Soon, the Youngest Reporter began to notice that, along with the electricity for the rich people who could pay for it, the nuclear power plants also produced an evil, toxic waste. And no one knew what to do with it.

"What about all the waste?" she asked the Piper. "Not my problem," said the Piper. "Someone else will come along later and deal with it."

Then the Youngest Reporter discovered that the people working at the nuclear power plant and the people living nearby and especially the children, were falling sick with strange diseases never before seen in Nukeland.

"It's the nuclear power plant that's making you sick," the Youngest Reporter told the people of Nukeland.

"Scaremonger!" cried the Piper. "Ignore her," he told the people of Nukeland. "She's too emotional. She doesn't understand science."

So the people ignored the Youngest Reporter even though most of them could not afford to buy the power from the nuclear plants and were still living in the cold and dark.

And then, one day, one of the nuclear power plants blew up and a great poison rained down on the land and many many more people got sick and many of them died.

And the Youngest Reporter who no one had listened to wept. "There was another way," she said, "and it was right there in front of us all the time. The sun and the wind are free and safe and fast and cheap."

And the people of Nukeland finally agreed. "We should never have listened to the Lying Piper," they said. "He took our money and wasted our time. He made us sick and led us down a dead end. We made a terrible mistake."

And they didn't live happily ever after.

The Lying Piper of Nukeland

A nuclear power fairy tale

A publication of BeyondNuclear.org

Once upon a time... long ago, a Piper arrived in Carbonville. The people of Carbonville welcomed him warmly because they had heard that when he played his flute he had magical powers.

"Oh Piper!" they cried. "Here in Carbonville it is always dark and cold. It is smokey and polluted. Can you help us find a better way to create warmth and light?"

The Piper was happy to oblige. "I know just the answer," he told them. "It's called nuclear power! It's safe, cheap and reliable. Very soon you will have warmth and light that is too cheap to meter!"

The people of Carbonville were so excited to get shiny new nuclear power plants that they took a vote and changed the name of their town to Nukeland.

The Piper began to play and very soon beautiful drawings of nuclear power plants started to appear for the people of Nukeland to admire. But several years passed and nothing else happened.

"What use are these drawings?" the people said. "We need warmth and light!"

"Be patient," said the Piper. "I will bring you 15 nuclear power plants and you will have all the heat and light you need. I just need five gold coins to get them started."

The people of Nukeland were very poor but they did without and saved up until they had five gold coins. They gave them to the Piper and once again he began to play.

The people of Nukeland watched as their fields were plowed under and their trees cut down and the land paved with concrete in readiness for the nuclear power plants. But still none appeared.

"I need more gold!" cried the Piper. "Just five more gold coins and your nuclear plants will be here".

"You said it would only cost us five gold coins," cried the people. "Now you're charging us double!"

But all the same, the people paid the Piper another five gold coins. Many more years passed while the people of Nukeland froze in the dark, and then one day three nuclear power plants were finally done.

The people of Nukeland were shocked. Three nuclear power plants weren't nearly enough to bring heat and light to everyone. "Why are there only three?" they asked the Piper. "You promised us 15. We paid for 15."

The Piper just shrugged. "Now you will have the heat and light you wanted!" he exclaimed. "Those of you who can pay for it."

So only the richest people who could afford the nuclear energy got light and heat even though everyone in the land had paid for the nuclear power plants.

And when the nuclear power plants opened, the Piper brought in all his friends and relatives to run them. "What about all the jobs you promised us?" demanded the people of Nukeland.

"You people are imbeciles," snapped the Piper. "We need experts." And even though the Piper's friends and relatives knew as little as he did about nuclear power plants, they all got jobs at the plants, leaving the people of Nukeland to starve.

The Piper went to the newspapers to brag about his achievement. "Nuclear power is the answer to all your problems," he cried. "Yes it is!" the editors agreed and wrote it in their newspapers.

But one reporter, the youngest of them all, wasn't so sure. "Surely," she said, "it would be easier, quicker and cheaper to harness the power of the sun when it is shining and capture the power of the wind when it is blowing?" she asked. "What if we turned that into heat and light?"

"Nonsense!" cried the Piper. "Nonsense!" agreed the editors, who never asked any questions. And they wrote it in their newspapers.