

The Queenborough Guildhall

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Characters: The Mayor of Queenborough, his wife, Townsperson 1, Townsperson 2, Townsperson 3, boy.

In the Guildhall at Queenborough, the Mayor and several townspeople are awaiting news of the approaching Dutch navy...

Mayor: Please everyone, remain calm. I assure you there is no possibility of a foreign invasion of our town.

Townsperson 1: But how can you be sure?

Townsperson 2: The defences at the port of Sheerness are nowhere near strong enough to hold off an enemy attack!

Townsperson 3: Rubbish! Our navy is the strongest in the world!

Wife: But if the Dutch do break through, what will happen to all of us? How can we keep our children safe?

Mayor: Enough! Enough! Please, I know that some of you are very worried but there is really no need to panic. I'm sure the men at Sheerness can force the Dutch ships back out to sea and then everything can return to normal...

They all sit down and calm themselves.

Mayor: (To his wife) Please don't upset yourself my dear. Surely you know as your husband I would do everything in my power to keep you safe.

Wife: Yes, I know. There are just so many rumours; we don't really know what's going on.

Townsperson 1: I heard that the Dutch fleet has already arrived at Sheerness! They've ransacked the entire port and every English man there has fled for his life!

Townsperson 2: I heard that too! One man told me that the Dutch completely destroyed the only seven English cannons that worked!

Townsperson 3: But that can't be possible!

Wife: If it is true then Queenborough is doomed!

Mayor: We must wait until we have word from Sheerness and then we will truly know what is happening.

Boy: *(Running in, out of breath)* Sir! Sir! Ships are approaching, down near the harbour!

Townsperson 3: You see! Our English ships sailing here to let us know we're safe! They've forced those Dutch rascallions back out to sea!

Wife: Oh thank heavens!

Townsperson 1: Don't be too sure! How do we know they are *English ships?*

Townsperson 2: Of course they are English ships!

Townsperson 3: But you don't know that!

Mayor: Quiet everyone! *(They all look at the Mayor in silence)*
Boy, are these ships flying the Dutch or the English flag?

(They all stare at the boy, who pauses for a long time)

Boy: The ships are flying the flag of the Dutch, sir.

(They all gasp)

- Mayor:** You're sure of this?
- Boy:** Absolutely certain, sir. You can see the red, white and blue stripes from a mile off.
- Mayor:** Then it has happened. The Dutch are sailing for Queenborough.
- Townsperson 3:** But we have no defences here! What are we going to do?
- Wife:** *(To her husband)* My dear, there is only one course of action to keep us all safe.
- Mayor:** Yes, I know what I have to do. *(To the boy)* Boy, go to the storeroom and fetch me a large white sheet.
- Townsperson 1:** What on earth do you need that for?
- Townsperson 2:** We can't all hide under one sheet!
- Wife:** Don't be ridiculous! We can hoist the white sheet to the top of our flag pole. When the Dutch see that we are flying a white flag of surrender they will know not to attack us.
- Mayor:** Yes, that is our only course of action.
- Boy:** But the Dutch will still invade...
- Mayor:** Yes, but as long as we pose no threat to them they will not harm us. *(Handing the sheet to the boy)* Hang this from our flagpole. Once the Dutch have seen this, it won't be long before they arrive.
- (They all look sad and worried)*