

SLEEPY HOLLOW: THE LOST CHAPTER

By Jeremy Sony

Freely Adapted from Washington Irving's
"The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"

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CHARACTERS

HANNA DE DAPPERE (16)

ABIGAIL SEYMOUR (20s)

ICHABOD CRANE (30s)

BROM VAN BRUNT (20s-30s)

KATRINA VAN TASSEL (20s)

NATHANIEL VISSER (Student)

SAMANTHA VERSTANDIG (Student)

CATHERINE MILLER (Student)

ROSE MOLENAAR (Student)

PETER DEVALCK (Student)

SUSANNA KONING (20s-30s)

SARAH VAN BRUNT (20s-30s)

JOSEPHINE KONING / DIEDRE VAN HART (40s-50s)

MARGRIET GELDERLAND / ELEANOR VAN TASSEL (40s-50s)

HANS VAN RIPPER / BALTUS VAN TASSEL / HORSEMAN (40s-50s)

TIME & PLACE

1790, shortly after Ichabod Crane's disappearance; and 1800.
Sleepy Hollow, New York

NOTES ON CASTING

Hanna is around 16. Other student ages are flexible (recommend ages 10-16; or they can all be teens. Hanna is always the oldest).

Doubling: The play is designed to work with doubling (using 15 actors) solely for economy; if you want to cast each part, you can.

Diverse casting is encouraged. The play lives in 1790; we do not.

Character ages are just that: *character* ages. Don't let this limit you in casting. This play has been performed by adults alongside youth actors, as well as a full youth cast (ages 8-19) playing all the roles.

...AND ONE MORE THING TO REMEMBER

This play is freely adapted and inspired by Washington Irving's famous tale of Ichabod Crane and the headless horseman as told in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. When Ichabod Crane went missing in Sleepy Hollow on that fateful night in 1790, it was thought that to be the end of the story; but Ichabod Crane wasn't the only schoolteacher to come to Sleepy Hollow. *Sleepy Hollow: The Lost Chapter* picks up in the final pages of Washington Irving's classic, revealing a previously untold piece of the legend.

SLEEPY HOLLOW: THE LOST CHAPTER was originally produced by Street Theatre Company's ClassAct Dramatics under the title "Ichabod: Missing in Sleepy Hollow".

It premiered on October 4, 2013, in Nashville, Tennessee;
Artistic Director, Cathy Street;
Directed by Elaina McKnight Shaver.

Winner of the Playhouse Nashville 2013 Playwriting Contest

SCENE ONE

The glowing faces of jack-o-lanterns fill the stage. Centered among them, is HANNA. She's in the middle of telling a story.

HANNA: The horseman appears! Headless and vile! His steed snorts fire and scorches the earth where it treads. His blade is like ice!

(From the darkness around the jack-o-lanterns.)

SAMANTHA: Ice?

HANNA: Yes, ice. His blade is like ice and cuts right through you.

SAMANTHA: Ice is not scary.

HANNA: It is when it cuts off your head.

(LIGHTS rise around HANNA and we see a group of school children --- PETER, SAMANTHA, CATHERINE, NATHANIEL, and ROSE --- sitting with their jack-o-lanterns. There are a couple of BENCHES and stacks of BOOKS on the ground. We are in the Sleepy Hollow SCHOOL HOUSE. It's unkempt. It's also early evening and these students shouldn't be here.)

NATHANIEL: I don't think we should be talking much about this.

HANNA: Are you afraid of the horseman, Nathaniel?

NATHANIEL: Aren't you?

HANNA: No.

CATHERINE: Hanna's not afraid of anything.

HANNA: Thank you, Catherine. Especially not some silly ghost story made up to frighten children.

NATHANIEL: My father says the Hessian's quite real.

CATHERINE: Your father says quite a few things.

NATHANIEL: He said the Hessian came for Mr. Crane. He said the horseman took his head right from his body and carried it off.

HANNA: Then where's Mr. Crane's body?

NATHANIEL: It's without its head is where it is.

ROSE: My mom says the horseman took that too.

HANNA: He only takes the heads.

ROSE: But maybe this time he took him all.

HANNA: No, you're getting it quite wrong. The Hessian is headless and thus when he comes for you, he only takes your head.

ROSE: I thought you said you don't believe in ghost stories.

HANNA: That is absolutely correct. I don't believe in ghost stories. Yet, you need to make sure the story is accurate. There's little use going on about things that make little or no sense.

ROSE: I like things that make no sense.

CATHERINE: Is that why you like Peter?!

ROSE: Catherine Miller, you stop talking right this moment.

HANNA: Agreed. Everyone who is not me, please refrain yourself from the conversation. I am telling you a story. Now where was I?

NATHANIEL: But Mr. Crane isn't a story --- he's our teacher.

SAMANTHA: He was our teacher.

PETER: He wasn't a good teacher.

SAMANTHA: He wasn't a good teacher? What do you know, Peter, about being a good teacher? I think he was quite good indeed. Mr. Crane can't help it if you didn't learn your numbers.

PETER: He was mean and doted on Katrina van Tassel a bit too much if you ask me.

HANNA: Ichabod Crane is not the point of this story.

PETER: I think Mr. Crane would beg to differ. It's his head that was taken off that bridge.

NATHANIEL: It wasn't on the bridge, it was near it. The one at the edge of the village? The horseman can't cross that bridge, it's a church bridge, it makes it safe.

HANNA: You know pretty much everything there is to know about the horseman, don't you Nathaniel?

NATHANIEL: Only what my father tells me.

HANNA: Did he tell you that the horseman takes people in threes?

NATHANIEL: He does?

HANNA: Oh yes. He very much does. The horseman needs to take three people's heads.

NATHANIEL: Three?

HANNA: Three. Every year. And Ichabod Crane... if he took him, was the second. You see, my father shares secrets with me too.

SAMANTHA: What secrets could he have possibly shared with you?

HANNA: The secret that this story about the Hessian, about the headless horseman that haunts these woods, who needs to claim three heads every year to appease its own tormented soul... That this story is very real. I've seen the hoof prints.

SAMANTHA: That's a complete and utter lie.

HANNA: It's nothing of the sort. It's complete and utter truth. The hoof prints of his steed, burned into the very earth upon which it stood. On our land. Forever scarred by its sheer evil.

CATHERINE: It's not simply a ghost story then? You've seen it?

HANNA: I have said, repeatedly, that I do not believe in ghost stories. But I do believe that the Hessian still rides.

SAMANTHA: You're trying to properly frighten us, Hanna.

HANNA: That's quite obvious, yet it doesn't make what I'm saying any less true. Look what happened to Mr. Crane.

ROSE: Hanna, you said Mr. Crane was the second person taken.

HANNA: Taken this year, absolutely.

PETER: Then who was the first?

SAMANTHA: Nobody, absolutely nobody was taken away by horseman.

HANNA: Yet there was a disappearance, wasn't there? A boy. The orphan from New York City---surely, you remember. Visiting family when the horseman snatched him up in the night.

SAMANTHA: He was a grave robber caught thieving in the church cemetery and taken to Tarry Town.

HANNA: A grave robber? Yes. Taken away to Tarry Town? That is a good story from the grown-ups. What if the orphan boy went thieving in the wrong grave and found his head lopped off with one clean blow of the horseman's blade? A blade that next claimed Ichabod Crane? That blade is hungry now, looking for another head to chop. He stalks the woods at night, waiting for wandering travelers and lost little boys and girls to cross his path.

(In the darkness behind HANNA, one of the Jack-o-lanterns rises and moves towards her as if on an invisible body. The school children begin to back away from her.)

HANNA (*Cont'd*): The Hessian's great horse, a devil-beast with red glowing eyes, can be heard at night, galloping along, searching for a fresh head, a new victim, to sate the horseman's appetite. (*The jack-o-lantern creeps closer.*) So when the horsemen returns --- will he return for you?!

JACK-O-LANTERN: No! He'll return for you!

(*HANNA screams and dives into the huddled group of school children, who all scream with her. The jack-o-lantern drops down, revealing ABIGAIL -- a young woman, too old to be a student.*)

ABIGAIL: Might I inquire as to what's going on in my school house?

HANNA: You nearly scared my wits out.

ABIGAIL: Only nearly? Then I ought to have tried a bit harder.

CATHERINE: Your school house?

ABIGAIL: My name is Abigail Seymour; I am the new school mistress.

SAMANTHA: But we always have a school master.

ABIGAIL: Yes, well you don't any longer.

NATHANIEL: The Hessian took him.

ABIGAIL: Is that the headless horseman that -- I'm sorry, we've skipped right over introductions. You, the storyteller -- what's your name?

HANNA: I'm Hanna.

ABIGAIL: It was a lovely story, Hanna. If not a bit graphic. My apologies if I frightened you. It was all in good fun.

NATHANIEL: We should not speak light of such things.

ABIGAIL: You're quite right; that's not setting a proper example. It's late and the school house should be closed. You all need to head home. We'll begin your new lessons in the morning. We'll do proper introductions then, after we clean. This place is quite...disheveled.

(*The children each take a jack-o-lantern and collect their belongings.*)

HANNA: You shouldn't reprimand the others.

ABIGAIL: For the disarray? Why? Was that Mr. Crane's doing?

HANNA: For being in the schoolhouse after-dark.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I see. That should fall on you? That's quite noble.

HANNA: This was all my idea. The gathering, not the mess.

ABIGAIL: There was no trouble to be had. I'm not your school mistress just yet, so I'll forgive you wanting to tell ghost stories.

HANNA: It wasn't a story.

ABIGAIL: A horseman without a head, galloping about? That is, nearly by definition, a story.

NATHANIEL: No, it's quite true! You shouldn't walk home alone tonight.

HANNA: That's Nathaniel. He's scared of everything. Rose, Peter. Catherine's the nice one and Samantha there will do everything you tell her.

SAMANTHA: Hanna, that's not polite to say! Ms. Seymour, I'm not weak willed.

ABIGAIL: I never conjured anything of the sort.

SAMANTHA: I'm well-behaved.

ABIGAIL: A trait that most adults readily enjoy.

NATHANIEL: You'll hear the galloping first.

ABIGAIL: The galloping?

CATHERINE: No, the wind. Rustling. Then the animals will go quiet.

NATHANIEL: It will get cold, like death's touch down your back.

ABIGAIL: You're trying to scare me because I'm new to Sleepy Hollow.

HANNA: You're not at all curious as to why Mr. Crane disappeared on us, Miss?

ABIGAIL: Mr. Crane? Mr. Ichabod Crane? From the few reports I've heard from the town council, he abandoned his post here and returned to, from wherever he came.

SAMANTHA: There, you see, Hanna. Your horseman isn't nearly so frightening as you tell it.

NATHANIEL: Yet he took him, the horseman, he took Mr. Crane's head.

ROSE: He took all of him.

ABIGAIL: Well that just doesn't make much sense.

NATHANIEL: It doesn't?

ABIGAIL: I was listening to Hanna's story; she said he only takes the heads, because that's what he's lacking. If he took Mr. Crane in whole, your Horseman would be lacking in everything.

HANNA: Then the horseman didn't take Ichabod Crane.

ABIGAIL: A sensible conclusion. Thank you, Hanna. Now truly, you must be getting home before your parents begin to worry. *(ABIGAIL picks up some loose books and stacks them on the benches.)*

HANNA: However, if it wasn't the Hessian, then I think it's safe to assume that something worse happened to Mr. Crane.

ABIGAIL: Worse than having one's head removed by a headless monster on horseback?

HANNA: People aren't prone to disappearing without a trace. *(Abigail stops, picking up a NECKLACE.)*

ABIGAIL: It happens all the time. Does this belong to one of you or one of your friends?

SAMANTHA: I've never seen it before. It's a lovely necklace.

CATHERINE: May I have it?

ABIGAIL: If it's not yours, I ought to hold onto it until we know for certain that it has lost its owner. I would hate for someone in the village to see you with it and think you stole it. Hanna? The necklace?

HANNA: Please don't distract me, I'm thinking of something. *(ABIGAIL pockets the necklace.)*

ABIGAIL: What is it that troubles you, Hanna?

HANNA: Something wicked must have happened to Ichabod Crane, I'm quite certain, not because he was after Katrina van Tassel and not because of some headless spectre, but because he was the school master; that must be it. So if you're not careful, Abigail Seymour, something wicked may happen to you as well!

ABIGAIL: So my choices are something completely wicked -- not related to the supernatural -- happened to Mr. Crane, or that he was taken in the night by a ghoul?

SAMANTHA: Yes, those seem to be your options.

CATHERINE: No one found his head. Or his body. He's simply missing.

ABIGAIL: Ah, then it must be sinister undoings in Sleepy Hollow.

PETER: What are undoings?

ABIGAIL: Nothing to worry yourself about. Perhaps Mr. Crane isn't missing, perhaps he simply left town. And if he didn't have his head, perhaps it was lowered in shame because his students had declared mutiny and he was ineffective.

HANNA: You don't believe me. He could be in trouble.

ABIGAIL: I believe what I can see and what I see are students who may need a lesson in respecting their new school mistress.

NATHANIEL: It won't hurt too much will it?

ABIGAIL: Hurt? No, learning doesn't hurt, Nathaniel.

HANNA: That quite depends on how you define learning. In my experience, there are some harsh interpretations.

(ABIGAIL glances around the room and sees it -- on the wall or in the shadows -- a ferule; a stick, about three feet long, like a thin cane or switch.)

ABIGAIL: That ferule there, was that Mr. Crane's?

(ABIGAIL retrieves it and examines it. Swishing it around.)

ABIGAIL *(Cont'd)*: Taut. I imagine this stings a bit when it lands. Harsh, one might say. This ought to do nicely. Hanna, come here to me.

(HANNA looks to her friends. Seeing they look nervous, she walks up to ABIGAIL and stands before her, unafraid.)

ABIGAIL *(Cont'd)*: And now, for your first lesson in respect.

(ABIGAIL breaks the stick in two and drops it to the floor.)

HANNA: I don't understand. Why did you break it?

ABIGAIL: I can't expect my students to respect me if they live in fear of a stick. I don't teach with punishment, but with respect. If you show it to me, I will show it to you.

CATHERINE: And if we don't?

ABIGAIL: Then I will show you the door. I'm certain your parents can always use another plowhorse in the field.

NATHANIEL: Are you being sly or do you speak at the truth?

ABIGAIL: Knowledge is the pursuit of truth. That is all you will ever find with me. I promise you.

HANNA: Then you will help us.

ABIGAIL: Help you?

HANNA: Pursue the truth. Find Ichabod Crane. Find out what happened.

ABIGAIL: I will aide you in your quest of learning, in pursuit of literature, arithmetic, and mastering your letters.

HANNA: With every respect, a man is missing.

CATHERINE: Taken.

NATHANIEL: At the hands of the Hessian.

ROSE: Or worse.

HANNA: You don't think that warrants some investigation?

ABIGAIL: I respect that you believe in sinister plots and ghostly tales. Please respect that I do not. In the morning, we will speak no more of Mr. Crane or the Horseman. Are we all clear?

(All of the students look to HANNA.)

ABIGAIL *(Cont'd)*: Hanna, this is the part of our meeting where you command that yes, we are quite clear; though we both know you are not.

HANNA: That is quite clear, indeed.

SAMANTHA: Let us not tire our new school mistress any longer.

(SAMANTHA begins to leave and the others follow suit.)

PETER: Good night, Miss Seymour.

ABIGAIL: You may call me Abigail.

ROSE: Good night, Miss Seymour.

CATHERINE: Tread carefully and stay out of the woods.

NATHANIEL: Or you might lose your head.

HANNA: Welcome to Sleepy Hollow.

(And with that, HANNA exits with her jack-o-lantern leaving

ABIGAIL alone in her school house.)

ABIGAIL: Oh, Ichabod, wherever you are, remind me to give you a good talking to if ever should we meet.

(End of scene.)

SCENE TWO

(The stage is awash in the light of a FULL MOON. The school house is gone and there is simply a BLUE DOOR. This is the SLEEPY HOLLOW TAVERN INN. For now, we only see the blue door and maybe a hint of the building that surrounds it. It is later that night; ABIGAIL approaches the door and KNOCKS.)

ABIGAIL: Hello? Is this the Tavern Inn? *(No answer. A WOLF HOWLS in the distance. SHE KNOCKS again.)* Please, I need lodging for the night.

(SHE KNOCKS again, persistently, until the BLUE DOOR swings open to reveal an old woman in her dressing gown with a lantern. This is JOSEPHINE KONING.)

JOSEPHINE: Do you have any idea what time it is?? Some of us are trying to sleep, you know!

ABIGAIL: I'm so terribly sorry, but I was told to look for the Tavern Inn. It has a blue door and a kind innkeeper and I thought --

JOSEPHINE: -- You thought you would wait until an old woman was in her dressing gown to bombard my threshold --

(SHE is interrupted by SUSANNA, a woman a little older than ABIGAIL.)

SUSANNA: Mama, calm down. The poor thing is simply seeking a place to lay her head tonight.

JOSEPHINE: Seeking out a tavern at this hour?

SUSANNA: We are also an inn with a blue door. Apologies for my mother.

JOSEPHINE: Don't beg my pardon, girl.

SUSANNA: Mama. Bed. Now. You're scaring the people again.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I'm not scared.

JOSEPHINE: She should be, out on a night like this alone.

(JOSEPHINE trudges off back inside.)

SUSANNA: Again, I am so sorry for my mother. She gets a bit cranky when roused from a good slumber.

ABIGAIL: What did she mean? On a night like this?

SUSANNA: She's just babbling a bit -- the full moon, you see. It has her a bit uneasy; that's not important. Are you kith or kin to Brom or Katrina?

ABIGAIL: Katrina?

SUSANNA: I thought so, a Van Tassel, you're pretty like she is. So you'll be needing lodging for a week until the wedding then? I would have thought Baltus to have you at their home.

ABIGAIL: I've travelled from New York and I plan on staying well past the wedding.

SUSANNA: Brom Bones and Katrina Van Tassel. It's the society nuptials of the year.

ABIGAIL: The... Sleepy Hollow... society?

SUSANNA: We can't all be from New York City. Around these parts, this wedding is quite the banner event.

ABIGAIL: I'm not here for the wedding.

SUSANNA: You said you were a Van Tassel, I'm confused.

ABIGAIL: No, with respect, you said I was a Van Tassel, but I'm not a van anything. I'm a Seymour. Abigail Seymour, I'm the new school mistress.

SUSANNA: Oh, you're the new Ichabod.

ABIGAIL: Um, no, I'm Abigail, as stated. No Van Tassel or Ichabod or any other name before you. Simply me. Abigail Seymour.

SUSANNA: The new school mistress, who has no idea about the wedding.

ABIGAIL: I wasn't invited.

SUSANNA: Then why did you utter Katrina's name when I mentioned her?

ABIGAIL: I'd heard it before. Just this evening, in fact.

SUSANNA: That's not a surprise. Every person in Sleepy Hollow is talking about the wedding. I love weddings, don't you? All that love, all that promise. We could use a bit of that.

ABIGAIL: Why so?

SUSANNA: No, I mean no reason in particular. Nothing's happened or anything, it's simply nice to see happiness is all.

ABIGAIL: Yes. I agree, and you could see such happiness if I could just come inside and rest for the night. Are you the nice innkeeper or, was that supposed to be her?

SUSANNA: My father was considered the innkeeper on the ledgers, God rest him. Though he was rubbish with the books and the cleaning, he could cook a feast. Mama and I, we keep this place afloat now, but in all modesty, I'm the one that steers the ship around here.

ABIGAIL: Great. Then, please, steer me to a room.

SUSANNA: Happy to do so. Though, only for the night and then I'm setting you up with the students' families in the morning.

ABIGAIL: I'm to stay with the families?

SUSANNA: It's tradition in Sleepy Hollow that the school teacher lodge with members of the community rather than pay out of pocket for the inn. We're hospitable, but we're not free.

ABIGAIL: That sounds wonderful. Thank you. It's good to find a friend.

SUSANNA: I'm Susanna.

ABIGAIL: It's lovely to make your acquaintance, Susanna. I'm so sorry about your father.

SUSANNA: That's a kindness, but he left us ages ago before the war when I was a still a little girl. He went to a better place.

ABIGAIL: (*attempting a joke*) He wasn't spirited off by the headless horseman, then?

SUSANNA: Now what would possess you to say a thing like that?

ABIGAIL: It was a harmless mention.

SUSANNA: There's nothing harmless when matters fall to the Hessian. To speak light of him shows a lack of respect. I think you best move on for the night.

ABIGAIL: Move on? It's close to midnight and the air is chilled. I fear the frost may come; have you not felt the air grow cold since I arrived.

SUSANNA: And the animals grow quiet.

ABIGAIL: I beg pardon, what did you say?

(*SUSANNA, who has been standing outside talking with ABIGAIL, steps back inside across the threshold.*)

SUSANNA: Where's your horse?

ABIGAIL: My horse?

SUSANNA: Yes, how did you get here?

ABIGAIL: I walked.

SUSANNA: From New York?

ABIGAIL: From the school house. I took a carriage from the city.

SUSANNA: Who's carriage?

ABIGAIL: Who's --- I don't know, I can't recall his name. I've met so many people today.

SUSANNA: You appear on my door step in the dead of night under a full moon speaking of the devil.

ABIGAIL: Susanna, I don't understand. If I have offended, please forgive and let me make amends.

SUSANNA: No horse, no name to recall of your supposed chauffeur. I'm sorry, Abigail, but there is no room for you tonight.

ABIGAIL: Susanna, please, this is absurd. I am terribly sorry if I've upset you or the memory of your loving father.

SUSANNA: Why did you breathe word of him? The Hessian, why?

ABIGAIL: I came upon some of my pupils tonight and they thought they might frighten me in good fun, a welcome of sorts. They regaled me with tales of the Horseman.

SUSANNA: They were warning you, Abigail. You are clearly marked.

ABIGAIL: I am not marked.

SUSANNA: As Ichabod was marked. There is evil near.

ABIGAIL: What happened to Ichabod? Why don't you invite me in and we will sit by the hearth and you can tell me about it.

SUSANNA: To invite you in would invite the horseman.

ABIGAIL: You would abandon me to freeze or worse?

SUSANNA: There is a farmhouse in that direction there, maybe two miles. It is where Ichabod was lodging before his disappearance. There will be an open room there.

ABIGAIL: How can you be certain they would take me in?

SUSANNA: The Van Ripper farm lies west of the church and the cemetery, and the Horseman has never been spotted beyond it.

ABIGAIL: You believe it to be true. That this spectre roams free?

SUSANNA: You would be a foolish woman not to.

ABIGAIL: Might you at the very least lend me a horse for the journey, as you pointedly noted I have none?

SUSANNA: You seem amenable to walking. Besides, a horse didn't help Ichabod make it through the woods. Good night, Abigail.

ABIGAIL: Susanna, please!

SUSANNA: God be with you.

(SUSANNA shuts the BLUE DOOR. ABIGAIL bangs against it.)

ABIGAIL: Susanna! I have coin, I can pay you! Susanna... please.

(remembering the necklace) There's also a necklace, it would
dance to be worn by you. ...Susanna! I'm not marked by the...

there's no such thing as a Headless Horseman! *(to herself)* What
manner of town have I come to? *(ABIGAIL fastens up her cloak
and sets off.)* Two miles. This will be an adventure.

(The BLUE DOOR moves away as LIGHTS SHIFT. End of scene.)

ABIGAIL: Yes! It sounded incredibly real. Let's not forget your spectre from which you were running away.

HANNA: We weren't galloping.

ABIGAIL: And I suppose you didn't have one of the boys dress up in a cloak? Now that was clever.

(And WE see it as HANNA sees it. On the other side of the stage, watching them from the shadows, a cloaked figure. We cannot make out its head. ABIGAIL is watching the figure and not HANNA, who is backing away very slowly.)

ABIGAIL *(Cont'd)*: I will admit that got my heart racing. Would that be Nathaniel?

(When ABIGAIL turns back to HANNA, she sees the fright on her face.)

HANNA: That's... not... one of the boys. Run, Miss Seymour!

(HANNA takes off running.) Everyone to the School house!

ABIGAIL: Hanna, wait! *(ABIGAIL looks back, but the cloaked figure has vanished.)* Where did it go? Hanna! Hanna, it's gone. You see? There's nothing to be frightened over.

(Just then, the GALLOPING SOUND returns. It's LOUD and now there's the SNORTING of an angry steed, the WIND begins to HOWL, and the SKY turns RED.)

ABIGAIL *(Cont'd)*: Hanna!! Wait for me!

(As ABIGAIL rushes off after HANNA, the GALLOPING and SNORTING vanish into the WIND, which fades with the woods as the SKY returns to normal. End of scene.)

SCENE FOUR

(A few moments later, in the SCHOOL HOUSE. Most of the students are already inside when HANNA comes running in, ABIGAIL right behind her.)

ABIGAIL: Did you see that? Did your eyes -- did my eyes -- oh dear, I don't know if I can breathe properly.

HANNA: Miss Seymour, it's alright, we're safe. We're all safe. Please try not to faint.

ABIGAIL: I think I would have at this point if that were an option.

HANNA: Your first encounter with the horseman.

ABIGAIL: My first? You say that word as if there will be further encounters in my future. Have you seen him before?

HANNA: Yes, but never that close.

ROSE: How did you escape?

ABIGAIL: He disappeared.

CATHERINE: He vanished?

ABIGAIL: Perhaps something scared him.

PETER: Scared *him*? He's the headless horseman.

CATHERINE: I'm quite certain he's the one who does all the scaring.

ABIGAIL: That he did.

NATHANIEL: Do you think he meant to take you?

ABIGAIL: I suppose I could have asked him, but he didn't stick 'round long enough for a chat, thankfully.

HANNA: Did anyone else hear the galloping?

(They all shake their heads, confused.)

ABIGAIL: None of you heard it?

SAMANTHA: There was nothing there. We were just playing and trying to frighten you properly.

HANNA: Miss Seymour, you actually heard his horse? That means he was close to you.

ABIGAIL: Susanna at the Tavern Inn told me tonight she saw evil around me, that I was marked.

HANNA: By the Horseman?

ABIGAIL: I don't know, I didn't believe her. Just like I didn't believe you about Ichabod Crane. Hanna, I think you're right. I think something wicked happened to Ichabod and now it's happening to me.

HANNA: What are you going to do?

ABIGAIL: We'll assemble tomorrow after school. We're going to find out what happened to Ichabod.

HANNA: We will gladly help. What I meant, is what are you going to do right now?

ABIGAIL: I'm going to stay here, Hanna. Here in the school house.

HANNA: Then, Miss Seymour, to ensure your safety, we shall stay as well until the danger has passed.

ABIGAIL: I'm beginning to wonder if I'm not the child between us.

HANNA: After seeing what we saw tonight, Miss Seymour, I wouldn't blink if you want to think that.

ABIGAIL: You know, you can call me Abigail. You all can.

HANNA: It's a show of respect to call you Miss.

ABIGAIL: Yes, it is indeed, but we also -- out of respect -- call our friends by their first names; and after what we saw tonight, Hanna, I could absolutely use a friend.

HANNA: Then you'll have one. Abigail.

(LIGHTS fade on the school house. End of scene.)

SCENE FIVE

(It is just before sunset the next evening. The BLUE DOOR reappears. This time, behind the door, we can see the TAVERN INN's main floor with tables and chairs set up. It's full of townsfolk, ready for dinner. The BLUE DOOR is closed and the action behind it frozen in a BLUE LIGHT. SUSANNA is sweeping out front as ABIGAIL and all the STUDENTS approach.)

SUSANNA: Abigail! You're alive!

HANNA: With little thanks to you.

SUSANNA: Children --- shouldn't you all be heading home? It's well after school hours.

ABIGAIL: Actually, they're with me today.

SUSANNA: I asked Hans Van Ripper how you fared last night and he said you never arrived.

ABIGAIL: I never did. May we go in?

SUSANNA: Whatever for?

ABIGAIL: We're looking into the disappearance of Ichabod Crane and, if we can, how to stop the headless horseman.

SUSANNA: For someone who doesn't believe in the Hessian, you do enjoy speaking of him freely.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I believe. He is as real as you standing before me.

SUSANNA: What altered your perception?

HANNA: What always alters it, she saw him.

SUSANNA: He came for you?

ABIGAIL: We don't know. I only saw him, he didn't pursue me. Nor attack. Truth be told, it was a strange meeting.

SUSANNA: I felt in my gut to send you away. You might have brought him here, right to this inn.

SAMANTHA: Except he didn't pursue her, Miss Koning.

ROSE: They found each other in the woods.

HANNA: Which means she might not have met him at all if you had only let her stay.

ABIGAIL: Thank you, children.

SUSANNA: I'm so sorry, Abigail. I was frightened.

ABIGAIL: I am glad you sent me away last night. I would never have believed it; and if the horseman is coming for me like he did Ichabod, now I have a chance to stop it.

SUSANNA: That's why you want to talk about Ichabod?

ABIGAIL: I promise we will leave before nightfall.

SUSANNA: On your heart?

ABIGAIL: On my head.

(SUSANNA nods and opens the BLUE DOOR --- as SHE does, the crowd inside begins to move as if we've joined them mid-sentence. MUSIC is playing. The BLUE DOOR circles off around to the other side of the room. Once there, the BLUE DOOR is closed and we're inside. The school children scatter, finding seats where they can. HANNA lingers.)

SUSANNA: What do you want to know about Ichabod?

ABIGAIL: Everything. Did he come in here much?

SUSANNA: Yes, most afternoons when he wasn't inviting himself to dinner at a student's home.

ABIGAIL: You disapprove?

SUSANNA: No, I simply enjoyed his company here. The school master is generally a man of some importance to the ladies of a rural neighborhood. To be certain, Ichabod was considered a kind of idle gentleman, of vastly superior taste and accomplishments to the rough country swains. *(beat)* Though I'm sure you're nice too. *(SARAH VAN BRUNT, who has overheard this, joins them.)*

SARAH: Our man of letters was peculiarly happy in the smiles of all the "country damsels." *(making introductions)* Sarah Van Brunt, welcome to Sleepy Hollow.

ABIGAIL: Thank you. I'm Abigail. And forgive me, but --- damsels?

SARAH: Ichabod's words. Of course, he's not the only one.

SUSANNA: Your brother Brom is the worst of the boys when it comes to that line of thinking.

ABIGAIL: Brom Bones? Katrina Van Tassel's bridegroom? Is he here?

SARAH: Where else would they be, except here among friends? Please know, Brom had nothing to do with Ichabod's disappearance.

HANNA: Abigail never said --

SUSANNA: Abigail?

HANNA: ...Miss Seymour never said that Brom was suspect.

SUSANNA: (*aside to Abigail*) You've got to keep those Sleepy Hollow urchin on a strict regiment; Ichabod used a ferule on them to great effect.

ABIGAIL: I am more than aware of Mr. Crane's disciplinary techniques. (*to SARAH*) Hanna's correct, I was merely hoping to wish the happy couple a festive wedding and bountiful marriage.

SARAH: Your predecessor certainly wasn't about to.

SUSANNA: I wondered if Ichabod had run off in embarrassment after Katrina chose Brom.

ABIGAIL: Ichabod was one of Katrina's suitors?

SARAH: He was her singing teacher. Psalmody. He claimed to be an expert, but then people can claim any number of things.

ABIGAIL: Perhaps he was simply trying to establish himself in an unfamiliar place. It couldn't have been easy.

HANNA: He would sing in the woods, all the time.

SARAH: To calm himself from the fright of a potential meeting with the Hessian. Personally, I think it scared the beast off.

ABIGAIL: What happened? What drove him away from Katrina?

SUSANNA: No body knows, in honesty. It's ironic, Ichabod would have been the first to know and spread the word. He was a kind of traveling gazette, carrying the whole budget of local gossip from house to house.

SARAH: I'd say it's the only reason anyone liked him. He talked about people.

ABIGAIL: So he talked about you to other people and still, you liked him for it.

(*SARAH and SUSANNA say their next line together, in unison.*)

SARAH: He was discreet with my affairs.

SUSANNA: He was discreet with my affairs.

ABIGAIL: That's a comfort, I wager.

SARAH: Excuse me, I ought to check on the kitchen.

SUSANNA: Yes, and someone needs to keep the cider flowing.

(*SARAH heads offstage while SUSANNA takes a pitcher of cider and tends drinks for her patrons.*)

ABIGAIL: If Ichabod was fearful enough to try and sing away the horseman, why would he venture out alone?

HANNA: There are two people here who may have the answer.

ABIGAIL: Brom and Katrina?

HANNA: No. His friends.

(HANNA leads ABIGAIL to two older women sitting in the corner, DIEDRE VAN HART and MARGRIET GELDERLAND.)

HANNA: May I introduce the Widow Van Hart and the Widow Gelderland.

DIEDRE: We are too full of life to be widows. Please call me Diedre, this is Margriet.

HANNA: Ladies, this is Abigail, our new school mistress.

MARGRIET: We were as shocked as anyone when the Hessian claimed the poor pedagogue. Ichabod was so prepared.

HANNA: Prepared? For the horseman?

DIEDRE: He'd read several books quite through and was a perfect master of Cotton Mather's History of New England Witchcraft.

MARGRIET: In which, by the way, he most firmly and potently believed.

ABIGAIL: In witchcraft?

DIEDRE: No dear, in the book.

(Nearby, another resident of Sleepy Hollow speaks up. This is HANS VAN RIPPER. The farmer.)

HANS: That's what he said, but I never saw him near the pulpit, not one bit. There was evil around him.

DIEDRE: Oh shush, you. He was a good boy, Ichabod. What did he always say?

MARGRIET: Yes, I liked that, that saying he had. He said it that last night before he disappeared. He was standing right there.

(LIGHTS shift and ICHABOD is there, in memory. ABIGAIL and the children are but observers, while HANS, DIEDRE, and MARGRIET share the memory and interact with him.)

ICHABOD: There are things about this world that we need to know, no matter how scary they might be. That we might be prepared when the time comes to face them.

DIEDRE: That is the statement of a brave man.

HANS: He's a fool, dabbling in books of that sort. No good comes of books. Filling your head with ideas.

ICHABOD: I find ideas quite refreshing, sir.

HANS: You get it in your head that you need to know things, like witchcraft, when we all know that leads to the devil.

ICHABOD: That link has never been proven.

HANS: Are you a devil?

ICHABOD: I'm a school master.

HANS: Ah yes, going from house to house, ingratiating yourself and your appetites into the families of Sleepy Hollow. Tell me, who do we know that can play that trick so well?

ICHABOD: Reading books and teaching them to others is my life's work; and that's not an exaggeration. One day, perhaps, I'll teach you.

(The LIGHTS shift us back to the present as ICHABOD vanishes, and HANS is now addressing Abigail and the Widows.)

HANS: The fool never got the chance. He knew I was onto him and he ran out like a coward.

ABIGAIL: Or perhaps you decided to teach him a lesson?

HANS: If I'd done something to that scraggly pedagogue, I wouldn't hide it. Would've been protecting this village, I would. Nah, Ichabod Crane, he was shifty and I never liked him.

HANNA: He's just sore because Ichabod was riding his horse when the Hessian took him and trampled Van Ripper's Sunday saddle.

ABIGAIL: Ah, the illustrious farmer, Van Ripper.

HANS: "He's just sore" because people like you (*pointing at Abigail*) won't leave well enough alone. Strangers in our Hollow, filling our youth with ideas. A witch, she is, as he was the devil! (*SUSANNA chimes in from across the tavern.*)

SUSANNA: She's not a witch, Hans! She just wants to find out what happened to Ichabod. Our new schoolteacher here was attacked by the headless horseman last night.

(The MUSIC stops. This gets every body's attention. The whole tavern is now looking at Abigail.)

SUSANNA (*Cont'd*): Sorry about that.

ABIGAIL: There is no cause for alarm, everyone. Attacked is more of an exaggeration; frightened perhaps. However, now that I have your attention, can anybody here claim insight into the

disappearance of Ichabod Crane? Was it the horseman? Should I be worried? As a fellow supporter of reading and knowledge.

BROM: (*Laughing, under his breath*) Only if jack-o-lanterns cause fright.

KATRINA: Brom Bones, you stop.

ABIGAIL: Is something humorous?

KATRINA: No, Brom simply has the most unsorted sense of humor there is. Never mind him, absolutely never. It's terrifying what happened to you. Is it true?

HANNA: Every word.

KATRINA: That's simply dreadful. I don't know what I'd do if I met the horseman on the road.

BROM: That's something you'll never have to worry about now. You've got your Brom Bones to protect you.

ABIGAIL: Well, he's Lancelot all over isn't he?

BROM: Lance-a-what did you call me?

ABIGAIL: Lancelot. He was a knight.

(*BROM doesn't know what to say.*)

ABIGAIL (*Cont'd*): A knight. (*beat*) Of the Round Table. (*beat*) He was a big strapping lad who rode around on horseback and picked fights with other strapping lads to honor the name of his lady.

BROM: Ah, yeah, that's me all over. (*to Katrina*) I'm your Lancelot.

ABIGAIL: Did you ever pick a fight with Ichabod?

KATRINA: Brom, we have to be back at the estate to review wedding plans with father.

ABIGAIL: This isn't going to take too much time.

DIEDRE: That lanky man would never fight Brom.

MARGRIET: Not for lack of trying on Brom's end. He was a sweet boy, Brom, you shouldn't have provoked him so with your boorish pranks.

BROM: See that? They miss him, the scarecrow. He would pass long winter evenings with the old widow wives as they sat, spinning by the fire.

MARGRIET: With a row of apples roasting and sputtering along the hearth, oh it was delightful. He was such a good listener.

PETER: A good listener to what?

DIEDRE: Why, to us, dear. He was curious to hear about all of the ghosts that haunt the fields around Sleepy Hollow.

ABIGAIL: "All" of the ghosts? How many are there?

DIEDRE: Of course there's the mourning cries and wailings heard about the great tree where the unfortunate Major Andre was taken.

MARGRIET: And the woman in white! She haunts the dark glen at Raven Rock. Often, you can hear her shriek on winter nights before a storm.

DIEDRE: Where she perished there in the snow!

ROSE: I don't like these stories.

MARGRIET: They're not all stories, dearie.

ABIGAIL: What did you tell Ichabod about the Hessian?

BROM: We all told him about the Hessian. I guess he didn't listen.

MARGRIET: Perhaps if you had told him something useful and not that braggart talk of yours.

BROM: Am I to blame if the headless horseman is nothing but an errant jockey? He was no match for my steed, Daredevil.

ABIGAIL: So you have seen him?

BROM: Seen him? (*as if about to tell a frightening tale*) My dear schoolteacher, on returning one night from the neighboring village of Sing Sing, I was overtaken by this midnight trooper.

PETER: Wh-what did you do?

BROM: What anyone would do, lad. I offered to race him for a bowl of punch! And should have won it too, for Daredevil beat the goblin horse all hollow, but, just as we came to the church bridge, the Hessian bolted and vanished in a flash of fire!

MARGRIET: That's a tale, a tall one for certain. Ichabod, in spite of being a man of letters --

DIEDRE: -- possibly because of it --

MARGRIET: -- believed in those things supernatural. He wanted to know everything about them. It was the knowledge he craved, not the fantastical.

DIEDRE: He wanted to know everything about the Hessian.

MARGRIET: How he died.

DIEDRE: How he lost his head.

PETER: How did he lose his head?

ROSE: Don't ask such horrible questions!

PETER: I want to know! No one ever tells me that part.

HANS: He's a war spirit, a remnant, so that we might not forget the cost of freedom. Lost his head in battle and he's still seeking it.

MARGRIET: Some say he lost it to an errant cannon ball.

DIEDRE: The Hessians were soldiers, mercenaries; known for their brutality. Except for one, I've heard tell. You see, children, this Hessian, before he lost his head, fell in love.

HANS: Oh, this. No, this is wistful longings of these old widows.

DIEDRE: He fell in love with a woman here in Sleepy Hollow.

MARGRIET: Yet they could never be together in life, for he was the enemy. The old residents chased him out. If you ask me, he didn't lose his head in battle.

DIEDRE: No, he lost it for love. It is said they promised each other that they would be together in the next life.

HANS: In the next life? Taking people's heads together for sport?

PETER: However he lost his head, it must be what upset him so.

ROSE: Is that why he haunts Sleepy Hollow? We hurt him.

CATHERINE: Maybe if we knew what happened we could help.

HANS: You see what reading those books of yours incites them to do? Go after the Hessian. To help?! You'll get them all beheaded!

ABIGAIL: You're frightening my students. I task you not to do so.

BROM: You brought them in here, asking about Ichabod and the horseman. If the topic is too grown up for their innocent ears, then to that I blame you and say -- *(BROM points behind them all)*

HEADLESS HORSEMAN HEADLESS HORSEMAN

HEADLESS HORSEMAN!

(The blue door BANGS open. The children scream. But there's no one there.)

KATRINA: Brom Van Brunt!

BROM: *(howling with laughter)* That door! Must be a storm coming in.

KATRINA: I'm so very sorry for his behavior.

DIEDRE: Indeed. Margriet, shall we? The hour is late and we don't wish to be caught on the path at the mercy of the Horseman.

(The widows exit through the blue door, shutting it behind them.)

KATRINA: Brom, we are also leaving.

BROM: It was all in fun, see that one over there is laughing.

HANNA: At what a buffoon you are, Brom.

KATRINA: Brom, if you won't walk me home, I can walk myself.

BROM: Relax and sit, darling, we'll leave when I'm ready. Why has the music stopped?

(BROM goes back to his table and drink as the music strikes up. The residents of the tavern go back to enjoying the night.)

KATRINA: My future husband enjoys merrymaking and jovial pranks a bit more than perhaps he should.

ABIGAIL: You needn't apologize, or you shouldn't have to.

KATRINA: Brom has a sweet heart; he might let it show if not for his foolish pride in front of the Sleepy Hollow Boys.

ABIGAIL: As long as you can see it, that's all that matters. Here -- *(ABIGAIL removes something from her pocket.)* -- take this necklace as a blessing upon your wedding.

KATRINA: Abigail, I couldn't possibly accept this, it's beautiful. It looks much too expensive for a... for...

ABIGAIL: For a school teacher?

KATRINA: For a stranger.

ABIGAIL: I found it at the school house, but it doesn't belong to any of the students.

KATRINA: At the schoolhouse?

ABIGAIL: Yes.

(KATRINA gingerly takes the NECKLACE.)

ABIGAIL *(Cont'd)*: Do you recognize it?

KATRINA: No... I'm afraid I don't.

(KATRINA goes to hand it back.)

ABIGAIL: As I said, consider it a gift. I think it was meant for you.

KATRINA: Perhaps so. Listen, Abigail, if you do find Ichabod... if he's alive... please tell him I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

ABIGAIL: Why are you sorry?

KATRINA: I must go. Thank you for the gift.

ABIGAIL: I never meant to upset you.

KATRINA: Watch for the storm. They're quite sudden here.

(KATRINA rushes out through the BLUE DOOR into the night as SARAH returns from the kitchen.)

SARAH: Is Katrina alright?

ABIGAIL: I have no clue. However, someone should make sure. *(THEY all look to BROM, who is showing PETER how to carve words into a table.)*

BROM: The trick, Peter, is to carve nice and slow as to not draw the ire of the establishment.

HANNA: Hey, Buffoon.

BROM: What?

SARAH: Don't answer to that, Brom. It's embarrassing.

HANNA: Your bride left. You might want to find her.

(BROM gets up, prepping to leave. HE pockets his knife.)

BROM: *(to Peter)* A few years, Peter, and you'll make a fine addition to our gang, the Sleepy Hollow Boys.

ABIGAIL: Please do not encourage him to follow in your path.

(BROM heads for the door, but stops at the threshold.)

BROM: Hey school teacher.

HANNA: Her name's Abigail.

BROM: School teacher, why do you want to find Ichabod?

ABIGAIL: Because if what happened to Ichabod is going to happen to me, I'd like to be prepared when the horseman comes.

BROM: Then you're looking for the wrong person. If he's even alive, Ichabod can't help you on this. You want to stop the horseman? You need to find the horseman.

(The music stops again.)

HANS: That will bring his wrath upon us all.

BROM: Not the one who rides. The one who sleeps.

(BROM exits through the blue door and the children gather around Abigail.)

ROSE: There's another horseman?

PETER: A sleeping horseman?

ROSE: This is Sleepy Hollow, maybe that's why we're called that?

SAMANTHA: That's not why.

ABIGAIL: He didn't mean sleeping, children. He meant resting.

CATHERINE: The horseman's resting place.

SAMANTHA: You mean the horseman's grave?

PETER: How will his grave stop him?

NATHANIEL: Because that's where it all started.

ABIGAIL: Even if Brom is right, we wouldn't even know where to begin looking.

HANNA: I can think of one place. Where else do you find graves, but in a graveyard?

(LIGHTS shift. End of scene.)

SCENE SIX

(The tavern inn has vanished; we're outside of the town church and Sleepy Hollow graveyard. Gravestones populate the stage. ABIGAIL and the STUDENTS stand rigid at the entrance to the cemetery. It is DUSK.)

NATHANIEL: We should not be here. We absolutely should not.

ABIGAIL: I thought the church graveyard was Holy ground. The horseman cannot tread here.

CATHERINE: Who told you that?

ABIGAIL: It's... common knowledge. About ghosts.

HANNA: In which you did not believe, yesterday.

ABIGAIL: We'll be safe. We have each other.

CATHERINE: You mean he can't take all of our heads at once.

NATHANIEL: I want to go home.

ROSE: Me too! Please may we go?

HANNA: We are fine, there are no monsters here.

NATHANIEL: How do you know?

HANNA: Do you hear galloping, Abigail?

ABIGAIL: No.

HANNA: If she cannot hear it, then we are still safe.

NATHANIEL: For now.

ABIGAIL: Follow me. Let's be quick about it and then we'll get each of you home.

(SHE moves into the cemetery. Slowly. They follow. Slowly.)

ROSE: We don't know which one it is.

ABIGAIL: Yes, that could prove a problem.

(There is a FLASH of LIGHTNING.)

PETER: The storm's coming.

(And a roll of distant thunder.)

SAMANTHA: It's a ways off. Several miles.

ABIGAIL: Some of these are very old aren't they? Have there been people here that long, in Sleepy Hollow?

HANNA: Many of these are from the Revolution, but people were here long before that.

CATHERINE: Maybe a hundred years.

ABIGAIL: Well, we can't exhume them all.

ROSE: Exhume?

ABIGAIL: Perhaps better you don't know... Wait, look! This one over here --- this grave has been disturbed. It could be his.

CATHERINE: Yes, except look at the name. It's a woman's grave.

PETER: Looks like somebody dug through it. Was it the Hessian?

SAMANTHA: No, silly, it was most likely the grave robber.

ABIGAIL: Grave robber? And haunted woods? And a headless horseman? How in Heaven's name did anyone ever think this hollow sleepy?

(Another FLASH of LIGHTNING.)

HANNA: Maybe we should come back when the sun rises?

ABIGAIL: The horseman won't wait until sunrise.

(A crash of THUNDER.)

SAMANTHA: It's getting closer.

CATHERINE: We should head home or take shelter in the church.

HANNA: I'm inclined to agree with Catherine. Once the rain starts, we won't be able to search. We should go inside.

ABIGAIL: Hanna, there is something here. I can feel it. Something we are meant to find. Trust me, believe me.

(Another FLASH of LIGHTNING. This one brighter than the rest and brings with it a loud crash of thunder. The younger children scream and hide behind ABIGAIL. There, deep in the cemetery, they all see it, the CLOAKED FIGURE.)

HANNA: Abigail! The Horseman!

(HANNA places herself next to ABIGAIL, protecting the students.)

ABIGAIL: Get everyone inside the church!

HANNA: I'm not leaving you out here with that thing.

ABIGAIL: The children are what matters.

(The CLOAKED FIGURE steps towards them. The children scream.)

HANNA: Wait! Look. Look at him... look closely.

ABIGAIL: He's not headless.

CATHERINE: It's not him!

ABIGAIL: Who are you, stranger?

HANNA: Identify yourself!

(The CLOAKED FIGURE pulls back the hood to reveal his face.)

HANNA *(Cont'd)*: Mr. Crane?

ABIGAIL: Ichabod?

(It's ICHABOD, not in his prime as we saw earlier, but scared and disheveled.)

ICHABOD: Get the children into the church at once! The horseman is coming!

(The LIGHTNING and THUNDER crash together as the sound of GALLOPING echoes in the distance. LIGHTS SLAM TO BLACK.)

END OF ACT I

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