

## The Poem-loving Thieves

(Renga Nusubito)

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Thief 1 (Shite)

Thief 2 (Ado)

Host (Koado)

Thief 1 I am a resident of this neighborhood. We have organized a linked-verse club, and I have been appointed to serve as host for the next club meeting. But since my life is quite lacking in affluence, I do not possess the necessary equipment for hosting such a meeting. However, there is a man named someone (use name of actor playing Thief 2) who lives near here and who is to serve as co-host with me. Thus I have decided to go confer with him as to what is to be done. I must hurry on my way. Truly, I do hope he is at home, but since he seldom ventures forth, I am quite sure he will be there. Well, here I am already. First, I will announce myself. Hello in there. Is somebody at home?

Thief 2 Here. Oh, someone (name of actor playing Thief 1), it is you!

Thief 1 It is me, indeed. The matter I have come about is of no great import. As you are well aware, the date for us to serve as co-hosts for the linked verse club meeting quickly approaches.

Thief 2 It is as you say indeed. This date for us serve as co-hosts quickly approaches, and I have been wondering how we will be able to manage it.

Thief 1 You must have made some preparations already.

Thief 2 Thinking it best to make preparations in advance, and considering such things to be necessary items, I have prepared some cryptomeria leaves and some nandin leaves.

Thief 1 Both of those are, indeed, necessary items. And what else have you prepared?

Thief 2 For the moment, that is all I have prepared.

Thief 1 Is that all?

Thief 2 Most certainly.

Thief 1 (Laughing.) We cannot fulfill our responsibility as co-hosts with nothing more than pine leaves and nandin leaves.

Thief 2 Then have you prepared something?

Thief 1 I, also, thinking it best to make preparations in advance, and considering such things to be necessary items, I have carved exactly twenty cryptomeria toothpicks.

Thief 2 Those are also indeed necessary items. And what else have you prepared?

Thief 1 For the moment, that is all I have prepared.

Thief 2 Is that all?

Thief 1 Most certainly.

Thief 2 (Laughing.) Since you laughed at me, I assumed that you had prepared a bit more, but there is no way that

we can fulfill our responsibility as co-hosts with nothing more than twenty cryptomeria toothpicks.

Thief 1 You are right, and concerning that matter, I have come to confer with you just a bit. But since we are so much in public view here, if you do not mind, shall we not go further inside to talk?

Thief 2 I do not mind in the least, so please come all the way inside.

Thief 1 With all my heart.

Thief 2 First, I beg you to seat yourself.

Thief 1 Haaaa.

Thief 2 So just what is the matter you have come to confer with me about?

Thief 1 It is a matter of no great import, but if you agree to my plan, it will be a great help, but if, by chance, you should not agree, I will be in a real fix.

Thief 2 Whatever it may be, if it is something useful for us to fulfill our responsibilities as co-hosts, there is no reason why I should not agree.

Thief 1 In that case, I will explain it to you. This is also part of our work as co-hosts. Is not Master Somebody (actor's name playing Rich Neighbor) a wealthy man who lives in this neighborhood?

Thief 2 It is as you say, indeed, he is an affluent resident of this neighborhood.

Thief 1 I have decided to sneak into his house tonight unannounced and that one or two necessary pieces of equipment and sell them, and we won't tell anybody what we have done, not a single soul.

Thief 2 That's enough, I understand. Without doing such a thing as that, there is no way we can fulfill our responsibilities as co-hosts for the upcoming meeting.

Thief 1 Then you do agree with me?

Thief 2 How can I possibly not agree with you?

Thief 1 Oh, how relieved, how relieved I am! I was afraid if I told you of my plan and you agreed, it would be a great help, but if, by chance, you should not agree, I would be in a real fix. It is said that night is the best time for the executing of such a plan as this. So let us be on our way.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

Thief 1 If that is the case, you must lead the way.

Thief 2 Oh, but I insist that you serve as guide.

Thief 1 What a bother to be called a guide

(BOTH laugh.)

Thief 1 Come, come, let us be on our way.

Thief 2 With all my heart.

Thief 1 Now just what do you think, when one does not have the means, one finds oneself coming up with a most unexpected idea.

Thief 2 Also, in our straitened circumstances, there is nothing else for us to do, and when we have accomplished our purpose, we must make restitution.

Thief 2 That is indeed the case. Well, now, here we are already.

Thief 2 Indeed, here we are.

Thief 1 I heard that he had recently taken additional security measures, and now he seems to have things locked up quite tight.

Thief 2 There is no way to get in from this side.

Thief 1 Let's go take a look at the back.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

Thief 1 If the back is locked up this tight, it will just be too bad.

Thief 2 I heard that his security construction work is still only half done.

Thief 1 Oh, good! The backside is nothing at all like the front. All we have to do is cut through this hedge and we'll be like a pair of crackers in a crock. Well, then, let's cut through the hedge.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

Thief 1 Have you prepared anything for a situation such as this?

Thief 2 No, I have prepared nothing at all.

Thief 1 I thought we might find this sort of obstruction, so I brought along a saw.

Thief 2 That was most clever of you. (BOTH laugh.)

Thief 1 Now I must cut through the hedge.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

Thief 1 Zuka, zuka, zuka. Zuka, zuka, zuka.

BOTH: (Pushing the hedge apart.) Meri. Meri. Meri, meri, meri meri, meri. (They fall to the floor and raise their hand to their ears.)

Thief 1 Did it not make a lot of noise?

Thief 2 It did indeed make a great noise.

Thief 1 I was so surprised at the noise it made, that I stopped my own ears.

Thief 2 I also stopped my own ears.

Thief 1 And we both most rudely fell to the floor. And on top of that, we stopped our own ears, thinking that would keep anybody else from hearing (They laugh, then step back in surprise and raise their hands to their mouths and peer off right.) I wonder if anybody did hear?

Thief 2 No, no, it seems that no one heard as there is nobody moving about inside.

Thief 1 Now we must get through this hedge.

BOTH Ei, ei. Yatto, na.

Thief 1 Now we're through and safe.

Thief 2 It is as you say indeed.

Thief 1 Here, here. All we need do is open this door, and we will be able to go straight into the parlor. So, first let us open the door. Goro, goro, goro. A fire has been lit.

Thief 2 Indeed, a fire has been lit.

Thief 1 The master is a most fastidious man, and it is likely for this reason that, realizing that the twilight is upon us, he lit a fire to provide pre-dawn light.

Thief 2 I am so afraid that we might be caught that my heart is pounding fiercely.

Thief 1 You must not talk in such a cowardly manner, and just follow me.

Thief 2 We really shouldn't go so very far into the house.

Thief 1 So I see he has indeed lit the pre-dawn lights.

Thief 2 It is as you say indeed.

Thief 1 It looks as though he had guests last night as his equipment is scattered all about.

Thief 2 His equipment is indeed scattered about.

Thief 1 Fortunately, here is a torch, so let use it to have a look about.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

Thief 1 Here I see tea ceremony utensils.

Thief 2 It is as you say, these are indeed tea ceremony utensils.

Thief 1 And here is a tea kettle.

Thief 2 A tea kettle.

Thief 1 Tea cups and a tea caddy.

Thief 2 A dipper.

Thief 1 A wrapping cloth and a feather duster. Are they not fine utensils?

Thief 2 They are indeed extremely fine utensils.

Thief 1 With such a set of utensils, we would be able to carry out our co-hosting responsibilities with the greatest of ease.

Thief 2 This is what is meant by the expression "a mountain of treasure."

Thief 1 It is as you say indeed. Here's an ink stone and a brazier.

Thief 2 That is indeed a brazier.

Thief 1 And here's a poem card.

Thief 2 What is written on it?

Thief 1 As I peer into the water. . .

Thief 2 As I peer into the water. . .

Thief 1 I see tree leaves above the moon. . . Well, I must say what an amusing verse!

Thief 2 I am certain that this must be the opening verse composed by the host.

Thief 1 Well, I must say, you are most perceptive. I am indeed certain that that is just what it is. I would like to make a linking verse for it. What do you think?

Thief 2 Well, I must say, what carefree things you say. Rather than wasting our time like that, don't you think it better for us to grab a thing or two and get out of here?

Thief 1 Wait just a moment. Was it not for the love of linked verses that we sneaked in here tonight?

Thief 2 That is also true.

Thief 1 Then first let us sit down here.

Thief 2 With all my heart. Come, come, try to think of something.

Thief 1 With all my heart.

Thief 2 What would be best, I wonder?

Thief 1 So how about this?

Thief 2 Have you already thought of something?

Thief 1 I will recite it and see.

Thief 2 Let's hear it.

Thief 1 Branches scatter. . .

Thief 2 Branches scatter. . .

Thief 1 But the dew still clings to the lower autumn leaves.

Thief 2 That is a fine verse indeed. But it has some forbidden overlap with the host's opening verse.

Thief 1 I doesn't have any forbidden overlap with the host's opening verse.

Thief 2 It may well not have any forbidden overlap with the host's opening verse, but I don't like the way "dew still clings" sounds in the context of tonight's gathering.

Thief 1 Then I will change it to "dew clings not."

Thief 2 That was a quick solution, so now I will compose the next linked verse.

Thief 1 That is a fine idea.

Thief 2 The sound of the evening shower is stolen by the wind in the pines.

Thief 1 That's worse.

Thief 2 What's wrong with it?

Thief 1 I don't like the way your "stolen" sounds in the context of tonight's gathering.

Thief 2 I know what you mean, but though we have sneaked in here tonight, we still haven't stolen as much as a single toothpick, so I can't see anything wrong with it.

Thief 1 What you say is also true. So now let's try singing them.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

(Just when they begin to sing their verses.)

Host Here, here! What's this I hear? You say a thief has broken in? Guard the back and front. I'll stand guard here. Bring torches. I'll catch you yet, I'll catch you yet.

Thief 1 Oh, someone has heard us.

Thief 2 I thought this sort of thing would happen.

Host You rascals, you'll not get away with this.

Thief 1 I say, I say. We beg you to forgive us. We are not thieves.

Host Sneaking into somebody's house in the middle of the night, what do you mean you are not thieves?!

Thief 1 It was due to the inordinate beauty of your parlor that we came for a visit. (To Thief 2) Didn't we.

Thief 2 Yes, that's right.

Both We came to view its beauties.

Host What do you mean, its beauties!

Thief 2 Well, what he just said was a little off the mark. What really happened. . . (To Thief 1) Right?

Thief 1 Yes, that's right

Both We simply lost our way.

Host You are still talking nonsense.

Thief 1 Please forgive us, oh, forgive us.

Host Well now, for some minutes past, I have been hearing some sort of recitation. What is it you were reciting?

Thief 1 Oh, no, it is nothing that would be appropriate for your ears.

Host No, no, it sounded most interesting. Recite it for me quickly.

Thief 1 (To Thief 2) You recite it for him.

Thief 2 No, you recite it for him. (They begin to argue.)

Host Stop this foolishness and recite it.

Thief 1 I will recite it, I will recite it. When we read the poem card in your alcove, that said, "As I peer into the water. . . I see tree leaves above the moon," while realizing how rude it may seem, I composed a first link verse to accompany it.

Host And just what was that verse?

Thief 1 Now, you recite it.

Thief 2 But it is your verse, so you must recite it. (They begin to argue.)

Host Hurry up and recite it!

Thief 1 I will recite it, I will recite. "Branches scatter, but the dew clings not to the lower autumn leaves." And then this petty thief composed a second linked verse.

Host And what was that?

Thief 2 Since you have started, go ahead and recite it too.

Thief 1 It's your verse, so you must recite it. (They begin to argue.)

Host Stop this foolishness and recite it.

Thief 2 I will recite it, I will recite it. "The sound of the evening shower is stolen by the wind in the pines." But we have not yet stolen so much as a toothpick.

Host You are the sort of rascals who steal things, but you are also rather clever, I will compose a third linked verse, and after that, if you two compose a fourth, I will spare you your lives. But if you don't, I will take your lives, so prepare your hearts for that.

Thief 1 You are quite capable of both, I am certain.

Host So how about this?

Thief 1 Have you already thought of something?

Host In the darkness of the night, sneaking in out of pity for the moon. . .

Thief 1 Very good!

Host The gods above also lend their light to watch.”

Thief 1 Well, I must say, how very amusing.

Host Come on, now compose your verse.

Thief 1 Come on, you compose it.

Thief 2 No, you must compose it. (They begin to argue.)

Host Hurry up and compose it.

Thief 1 How about this?

Host How about what?

Thief 1 The temple bell peals out its forgiveness as we wake from a forbidden dream.

Host Well, I must say, how very amusing. On the strength of your verses, I will spare you your lives. So now get out of here the way you came in.

Thief 1 We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. But in the condition you are in now, you seem most uncomfortable, so won't you take a more relaxing stance?

Host You are right indeed. If that is the case, I will return my sword to its scabbard.

Thief 1 For that we are extremely grateful.

Host Come, come, get out of here quickly.

Thief 1 (To Thief 2) Then you must go first.

Thief 2 No, you must go first. (They begin to argue.)

Host Get out of here quickly.

Thief 1 I am going, I am going. Oh, forgive me, please forgive me. (He hides his face behind his sleeve as he speaks and moves away.)

Host And you get out of here too.

Thief 2 I am going, I am going. Oh, forgive me, please forgive me. (He hides his face behind his sleeve as he speaks and moves away.)

Both We have completely lost face.

Host So, first, tell me what it is all about.

Thief 1 I didn't really want to come, but this rascal insisted that something good would come of it, so I came along with him.

Thief 2 It was just the other way around, I didn't really want to come, but this rascal insisted that something good would come of it, and, just look, he even brought along a saw.

Thief 1 Psst, psst. That is something you must not tell him.

Host Arguing will do you no good. I am certain that there was more to it than that, so tell me all quickly.

Thief 1 If that is the case, as the time quickly approaches for me to act as host for our next linked-verse club meeting, and since my life is quite lacking in affluence, and I do not possess the necessary equipment for hosting such a meeting, I decided to sneak into your house tonight and borrow one or two pieces of equipment for use in hosting our meeting, and that is the reason I have so impudently come here.

Thief 2 Yes, that is how things stand.

Host If that is how things stand, if you had asked me for them in advanced, anything could have been done to alleviate your situation. But since it is so very fortunate that none of us has suffered physical harm, and since the night is so very cold, I will serve you wine so, first of all, please sit down.

Thief 1 As it is quite enough that you have spared us our lives, please do not bother yourself any further for our sakes.

Host It is no bother and will take no time at all to prepare, first of all, please sit down. (He makes preparations for serving wine.)

Both We say, we say.

Thief 1 Do you think he might be trying to fool us?

Thief 2 I would greatly prefer taking a couple of items and getting out of here.

Thief 1 I agree entirely.

Host (Returning with wine.) Here, here, drink, drink. (Pouring for them.)

Both (Receiving the wine.) We are most grateful indeed.

Host Take turns and drink three cups each. (Pouring for them again.)

Both (Receiving the wine.) We are increasingly grateful.

Thief 2 Thanks to the wine, my belly has stopped fluttering.

Host (To Thief 1) Now I have something to say to you. Time has passed so fast that all of my family and servants have gone to sleep and the house is quiet. (Offering Thief 1 a sword.) This is greatly worn with age, but I give it to you, so please accept and sell it to procure the necessary funds for serving as host for your next linked-verse club meeting.

Thief 1 You say you are giving this to me?

Host Most certainly.

Thief 1 I am so extremely grateful that you began by sparing me my life, so please allow me not to accept it.

Host There is no need for such politeness. Accept it as I say.

Thief 1 Oh, no, I cannot possibly accept it, so please accept my refusal.

Host Stop jabbering nonsense and accept it.

Thief 1 I feel I must refuse no matter how many times you offer it to me.

Thief 2 (To Thief 1.) I say, I say, it is most rude of you to refuse this gift he is offering, so go ahead and accept it.

Thief 1 If that is the case, I will humbly accept it.

Host That is most prudent of you. (To Thief 2.) Now, I have something to say to you. (Offering Thief 2 a gift.) This is greatly worn with age, but I give it to you, so please accept and sell it to procure the necessary funds for serving as host for your next linked-verse club meeting.

Thief 2 You say you are giving this to me?

Host Most certainly.

Thief 2 First of all I thank you from the bottom of my heart, but the sword you just gave somebody (Name of the actor playing Thief 1.) will bring in quite sufficient funds for serving as host for our linked-verse club meeting, so please allow me not to accept it.



Host There is no need for such politeness. Accept it as I say.

Thief 2 Oh, no, I cannot possibly accept it, so please accept my refusal.

Host Stop jabbering nonsense and accept it.

Thief 2 I feel I must refuse no matter how many times you offer it to me.

Thief 1 (To Thief 2.) I say, I say, he is a most august personage, so go ahead and accept his gift.

Thief 2 If that is the case, I will humbly accept it.

Host That is most prudent of you. Now I have something to say to the both of you. I am also a great lover of linked-verses, so please come and visit me often from now on, not from the back as you did tonight, but come to the front and announce yourselves properly when you come.

Thief 1 We are most grateful indeed, but rest assured that there is nobody else who will venture to break in as we did, so both your back entrance and your front. . . (To Thief 2.) Right?

Thief 2 Oh, oh!

Both We urge you to leave unlocked and open.

Host I am most grateful for your agreement and concern. Well, now, I am certain that my further presence here will only serve to make you feel uncomfortable, so I will retire to the kitchen, but you stay here and relax for a time.

Both We are indeed most grateful.

(The Host exits.)

Thief 1 Is this not very like a dream?

Thief 2 It is as though we have awakened from a dream.

Thief 1 And this is all because everybody is for very fond of linked-verses these days.

Thief 2 It is as you say indeed.

Thief 1 At such a time as this, I think I should compose a Waka verse.

Thief 2 That is a fine idea.

Thief 1 And you must sing and dance it with me.

Thief 2 With all my heart.

Thief 1 It is said truly that the way of Wake linked-verses is so very popular that even the demons and the gods enjoy its beauties. (Singing and dancing.) Among the customs of this world there is truly. . .

Both Among the customs of this world, one hears of laws that demand the execution of the thieves who are caught, but these thieves were not treated in that manner, rather, thanks to the gentleness of one who loves linked-verses, we were not only invited to stay, but we were also served wine. . .

Thief 1 This sword. . .

Thief 2 This very sword. . .

Both Was presented to us, even so, taking our experience as an example, we do not intend to recommend others to become thieves, we do not intend to recommends others to becomes thieves.

Thief 1 I say, let's you and I. . .

Thief 2 Let's you and I. . .

Thief 1 Remain friends for five hundred eighty years. . .

Thief 2 Seven times over. . .

Thief 1 And this will is a matter truly to celebrate. Come, come along with me.

Thief 2 With all my heart, with all my heart.