

A FAIRY TALE

Once upon a time, in the town of Thera, all was not well. For although the surrounding fields gave forth richly of their increase, perhaps half the people were poor, one fifth were starving, and so many died every day that not enough graves could be found for them.

This was particularly strange because, at the northwest end of the town, there were suburbs full of smart houses, in which dwelt the minority of people with not only enough, but plenty to spare. Their fields (and they owned the majority of the fields) were the richest of all, for they could afford the best fertilisers and seed. And yet their appetites were so insatiable that they obtained more food from the poor townspeople to feed their sleek cattle than they would sell back to stave off their starvation. As a result there was even less food for the poor, and such as there was grew more expensive. Even the greedy suburban dwellers could not eat all they had (and they certainly tried, for they spent much of their wealth on slimming aids and medicine to cure the diseases their overeating caused), so there were warehouses full of wasted food.

Strangest of all, these selfish people spent much of their time praising the goodness and generosity of their King, and holding meetings to discuss how to get more from him. They were,

strange to say, mystified when they saw the suffering of their neighbours on their colour televisions, or in glossy magazines or from the windows of their cars while they were out on pleasure jaunts. They sometimes sent a small part of their Sunday leftovers to help, "but what can we individuals do," they exclaimed, "when things are so dear nowadays." They even wondered, in their doubting moments, how their King could allow such suffering to happen.

And of course in the long run he couldn't. One day he came to visit Thera, and saw how his beloved people were being cheated and starved, and was ashamed that those responsible were the very people who claimed most loyalty to him.

What would you do if were that King?***
you

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