

CLASSIC
a story with
timeless appeal

Drama

BETRAVE THE THUNDER

What if you woke up one day and the world
you knew had disappeared?

By Jennifer Dignan | Art by Shane Rebenschied

Based on the classic Washington Irving story "Rip Van Winkle"



CHARACTERS

Circle the character you will play. *Starred characters are major roles.

***Stage Directors 1, 2, 3**

(SD1, SD2, SD3)

***Peter Vanderdonk, *Katrina**

Knickerbocker: elderly villagers

Odd Fellows: three men from the past

Cornelia Van Winkle: Rip's wife

***Rip Van Winkle:** village man

(the main character)

Brom Dutcher: Rip's friend

Nicholas Vedder: innkeeper

Derrick Van Bummel: schoolmaster

Helen, Willem: village children

Theo, John: villagers

Crowd: to be read by a group

Judith: Rip's daughter

As You Read As time passes, how does the world change?

PROLOGUE

SD1: The curtains rise on two elderly villagers.
Peter: The tale you are about to hear is not one you will find in history books.
Katrina: But that doesn't mean it didn't happen.
Peter: History is more than facts. History is also stories.
Katrina: Like the story of Rip Van Winkle.
Odd Fellows (*whispering offstage*): Rip Van Winkle . . .
Peter: And the odd fellows who lured him away.
Odd Fellows (*whispering offstage*): Rip Van Winkle . . .
Peter: Our story begins before the American Revolution.
Katrina: The United States did not exist yet.
Peter: We were all ruled by King George III in England.
SD2: The lights go out.

SCENE 1

**A village at the foot of the Catskill Mountains,
New York, 1765**

SD3: Cornelia, a stern-looking woman, is repairing a fence in her yard.
SD1: Behind her are a garden where a few scraggly plants fight for life, and a small, **shabby** house.
SD2: The **lush** Catskill Mountains lord over the scene from the backdrop.
SD3: Cornelia pounds nails into the fence.

Cornelia: Rip!

SD1: Pound.

Cornelia: Van!

SD2: Pound.

Cornelia: Winkle!

SD3: Pound-pound-pound.

Cornelia: No doubt my husband is off flying a kite!

SD1: Rip **sauters** onstage, whistling merrily. His dog, Wolf, trots at his side.

SD2: Rip stops whistling abruptly when he sees his wife. Wolf drops his head.

Cornelia: Where have you been all day?

Rip: Well, first I went fishing—

Cornelia: Did you catch anything?

Rip: No.

Cornelia: You spent the whole day *not* catching fish.

Rip: Not the *whole* day. Joseph Linden asked me to lend

a hand building his fence. Then little Martha and Henry begged me for a ghost story.

Cornelia: So you helped the neighbors build a fence, even though your own fence is falling apart.

Rip: Well—

Cornelia: And you told stories to the neighbors' children, even though your own children are running wild as goats.

SD3: Rip shrugs. Wolf lies down with a sigh.

Odd Fellows (*whispering offstage*): Rip Van Winkle . . .

Rip: Did you hear that?

Cornelia: Hear what?

SD1: Rip looks up. The sun sits low on the horizon, casting the entire sky in deep reds and purples.

Cornelia (*softening*): What a dreamer you are, Rip.

Rip: Would you look up at that sky?

Cornelia: Look up? There's no time for looking up when there is so much work to be done here on the ground.

SD2: The stage lights fade to black.

SCENE 2

The Village Inn, the next day

SD3: The lights come up on a cobblestone courtyard. At the back is a building with a sign that says "Village Inn" below a painting of King George III.

SD1: Outside the inn, several men sit on benches.

Brom: Nicholas, how is business at the inn?

Nicholas: Slow as always.

SD2: Derrick Van Bummel clears his throat.

Derrick: I've something to say, gentlemen.

King George is to **impose** another tax on us.

Brom: You're a little late.

Rip: That news is four months old.

Derrick: My point is that the new tax is **detestable**.

SD3: Nicholas turns to the painting of King George III.

Nicholas: Hear that, King George? The schoolmaster says your tax is detestable.

SD1: Cornelia marches onstage, dragging two **bedraggled** children behind her.

Brom: Uh-oh.

Cornelia: Rip Van Winkle, I asked you to milk the cow, feed the chickens, and look

after the children while I visited my mother. I come home to find the cow *un*-milked, the chickens *un*-fed, and little Judith and Rip Jr. running around the yard screeching like angry cats!

Rip: I was busy.

Cornelia: Busy? Sitting here like a pumpkin in the field?

SD2: Rip shrugs.

Cornelia (*sighing*): I am going home.

SD3: Cornelia and the children exit.

Odd Fellows (*whispering offstage*): Rip Van Winkle . . .

Rip: Who said that?

Derrick: Who said what?

Rip (*confused*): I thought I heard my name.

SD1: Rip looks at the sky.

Rip: Wolf, I think tomorrow would be a fine day to go hunting in the mountains.

SD2: Wolf thumps his tail in agreement. The lights fade.

SCENE 3

Catskill Mountains, the next evening

SD3: The orange glow of the setting sun illuminates a forest scene. Rip's hunting rifle rests against a tree, as does Rip. Wolf lies in the grass nearby.

Rip: It's beautiful up here, isn't it, Wolf?

SD1: Wolf sighs contentedly.

Odd Fellows (*offstage*): Rip Van Winkle . . .

Rip: Did you hear that, Wolf?

SD2: Rip looks around. Wolf tilts his head, listening.



Odd Fellows (*offstage*): Rip Van Winkle!

SD3: Rip's shoulders tense. Wolf's **hackles** go up.

SD1: A short, stout man with thick, bushy hair and a **grizzled** beard enters—one of the Odd Fellows. He is dressed like the Dutch explorers who came through the Catskills some 50 years earlier.

SD2: The Odd Fellow carries a barrel on one shoulder. He motions for Rip to help.

Rip: You need help? Sure, sure. Where are you headed?

SD3: The Odd Fellow raises one finger to indicate up.

Rip: All right then, up we go. Here, let me carry that.

SD1: The Odd Fellow gives Rip the barrel and motions for Rip to follow him offstage. Wolf creeps after them, his tail tucked between his legs.

SD2: The stage curtains close.

SCENE 4

Higher in the Catskill Mountains, the same evening

SD3: The Odd Fellow, Rip, and Wolf trudge back and forth across the stage in front of the closed curtain.

Rip (*out of breath*): So, what's your name?

SD1: The Odd Fellow does not respond.

Rip: Well, uh . . . what brings you up to the mountains?

SD2: Still the Odd Fellow says nothing.

Rip: I guess you're not the talkative type, huh?

SD3: From offstage comes a deep rumbling.

SD1: Wolf whines.

SD2: The rumbling gets louder.

A Time of Stories

If you had grown up in the time of Rip Van Winkle, you would have heard many tales about supernatural happenings in the rugged wilderness of the Catskill Mountains.

SD3: The curtains rise on a clearing in the forest.

SD1: The Odd Fellows are playing ninepins, a game similar to bowling.

SD2: The men's expressions are grave.

SD3: No one speaks. In fact, the only sound comes from the balls, which rumble like thunder as they roll.

SD1: One Fellow pours the contents of the barrel into cups. He motions for Rip to serve. Rip obeys, his hands shaking.

Rip: Here you go, gentlemen.

SD2: The men drink silently and then return to their game.

Rip (*to himself*): Surely it wouldn't hurt to have a sip.

SD3: Rip sneaks a swig.

Rip: Delicious!

SD1: He takes another sip . . . and then another.

SD2: He sits down and falls into a deep sleep.

SCENE 5

Under a tree, a bright morning

SD3: Rip is asleep under a tree. His beard has grown long and white.

SD1: Rip shifts and snorts, then opens his eyes.

Rip: Did I sleep here all night? What will I tell Cornelius?

SD2: Rip looks for his rifle. He finds only a rusty old firearm.

Rip: Did those fellows take my rifle? And where has Wolf gone? (*calling out*) Wolf! Wolf! Here, boy!

SD3: Wolf does not appear.

Rip: Did they take my dog too?

SD1: Rip stands, wincing and clutching at his back.

Rip: I must find those fellows and end this joke.

SD2: Rip walks stiffly off the stage.

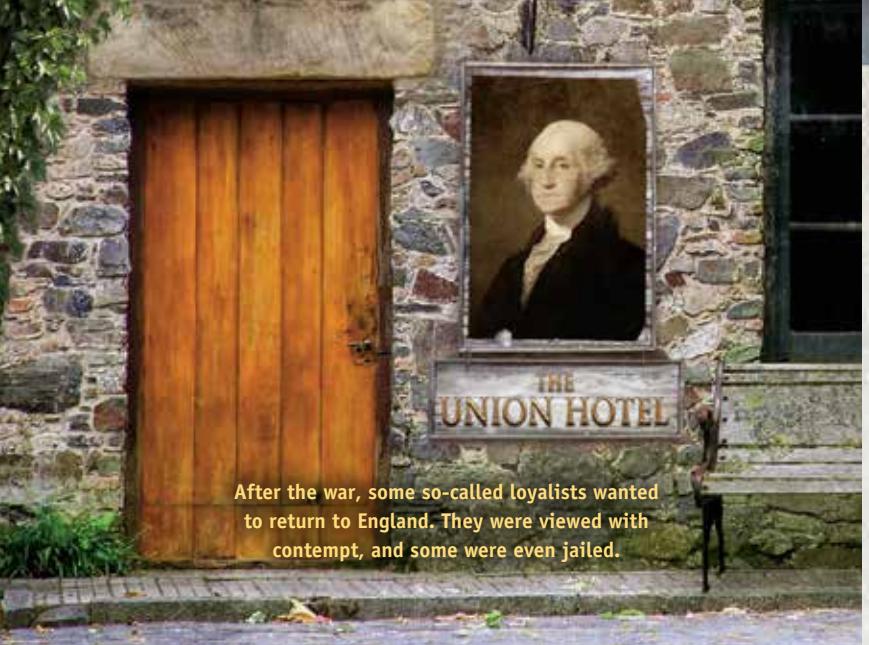
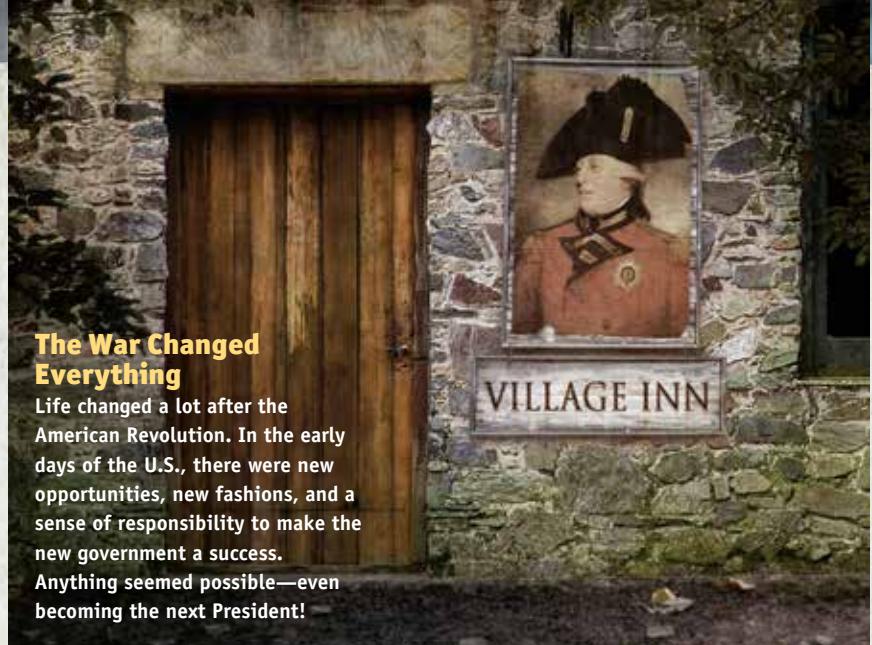
SCENE 6

The Union Hotel, later that morning

SD3: The lights come up on the courtyard from Scene 2.

SD1: The courtyard is full of people. The sign on the inn has changed. Now it reads "The Union Hotel."

SD2: The painting of King George III is gone too. In its place is a painting of George Washington.



SD3: Rip walks in, the rusty rifle slung over his shoulder and a bewildered look on his face.

SD1: Two children come up to him.

Helen: Where did you come from?

Willem: Why are you wearing those old clothes?

Helen: I like your beard, mister!

SD2: Rip touches his face and is astonished to find he has a foot-long beard.

Rip: Who are these people? Why are they dressed oddly?

Willem: They're just the villagers.

Helen: You're the one who's dressed oddly.

Rip: Have I gone mad?

SD3: Some adults gather around.

Theo: What do you mean coming here with a gun? Are you trying to start a riot?

Rip: No! I'm a quiet man and a loyal subject of the king.

Crowd: Gasp.

John: He's a spy for the British!

SD1: The angry crowd inches closer to Rip.

Rip: I mean no harm!

John: Who are you? Tell us before we throw you in jail!

Rip (*hysterical*): I fell asleep in the mountains, and some fellows in old-fashioned clothes stole my gun and my dog. And then they . . . vanished.

SD2: The villagers look at Rip suspiciously.

Rip: I came back here, (*louder*) but everything is different and—and—and—(*shouting*) I can't find my friends!

Willem: Who are your friends?

Rip: Nicholas Vedder? Brom Dutcher? Derrick Van Bummel?

SD3: An old man pipes up.

Peter: Nicholas has been dead 18 years. Brom went off to war and never came back. Derrick is in Congress.

Katrina: There aren't many of us old-timers left, eh?

Rip: Look—does anyone know Rip Van Winkle?

John: That's him over there, leaning against that tree.

SD1: Rip turns and sees a man who looks exactly as he once looked. Rip faints.

SCENE 7

The Union Hotel, moments later

SD2: Rip awakes on the ground surrounded by people.

SD3: Katrina dabs his forehead with a cool cloth.

SD1: John helps Rip to his feet.

John: Listen old man, what is your name?

Rip: I . . . I don't think I know.

SD2: A woman steps forward. The baby in her arms starts to cry.

Judith (*to the baby*): Hush, little Rip.

Rip: What is your name, good woman?

Judith: Judith.

Rip: And your father?

Judith: Rip Van Winkle. But no one has heard from him in 20 years. His poor dog came home without him.

Rip (*trembling*): And . . . your mother?

Judith: She died long ago.

SD3: Rip's eyes widen.

Rip: Judith, it's me—your father. That must be my son by the tree. Don't you recognize me?

Judith: I was a child when my father left.

SD1: Katrina peers into Rip's face.

Katrina: Why, it is Rip Van Winkle! Where have you been these long years?

Rip: For me, 20 years has been one night.

John: What nonsense.

Peter (*quietly*): Rip, I believe your story.

Crowd: You do?

Peter: I do. The Catskill Mountains have always been haunted by strange beings.

SD2: A roll of thunder echoes.

Katrina: It is a fact that Captain Henry Hudson returns every 20 years with his crew.

Peter: My own father once saw them in their old Dutch clothes, bowling in the hollow of the mountain. He said their game sounded like peals of thunder.

Rip: Yes! Exactly!

Judith: So . . . you are my father?

Rip: I believe—I am!

Judith: Then you shall live with us. We will have old Rip, Rip Jr., and baby Rip.

SD3: The villagers are persuaded by Peter Vanderdonk and Katrina Knickerbocker. They nod approvingly.

SD1: The lights fade and the curtain closes as another peal of thunder echoes across the stage.

EPILOGUE

SD2: Seven characters step in front of the curtain.

Katrina: It took time for Rip to grasp all that had happened while he slept.

Peter: We had a revolution.

Theo: We freed ourselves of King George.

John: We formed the United States of America.

Willem: Now Rip tells his story to anyone who will listen.

John: Some think he is out of his head.

Helen: Others believe him.

Judith: And whenever we hear thunder, we say the Dutch are at their game of ninepins again. →

What If You Fell Asleep for 20 Years?

Seven ways the world might be different in 2037 **By Adee Braun**

In the play you just read, *Rip Van Winkle* falls asleep for 20 years and wakes up to find the whole world has changed. That got us thinking: What might OUR world be like in 20 years? We asked futurologists—people who study and think about the future—to tell us what could happen.

You'll beam your thoughts into your best friend's brain.

You'll be able to send messages directly from your brain to your best friend's brain with the help of nanobots—tiny robots swimming around in your head.



You'll download your favorite outfit and print it out at home.

Everyone will have a 3-D printer at home. That means back-to-school shopping will be as easy as downloading the design for your favorite sneaker and clicking "print."



You won't have to wash your clothes (as often).

The clothes of the future will be bacteria-resistant, meaning you won't have to launder them as frequently.



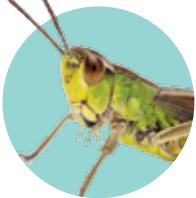
Your toilet will spy on you.

Your toilet will study your waste and tell you if you have health problems. It will send the results to your doctor and arrange for medicine to be delivered to you.



You'll eat bugs.

Bugs will be a staple of our diets as traditional protein sources such as beef and chicken get more expensive. Beetle burger, anyone?



Your breakfast will be delivered by drone.

You'll order your meals from a neighborhood kitchen, and a drone will deliver your order within minutes.



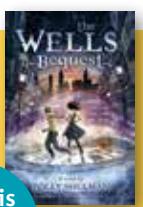
You won't have to get on a plane to see the Grand Canyon.

Virtual reality will provide realistic experiences of far-off places—including sights, smells, and sounds. So anyone will be able to experience any place without having to pack a bag.



Writing Contest

Write a story about someone who falls asleep and wakes up 20 years from now. Use the play and the informational text to help you come up with your plot. Your story can be in the form of a play, video, or short story. Group entries accepted. Send your story to **Rip Van Winkle Contest**. Five winners will each get a copy of *The Wells Bequest* by Polly Shulman. See page 2 for details.



Get this activity online.

Thanks to futurologist Peter Cochrane as well as the experts at the World Future Society for their help with this article.

