

Speaking of fabulous characters, England has produced a bumper crop. But here in the colonies, we have a few of our own. Paul Bunyan, Pecos Bill, Johnny Appleseed, Black Bart, Davy Crockett, Daniel Boone.

And, of course, the one and only Ichabod Crane. Ichy was the country schoolmaster dreamed up by Washington Irving. He had a way with a **yarn** did Mr Irving.

If we could journey back to that period in history when Manhattan was but a market town, we would discover, in one of the coves which indent the shores of the Hudson, the little village of Tarry Town. And just beyond, **nestled deep in the low rolling hills, a sequestered glen. It's a quiet, peaceful place**, and yet, somehow... **foreboding**. It **abounds** in haunted spots, twilight tales and local superstitions.

The best-known story concerns an **itinerant** schoolmaster who once frequented these parts. Some say his **melancholy** spirit still haunts the vicinity. The **pedagogue** was described as a most unusual man. To see him striding along, one might mistake him for a scarecrow **eloped** from a cornfield. He was tall, but exceedingly lank. His head was small and flat on top, with a long, snipe nose. **It looked like a weathercock perched upon his spindle neck**. Altogether, he was an **apparition** seldom to be seen in broad daylight.

Late one drowsy autumn afternoon, this strange figure first approached Sleepy Hollow. As usual, there had gathered at Ye Olde Schnooker and Schnapps Shoppe a group of rustic lads, the Sleepy Hollow boys. Their self-appointed leader, Brom Bones, was a **burly, roistering** blade, always ready for a fight or a frolic. Though Brom was given to **madcap** pranks and practical jokes, there was no **malice** in his mischief. With his **waggish** humor and **prodigious** strength, Brom Bones was quite the hero, all the country round.

Odds bodkins! Gadzooks! Look at that old spook of spooks.

Who's that coming down the street?

Are they shovels or are they feet?

Lean and **lanky**

Skin and bone

With clothes a scarecrow would hate to own

Yet, he has a certain air

Debonair and devil-may-care

It's the new schoolmaster What's his name? Ichabod Ichabod Crane

What a name! Kind of odd But nice just the same

Funny pan, funny frame Ichabod may be quaint May be odd, and maybe he ain't Anyway, there's no complaint From Ichabod, Ichabod Crane...

Though the arrival of the **pedagogue** gave rise to mixed emotions, the townspeople all agreed they'd never seen anyone... Like Ichabod, Ichabod Crane

The schoolroom became Ichabod's empire, over which, with lordly dignity, he held absolute sway. Truth to say, Ichabod was a conscientious man, and ever bore in mind the **maxim** spare the rod and

spoil the child. Still, he was careful to administer justice with discrimination. For it **behoved** him to keep on good terms with his pupils. Especially if their mothers happened to be good cooks.

Who's the town's ladies' man?

Gets around like nobody can Has to be none other than...

As time went by, it may be seen that the pedagogue got on **tolerably** enough. Moreover, Ichabod found ways to increase his slender income and, at the same time, awaken the cultural interests of the sleepy little village. It was **inevitable** that a man like Ichabod would become an object of ridicule to Brom Bones and his gang. Yet, to Ichabod, these were small matters. He possessed a remarkable **equanimity** which remained quite undisturbed until that fateful day, when his path was crossed by a woman. A certain woman. Katrina Van Tassel, only child of Baltus Van Tassel, the richest farmer in the county. She was a blooming lass, plump as a partridge. Ripe, melting and rosy-cheeked.

Once you have met that little **coquette** Katrina

You won't forget Katrina

But nobody yet has ever upset Katrina

That cute coquette Katrina

You can do more with Margaret or Helena Or Anne or Angelina

But Katrina will kiss and run

To her, a romance is fun

With always another one to start

And yet when you've met that little coquette Katrina

You've lost your heart

There was no doubt the fair Katrina was the richest prize in the countryside. The schoolmaster, being an ambitious man, began to fill his mind with many sugared thoughts and hopeful **suppositions**.

Katrina, my love. Who can resist your grace? Your charm?

And who can resist your father's farm? Boy, what a set-up!

There's gold in them acres, and that ain't hay.

Not to mention that lovely green stuff.

Katrina, my sweet. My treasure.

Treasure... That barn's a gold mine. How I'd love to hit the jackpot.

Dear Katrina. Papa's only child. Papa! The old goat can't take it with him. When he cuts out, that's where I cut in.

Sweet Katrina, poor little rich girl. But don't worry, Katie, Ichabod will protect you. Yes, Katrina, you've won me. I surrender.

And yet when you've met that little coquette Katrina

You've lost your heart

Every **portal** to Katrina's heart was jealously guarded by a host of rustic admirers. But Ichabod was confident he'd soon **ride roughshod** over these simple country **bumpkins**. But the most **formidable** obstacle he had failed to reckon with. That was the **redoubtable** Brom Bones.

The ease with which Brom cleared the field of rivals both **piqued** and provoked the fair Katrina. She often wished that some champion would appear and take the field openly against the **boisterous Brom**. A wiser man would have shrunk from the competition, but love is blind. Ichabod was aware only that **Dame Fortune** was at last thundering at his door.

It's true that Brom liked a joke as well as the next, but enough was too much. It was time for open warfare. He'd double that schoolmaster up and lay him on a shelf in his schoolhouse! But this was easier said than done. No doubt of it, this was Ichabod's lucky day. The schoolmaster was a man of hidden talents, a rival to be **reckoned** with.

Still, wars are neither won nor lost at the first encounter. The high-flyer might yet be brought to earth. For Brom Bones was never a man to cry quits.

On the occasion of her father's annual Halloween **frolic**, Katrina chose to stir the embers of the smouldering rivalry. One invitation in particular carried a most personal summons. The worthy schoolmaster was in a transport of joy. To him, this could mean but one thing. Ichy, you sly old dog, you! What is this strange power you have over women? Well, tonight's the night, boy! Just turn on the old charm. The fair Katrina is yours for the asking.

Gaily bedecked and nobly mounted on a horse he had borrowed, Ichabod issued forth like a knight errant of old to keep a **tryst** with his lady fair. There was nothing to equal the merrymaking at Mynheer Van Tassel's farm. To Ichabod, here was a perfect field for his **endeavours**. How would he put his best foot forward! Beyond all his other talents, he prided himself upon his dancing. Unhappy Brom, already bested at every turn, saw himself once more outmatched. For as he watched the **posturing pedagogue**, he had to admit that here was a flawless picture of ease and grace. There was no doubt that Ichabod was the man of the hour. Brom had to concede his rival another victory.

Yet, there was still a chance his time would come. For when the hour grew late, Van Tassel would call on his guests to tell him ghostly tales of Halloween. Brom knew there was no more **potent** believer in spooks and goblins than Ichabod Crane.

Just gather round and I'll **elucidate** what goes on outside, when it gets late.
Around about midnight, the ghosts and banshees get together for nightly **jamborees**.
Things with horns and saucer eyes, and some with fangs about this size!
Some are fat. And some are thin! And some don't even wear their skin!
I'm telling you, brother, it's a frightful sight what goes on, Halloween night.
When spooks have a midnight jamboree They break it up with **fiendish** glee
Ghosts are bad, but the one that's cursed Is the Headless Horseman, he's the worst
That's right, he's a fright on Halloween night
When he goes a-joggin' across the land Holdin' his **noggin** in his hand
Demons take one look and groan And hit the road for parts unknown
Beware, take care, he rides alone
And there's no spook like a spook who's **spurned**
They don't like him and he's really burned
He swears to the longest day he's dead He'll show them that he can get ahead
They say he's tired of his flamin' top He's got a **yen** to make a swap

So he rides one night each year To find a head in the hollow here
Now, he likes them little, he likes them big Part in the middle, or a wig
Black or white, or even red The Headless Horseman needs a head
With a hip-hip and a **clippity-clop** He's out lookin' for a top to chop
So don't stop to figure out a plan You can't reason with a headless man
Now, if you doubt this tale is so, I met that spook just a year ago.
Now, I didn't stop for a second look, but made for the bridge that **spans** the brook.
For once you cross that bridge, my friends The ghost is through, his power ends
So, when you're riding home tonight Make for the bridge with all your might
He'll be down in the hollow there He needs your head Look out! Beware!
With a hip-hip and a clippity-clop He's out **lookin'** for a head to swap
So don't try to figure out a plan You can't reason with a headless man

It was the witching hour of night as Ichabod pursued his travel home. The sky grew darker. One by one, **the stars winked out their lights**. Driving clouds obscured the moon from sight. Never had the schoolmaster felt so **melancholy**, so utterly alone. The nearer he approached the hollow, the more **dismal** he became.

Once inside the murky glen, Ichabod's anxiety increased one-hundredfold. The forest seemed to close in behind him. Every small detail of Brom's awful story returned to haunt his **recollection**.

Headless Horseman. Beware! Once you cross that bridge, my friends, the ghost is through, his power ends.

Next morning, Ichabod's hat was found. And close beside it, a shattered pumpkin. But there was no trace of the schoolmaster. Shortly thereafter, Brom Bones led the fair Katrina to the altar. Rumours persisted that Ichabod was still alive, married to a wealthy widow in a distant county. But the good Dutch settlers refused to believe such nonsense. They knew the schoolmaster had been spirited away by the Headless Horseman.

With a hip-hip and a clippity-clop He's out looking for a head to swap But don't try to figure out a plan
You can't reason with a headless man

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