

TOWNSPERSON

Another market day finished and not a single sale. Even if we had the money to buy food, there's none to be had. The rats have had the lion's share. They're terrorizing us. I'm afraid to go out at night. This place used to be full of tourists. Wallets overflowing and money to spend on anything we had to sell. More money than sense. Those were the good old days. Ever since the rat king moved in with his mob, no one comes to Hamelin. Little wonder. You're not going to have the best of holidays if you keep getting robbed in the street by a horde of rats. It gets wearing. They don't want Old Hamelin nowadays, not with its wall-to-wall, hot and cold running rats. They're all opting for all-inclusives in Corfu these days. Sun, sea, sand and all the hummus you can eat. I hear it's quite reasonable. I've seen the brochures. Some lovely destinations. Barbados... Mauritius... Hull. (Substitute the last with somewhere that few people would holiday) Who cares? They're going anywhere other than here. Who can blame them? No one likes a rat in their swimming trunks. Gets a bit nippy. You know, I've had enough. I'm packing it in. There's got to be something more rewarding to do. Maybe I'll emigrate.

MIKE BOOM

I don't know why I have to do all these small town reports. I didn't sign up for this. I wanted the celebrity lifestyles racket not 'Cat stuck in a tree stories'. I'm a professional, Deirdre. I should be reporting in St Tropez, not this backwater town in... where was it again? Lower Saxony? Never heard of it. You see? Don't they know my potential? I'm Mike Boom, news anchor extraordinaire. That editor needs his eyes tested. They wouldn't know star potential if it came up and kicked them in the... are we on?

COUNCILLORS

As councillor for Health and Safety, I should like to point out that the plan you have in mind had better work. There's plague in the streets and I myself feel like I could have a touch of bubonic plague. As councillor for Health and Safety, I've seen hundreds of people catch it. Not a pretty sight. Unsightly boils, fever, headache, chills, weakness, and swollen infected glands. Not a pretty sight. Not to mention, ultimately death. As councillor for health and safety, I should like to be put on record that if any of this gets out our own health and safety is well and truly at risk.

SILAS

(full melodramatic villain mode) Ha ha ha! Fools! I ain't no ratcatcher at all. If these backwater bumpkins are backward enough to strike a bargain with a black-hearted blackguard like yours truly, they've only themselves to blame. I'll take their gold and disappear like a puff of smoke. I think that calls for a truly evil laugh.

SCHMALZ

Can I get on? Good. Fellow Hamlonians, after years of tyranny we have cast off the chains of those furry demons and are free to live amwonderful life of plenty once more. There is wheat again in the stores, beer in the barrels, and sunshine in our hearts. And who put all this back? The Piper? No, me. If it wasn't for me, then the rats would still be here. I was the one who employed the Piper and just look at what we've gained. That's worth a few more terms in office, isn't it? You know it makes sense. Schmalz for Burgermeister!

PIPER

You are all liars and cheats. You play at gentlemen but you are no better than those rats. Grubbing in the dirt for whatever you think should be yours. Money before honor. Where is your honor, gentlemen? This is no way to teach your children. Honor your promise. Fifty thousand guilder. I think was the agreement. Then I stick to my original price. One thousand. You so-called gentlemen have shown your true colors here today. You have turned your backs on decency. I have given you chances to redeem yourselves but you have done nothing but laugh and turn your backs. You knew my terms and agreed to them. We shook hands as gentlemen do. Without honor and truth, what are we? I made a promise that day and so did you. If this is the kind of example that you are to set your children, then you do not deserve them. If you do not teach them honor by example, someone else will. Fulfil your promise and pay the piper or suffer the consequences.

CHILDREN: Mother! The Piper, Mother. He's gone. He's taken all the magic from our village. That music. I just wanted to follow. He danced us round the square and then up the mountain path. The mountain, Mother, the mountain. It just opened like a door to him. They all went into a bright light but I was too slow. I should be with them, Mother. They left me behind. As I fell to the ground, the mountain closed and I was left alone.