

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Rip Van Winkle

By
Frederick Gaines

From the Story by
Washington Irving

Rip Van Winkle was originally produced by the Children's Theatre Company in the 1970-71 season.

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CHARACTERS:

Rip Van Winkle

Dame Van Winkle

Judith Van Winkle

Young Rip Van Winkle

Dame Van Susteren

Van Bummel

Van Ruyder

Brom

Van Eyck

Vedder

Ensemble includes: The women and children of the village, the men of the tavern, Henry Hudson and the Little Men

ACT I, SCENE 1

The play opens in the village square of a Dutch community in the Kaatskill Mountains. We can see the well where the women of the village gather to do their washing. The children of the village are skipping rope in the open area as their mothers attend to the week's washing. RIP VAN WINKLE enters and runs straight for the jump rope. The CHILDREN sing.

CHILDREN: Rip Van Winkle go up,
Rip Van' Winkle go down,
Rip Van Winkle go all around
On a Saturday afternoon.
Rip Van Winkle jump high,
Rip Van Winkle jump low,
Rip Van Winkle jump to the sun
And to the moon below.
To the tune he jumps,
To the tune he goes,
To the tune he hips and hops
Until it brings him low. . . !

Rip misses and the children tie him up in the rope.

CHILDREN: You missed! Tie him up! Now you have to pay! Loser has to pay!

RIP: No fair! You went too fast!

CHILDREN: Tell us a story! A story to get free!

RIP: My missus will come and be cross with me!

CHILDREN: Tickle him!

RIP: I've told them all already.

DAME

VAN SUSTERN: Meenie, come and help me.

CHILD: Tell a new one.

RIP: Uh. . . uh. . . Ichabod Crane! The Headless - Horseman!

CHILD: That's only for nighttime.

CHILD: For Halloween!

RIP: Henry Hudson!

CHILD: Okay.

As Rip begins to tell the story, the women begin to sing a canon as they work and that song becomes the background for the telling of the story.

WOMEN: Hey, ho, nobody home,
Meat, nor drink, nor money have I none.
Yet I will be happy ...

RIP: Way up in the mountains, when it storms, a sound falls down on the towns below, it sounds like thunder, it sounds like lightning, but it is not so, for those are the sounds of Henry Hudson and his men bowling up in the Kaatskill Peaks. One man has a beard like the wildest of storms and another has a face that consists entirely of nose. . .

DAME VAN SUSTERN, sees DAME VAN WINKLE and her two children as they approach the village square.

DAME

VAN SUSTERN: Dame Van Winkle! Dame Van Winkle!

RIP scurries and ducks behind a sheet hanging on the clothesline, but his hat reveals his place. The children take up a quiet game of jacks or hopscotch and the women resume singing as they wash and wring their clothes. DAME VAN WINKLE and her two children, JUDITH and LITTLE RIP enter. JUDITH immediately sees her father's hat but none of the others seem aware of it.

ACT I, SCENE II

DAME

VAN WINKLE: Good afternoon, Dame Van Sustern. My husband, is he here?

DAME

VAN SUSTERN: Have you come to wash with us, Dame Van Winkle?

VAN WINKLE: I thank you all the same, but it's my lay-about husband I'm looking for.

VAN SUSTERN: My Meenie will be most happy to draw your water for you if you'd like to join us.

VAN WINKLE: Am I carrying a basket of clothes, Dame Van Sustern?

VAN SUSTERN: Uh.. .

VAN WINKLE: As I am not, it seems unlikely that I'll need water drawn.

VAN SUSTERN: Perhaps you'd care to sit with us and talk, Dame Van Winkle. So much going on in the village just now.

VAN WINKLE: Just now it's my husband I want. He hasn't been here?

JUDITH: (To LITTLE RIP) Little Rip, tell father to. . . (JUDITH pantomimes putting his head down. LITTLE RIP slides away from his mother to slip under the sheet to take his father's place. RIP hides behind a rock upstage. LITTLE RIP wears RIP'S hat).

VAN SUSTERN: I think he's with the men cutting winter wood.

VAN WINKLE: I could call that a lie, Dame Van Sustern, but I'll allow it as no more than mistaken apprehension. The man would not lift an axe to timber if his life depended upon it.

VAN SUSTERN: Oh, he did that with my own husband just yesterday afternoon. . .

VAN WINKLE: (To JUDITH) Judith! Where has your brother gotten to?

JUDITH: I think he went on to play with his friend Abraham.

DAME VAN WINKLE spies LITTLE RIP hiding behind the sheet with Rip's hat on and begins to move toward it.

VAN SUSTERN: Now that I think of it, I believe your husband was by and said he had a cow that was wanting his attention. . .

DAME VAN WINKLE whips off the sheet and catches hold of Little RIP by the ear.

VAN WINKLE: Off to Abraham's is he?

JUDITH: We just thought to stay awhile to skip rope if it's all right.

VAN WINKLE: A waste and a folly. Get to home. There is work back there for you..

LITTLE RIP pulls away from his mother and runs off dropping hat.

VAN WINKLE: Young Rip. . .! That boy. As like his father as daylight. (*Picking up the hat*) Judith, I want your father at home. You stay here and you tell him... (*She seems to know where RIP is hiding and directs her words in that direction*). . . should he suddenly appear. (*Gives hat to Judith. She starts off, turns back*). The Bible says not to lie, daughter... though the good women here do not honor that commandment.

She exits. Slight pause and the women resume their work. RIP comes out from behind the rock.

ACT I, SCENE III

RIP: Holy doodle ... she's cross!

VAN SUSTERN: So good of you to help us. (*RIP helps her fold the laundry as they talk*).

RIP: Not at all, a favor returned.

VAN SUSTERN: I meant to thank you for the trout you brought to us yesterday.

RIP: Madam, the pleasure was in the catching and in the sharing.

JUDITH: Here's your hat father. *(Hands Rip his hat. The women have now finished their work and left, leaving JUDITH alone with her father).*

RIP: Your mother's right, Judith. The Book forbids all falsehoods.

JUDITH: Mother says you're wanted at home.

RIP: How good of you to tell me. Well! No use delaying. Off we go.

ACT I, SCENE IV

JUDITH: Why is Mother so cross?

RIP: Your poor mother. Across to bear has your mother. Me, Judith. Your father is not a comfort to have in the home. I work. . . not well.

JUDITH: But you do, Father! All the village knows you do.

RIP: But the difference is. . . not for your mother. Be not too hard on your mother's temper. She loves us all.

JUDITH: Then she shouldn't scold so.

RIP: And I shouldn't play so. None of us are without our faults.

JUDITH: You are.

RIP: Ah. Well. . . nearly. *(They laugh).*

JUDITH: Wouldn't it be easier to just do the work she tells you to?

RIP: The hardest work to do is that you're told to do.

JUDITH: Then do it before she tells you.

RIP: Why didn't I think of that? Be it resolved that this day, if no other, we will do as we are told, we'll labor without stint.

JUDITH: What does "stint" mean?

RIP: Uh. . . fun, I think.

JUDITH: Is labor supposed to be fun?

RIP: I always hoped it would be when I was your age, but I'm learning that it sometimes is not. So, perhaps if we overwhelm your mother with our industry, she'll grant us a reprieve and we might discover something that is fun to do.

JUDITH: Like meet the mail coach?

RIP: Like meet the mail coach.

JUDITH: Do you think she'll let us?

We hear DAME VAN WINKLE'S voice from within the house.

VAN WINKLE: *(Voice off.)* Rip Van winkle!

RIP: Let us. . . hope so.

ACT I, SCENE V

They enter the house and are met by DAME VAN WINKLE.

VAN WINKLE: That boy of yours ran off from me.

RIP: Did he? Well, probably, some little thing he forgot to do.

VAN WINKLE: I'm talking of work not done.

RIP: That was, I think, what he remembered.

VAN WINKLE: There is water to draw, kindling to split and carry, the cow to milk.

RIP: My favorite jobs. I'll do them myself.

VAN WINKLE: When they are done, the barn's to be cleaned, fresh hay forked down and the eggs gathered.

RIP: I will do them. . . without stint. Water to be drawn, is it? I am off to do so. Now where's that bucket? *(He exits the house and finds the bucket outside).*

VAN WINKLE: Your father and you have dreamed up a strategy, have you?

JUDITH: Only to get the chores done on time.

VAN WINKLE: I see.

ACT I, SCENE VI

VAN BUMMEL enters and meets RIP outside.

VAN BUMMEL: You haven't forgotten?

RIP: Van Bummel. . . Uh, well, no... *(He checks to see if his wife has come to within hearing and then draws VAN BUMMEL away from the house).*
Fishing - am I right?

VAN BUMMEL: Fishing.

RIP: Good. Memory is still working. I have, uh. . . some few chores to perform for the wife - water, kindling, hay, eggs. . .

VAN BUMMEL: But I've only a few days left before I must return to my school master duties. Your list will take you weeks.

RIP: True. . .

VAN BUMMEL: A pleasant afternoon, a new rod just arrived, fish waiting to be caught, bottled beer to take along with us. . .

RIP: I think your list has more stint in it than mine.

VAN BUMMEL: I'm ignorant of the craft. I need a teacher.

RIP: I thought you were that.

VAN BUMMEL: In fishing, Rip, in fishing.

RIP: Yes, yes, of course. . .

JUDITH comes out of the house to see if he's doing his chores.

JUDITH: Father.. .

RIP: *(He raises his voice for JUDITH'S benefit) ...and I did promise. A solemn oath. And a man must never break his word. The Good Book tells us that. . . Ah, Judith. You may tell your mother that I am, indeed, off to draw our water, but. . . suspecting the quality of the well, I thought it best to draw it from a fresh running stream. . .*

JUDITH: I'll tell her you've gone to the trout stream. . .

RIP: Just say the stream, daughter, just the stream. And I'll be back soon and those other chores will disappear. . . like water.

RIP: The art of fishing, school master, is more in the direction of patience than effort, more in the direction of leisure than industry. . . *(They exit. JUDITH goes back into the house).*

ACT I, SCENE VII

JUDITH: Mother, father wanted me to tell you.. .

VAN WINKLE: He's off, isn't he?

JUDITH: He said to tell you he went to the stream for our water. . .

VAN WINKLE: But it's fishing, isn't it?

JUDITH: Yes, ma'am.

YOUNG RIP sneaks into the house to get his fishing pole.

VAN WINKLE: Well. . . if there's a fish super in it, I suppose ,it can't be all waste. But if there's not, if there's all talk and dozing, then Master Van Winkle will answer for it.

JUDITH: Yes, Mama.

VAN WINKLE: To work then, to work. What the men won't do, the women must.

LITTLE RIP takes this opportunity to escape with his fishing pole.

VAN WINKLE: Rip! Young Rip! *(He exits running)*. Like his father! Just like his father!

The lights go to black on the scene and a moment later we hear RIP whistling - or singing - as he ties a line on a pole, The school master sits beside him reading aloud from a book.

ACT I, SCENE VIII

RIP: Right this way schoolmaster. Watch out for the slippery rocks.*(Van Bummel stumbles rights himself, sets down creel and rod)*

RIP: What is that on the ground there?

VAN BUMMEL: Creel. It is called a creel.

RIP: Is that a fact? And what's it for?

VAN BUMMEL: Why, to put your fish in.

RIP: In a basket? You put fish in a basket? (*He sees VAN BUMMEL's reaction*). Of course - a Creel.

YOUNG RIP dashes in and quickly sets himself up to fish.

VAN BUMMEL: Sir Isaac Walton says "Ye shall not use this forsayd crafte for no covetousness to the increasing and sparing of your money only. . ."

RIP: And that means?

VAN BUMMEL: That it's for sport and not for catching fish to sell.

RIP: I am in total agreement.

VAN BUMMEL: But principally for your solace and to cause the health of your body and specially of your soul.

RIP: Ah. Now that, that is as true as daylight is. Your soul. The soul of a fisherman is one of pure beauty. Restful, at peace. What do you call this?

VAN BUMMEL: A royal coachman hand-tied fly.

RIP: You don't say. . . For what?

VAN BUMMEL: Sir Isaac says that is the most favorable cast for brook trout.

RIP: The man who wrote that book?

VAN BUMMEL: Walton.

RIP: Walton. . . What are you using, Rip?

LITTLE RIP plays some notes on his fife.

VAN BUMMEL: What does that mean?

RIP: Grasshopper.

VAN BUMMEL: You're the one who taught him to play the fife?

RIP: Well, not that I want the boy to ...

VAN BUMMEL: He plays it during school, straight through his lessons.

RIP: But the boy taught himself ... right, Little Rip? (*LITTLE RIP plays "no" on the fife*). That means yes. (*LITTLE RIP plays "no" again on the fife*).

VAN BUMMEL: I think it means no. (*LITTLE RIP plays 'absolutely right'*).

RIP: (*To LITTLE RIP*) Quiet or you'll frighten the fish away. (*To VAN BUMMEL*) Shall we try the royal coachman? (*VAN BUMMEL nods "yes"*). First, you drop the line into. . .

VAN BUMMEL: No, no. That's not the approved method. Here. (*He takes the rod from RIP and gives RIP the book so he can follow the illustration*) One must follow the action of a delicate fly.

RIP: The royal coachman?

VAN BUMMEL: Exactly. (*VAN BUMMEL whips the line in and out with great rapidity*).

RIP: That's how it is, is it?

VAN BUMMEL: As near as I can make it.

RIP: Going to take a very fast trout, isn't it?

VAN BUMMEL: One is to imitate the action of the fly.

VAN BUMMEL Flicks the line back and forth, Little Rip tries to grab it.

RIP: Here.

Little Rip grabs the line and cuts it with the royal coachman attached.

VAN BUMMEL: My royal coachman. . .!

RIP: If there were any fish that could read, we'd try your book, but in this class, it's the fish we learn to read.

VAN BUMMEL: That seems unlikely. Unless you've learned their language.

RIP: I look at what they're feeding on and what they're feeding on, is what they'll bite on. Grasshopper. (*LITTLE RIP hands him one and he quickly baits his hook with it. He tosses the line in the water and lays back*). The approved method.

VAN BUMMEL: But the sport. . .

RIP: The sport is in the fishing, school master. Lay back, let your soul expand. One, Two, Three ...

The focus fades on the scene. We hear the men at the village tavern singing a song "I Wish I Was Single Again" and as the lights come up on them, we see them gathered around an outdoor table with their steins in their hands. When the song ends, there is general applause.

ACT I, SCENE IX

VAN RUYDER: More charm in song than all the haunts of the mountain can chase away.

VAN EYCK: As Ichabod Crane was wont to say. (*The men all laugh quietly*).

BROM: Sweet Ichabod. Our departed master of psalmody.. . and superstitions.

VEDDER: The Headless Horseman.

BROM: Midnight rides and pumpkins.

VAN RUYDER: But still, the Kaatskills are a place of wonder.

VAN EYCK: True. I have heard strange sounds from the Kaatskill Hills.

VEDDER: And there are times that are worse than others.

VAN RUYDER: Nights that are worse than others.

BROM: I am reminded of your uncle, Nicholas Vedder.

VEDDER: Lost.

VAN EYCK: And not found yet this day.

BROM: And some still say. . . it was Henry Hudson's men that took him off.

VEDDER: Gone.

VAN EYCK: And never seen again in the village of Falling Water.

VAN RUYDER: I heard them about last night.

BROM: Wouldn't stop thundering.

VAN EYCK: And some fools call it thunder. (*They all shake their heads for they know better*). Bowling in the Kaatskill peaks.

BROM: Drunk on heavy Dutch ale.

VAN RUYDER: And the night looks right for it again. Heavy.

BROM: There'll be wives wondering what happened to their wash come tomorrow.

VAN EYCK: Last Wednesday -- do you recall? -- the wind came up late, the sky filled with all sorts of sounds coming from the hills. 'Get the wash in, wife,' I said, but no, the next day will be fine. Two sheets and pillowcases gone, never seen again.

VEDDER: Wednesday last?

VAN EYCK: My word on it.

VEDDER: Two of my best pewter mugs were stolen Wednesday last.

BROM: They weren't.

VEDDER: They were. You were here, Van Eyck, do you remember? The two of us sat here late, talking, remarking on the clouds, .and that girl of mine left our mugs right here on the table. Gone the next morning.

VAN EYCK: Henry Hudson's men.

VAN RUYDER: Well, they like to drink from fine pewter same as any living man.

VEDDER: Does it have to be from mine? *(The men all laugh).*

BROM: No question about it. This could be a night Hudson's men will be about, stealing what they can put their hands to; bowling at nine pins all the nightlong. My door will be shut tight I can tell you.

ACT I, SCENE X

Silence, all of them contemplating the, lowering sky. RIP, and VAN BUMMEL enter with their catch. RIP studies them a minute and then shouts.

RIP: Hallo, there! *(The men all jump, and then laugh. RIP holds out the creel full of fish toward the young BARMAID).* Fish, fish, and more fish! Fry them all for the company! *(ALL cheer).*

BROM: And did our school master learn the art, Rip?

VAN BUMMEL: From the Kaatskill master.

RIP: Ah, but there was one, a lunker as long as my arm that wouldn't rise to be looked at. Waiting he was, for a royal coachman fly or nothing. *(The men all laugh).*

BROM: Be glad you didn't catch him, School Master.

VAN BUMMEL: Your name's on him is it?

BROM: They say there's a pool, near the stream Rip fishes, that is the property of no other than Henry Hudson.

VAN BUMMEL: Oh, go on with you.

BROM: One day you'll learn, School Master. You'll take the trout, you'll clean him out and there'll be an old Dutch coin inside him there. That night there'll be a knock on the door and when you open it. . . beware.

VAN BUMMEL: A fish is a fish and if I catch it, it's mine.

BROM: You know nothing of Henry Hudson?

VAN BUMMEL: I know that he found this valley and named it.

BROM: Named it and lives here yet, Hudson's Valley.

VAN BUMMEL: Here? Hudson's dead, a century ago. Lost off the coast of Greenland.

VAN EYCK: That's only what they say in books. He's here all right.

VAN BUMMEL: You can't believe that. The man would be as old as Noah.

BROM: But he is dead. . . or partly so.

VAN RUYDER: How many were with him, Abraham?

BROM: His son, himself, seven faithful. Nine.

VAN RUYDER: There are nine men who come to the Kaatskills each hour when it storms. And what we hear as thunder is those same nine bowling at nine pins over the valleys of the Kaatskills. (*Silence for a moment and then VAN BUMMEL laughs*).

VAN BUMMEL: Well, it wouldn't be a Dutch coin if it was Hudson - it would be English! *(He laughs but no one laughs with him).*

VAN BUMMEL: Rip, tell these fools that they're fools.

RIP: They might not be.

VAN BUMMEL: You can't mean to say. . .

RIP: I hear the stories that are told. I'd never call any man a liar.

VAN BUMMEL: But you've walked those hills from top to bottom and if any ghosts walked there, you would have seen them.

RIP: I might have heard them.

Slight pause and then we hear a distant roll of thunder. The men fall silent and then we hear DAME VAN WINKLE'S voice from off stage.

ACT I, SCENE XI

DAME VAN WINKLE: Rip Van Winkle!

Slight pause and then the men all quickly move away from RIP to another table.

VAN RUYDER: Have you seen the paper that came in the mail, School Master?

VAN BUMMEL: I'd hoped to have a look at it.

VAN EYCK: Oh, it has the latest news from the city. . .

The men have all drifted away when DAME VAN WINKLE enters with her two children.

RIP: I was on my way to the stream to draw water. . . *(DAME VAN WINKLE says nothing and RIP'S voice trails off into silence).*

VAN WINKLE: And what have you done for your family this day, Rip Van Winkle?

RIP: Wife, I . . .

VAN WINKLE: I did not do my work for you, wife.

RIP: I . . . did not do my work for you, wife. That is true. I did not. I said I'd fetch the water, split the wood and carry it and I did not. I am sorry now for it if I gave you worry. I'm hopeful of forgiveness.

VAN WINKLE: Look at your children, Rip Van Winkle.

RIP: I . . . yes, yes, I see them.

VAN WINKLE: Are you proud of what you give to them?

RIP: Well. . . yes, now that I look at them. This one has a touch of me in him, that one, my Judith, more than a little of her sweet mother. . .

VAN WINKLE: They are dressed almost in rags, husband.

RIP: I think I recognize that shirt as one I used to wear and it felt warm enough to me. . .

VAN WINKLE: A dozen years ago it felt warm enough to you -- it's hardly held together with my patches now!

RIP: And very well sewn, wife. You have a fine hand at stitching. (*The men at the other table laugh and DAME VAN WINKLE turns to them. RIP grins*). The man who has a wife who sews always knows what shows and flows is love. . . (*BROM, at the other table, laughs and DAME VAN WINKLE wheels back to her husband*).

VAN WINKLE: Silly rhymes from a silly man! I thought to forgive you if you at least brought back fish for our supper, but you bring nothing but foolery!

RIP: Ah. Well, good wife. . .

BARMAID: (*The BARMAID enters from the kitchen*). Rip's fish are fried and hot!

ALL cheer and converge around her. Silence between RIP and his wife for a moment.

RIP: We may, at least, share in it, wife. . . (*She slaps him hard and the others are aware of it*). Perhaps not.

VAN WINKLE: I will not. You may, if you wish, eat of it. We have want of food honestly gained.

RIP: But, wife. . .

VAN WINKLE: We'll not stay here to listen to your lies right now. They encourage you. Feed you ale, listen to your foolish tales, and laugh with you at your shrewish wife. Children, let's go.

She exits. There is a brief silence and then the tavern returns to hilarity and high spirits. RIP is aware of the effect on his two children and does not join them in their laughter. LITTLE RIP runs off after his mother.

ACT I, SCENE XII

BROM: Oh, our Rip has been paid in full!

VAN RUYDER: Doesn't he handle her well?

VAN EYCK: Every man can rule a shrew. . . save he that hath her.

RIP holds out his arms to JUDITH.

BROM: I will say this of your fish, School Master. . .

VAN BUMMEL: No, no. Over there is the master.

VEDDER: Of all but Dame Van Winkle.

They all laugh. JUDITH comes reluctantly to RIP and he speaks quietly to her.

JUDITH: She shouldn't hit you.

RIP: Well, what do you do with a foolish old man who won't learn? I brought home shame and I should not have. . . (*JUDITH, unable to laugh, turns away from him*).

BROM: Rip, come have a bite and a tankard of stout!

RIP: (To *JUDITH*) Do you want some food?

JUDITH: No.

RIP: Am I a terrible man to stay and try to be happy for an hour?

JUDITH: No.. .

RIP: No more than an hour, no more than a plate of trout. . . (*She turns back to him knowing he has told her mother the same sort of thing too often. Slight hesitation*). I know, I know. . . my old promises. I will not break one to you. Mark it on your calendar; poppa made a promise to me. (*She, finally, smiles*). Off now. Find Little Rip and take him with you. I will be there to tuck you in. (*She hurries out. RIP watches her for a moment and then turns to the men with a grin*).

VAN EYCK: Will you tuck me in too, poppa.

RIP: If all my trout are gone, I'll send the School Master back for more!

The men all laugh and RIP joins them. The focus fades from the scene. In the darkness, we hear the low rumble of thunder and then we see DAME VAN WINKLE to her children as they prepare for bed. LITTLE RIP is kneeling before his mother, JUDITH is sweeping the floor with a broom.

ACT I, SCENE XIII

VAN WINKLE: Sloth, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears, while the used key is always bright, as Poor Richard says. But does thou love life, then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of, as Poor Richard says. (*to LITTLE RIP*) Young Rip, a different day tomorrow. Are we agreed? (*LITTLE RIP nods his head*). No following after your father, no idling on the village square, hard work and promptly done. (*He nods again*). Off to bed now. (*He exits*). And you're to see that he holds to that.

JUDITH: Yes, mother.

VAN WINKLE: Young boys need discipline. They prosper from it.

JUDITH: Yes, mother.

VAN WINKLE: Off to bed now.

JUDITH: (*JUDITH continues to sweep the floor*). Father said he'd be here.

VAN WINKLE: We've all heard that promise before, haven't we? (*She starts to close up the house for the night*).

JUDITH: You aren't going to lock the house, are you?

VAN WINKLE: We do the same every night. . .

JUDITH: But a storm is coming and he'll have nowhere to sleep.

VAN WINKLE: He will sleep in the barn, or under a tree. Don't worry. Your father will always survive. As Poor Richard says. . .

ACT I, SCENE XIV

RIP peaks in through a window or door.

RIP: Improve, improve, throw away idle ways.

JUDITH: He said he would come!

VAN WINKLE: He came home to sleep, not to do work.

RIP: I've come to see if it's a home that I live in, or only a house.

VAN WINKLE: Your home is what you make it.

RIP: Nay, what you make it.

VAN WINKLE: And if I do, it is only because none other does it for me.

RIP: Would you have me sew and mend and cook the meals?

VAN WINKLE: I would have you work for the farm to prosper - yes! A handsome land my father gave us for a wedding gift and look at it now. The fields lie fallow, the fences down, the animals half starving. A dowry my father gave to me and do you see what I have left? This poor hand mirror that only shows me the worry in my own face. (*DAME VAN WINKLE holds up her hand mirror*).

RIP: Good wife. . .

VAN WINKLE: Look at your face, Rip Van Winkle. Is this the face of the man who took me to bride these many years ago? Who promised to honor me and love our children?

RIP: I love the children ... !

VAN WINKLE: Then look at the face of your son and you will see there what you are making him into, a boy with no pride in himself.

RIP: Good dame, I had not meant. . .

VAN WINKLE: You had not meant! You had not meant! Failure is filled with "had not meant!" Do you expect the farm to care for itself?

RIP: I had hoped in my middle years, to have some piece of help from my children. . .

VAN WINKLE: But they follow you! Can't you see it? Young Rip is your very picture and Judith so worn down with doing all your chores for you that she'll end up like her mother, a tired, weak woman.

RIP: The slap did not feel that weak, good wife.

VAN WINKLE: I . . . I should not have given in to my anger and am sorry that I did.

RIP: Ah, well. It brought me a mug of porter so it was worth something.

VAN WINKLE: Even that is a joke to you!

RIP: It may be that I joke to make a reason to get through a day.

VAN WINKLE: Has it occurred to you that hard work might give you a better reason?

RIP: Well. . . let me consider. . . No, I think that hard work...

VAN WINKLE: Away with you. We're better off without your jokes and lollygags.

RIP: Do not tempt me. . .

VAN WINKLE: It is a plain statement of fact and not temptation.

RIP: In faith, good wife, I had not meant. . . (*He hears his own excuse, stops, ashamed*). I am a poor father and a poor provider. I am ashamed to be what I am, but, wife. . . there are good days as well.

VAN WINKLE: Yes, when you wake long enough from your slumbers and walks and children's games to bring home fish or game, but they are few and far between, and I see no prospect for their improvement while you waste your days at the King George Inn.

RIP: The King George Inn is my one escape from constant nagging from a wife I once thought I loved.

VAN WINKLE: Oh, it's thought that you loved now.

RIP: No, it's that I did love but now wonder at my own foolishness.

JUDITH: Don't say it, father. . .

VAN WINKLE: He has said it and it is no great surprise. He loves none of us any longer.

RIP: I did not say. . .

VAN WINKLE: Your actions say what you're ashamed to admit.

RIP: And you think you would be better off without me.

VAN WINKLE: I . . . did not say. . .

RIP: Oh, but your actions say it loudly. A slap for your husband at the King George Inn.

VAN WINKLE: I have said that I am sorry. . .

RIP: Sorry never sewed a seam. I will test it for you, good dame. Husband your own household, if you think I am nothing.

JUDITH: No, father. . . Mother. . .

RIP grabs his hat, gun, and powder horn.

VAN WINKLE: I would not put you out into a storm even though you test me too often. . .

RIP: The storm without is not so hurtful as the storm within the house. I am taking my rifle and powder and going somewhere into the night!

VAN WINKLE: Good riddance. At least the children will learn what it is to do a fair day's work.

RIP: Judith, never forget that your father loves you and this promise I make. . .

VAN WINKLE: Love alone will not put a meal on the table.

JUDITH: Please let him finish his promise.

VAN WINKLE: Hush!

RIP: I am gone!

RIP hesitates and then dramatically exits into the night and slams the door shut behind him.

JUDITH: Don't let him go!

VAN WINKLE: He will be back. His promises never last longer than a day away.

JUDITH peers out the window at the figure of her father, but he is too stubborn to give in so he shoulders his gun, pulls down his hat to keep off the rain and starts off for the mountains.

JUDITH: What if he comes back and the door is locked to him?

VAN WINKLE: Stay there to open it if you want, but you'll see sunlight before you see him again.

She exits. Judith sits by the window. We see RIP high in the mountains.

ACT I, SCENE XV

RIP enters singing the song the men were singing in the tavern.

RIP: Wives! Did God trouble himself with one? A bachelor. A man should be a bachelor. What would I miss if I had no wife? Someone to mend my stockings and pare my carrots - and is that so much? A man can do whatever a woman can. . . save children. . . Two handsome one's she has given me. Ah, well. . . They are well on their ways. Raise themselves up if I guess right. (He sits down on a rock). Did I seem such a fool? I felt. . . something of a fool. Tempers. Man's curse, to lose his temper. She is not. . . as bad as I make her. Does have a tongue like steel though. . . Still, the home is kept well, our clothes patched, our dinners hot. . . Well, one night is enough of a lesson. I'll rise early, bring her some quail and ask for forgiveness. Yes. Tomorrow is a fine day to start anew. (We see a flash of lightning and then hear a rolling of thunder). What a flash that was. Henry Hudson's lighting his pipe up in the mountains tonight. Storms a brewing. I better find shelter. (He hears a voice from off).

VOICE: Rip Van Winkle!

RIP: What? Has she followed me up here? (He listens, silence. He tries to settle against the stump again).

VOICE: Rip Van Winkle!

He stands up, peers into the darkness, and then he sees the figure of one of the little men in the distance.

ACT I, SCENE XVI

RIP: It looks to be someone down there - and he knows my name. (*THE MAN comes closer and RIP can see him more clearly*). I thought nobody but me ever came up this far. . . Hello, there. (*THE MAN asks him with a gesture to help lift the large keg from his back*). What. . .? Oh. Lift it down, eh? Glad to. (*He takes the keg from his back and sets it on the ground. THE MAN plumps himself down on it*). Sit down and make yourself comfortable. Thanks, Rip, don't mind if I do. . . Aren't you going to speak to a feller? I don't want to speak to you then. Who you think you was, that I want to speak to you anymore you want to speak to me? (*RIP pokes him in the chest and THE MAN turns his gaze on him*). Holy doodle! What sort of a man is this? You must be an old sea-snake is what you are. (*THE MAN gets up off the keg and gestures to RIP to help him carry it*). Well, why don't you say so then? You mean you would like me to help you up the mountain with that keg? well, sir, I won't do it. No, there's no good you speakin' like that. I've never seen you before have I? (*THE MAN shakes his head*). I don't want to see you again neither. That's a joke. What you got in that keg - schnapps? I don't believe you. Is it good schnapps? Well, maybe I will help you then. Go along, pick up my gun there and I'll follow along with the keg. Lead the way.

They disappear into the darkness as the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls. A moment later, we see them again higher in the mountains.

ACT I, SCENE XVII

Possibly add music or a song that helps to set the mood and create the passage of time.

RIP: So ... you plan on drinking this all yourself? Or for a schnapps fest, huh? With Henry Hudson's men? *(They exit)* You might be one of them that got stuck off into the ocean with him. I think we're almost up to the clouds, we come so high, makes my head spin.. Will we be singing one of them sea shanties like Bound Away, huh? *(sings)* Bound away, for to stay ... you know that one? Come on then, sing with me ... *(He sees another little man appear)*. You're another fella! You that other one's brother? *(He sees a third little man)*. You're another one! *(He sees the whole crew of little men)*. Here's the whole family! I'm a dead man for certain! *(The chief of the little men approaches him)*. Oh, here we are then -the grandfather of 'em all. How is you, sir? You're wondering how I come to intrude on you here I can see it. Well. . . I'll tell you how it was. I met one of your little fellas back down there and it was that one. . . No, I think maybe that. . . No, for sure him. . . It was one of 'em and he asked would I help him to carry this keg of schnapps for him. . . and what I said then was, say, you be one of them Henry Hudson's men... *(They all turn to him)* Course I might have been wrong. I've been known to be wrong. I didn't come intendin' any harm to you. . . *(THE CHIEF extends a drink to him)*. You want me to drink with you? Well, I've been swearin' off drinkin' because of the trouble it gets me into, but as I worked up a thirst carryin' your keg up for you. . . Don't mind if I do. If you'll all drink with me. . . To us! To all men who are bachelors! *(He drinks and all of them drink with him. One of the men bowls a bowling ball of lightning. We hear thunder and lightning when it strikes off stage)*. Let me have a bowl of that ball, and you'll see how this game is won. Straight ahead is the answer and down will come. . .

He tries to pick up the ball and it is hot to the touch.

RIP: Donner and blitzen! What you do to poor old Rip? Burn his hand cause you think he'll beat you? *(He pours some of the schnapps on his burned hand)*. Ah, there, that does it. Icy cold. *(He licks the schnapps off of his hand)*. That is a... that is a fine schnapps. Strong. I'll just sit down here and let the night air clear my head. . .

He sits down and accepts another mug of schnapps. Some of the other men continue bowling.

RIP: I shouldn't. More than an old fool should drink so fast.. .

One of the little men bowls a ball and the lightning flashes and the thunder rolls. RIP is startled awake and turns to the chief of the little men who has just lit his pipe and is puffing it contentedly.

RIP: You are like. . . You are like Nicholas Vedder at the King George Inn. . . Never a word. . . but puffs his pipe. . . puffs his pipe. . .
(Another little man bowls a ball and we hear a peal of thunder). How could a man sleep. . . sleep with all this noise. . . sleep. . .

The light slowly fades on the sleeping RIP as we hear the rolling thunder.