



The Pied Piper of Hamelin

Conte des Frères Grimm / Vincent Wagner

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1

Royal Inspector: Innkeeper, give me something to drink and tell me the whole story! Do not leave out any details! The mayor told me you know more about this strange affair more than anyone else. And I have to dispense justice as soon as possible!

Inkeeper: Yes, my lord Inspector of the king!

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: We have to catch this devil who took our children away, my lord! Our lives are difficult enough! What will we become without our daughters and sons?

Royal Inspector: If everybody followed that man, innkeeper, why did the little Gerda stay in town?

2

Inkeeper: She is deaf, my lord! And believe me you had to be deaf if you wanted to escape the spell! But hear what I have to say.

3

Inkeeper: As you know, my lord, it has been very cold in Hamelin the last two months...

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: My lord, during the first lights of December, while ice and snow had covered the town, thousands of rats suddenly appeared from the bottom of the earth!

They were everywhere within a few days: on the roofs of our houses, in the cellars and in the kitchens. They were scurrying about the streets in every direction, plundering our grain stocks, even worming their way under our bed sheets!

Men and boys armed themselves with bludgeons to hit them, our wives set mousetraps, poured poison around windows and doors but, there were so many of those damned creatures that nothing could have stopped them!

4

Inkeeper: Then he appeared.

Royal Inspector: The stranger? The mayor told me you put him up?

5

Inkeeper: Yes, my lord! That evil man showed himself at my inn on the morning of 24th December! At Christmas Eve! He was tall and strong, richly dressed and he asked for supper.

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: I immediately saw that he had the evil eye. He did not seem bothered by the rats. I wish he had left my humble inn. My little Hans served him.

Royal Inspector: The little Hans?

6

Inkeeper: Alas, my lord! Children do not listen to their parents!

Royal Inspector: Don't I know it, Innkeeper!

Inkeeper: That rascal sat down at the table to talk with that stranger instead of helping me in the kitchen. I am sure that this demon whispered fables in his ears!

7

Inkeeper: Early on in the afternoon the stranger went and saw the mayor at the town hall.

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: He told him he could get us rid of the rats with his wooden pipe. But he asked for gold for that service.

8

Royal Inspector: The mayor already told me that, innkeeper! And I know he promised him one hundred golden coins as reward.

9

Inkeeper: The news went round the town faster than a swallow flight, my lord!

Can you believe it! That stranger promised he would throw the rats out of Hamelin!

Without much conviction, we watched him behind our windows...

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: He rose his pipe to his lips...

10

Inkeeper: ...And started to play dreadful music, my lord, sourer than vinegar, colder than snow on the river Weser, sharper than a butcher knife blade! How such an awful sound can escape from a little wooden pipe? My blood is still freezing in my veins!

Royal Inspector : And what happened?

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: Everything he told us, my lord : the rats came to him as if his devilish music ordered them to round up!

11

Inkeeper: He was standing like a shepherd in the middle of the swarming rats...

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: Then he started to walk. The rats were around him.

12

Inkeeper: Would you believe me if I told you that once they were on the bridge, the rats threw themselves against the frozen river? The ice broke under their weight and they all died drowned!

Royal Inspector: This is incredible! Only a sorcerer is able to command animals this way!

13

Inkeeper: A sorcerer? You are absolutely right, my lord! When he came back to the town hall, our good mayor gave him one hundred golden coins as promised.

But that blasted sorcerer, that evil stranger wanted more : he demanded that we gave him one thousand coins but, you can imagine that, we do not have that amount in the Treasury of the town.

Royal Inspector: The poor wretch! One hundred golden coins : isn't that already a fortune? Couldn't he be content with it?

14

Inkeeper: Alas my lord! He was so furious that he left the town cursing us all.

I saw brave women who tried to offer him several of our best Hamelin sausages but, he rejected them with contempt.

15

Inkeeper: So we took refuge in the cathedral to pray to Our Lord and repent.

16

Inkeeper: At New Year's Day, we thought our woes had ended at last.

The mayor gathered us on the main square when we saw the stranger again!

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: He rose his pipe to his lips...

17

Inkeeper: And then, my God! He started to play wonderful music, lighter than a butterfly, merrier than a bird song, sweeter than the most delicious fruit, gentler than the spring wind stroke in the early hours.

As if, all of a sudden, Paradise sang in our ears!

..... Pull the board up to the mark

Inkeeper: But it was tragedy singing, my lord!

Suddenly, it was as if my feet took root in the snow, while little Hans and his friends, all the little boys and girls of Hamelin, hand in hand, joyfully came to the stranger...

18

Inkeeper: We, the parents, we saw them dancing around him without stopping.
And the more he played the pipe, the more our children whirled round with jubilation.
Our feet refused to move forward, our arms, our hands did not want to go up!
It was as though we were paralyzed.

19

Inkeeper: Then he started to walk with our children hot on his heels.

.....*Pull the board up to the mark*

Inkeeper: Oh what a pity, my lord! When our legs finally agreed to run, it was too late : the snow and the wind had erased their tracks! We looked for them in the mountains night and day but, they had well and truly disappeared. Find them my lord! Find my little Hans and, by the King's blessing, hang that stranger!

20

Royal Inspector: Have no fear, Innkeeper!

I will go straightaway and look for your children!

I am an Inspector of the King. I can assure you that, even though he is a sorcerer, that pied piper will not get away from me!

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Nowadays people say that citizens of Hamelin town are still waiting...

END