

The Spread-End Fan
(Suehirogari)

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Wealthy Man
Taro Kaja
Shyster

WEALTHY MAN I am a man of great good fortune. The world is in a state of peace and prosperity. And wondrous things happen with each passing day, not only to those in exalted positions, but to those of the lowest ranks as well. Thus the felicitous New Year promises all the blessings one could desire. And as is my custom, I will hold a celebratory banquet, at which event, I intend to present a spread-end fan to my most distinguished guest. I will call my servant and explain to him what I need. Here, here! Is anyone about? I say, is anybody there?

TARO KAJA Here.

WEALTHY MAN Are you there?

TARO KAJA Here.

WEALTHY MAN There you are.

TARO KAJA At your service, Sir.

WEALTHY MAN You came quite quickly. The matter I have called you here about is of no great import. Do you

not agree that, while each and every New Year is a fine one, this New Year is particularly felicitous?

TARO KAJA As you have so astutely observed, Sir, this is, indeed, a most felicitous New Year.

MASTER Well, now, as is my custom, I will hold a celebratory banquet, at which event, I intend to present a spread-end to my most distinguished guest. Do we have one on hand?

TARO KAJA No, I do not recall us having anything called a "spread-end."

MASTER If you do not recall us having one, we must not. Do you suppose they would have them in the capital?

TARO KAJA Whatever it may be, it is unlikely that they would not have them in the capital.

MASTER If that is the case, while I realize it is a great imposition, I order you to go to the capital and purchase a spread-end.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir.

MASTER Well, now, I have some specifications to be met.

TARO KAJA Just what might your specifications be?

MASTER To begin with, I want the paper to be of high quality, the bones to be well polished, the pivot to be a

sturdy one, and the picture (e) adorning its surface to be one of fun and games (zare-e).

TARO KAJA On that score, I assure you, you have no need for concern.

MASTER So be on your way this minute.

TARO KAJA I will go whenever you like.

MASTER In that case, go quickly and come back soon.

TARO KAJA Ha.

MASTER Ei.

TARO KAJA Ha.

MASTER Ei. (He exits.)

TARO KAJA Ha. I have suddenly been given an unexpected task. I must hurry on my way. Truly, I have never before been to see the capital. Wah, wah! It looks like I am near the capital as all is in a bustle. And as one would expect of the capital, different from the houses of the countryside, the eaves are built right up against each other, as though they are all the best of friends. Well, I must say, how lively it is here! Ah! I just remembered something I had completely forgot. I have no idea what a spread-end may be or where one might be found. I should have inquired carefully about this before I set out, but now that I have come this far, there is no way I can go back to inquire. Just what am I to do? Huh? Huh? Huh? (He laughs.) Just as one might expect of the capital, it appears that people go about shouting

out the things they want to sell or buy. If that is the case, I will also go about shouting. Here, here, I say! Is there a spread-end seller living there? I want to buy a spread-end. I would like to buy a spread-end. Where is there a spread-end seller? I want to buy a spread-end. I would like to buy a spread-end. I say, I say! Is there a spread-end seller living there? You say there's none? I want to buy a spread-end. Where is there a spread-end seller? I want to buy a spread-end. I would like to buy a spread-end.

SHYSTER (Aside.) I am a resident of the capital with a most deceitful heart. That looks like a country man over there, and he is yapping about something or other. I think I'll just try to strike up an acquaintance. (To TARO KAJA.) Here, here! I say, I say!

TARO KAJA Is it me to whom you speak?

SHYSTER Indeed, it is you to whom I speak. What is it you are yapping about in the middle of this broad highway?

TARO KAJA As I am a country man, I spoke without knowing yapping is prohibited. I humbly beg your pardon.

SHYSTER No, no. There is no prohibition against yapping. I am simply asking you what it is you want as it may just be that I can provide you with it.

TARO KAJA For that I would be most grateful. As I desire a spread-end, I am seeking for a spread-end seller.

SHYSTER And would you recognize a spread-end seller if you saw one?

TARO KAJA Well, as a man of the capital you should know better. If I could, I would not walk about shouting out like this. It is because I do not know one that I seek for one.

SHYSTER Then I was very wrong. In that case, you are a man of good fortune.

TARO KAJA You speak of good fortune, but these clothes clearly show the extent of my fortune.

SHYSTER No, no. The way you dress is not the sort of fortune of which I speak. I mean that your meeting me is your good fortune.

TARO KAJA And just what do you mean by that?

SHYSTER In the capital are many people, but the one you seek is I, a spread-end seller.

TARO KAJA So, you say you are a spread-end seller?

SHYSTER Most certainly.

TARO KAJA Then, I am, indeed, a man of good fortune, for, you see, I want to buy a spread-end. Please show one to me.

SHYSTER I will show one to you. Wait right there for a moment.

TARO KAJA With all my heart.

SHYSTER (Aside.) That country man, I have succeeded in duping, but I have nothing to sell him that I could say is a spread-end. Just what am I to do? Oh, I have an old umbrella here. I will give him an amusing explanation and sell it to him. (He goes to get the umbrella.) I say, I say. Are you there?

TARO KAJA I am here.

SHYSTER Here, now, I will show you a spread-end. (He hands TARO KAJA the umbrella.)

TARO KAJA Let me see, let me see. (He takes the umbrella, looks it up and down, and throws it on the ground.) I do not need such a thing as this. Just show me a spread-end.

SHYSTER Well, it appears that the fact is that you do not know what a spread-end is. I will now show you that this is, indeed, a spread-end. (He picks up the umbrella and slowly opens it.) Look, look, look. Has it not become a spread-end.

TARO KAJA Truly, it has become a spread-end. Well, now, I have some specifications to be met.

SHYSTER Just what might your specifications be?

TARO KAJA To begin with, I was ordered to purchase one of which the paper is of high quality, the bones are well polished, the pivot is a sturdy one, and the picture (e) adorning its surface is one of fun and games (zare-e).

SHYSTER Indeed, this one meets all your specifications. To begin with, the paper you see here is of the highest quality of all that made in Mino. And as it was glued in place on a fine sunny day, just listen, (Tapping the paper of the umbrella with the back of his hand.), it has a crisp reverberation.

TARO KAJA Truly, it does have a crisp reverberation.

SHYSTER And the bones you see here have been polished to a high sheen. And since the polishing was carried out by a most skilled craftsman using Shinano scouring rush leaves, spending seven days and seven nights in the process, they are smooth and slippery.

TARO KAJA Truly, they are smooth and slippery.

SHYSTER And the pivot you see here is a most sturdy one. If you put it up like this you can go anywhere at any time, and it will never ever so much as wobble.

TARO KAJA And what about the picture of fun and games (zare-e)?

SHYSTER What? The picture of fun and games?

TARO KAJA Most certainly.

SHYSTER Wait right there for a minute.

TARO KAJA With all my heart.

SHYSTER What is this? He has got me hung up on this picture of fun and games. Just what am I to do? Oh, I know what I'll do. (He closes the umbrella and strikes

TARO KAJA's face with the handle, on one cheek and then the other.) Yatto-na.

TARO KAJA What are you up to?

SHYSTER Yatto-na.

TARO KAJA What are you up to?

SHYSTER You must not make such a fuss. It is because you can have fun (zare) with this handle (e) that it is called a fun and games handle (zare-e). It is this handle (e) that was intended by your order, not a picture (e).

TARO KAJA What's that? You say it is because you can have fun with that handle that it is called a fun and games handle, and that it was such a handle that was intended by the order I received, not a picture?

SHYSTER Most certainly.

TARO KAJA So all the specifications have been met. I will buy it. And what will be the price?

SHYSTER Ten thousand gold pieces.

TARO KAJA That is much too high. (BOW) Please give me a discount.

SHYSTER On spread-ends alone I can give no discount. If you do not like the price, cancel your order.

TARO KAJA I will take it anyway. I will pay you at the Daikoku Shop on Third Avenue.

SHYSTER I know the Daikoku Shop well. I will receive it there.

TARO KAJA Now I will be on my way.

SHYSTER You say you are going on your way?

TARO KAJA Most certainly.

BOTH (BOW) Fare you well, fare you well.

SHYSTER I say, I say. Wait just a moment.

TARO KAJA What is it?

SHYSTER As you are such an agreeable buyer, I will add a little something extra.

TARO KAJA For that I am most grateful. (Holding out his hand.) Please give it to me.

SHYSTER Oh, no, it is not a thing that you can carry in your hand. You appear to be in service to a master, and it is well known that all masters have times when they are in good spirits and times when they are in bad humor. I will teach you a song and dance that will improve your master's spirits quickly when he is in a bad humor.

TARO KAJA For that I am most grateful. Please teach it to me.

SHYSTER This is how it goes.

TARO KAJA How does it go?

SHYSTER It goes:

Open umbrellas resemble Mount Kasuga,
And I pledge to all the gods there,
That when others open and raise their umbrellas,
I will open and raise mine, too,
Truly, this I swear,
To do without fail.

TARO KAJA I have memorized it well. I am most grateful. Now I will be on my way.

SHYSTER You say you are going on your way?

TARO KAJA Most certainly.

SHYSTER It was good of you to come.

TARO KAJA (Bowing.) Ha.

(The SHYSTER exits and TARO KAJA sets out toward home with his umbrella slung over his shoulder.)

TARO KAJA Oh, how happy, how happy I am!
Everything has turned out just right. I must hurry home. Truly, though I thought it would take a great deal of time, I found a most clever spread-end seller. I never expected to be so fortunate. When I report what has happened to my master, I am certain he will be most satisfied. Well, here I am already. First, I will put this spread-end down right here. I say, Master, are you there?

MASTER Have you come back, are you back?

TARO KAJA I have just now come back home.

MASTER Well, I must say, I appreciate your efforts. And did you purchase a spread-end for me?

TARO KAJA I did succeed in purchasing one for you.

MASTER You have done well, indeed. Show it to me quickly.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir. (He goes and gets the umbrella.) Now I will show it to you.

MASTER Let me see, let me see. (He receives the umbrella from TARO KAJA, looks it up and down, and throws it on the ground.) Haa. It appears that you ran into a rain storm in the capital and bought yourself an umbrella. But show me the spread-end you bought.

TARO KAJA Well, it appears that the fact is that you do not know what a spread-end is, either. I will now show you that this is, indeed, a spread-end. (He picks up the umbrella and slowly opens it.) Look, look, look. Has it not become a spread-end?

MASTER (Aside.) What is he jabbering about?

TARO KAJA And all your specifications have been met. To begin with the paper you see here is of the highest quality of all that made in Mino. And as it was glued in place on a fine sunny day, just listen, (Tapping the paper of the umbrella with the back of his hand.), it has a crisp reverberation.

MASTER (Aside.) That rascal appears to have lost his mind completely.

TARO KAJA And the bones you see here have been polished to a high sheen. And since the polishing was carried out by a most skilled craftsman using Shinano scouring rush leaves, spending seven days and seven nights in the process, they are smooth and slippery.

MASTER (Aside.) He continues to spout nothing but nonsense.

TARO KAJA And the pivot you see here is a most sturdy one. If you put it up like this you can go anywhere at any time, and it will never ever so much as wobble.

MASTER (Aside.) And still he keeps it up.

TARO KAJA And now you want to know about the picture of fun and games?

MASTER That goes without saying.

TARO KAJA (He closes the umbrella and strikes the MASTER's face with the handle, on one cheek and then the other.) Yatto-na.

MASTER You hateful rascal!

TARO KAJA Yatto-na.

MASTER What are you up to?

SHYSTER Yatto-na.

TARO KAJA Hey, what are you up to?!!

TARO KAJA You must not make such a fuss. It is because you can have fun (zare) with this handle (e) that it is called a fun and games handle (zare-e). It is this handle (e) that was intended by your order, not a picture (e).

MASTER What's that? You say it is because you can have fun with that handle that it is called a fun and games handle, and that it was such a handle that was intended by the order I gave you, not a picture?

TARO KAJA That it truly is.

MASTER Well, I must say, what a foolish rascal you are. If you did not know what it was, you should have asked before you went. A spread-end is a fan that spreads out toward the end opposite the pivot.

TARO KAJA Huh? So you say it is a fan?

MASTER The average fan is called a folding fan, and this type that spreads out toward the end opposite the pivot is called a spread-end fan. (Showing TARO KAJA the fan--a special type that is normally called a "chukei" and that actually spreads out even when it is closed.) It is covered with fine quality paper, and its shape is formed by polished bones that are held together by a sturdy pivot. And the pictures of fun and games consist of a painting of autumn fields of plants and trees on the front side and another of Chinese children having fun playing games on the backside. This is what is meant by pictures of fun and games. How could you possibly think

that having fun with the handle of an old umbrella like this could constitute pictures of fun and games?

TARO KAJA But it was because the man in the capital said it was a spread-end that I bought it from him.

MASTER You are still talking nonsense. I tell you here and now, a spread-end is a fan that spreads out toward the end opposite the pivot!

TARO KAJA If it is a fan you should have said it was a fan from the start.

MASTER Well, I must say, what a hateful rascal. If you want to stay alive, get out of my sight this instant!

TARO KAJA Agh!!

MASTER (Chasing TARO KAJA out of the house.) Get out of here, I say!

TARO KAJA Oh, forgive me.

MASTER Get out of here, get out, I say!

TARO KAJA Oh, forgive me, please forgive me.

MASTER (Going back into his room and sitting down.) Well, I must say, how angry I am.

TARO KAJA What is this? He is angry indeed. Now that I get a better look at this thing, I see that it is an umbrella just like those of which we have aplenty in the kitchen. Just what am I to do now? Like a true man of the capital, that man who sold me this did not just make

a fool of me and leave it at that, for he taught me a song and dance to improve my master's spirits quickly when he is in a bad humor. Let me see, how did it go? Oh, I remember, I remember now.

Open umbrellas resemble Mount Kasuga,
And I pledge to all the gods there,
That when others open and raise their umbrellas,
I will open and raise mine, too,
Truly, this I swear,
To do without fail.

This is how it goes. So now I will sing and dance it to improve my master's spirits.

(TARO KAJA begins singing and dancing. The MASTER notices and begins to enjoy the performance, reluctantly at first, but gradually finding himself keeping time with the music with his whole body in a state of euphoria. Finally, he gets to his feet.)

MASTER (Laughing.) Taro Kaja made a fool of himself in the capital, and now, thinking to improve my spirits, he is doing a most amusing song and dance. I must go to him. Here, here, I say, Taro Kaja!

TARO KAJA That is my master's voice.

MASTER Your foolishness angered me, but your song and dance is most amusing. Now, I order you to come all the way back inside to eat your fill loach sushi and drink of my finest wine to your hearts content.

TARO KAJA (Continuing to sing and dance in celebration of his success.)

And I pledge to all the gods there,
That when others open and raise their umbrellas,

I will open and raise mine, too. . .

MASTER I will no longer bother you with details. Come on in quickly and we will deal with all this later.

TARO KAJA (Ending his song and dance.)
Truly, this I swear,
To do without fail.

MASTER (Kneeling on one knee in a celebratory pose.)
Iiya.