HOST: I am a resident of this neighborhood. It is my turn to host the celebration of this year's Tenjin Festival that is to take place this evening.
Concerning which, I mean to call my servant Taro Kaja and give him a job to do. Taro Kaja, are you there?

TARO KAJA    Here.

HOST        There you are.

TARO KAJA    At your service, Sir.

HOST        You came quite quickly. The matter I have called you here about is of no great import. It is my turn to host the celebration of the Tenjin Festival, for which everyone is to come over this evening. When they arrive, you must let me know.

TARO KAJA    As you say, Sir.
HEAD GUEST  I say, I say. Have you all gathered together?

GUESTS     We are all here.

HEAD GUEST  Somebody (name of actor playing the HOST) is to host this evening's celebration of the Tenjin Festival. As the time is about right, let us be on our way there.

GUESTS     That is a fine idea.

GUEST III   Oh, but Taro has not yet arrived.

HEAD GUEST  When I went to invite him, I was told that he had gone off somewhere already as usual with his bow and arrows. So let us just go on without him.
GUESTS  That is a fine idea.

HEAD GUEST  Come, come. Let us be on our way.

GUESTS  With all our hearts.

HEAD GUEST  Hello in there? Is anybody home?

TARO KAJA  Someone is at the door. Who is there?

HEAD GUEST  Tell you master that we have arrived.

TARO KAJA  I will indeed inform him of your arrival, so wait right where you are.

HEAD GUEST  With all my heart.
TARO KAJA    I have a matter to relate to you.

HOST        What is it?

TARO KAJA    Everybody has arrived.

HOST        Then ask them to come all the way in here.

TARO KAJA    With all my heart. He says you are to come all the way inside.

HEAD GUEST  With all my heart. I congratulate you on your appointment as host.

HOST        I am pleased that you have come.

GUEST II     Taro Kaja, I am here.
TARO KAJA    It is good that you have come.

GUEST II     I congratulate you on your appointment as host.

HOST        I am most pleased that you have come.

(Each GUEST enters in turn, greeting TARO KAJA and the HOST in the same manner as GUEST II, and they line up stage left.)

HOST        All of you come all the way inside.

GUESTS      With all our hearts. (They move to stage right, still in a line.)

HOST        First, I beg you all to sit.
GUESTS  With all our hearts. (They sit.)

HOST  Well, I must say, it is good to see that everyone is here.

HEAD GUEST  First, concerning your appointment as host for this evening... 

ALL GUESTS  (Bow ing.) we wish to extend our congratulations.

HOST  But I see that Taro is not here.

HEAD GUEST  When I went to his place to invite him, I was told that he had gone off somewhere already as usual with his bow and arrows. So we came without him.
HOST    Well, I must say, that Taro goes off somewhere each and every day with his bow and arrows, does he not?

HEAD GUEST    And I have been told that he has never shot down so much as a single sparrow.

GUEST II    I have never heard tell of him doing the least bit of archery training.

GUEST III    I have been told that people go about calling him Archer Taro whenever his name comes up.

HOST    Also, I have been told that he is actually a great coward, and that that is the reason that he always goes about carrying his bow and arrows
with him.

HEAD GUEST    I am certain that that is indeed the case.

HOST    In that case, if he should put in an appearance here tonight, I suggest that we relate horrifying tales to frighten Taro. What do you all think?

HEAD GUEST    That is indeed . . .

ALL GUESTS    . . . a fine idea.

HOST    If that is the case, you must each think up some horrifying tale to tell.

ALL GUESTS    With all our hearts. (All face front
and think.)

TARO I am a resident of this neighborhood, and I am known as Archer Taro. It is not from a desire to please myself that I go about day after day with my bow and arrows in hand destroying life, but rather that I kill wild birds and beast to prevent their wreaking havoc upon fields and paddies, and that I take aim at burglars and hoodlums to protect women, children, and the aged from sorrow. Now, tonight is the night appointed for celebration of the Tenjin Festival at the home of Somebody (the name of the actor playing the role of HOST). As I am a member of his group, I have decided to stop by his place. And since I would be late if I were to take the time to drop by my place and change into more proper clothes for the occasion, I have made up my mind to go just as I am. Hello in there? Is anybody
home?

TARO KAJA    Someone is at the door. Who is there?

TARO    Tell your master that I have arrived.

TARO KAJA    I will indeed inform him of your arrival, so wait right where you are.

TARO    With all my heart.

TARO KAJA    I have a matter to relate to you.

HOST    What is it?

TARO KAJA    Taro has arrived.

HOST    Then ask him to come all the way in here.
TARO KAJA    With all my heart. He says you are to come all the way inside.

HEAD GUEST    With all my heart.

HOST    Here, Taro, I am most pleased that you have come.

TARO    I congratulate you on your appointment as host for this evening.

HOST    How very gallantly your are attired.

TARO    Today as always I went hunting in the fields. And since I would have been late if I had taken the time to drop by my place and change into more proper clothes for the occasion, I made up my mind
to come just as I am.

HOST    Please go make yourself more comfortable.

TARO    I will go make myself more comfortable and come back.

HOST    That is best.

TARO    Here, here, Taro Kaja. I entrust my bow and arrows to you.

TARO KAJA    As you say, Sir.

HOST    (To the GUESTS.) I say, I say, Taro has arrived.

HEAD GUEST    You say he has arrived?
HOST    Take care not to slip up.

GUESTS    With all our hearts.

TARO    Well, I see everyone is present.

HEAD GUEST    I say, Taro, I went to your place to invite you, but I was told that you had gone off somewhere already as usual with your bow and arrows. So I came without you.

GUEST II    And the rest of us, as well...

GUESTS    Came here without you.

TARO    I thank you heartily for thinking of me. Today as always I went hunting in the fields and
dropped by my place to change into more proper clothes for the occasion just now.

HEAD GUEST    This is as it should be.

HOST        Well, Taro, going off somewhere each and every day with your bow and arrows must be a most comforting pastime for you.

TARO        Oh, no, never. It is not from a desire to please myself that I go about day after day with my bow and arrows in hand destroying life, but rather that I kill wild birds and beast to prevent their wreaking havoc upon fields and paddies, and that I take aim at burglars and hoodlums to protect women, children, and the aged from sorrow.
HEAD GUEST   This is as it should be.

TARO       I will relate my adventures to you all. Today as usual, when I passed through the foothills of the eastern mountain, I saw a huge wild boar wreaking havoc upon the ripened grain. So I took aim with my trusty bow, and pierced the boar’s forefoot, and the huge beast immediately fell to the ground.

HEAD GUEST   Well, I must say, what a brave accomplishment.

HOST       I say, I say, Taro. Do wild boars really appear in the foothills of the eastern mountain?

TARO       Not only wild boars, but also deer, monkeys, wolves, foxes, and badgers appear there as well.
HOST    Haaa. And do you shoot foxes as well when they appear?

TARO    Oh, it goes without saying that I shoot foxes as well when they appear.

HOST    I think it would be advisable for you to stop shooting foxes in future.

TARO    What makes you say that?

HOST    It is because the fox is most fearfully vindictive, (To the GUESTS.) is it not?

GUESTS   That it is, that it is.

HOST    So I strongly advise you to stop shooting foxes.
TARO    What are you talking about? The fox is a four-legged beast like all others, all of which I shoot down as soon as I discover them.

HOST    Oh, no! Foxes alone you must most certainly abstain from. I know a most fearful tale about the vindictiveness of foxes. I will relate it to you all.

GUESTS    That is a fine idea.

HOST    Taro, you must listen carefully with the rest.

TARO    With all my heart.

HOST    Long ago, during the reign of Emperor Toba, there lived a woman of the court called Lady Tamamo.
TARO    I say, what is a 'woman of the court'?

HOST    A lady-in-waiting in service to the emperor.

TARO    Hmmm.

HOST    But she was, in actual fact, a fox in disguise.

TARO    What is this?

HOST    One day during a gathering in the court, to attend a concert, just when the music began, a great wind began to blow, extinguishing all the lamps and candles in a trice. Then suddenly a light shone out from the body of Lad Tamamo that illuminated not only the palace, but every grain of sand in the garden as well. After that, she ran off to the Plain of
Nasu, and a warrior was sent out to quell her. But after she was killed, her vindictive spirit remained in that field where it continues to capture people to this very day. It is due to this fearful vindictiveness that I strongly advise you to abstain from shooting foxes.

TARO (Laughing.) What foolish words you utter. That is a tale of most ancient times, during which I have heard tell, things of that sort did indeed happen. But as there is not a single fox of that ilk left today, I shoot them down as soon as I discover them.

HOST Oh, no. As the fox is a most wily creature, you never know when or where one might disguise itself as who knows what. And there may well be a fox in disguise among us here tonight in this very
room. (To the GUESTS.) Is that not so?

HEAD GUEST That it is. . .

GUESTS . . . most true indeed.

TARO What nonsense you all do utter. Here in this room tonight, there are the Host and you, and you, and you. (Using the names of the actors playing the GUESTS as he points at them in turn.) Not one of whom has the slightest resemblance to a fox.

HOST Well, it has been said since ancient times that if you extinguish the lights, a fox will show its true self. (To the GUESTS.) What do you all think of extinguishing the lights here tonight to discover whether or not there is a fox among us?
HEAD GUEST    That is indeed. . .

GUESTS    . . . a fine idea.

HOST    Then, come, come, let us extinguish them.

GUESTS    With all our hearts.

TARO    Oh, wait, please wait!

HOST    Wait for what?

TARO    Well, I must say, what needless things you say. To begin with, it is best to consider things with care. No matter how devoid of shadows the light of the moon may be, it cannot compare with the light of the sun. Concerning which, since it is always best to light fires to enjoy oneself by night, what do you
mean by the irresponsible act of extinguishing the lights on such a dark night? So after all, it is best for us to relight the lights to enjoy ourselves.

HOST It is indeed a most dark night in this room tonight. But, even so, I think I see a light shining behind your, Taro.

GUESTS It seems something in disguise is about to appear.

TARO I will just move to another position.

HOST Yes, you should not stay where you are.

TARO Oh, I must say, your stories are most uninteresting tonight. Can you not think of some more amusing tales?
HEAD GUEST    I have just remembered something about things that shine.

TARO        Is there still more to be told?

HEAD GUEST    Last night I had particular matter to pray about, for which I traveled to the forest of the Tenjin Shrine in Kitano at the Hour of the Ox (2am). As I arrived a bit too early, I sat down in the shade of the aged pine to rest. Suddenly the branches above began to rustle. In fear, I looked up, and what I saw was most frightening.

TARO        What was it?

HEAD GUEST    A demon appeared.
TARO    What’s that? You say a demon appeared?

HEAD GUEST    It stood a full fifteen feet high, and its eyes gleamed like the Morning Star. Its mouth opened all the way back to its ears, and its hairy arms stuck out a full six feet from its shoulders.

TARO    Aaagh! (He falls flat on his back in a dead faint.)

HOST    Taro has passed out. Let’s bring him to.

HEAD GUEST    That is best. (All gather around Taro.)

GUESTS    Here, here! Taro, Taro! (They help Taro into a sitting position.) Just look at that face of his! (They laugh.)
TARO    I say, here, here. Just what is it you all find so amusing?

HOST    The way you passed out is what is so amusing.

TARO    When did I pass out?

HOST    Did you not pass out in fright at the tale of the demon just now?

TARO    You mean the tale of the demon just now?

HOST    Most certainly.

TARO    There was a reason.
HOST    What was it?

TARO    As that tale was so very amusing, I dozed off
during the telling of it, and fell into a deep sleep.

HOST    Just listen to him! (All laugh.)

TARO    Hey, Somebody! (Name of the actor playing
the role HEAD GUEST.)

HEAD GUEST    What?

TARO    You are a coward!

HEAD GUEST    Why do you call me coward?

TARO    Why did you not call for me at that time. If
you had called for me, I would have come and shot
that demon through the stomach with my bow and arrows. I must say, what a pity you did not.

HOST Just listen to his empty boasting. (All laugh.) I say, I say, Taro.

TARO What?

HOST Tell me, are you truly not frightened?

TARO And of what should I be frightened?

HOST If that is the case, go out to the Tenjin Forest right now.

TARO And what am I to gain if I go?

HOST I will give you a reward of one hundred gold
TARO    What’s that? You say you will give me a reward of one hundred gold pieces?

HOST    Most certainly.

TARO    This is amusing. I will go.

HOST    Oh, wait just a minute.

TARO    Wait for what?

HOST    Just saying you have gone will provide no proof. I will give you this fan to hang on the branch of the pine tree in Tenjin Forest. And if you succeed, I will reward you with one hundred gold pieces. But if you fail, you must serve me as my servant.
without pay for the rest of your living days.

TARO    What’s that? You say if I succeed in hanging this fan on the branch of the pine tree in Tenjin Forest, you will reward me with one hundred gold pieces, but if I should fail, I must serve you as your servant without pay for the rest of my living days?

HOST    Most certainly.

TARO    Here, here, listen, everybody! He says if I go hang this fan on the branch of the pine tree in Tenjin Forest, he will reward me with one hundred gold pieces.

GUESTS    That he will do indeed.

TARO    You must not take back your word when the
time come!

GUESTS      With all our hearts, we will not.

TARO        Oh, how happy I am. I must hurry on my way to Tenjin Forest.

(All laugh as they watch TARO exit.)

HOST        Taro is gone.

HEAD GUEST  He is gone indeed.

HOST        Do you think he will pass out?

HEAD GUEST  If he passes out, he will not likely make it back alive.
HOST       Now, I have a matter of import to consider.  
            As he is a most sly rascal, he might just hire 
            someone to go in his place.

HEAD GUEST    That he may just do.

HOST       As it is important for there to be something 
            there that looks like a demon when he gets there, I 
            will disguise myself as a demon and go there to see 
            whether Taro passes out or not.

HEAD GUEST    That is indeed. . .

GUESTS       . . . a fine idea.

HOST       As fortune would have it, I have a neighbor 
            at whose place I can disguise myself. So the rest of 
            you must go there too and hide where you can see
what happens.

GUESTS With all our hears, we will.

HOST Taro Kaja, you come along and hide where you can see, too.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir.

HOST What a strange matter this has developed into.

GUESTS It is as you say indeed.

(All exit. Pause. Taro enters in demon disguise.)

TARO I am a demon from the Isle of Horai. Each and every night I go to the Tenjin Forest at the Hour
of the Ox to catch and devour those who come to pray, and I plan to go there tonight as usual. I must hurry on my way. Truly, all those who come to pray at the Hour of the Ox are jealous women and those who wish to place a curse on others, prankish rascals one and all. So as soon as I find any such rascals, I catch and devour them, each and every one. Well, here I am already at Tenjin Forest. Well, I must say, what a dark night it is. As I have arrived a bit too early, I will sit down in the shade of this aged pine to rest.

HOST I am a demon from the Isle of Horai. Each and every night I go to the Tenjin Forest at the Hour of the Ox to catch and devour those who come to pray, and I plan to go there tonight as usual. I must hurry on my way. Truly, all those who come to pray at the Hour of the Ox are jealous women and those
who wish to place a curse on others, prankish rascals one and all. So as soon as I find any such rascals, I catch and devour them, each and every one. Well, here I am already at Tenjin Forest. Oh, I must say, what a dark night it is.

TARO Well, how very strange. Suddenly I hear a human voice.

HOST Well, how very strange. Suddenly I hear a human voice.

TARO Oh, I say, and how close it does sound.

HOST Oh, I say, and how close it does sound.

TARO Perhaps it is someone come to pray.
HOST    Perhaps it is a worshipper at the Hour of the Ox.

TARO    Oh, how creepy.

HOST    Oh, how creepy.

(They run into each other, back to back, and, frightened out of their wits, the HOST falls on his back in a dead faint, and TARO tiptoes off to the opposite side of the stage.)

TARO    (Aside.) Oh, I must say, what a fright I had, what a fright. This evening at Somebody’s (Name of actor playing the HOST.) place, I was told that if I came too Tenjin Forest to find out whether or not demons appear, I would be rewarded with one hundred gold pieces. So when I got home and
conferred with my wife, she scoffingly insisted that there are no demons in Tenjin Forest and that everybody told me that just to frighten me as they know I am a coward, urging me to go quickly and come back to claim my reward of one hundred gold pieces. Out of fright, I came here wearing a demon mask, and a demon appeared, standing a full fifteen feet high, eyes gleaming like the Morning Star, mouth opening all the way back to its ears, hairy arms sticking out a full six feet from its shoulders, just like they said it would. Since neither greed nor gain can take the place of life, I must return home quickly. Oh, I see over there a huge crowd of people carrying pine torches and making an uproar. I must take care they don’t see me. For the moment, I think I will just hide right here and see what is to be seen.
HEAD GUEST    Come, come, Everybody, come along
             with me, come with me.

GUESTS       With all our hearts, with all our hearts.

HEAD GUEST    I wonder whether Taro has arrived.

GUEST II      How can you even think he might come?

GUEST III     It is just as you say, I cannot believe he
             would come.

GUESTS       It is as you all say indeed.

HEAD GUEST    Oh! There is a demon here.

GUEST II      Do you not think it might be our host?
GUEST III    Is it not Somebody? (Name of actor playing the HOST.)

LAST-IN-LINE GUEST    First take off his mask and see.

HEAD GUEST    Taro Kaja, take off his mask.

TARO KAJA    As you say, Sir.

HEAD GUEST    Well, it is Somebody (Name of actor playing the HOST.) indeed.

GUEST II    Let’s bring him to.

GUESTS    Somebody, Somebody, Somebody!!

(Name of actor playing the HOST.)
HOST    Oh, how glad I am to see you all here.

HEAD GUEST    First tell us what has happened.

HOST    Well, I must say, what a frightening situation I found myself in.

HEAD GUEST    And what was that situation?

HOST    Just like you said it would earlier, a demon did appear.

HEAD GUEST    What is this?!

HOST    It stood a full fifteen feet high, and its eyes gleamed like the Morning Star. Its mouth opened all the way back to its ears, and its hairy arms stuck out a full six feet from its shoulders. And it seems
that I feel into a faint here, but I remember nothing else at all.

HEAD GUEST Well, I must say, I do not know what to think of that. The tale I told earlier was made up merely to frighten Taro. So did Taro come here?

HOST Oh, dear me, I cannot recall whether Taro came here or not.

TARO (Nodding vigorously, and then jumping out and prancing menacingly.) Catch and gnaw, catch and gnaw.

HOST Oh, look, the demon has appeared. Oh, how frightful, how very frightful. (Running off.)

GUESTS Oh, how frightful, how very frightful.
(Running off, following HOST.)

TARO       Catch and gnaw, catch and gnaw, catch and gnaw. (Chasing the others off.)