

Story 2170 (1999 Tape 11

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Things in This World Misunderstood

Two professional thieves set out together one day. As they walked along, each claimed that he was the superior thief. The first thief said, "You keep praising yourself a great deal for your professional ability. Now show me an example of your skill. Do you see that man over there plowing his field? If you can steal one of his oxen right here in broad daylight, then I shall believe in your competence

The second thief answered, "In the middle of the while the farmer is actually using his oxen? How could I steal one of them?"

"If you cannot do that, then stop claiming that you are a master thief."

But the second thief responded, "If we were to work together, we could steal both of his oxen."

"How could this possibly be done?" asked the first thief.

The second thief said, "You remain right here, but keep yourself hidden. I shall go to that tree you can see there in the distance. I shall sit in the shade of its branches and call to that plowman. I shall provoke him to come

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talk with me. While I keep him distracted in conversation, you unhitch one of his oxen and take it to that bridge we crossed about an hour ago. Hide beneath that bridge with the ox until I get there.

The second thief then proceeded to the tree and sat down in its shade. There he began to lament loudly, "There are many things in this world that I simply cannot understand! There are many things in this world that I simply cannot understand!"

The farmer who was plowing his field listened to the second thief's complaint for awhile and thought, "That fellow must have some sort of problem. Since I need a rest anyway, why don't I go and ask what is bothering him?" He then walked to the tree, greeted the man sitting beneath it, and offered him a cigarette. The second thief accepted the cigarette began to smoke it, but he smoked it very slowly, for between puffs he repeated his complaint about his lack of understanding.

The farmer said, "Just enjoy your cigarette now, and we shall talk afterwards." The thief smoked slowly in order let as much time pass as possible. When the cigarette was finished, the farmer asked the thief, "What world are you talking about? What is there about that world that mystifies

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you so much?"

friend, the mysteries are all around us. Right here you are plowing that field below us with but a single ox. In what world could such an unusual thing happen?"

The farmer laughed at this remark, but when he glanced at his field, he discovered to his amazement that there was indeed but one ox harnessed to his plow. He began to run this way and that way in an effort to discover his lost ox. While the farmer was doing this, the second thief descended to the field and took the remaining ox.

When the exhausted farmer returned to his field, he found that the second ox had also disappeared. He said, "I have learned something about the treachery of this world, but it cost me two oxen to acquire that knowledge."