

SCENE FOUR: *The Marketplace in Hamelin Town*

All TOWNSPEOPLE and all CHILDREN enter.

CHILD 1: The rats have all gone!

TOWNSPERSON 2: I know, isn't it wonderful?

CHILD 2: Where are they? Where have they disappeared to?

TOWNSPERSON 3: I don't know, but they've certainly all gone.

TOWNSPERSON 4: I heard that they'd all fallen into the river Weser and drowned.

TOWNSPERSON 1: Yes, I heard that as well. I wonder why?

TOWNSPERSON 2: Maybe the council found something to drive them away with.

TOWNSPERSON 3: Well, it took them long enough to do it!

TOWNSPERSON 4: People are saying that a strange man lured them all away.

TOWNSPERSON 2: Are they? Who was it?

TOWNSPERSON 4: I don't know. Someone the Mayor found, I think.

TOWNSPERSON 1: Well, whoever it was, I'd like to shake his hand.

CHILD 3: Does that mean they're not coming back, ever?

CHILD 4: Does that mean we can play in the streets again without worrying about being bitten and chased?

TOWNSPERSON 2: It means that at last, we can all start living properly.

CHILD 5: *(To other children)* Well, what are we waiting for? Let's go and play! Last one there's a sissy!

The CHILDREN all exit excitedly. CHILD 6 struggles to follow them.

CHILD 6: Don't go so fast! I want to play too! Wait for me!

CHILD 6, limping, struggles to follow them.

TOWNSPERSON 3: It seems we may have underestimated our Mayor and his council.

TOWNSPERSON 4: Yes. *(Pause)* Exactly who did it and how they did it, I'm still not sure, but the rats have definitely all gone.

TOWNSPERSON 2: Well, I for one will certainly be voting for the Mayor again next year. It will be wonderful be able to to live a normal life again.

TOWNSPERSON 1: I think this occasion should be celebrated properly. I vote for an enormous party!

OTHER

TOWNSPEOPLE: *(Ad libbing in agreement)* 'Yes!' 'What a great idea!' 'Good thought!' and so on.

NARRATOR 2 enters. The MAYOR and all CORPORATION enter on the opposite side of the stage. The TOWNSPEOPLE applaud them. The MAYOR and CORPORATION acknowledge the applause modestly. Some of them bow slightly. The MAYOR addresses the TOWNSPEOPLE directly.

MAYOR: Go...

NARRATOR 2: ...cried the Mayor...

MAYOR: ...and get long poles, poke out the nests and block up the holes! Consult with carpenters and builders, and leave in our town not a trace of the rats!

NARRATOR 1 enters. The PIED PIPER enters.

NARRATOR 2: When suddenly, up the face of the Piper perked in the marketplace, saying...

PIED PIPER: First, if you please, my thousand guilders!

The MAYOR signals to the TOWNSPEOPLE that they should leave. The TOWNSPEOPLE all exit, slightly puzzled about who the Pied Piper is and what's happening. The MAYOR and the CORPORATION look nervous, but determined. They exchange glances.

NARRATOR 2: A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue; so did the Corporation too. For council dinners made rare havoc with Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock; and half the money would replenish their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. To pay this sum to a wandering fellow with a gipsy coat of red and yellow!

The MAYOR gathers all the CORPORATION for a meeting while the PIED PIPER looks on.

MAYOR: *(To the others)* I don't think we can afford a thousand guilders, can we?

CORPORATION 1: *(Unsure)* Well, we can if we reduce our wine cellar and cut down on our drinking.

CORPORATION 2: And don't have so many council dinners.

CORPORATION 3: And stop being driven around in limousines.

CORPORATION 4: And, maybe, sell off a few of our robes and chains.

MAYOR: So we can't afford it, then?

Pause. They all look at each other.

ALL CORPORATION: *(Together)* No, we can't.

MAYOR: Right! *(He pauses, thinking carefully, and then beckons the PIED PIPER over)* Beside...

NARRATOR 2: ...quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,

MAYOR: Our business was done at the river's brink. We saw with our eyes the vermin sink, and what's dead can't come to life I think. So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink from the duty of giving you something for drink, and a matter of money to put in your poke; but as for the guilders, what we spoke of them, as you very well know, was in joke. Besides, our losses have made us thrifty. A thousand guilders? Come, take fifty!