strike.*) ...go!

*Strike. STUDENTS rush back to their places on bench. ICHABOD and CORNWALL return and CORNWALL slowly returns to his seat.*

ICHABOD            (*Angry.*) So? Frightened, am I? Itchy nose, have I? Well, Master Scholars, we shall see what we shall see. I care not a pinch for your ghosts and goblins! (*He turns away with a dashing gesture and boasts.*) Your common witch knows better than to traffic with the likes of Ichabod Crane! (*Eerie light on STUDENTS as they make terrible goblin faces. ICHABOD stops short, looks, turns to audience, and looks back again and all is normal.*) If your "garden variety" witch so much as crosses my path, out comes the Gospel and off flies the witch! And not on a broomstick, either; God made the birds to fly and... (*A STUDENT has turned into a goblin. ) ... no... (Other STUDENTS smile innocently, seemingly unaware of the transformation.) ... one... (ICHABOD is concerned, uneasy. He turns away from them.) . . . else. (A breath. He summons his courage.) That is not to say witches do not exist. Only the ignorant would swear to such a positive declaration . . . (He swiftly turns to see three goblins. He moans and turns away.) The wise say "I doubt it." (*Eerie lights and music. More goblins. ) I doubt it**

. . . I doubt it... I... seem to be a little... weary... (*He shrieks in terror, his back turned to STUDENTS.*) . . . Class dismissed!

Normal lighting and boys shout in celebration and run off. ICHABOD stands transfixed, trembling. CORNWALL quietly steps up behind him.

CORNWALL Sir?

ICHABOD (*A tiny shriek in terror.*) Oh, my goodness! Oh, my . . . (*Calming down, seeing it is only CORNWALL.*) . . . goodness! Cornwall!

CORNWALL Master Crane?

ICHABOD Yes, my boy. Speak right up. Nothing to be frightened of. Master Crane is here to protect you.

CORNWALL You said, sir, to tell you when next the Widow baked.

ICHABOD And did she bake today, Cornwall?

CORNWALL Yes, sir. Pies, sir, and bread.

ICHABOD (*His mouth watering.*) Pies? What kind?

CORNWALL Mince, sir, raisin, and pumpkin.

ICHABOD Apple?

CORNWALL Yes, sir.

ICHABOD Berry and cherry and quince?

CORNWALL I think so, sir.

ICHABOD You're a bright lad, Cornwall.

CORNWALL Yes, sir.

ICHABOD A lad to be proud of.

CORNWALL Yes, sir.

ICHABOD Shall we walk?

CORNWALL Yes sir.

ICHABOD pantomimes opening door. CORNWALL and ICHABOD walk in place DSL of ramp. A few moments pass with them walking; birds singing, breeze blowing.

ICHABOD See that tree over there? Orioles. Four eggs last spring.

CORNWALL Yes, sir.

ICHABOD *(After a few more moment of silence. )* And what do you make of all this nonsense, Cornwall?

CORNWALL School, sir?

ICHABOD No, no. Ghosts and goblins and all like that.

CORNWALL I don't believe an inch of 'em, sir.

ICHABOD *(With a touch of admiration.)* You don't?

CORNWALL Why, no, sir! Witches don't exist, sir. Except for Halloween, for an hour or two.

ICHABOD Good boy! *(KATRINA appears with two of her friends, laughing and talking.)* Oh - Katrina ! *(He waves and calls.)* Miss Katrina!

CORNWALL What shall I tell her about the pies, sir?

ICHABOD *(Shooing him away.)* Tell her I won't . . . be long.

CORNWALL exits as ICHABOD rushes up to KATRINA, offers her his arm and engages the WOMEN in small talk as he escorts them and off the boardwalk.

## Scene IV

After ICHABOD, KATRINA, CORNWALL, and WOMEN exit, RUSTIC LADS appear from various nooks and crannies of the ramp. BROM stands in the center of the group.

BROM                    *(Having just outlined a plan. )* And I'll take Master Crane myself.  
*(WIDOW WINETRAUB is heard talking offstage.)* They're coming.  
*(LADS scatter and hide. WIDOW and HILDA. enter.)*

WIDOW                 And would you listen to your mother?

HILDA                 But, Ma . . .

WIDOW                 "No, I know best," you say, "I'll send a little boy with a penny." So where's the little boy? And where's the penny? Both gone and no Master Crane in sight. You'll be the death of me, Hilda, I swear you will. I feel weaker already. I'd better sit.

HILDA                 But, Ma . . .

WIDOW                 "But, Ma!" You sound like a goose been stepped on! Like a lady, Hilda - softly - like your mama. Now spread your shawl, girl; you want your dying mother sittin' on a board?

HILDA spreads out her shawl and the WIDOW sits at the DS edge of boardwalk. HILDA sits slightly US of her mother.

HILDA                 No, Ma.

WIDOW                 You're a shameful girl, Hilda, shameful. Never listen to a word your poor old widowed mother tells you. "Fatten him up," I say, "spread out the sweets," I say, "and the schoolmaster will come like bees to honey!" And what to you do? Send a schoolboy to speak for you with a made-up story about your mother baking pies. Speak for yourself, that's what I say. There's not a bit of immodesty in a girl extending an invitation to supper - not a bit.

As WIDOW rattles on, BROM peers out from behind tree and signals for three RUSTIC LADS to crawl up from behind ramp. One taps HILDA on the shoulder and indicates second standing US, arms outheld, a kiss for HILDA on his puckered lips. HILDA stands and runs for it, as third

LAD pulls forth a burlap bag and flings it over HILDA'S head. The three drag HILDA US and toss her over the boardwalk and disappear after. HILDA'S head bobs up for a moment as LAD removes her bonnet. She is dragged back down and LAD with bonnet climbs over, tying it on his head, and sits in HILDA'S place.

WIDOW                   ... Master Crane would have thought it no more than friendliness. You know how fond of his eating is Master Crane. The whole Hollow knows how fond of his eating Master Crane is. (*WIDOW has started to unpack picnic basket; LAD offers help, handing WIDOW items.*) He eats a great deal. You could say he eats too much. Far too much. You could say that he's a pig in a trough and not be far off. But we don't like to find fault, Hilda. "Catch as catch can," I always say. (*WIDOW stops for a moment, holding LAD'S hand but not looking at him.*) Hilda - just look at your nails! (*She releases the hand and continues.*) Now if you took after your mother, it might be a different matter, but you're plain as cottage cheese, girl; a turnip with legs. And we can't be too particular, now can we, Hilda? (*LAD runs US and over edge of ramp.*) Hilda? Hilda, I'm talking to you! (*WIDOW realizes HILDA is gone.*) Hilda! Now where'd that girl get to? Hilda!

LAD 1                   I'm over here, Ma.

WIDOW stomps over to voice. Nothing.

LAD 2                   I'm over here, Ma.

WIDOW                   Hilda?

Again nothing. LAD with bonnet peeks top of head over edge of ramp and waves his hand.

LAD 3                   Here, Ma! I'm under here! Here, Ma!

WIDOW                   (*Moving US.*) If that doesn't beat all . . . I swear, that girl will be the death of me yet! What are you doing under there, Hil... (*LAD sneaks up behind WIDOW and gives her a solid push over the edge.*) . . . daaaaa! (*LAD jumps over after as KATRINA and ICHABOD enter. KATRINA is hurrying away with ICHABOD in pursuit.*)

ICHABOD               (*Imploring.*) It was meant as a compliment...

KATRINA           It wasn't taken as one.

ICHABOD           Think of it as no more than a simile, a metaphor . . .

KATRINA           I'll take it as "good-bye, " Master Crane! (*She runs out.* )

ICHABOD           But, Miss Katrina . . . Women! What's to please them? "Your hair is as golden as pumpkin pie . . ." It doesn't seem offensive. Would a man take offense to such an expression? "Master Crane, your hair is as yellow as apple cider." Seems innocent enough to me. If she were not such a cook, such a thought would not occur. But a cook she is! Oh, Ichabod - you build up your good graces again. Will you miss her partridge pies with chestnuts, her roast ton turkey and clams, her taffy, her cakes, her cheeses, her wines, her . . . (*Hearing the sound of the WIDOW'S muffled cry from beneath the ramp, he listens for a moment and ends hopefully.*) . . . ducks? . . . No more. Well – to home, Master Crane . . .

*ICHABOD starts offstage. BROM, hidden behind the tree, holding a bush in his hand, gives it a violent shake as ICHABOD approaches. ICHABOD stops. ICHABOD takes a step, bush shakes, ICHABOD stops. ICHABOD emits a tiny moan of "oh no." ICHABOD pulls forth his book and lifts his walking stick to poke at the bush. No response. ICHABOD starts off again, bush shakes, ICHABOD prods, but BROM grabs walking stick with his free hand. ICHABOD'S eyes and mouth open wide in terror as he pulls frantically on his stick. BROM releases it and ICHABOD tumbles down to C. ICHABOD rises, looks over to bush, pulls his coat down as if to say "now I mean business" and takes a step toward the bush, but two LADS have crept up behind ICHABOD and one pulls on ICHABOD'S coattails again. ICHABOD freezes, slowly turns around, but the LADS stay directly behind him, out of sight. ICHABOD stops after making a full revolution, now both perplexed and a little frightened. LAD lifts ICHABOD'S hat from his head. ICHABOD'S eyeballs turn upwards as he sees it rise. It drops. Hat rises again and a hand scratches his head. Business continues in this vein with ICHABOD finally running in terror into BROM'S arms. LADS fill the stage.*

BROM               Hello, Master Crane.

ICHABOD           Hello, Master Bones.

BROM               Master Van Brunt to you. (*He drops ICHABOD to the ground.* ) Gone a-courting, Master Crane?

ICHABOD A bit of evening air is all; you know, exercise, good for the heart and liver.

BROM With a young lady on your arm?

ICHABOD Well, I . . . yes, Miss Katrina and I . . . that is, we met, accidentally, on the path and I . . . to escort her home, no more . . . dark paths . . . a gentleman's arm needed . . .

BROM If Miss Katrina needs a man's arm, I'll be there.

ICHABOD Oh? Yes, well, of course that's true, but then you weren't there, were you? And I felt that I couldn't abandon her, as it were, to the wilds of the woods.

BROM Yes. Things happen in the woods, Master Crane.

ICHABOD Oh. Do they?

BROM Perhaps, Master Crane, it would be better for you to stay clear of the woods.

ICHABOD In this vicinity?

BROM Yes. They are particularly dangerous in the vicinity of Miss Katrina's, Master Crane.

BROM Well, I will, of course, remember that, and I thank you for your sage advice . . .

WIDOW *(Calling from beneath the ramp.)* Master Bones! Master Bones! *(LADS scatter as WIDOW appears.)* Think to terrorize a poor, defenseless widow, do you? Ah, Master Crane, just in time!

ICHABOD *(Rushing up to help her onto the ramp.)* Widow Winetraub!

WIDOW Hunting for mushrooms. *(She steps over to BROM and smacks him with her basket.)* You might be a gentleman, Master Bones!

BROM Ma'am?

WIDOW                    My poor Hilda's mired in the mud. Give her a hand. (*BROM, uneasy, steps US. WIDOW indicates where HILDA is and gives him a solid kick in the rear, sending him over the edge. She turns, fixes herself, and sweetly smiles at ICHABOD.*) You'll come for strudel, Master Crane?

ICHABOD                Strudel, Widow Winetraub?

WIDOW                    It'll die of chills if you stand gaping much longer, Teacher. It's made to eat hot.

ICHABOD                (*Offering her his arm.*) By all means, Widow Winetraub.

WIDOW                    (*As they walk.* ) Not that it'll matter to you or your stomach, but it's made by daughter's own hand.

ICHABOD                Hilda? A splendid girl, Widow - splendid!

*They are off. A feeble plea comes from HILDA as she pokes her mud-covered head above the ramp.*

HILDA                    Maaaaaaaaa?!

*Blackout.*