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"Nonetheless, whenever I come to a clustered tangle, realizing that it is difficult to do anything about it, I instead restrain myself as if terrified, until my seeing comes to a complete halt. My activity slows, and the blade moves ever (3:5) so slightly. Then all at once, I find the ox already dismembered at my feet like clumps of soil scattered on the ground. I retract the blade and stand there gazing at my work arrayed all around me, dawdling over it with satisfaction. Then I wipe off the blade and put it away" (Ziporyn 47).

- The first sentences are referring to the when the butcher is cutting up oxen and he finds that the blade is having a hard time cutting through the knot. He tries and pries to get his blade through and there does seem to be some frustration; however, instead of trying even harder to break through -- he lets go and relaxes.
- This restraining of himself to a calm and tranquil state forces his mind and body to return to a state of focus, calmness, and serenity that's better suited for the action at hand. It's almost as if in his frustration he almost lost himself, and all the knowledge he had cultivated in nineteen years (Ziporyn 46).
- This slowing down helps him hone, not only his blade, but himself and his technique; ultimately, his newly honed self and blade is now able to cut through the tangle.
- Before he knows it, the oxen is sliced perfectly and the parts are disbursed all around him, hence "clumps of soil scattered on the ground".
- Once he is done, he is happy at the work before him.
- He then cleans and stows his blade away.
- This passage can be taken at face value about the difficulties that can be experienced when cutting oxen, but also as a metaphor for how one should approach their life.
- One should not hack and slash their way through life, because you're becoming more battered this way. You will still manage to get through it, life and/or difficulties, but instead of always being present, you'll be like the blade that must get sharpened every month--rather than never (Ziporyn 46).
- Also, take your time in life, its not always good to run through circumstances and difficulties like a bull in a China shop, rather taking a step back and coming back to what you know often leads to an easier solution for you and the problem at hand that will often leave you happier (Ziporyn 48).