

Cautious Bravery
(Chigiriki)

Taro
Master
Taro Kaja
Wife
Friends

MASTER I am a resident of this neighborhood. I have recently formed a Renga linked-verse club for beginners with some young friends. And today, it is my turn to serve as host. As the time is about right, I will call my servant Taro Kaja and send him to bring them all here. Taro Kaja, are you there?

TARO KAJA Here.

MASTER There you are.

TARO KAJA At your service, Sir.

MASTER You came quite quickly. The matter I have called you here about is of no great import. I order you to go to the homes of all my friends and tell them that, as the time is already about right, they should come for our club meeting.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir.

MASTER Also, for reasons of which you are quite aware, do not go to Taro's place.

TARO KAJA With all my heart.

MASTER Go quickly and hurry back.

TARO KAJA Haah.

MASTER Eeeei.

TARO KAJA Haah. Well now, whose place should I go to first? Oh, Somebody's (name of actor playing HEAD FRIEND) place is the closest. I will go there first. Well, here I am already. First I will announce myself. Hello in there. Is anybody home?

HEAD FRIEND Well, someone is at the door. Who is there?

TARO KAJA It is I.

HEAD FRIEND Oh, it is you. And for what have you come?

TARO KAJA My master sent me to tell you that as the time is already about right, you should come for our club meeting.

HEAD FRIEND As everyone expected that you would be coming for us, they have all gathered here at my place.

TARO KAJA Does that mean that I will not have to visit each of their places?

HEAD FRIEND You need not visit each of their places. So you go on ahead.

TARO KAJA If that is the case, I will go on ahead. Please come as quickly as possible.

HEAD FRIEND With all my heart.

TARO KAJA (To his MASTER.) I have a matter to report to you.

MASTER What is it?

TARO KAJA Just now I went to Somebody's (name of actor playing HEAD FRIEND) and found that everyone has already gathered there, and they said that they would come as quickly as possible.

MASTER Let me know when they arrive.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir.

HEAD FRIEND I say, I say. Are you all there?

FRIENDS We are here.

HEAD FRIEND Just now a messenger arrived from Somebody (name of actor playing MASTER), so now let us be on our way.

FRIENDS That is a fine idea.

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

FRIENDS With all our hearts.

HEAD FRIEND Well, here we are already. First I will announce us. Hello in there. Is anybody home?

TARO KAJA Well, someone is at the door. Who is there?

HEAD FRIEND It is us. Inform your master we have arrived.

TARO KAJA With all my heart. (To his MASTER.) I have a matter to

report to you.

MASTER What is it?

TARO KAJA They have all arrived.

MASTER Tell them to come all the way inside.

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir. (To the FRIENDS.) Please come all the way inside.

HEAD FRIEND With all our hearts. (To the MASTER.) Congratulations on being host today.

MASTER I am happy you have come.

1ST FRIEND Taro Kaja, I have come.

TARO KAJA And you are indeed welcome.

1ST FRIEND (To the MASTER.) Congratulations on being host today.

(Each of the FRIENDS greets TARO KAJA and then the MASTER one at a time as they enter with the same words and receive the same responses as the 1ST FRIEND. Then they form a line from down stage to upstage left with the HEAD FRIEND the farther down stage.)

MASTER I am happy you have all come. Now please sit down.

FRIENDS With all our hearts.

MASTER Well now, as Taro always disturbs our Renga poetry composing, I make it a point not send anybody to invite him this time.

HEAD FRIEND We also understand with all our heart, for which reason

we did not drop by his place either.

MASTER If he somehow gets wind of our meeting and puts in an appearance, just pay him no mind.

FRIENDS With all our hearts.

MASTER Well now, who is to compose the opening verse today?

HEAD FRIEND While it is a bit out of the ordinary, I suggest that you do so.

MASTER No. no. It is always said that a guest must provide the opening verse and the host the first response. So I insist, after all, that one of you begin.

HEAD FRIEND If that is the case, shall we have the one who hits upon a verse first begin?

MASTER & FRIENDS That is a fine idea.

MASTER Now let us all try to compose a verse.

FRIENDS With all our hearts.

TARO I am a resident of this neighborhood and my name is Taro. Today there is to be a meeting of the linked-verse club at Somebody's (name of actor playing the MASTER) place. Though I am also a member, for some reason or other, no one was sent to invite me. The way I see it, it appears that they dislike me. And their dislike of me makes me even more determined to attend. How can they possibly compose verses without my presence. Ho! I see all are here.

MASTER & FRIENDS Shhh!

TARO I say, Host! I have heard that you are having a meeting of the

linked-verse club today. As I am also a member, why is it that you sent no one to my place to invite me? Might it possibly be that when I am here I cause some disturbance or other? (To the FRIENDS.) Oh, I can see how the host may have been so busy making preparations that he forgot about me, but since you all pass along the same street where I live coming here, why did you not stop by to invite me too? After all, how can you possibly have a successful linked-verse club meeting without me? Oh, I must say, what incomprehensible rascals you are. (He looks around the room.) Oh, I see you have put up a hanging scroll, and it is the host's favorite painting of the happy god Hotei crossing a river. Oh, how crooked it is, how crooked. It is often said in the world that one should correct even a crookedness of three inches, but that scroll is off as much as seven or eight inches. Do you all mean to tell me that none of you saw how crooked it is? Oh, I see that he has arranged some flowers. It looks as though he arranged them in the "grab and thrust" style. If that is the style he wanted to use, he would have been better advised to tie them up into a bunch in straw matting before tossing them into the vase.

(The MASTER beckons to TARO KAJA and signals to him with his eyes to send TARO away.)

TARO KAJA As you say, Sir. (He moves to the bridgeway and calls to TARO.) Taro! Taro!

TARO (Coming to join TARO KAJA.)What is it?

TARO KAJA Just come over here for a minute.

TARO What is it?

TARO KAJA They all say that whenever you come you disturb their composing of linked-verses. So you must go away.

TARO Hey, you rascal! I have come because I am also a member. What do you know?! Get out of my way and mind your own business!

(Going back to join the others.) I say, what a pushy rascal!

MASTER (To the FRIENDS.) Taro has come back in.

FRIENDS He has indeed.

MASTER Just don't pay him the least attention.

FRIENDS With all our hearts.

TARO Look, look! The position of the ink stone stand is wrong, even though I told you the right way last month. Haven't you been able to remember it yet? Well, I must say, you people have bad memories.

MASTER Taro! Taro!

TARO What is it?

MASTER Come over here for a minute.

TARO What is it?

MASTER Come over here for a minute. I've got something to talk to you about.

TARO What is it?

MASTER Everybody says that whenever you come, you disturb their linked-verse composing. I will send for you when the food is ready, so go back home now.

TARO What's that? You say you will send for me when the food is ready so I should go back home now?

MASTER Most certainly.

TARO Now, listen here, Somebody (name of actor playing the MASTER).

MASTER What is it?

TARO I came here because I am also a member of the club, I did not come here to eat your food.

MASTER You have the bad reputation of always being too choosy about who you associate with. You must mend your ways.

MASTER What impertinent words you utter. Get out of my sight!

TARO What is this?

MASTER I say, I say, all of you! If Taro comes back, let's surround him and stomp on him.

FRIENDS That we will do.

TARO This is what is meant by the saying that ears rebel against words of gold. I gave him a piece of good advice and he got angry. It appears that he cannot grasp the idea that he is in the wrong. How can they accomplish anything without me present? (Coming back into the room.) Here now, who is to compose the opening verse today? Let's hear it. I am ready to listen.

(During the above dialogue, the FRIENDS and the MASTER gather around TARO, throw him to the ground, beat and stomp on him.)

FRIENDS & MASTER (Everyone speaks out of sync with the other and repeatedly during the beating and stomping.) You are a hateful rascal! Have you had enough, have you had enough?

TARO Ow, ouch! Ow ouch! Ow ouch! Ow, ouch! Oh, help me, please help me! Oh, help me, please help me! (He continues to cry out, lying

flat on his back, even after the FRIENDS & MASTER have gone back to sit in a row stage left.)

WIFE Here, here ! What's this I hear? You say Taro has been stomped on? Is it really true? Oh, how angry, how angry I am! Who stomped on him. Where is my husband? Well, here he is. Oh, my husband, my darling. I am your wife, I am your wife. (She helps TARO to his feet, but he is still in a daze and does not recognize her.)

TARO Oh, no, I will never come again. Please spare me my life, please spare me my life.

WIFE What is this?! Get a good hold on yourself. I'm telling you I am your wife!

TARO Oh, Wife. How did you find me?

WIFE What do you mean how did I find you? As I heard that you had been stomped on, I threw all caution for myself and others to the wind, and came running here to you. First tell me who stomped on you, tell me who stomped on you!!

TARO What do you mean stomped on?

WIFE Oh, yes, it is clear you have been stomped on.

TARO Hey, you rascal! How could a man allow himself to be stomped on?!

WIFE Hey, you rascal!

TARO What is it?

WIFE If you have not been stomped on, what is the meaning of those footprints?

TARO Hmmm. So you are concerned about these footprints, are you?

WIFE Yes, indeed, I am.

TARO They mean something.

WIFE What is that something?

TARO They all asked me what my family crest is and when I said I have not yet chosen one, to make my identity clear, they gave me the sandal crest. Does it not become me?

WIFE What's that? You ask does it become you?

TARO Most certainly.

WIFE Oh, how angry, how angry I am! Of all the crests you could choose from, how could you choose the sandal crest? You cannot let them get by with stomping on you. Go and kill them all, go and kill them all!

TARO You mean I must kill everybody who stomps on me?

WIFE How can I put up with you if you do not kill them?

TARO If I killed everybody who stomps on me, I would never be done with killing.

WIFE Well, I must say, I though this was the only time you had ever been stomped on. You mean you have been stomped on repeatedly?

TARO Oh, yes, it happens frequently.

WIFE Oh, how angry, how angry I am. After hearing such a thing as that, how can I put up with you longer? Just come over here, just come over here.

TARO What are you up to?

WIFE (Offering him a short sword.) First put this in your sash.

TARO That is too much bother.

WIFE (Offering him a six-foot stick.) Now take this stick and go and kill them all, go and kill them all. Go do it!

TARO Hey, hey! As you are a women, you do not know what you are saying. If you stop to think about it, it may just happen that I lose my life in the attempt.

WIFE You rascal, are you still thinking about staying alive?

TARO Would it not matter to you if I die in the attempt?

WIFE Oh, certainly not. Even if you die, it does not matter.

TARO (Laughing.) You are the kind of wife they speak of when they say that a raucous woman devours her husband. No matter how much I am stomped on, I do not wish to die. If dying is no matter, you can just die in my place.

WIFE There you go talking nonsense again. Just come over here. First take that wimpy fan out of your sash. It is your wimpy attitude that gets you stomped on. (Offering him the short sword once more.) Stick this in your sash.

TARO What a bother this all is.

(The **WIFE** busily pulls **TARO**'s right sleeve off and loosens his hair for him to prepare him for action; puts the six-foot stick in his hand, and pushes him in the direction of the **FRIENDS**.)

WIFE Take this stick and go kill them. If you do not kill them, I will not let you into the house.

TARO What's that? You say if I do not kill them, you will not let me into the house?

WIFE Yes, indeed, that is what I said.

TARO By the three treasures! This puts me in a real bind. Your saying you will not let me into the house is most troublesome. If that is the case, I will go kill them, so will you come too?

WIFE Oh, yes. Having you go alone would be worrisome. I will go too.

TARO That makes me feel most relieved.

WIFE And who is today's host?

TARO Today's host is Somebody (name of actor playing the MASTER.)

WIFE Come, come. Be on your way to his place first.

TARO With all my heart. Well that Somebody (name of actor playing the MASTER) is usually most kind. I have no idea what he might have been thinking, but he stomped on me very hard.

WIFE You say he is kind, but that is not a thing to be depended upon.

TARO He must be all puffed up about being host, for he really stomped hard on me.

WIFE Well, I must say, that is a hateful thing to do.

TARO Here we are, here we are.

WIFE Is this the place? Come! Stomp right on in, stomp on in!

TARO Do not speak so raucously. First you go all the way over there.
(Calling politely at the door.) Hello in there. Is anybody home?

WIFE Hey, you rascal. As you intend to kill him, what do you mean announcing yourself?! Stomp right on in, stomp on in!

TARO As you are a woman, you know nothing about it. They say that a man should be polite in all things. That's what they say!

WIFE There you go talking nonsense again. What good can politeness and manners do you?! Stomp right on in and kill him, stomp on in and kill him!

TARO How raucous you are. You just go all the way over there.

WIFE Oh, what a dithering rascal you are!

TARO (Calling politely at the door again.) Is there anyone inside?

MASTER Nobody.

TARO What's that? You say nobody is there?

WIFE Here, here. What are you jabbering about?

TARO Nobody's there, nobody's there.

WIFE Oh, I must say, what a pity.

TARO As it must one or the other, nobody there is best. Hey, you cowardly Somebody (name of the actor playing the MASTER)! If it is true that you are not there, just come out here and see what will happen to you. The instant you show your face, I'll beat you with this stick until I kill you dead, I'll beat you dead!

WIFE Oh, I say. That was well spoken.

TARO Was it not indeed well spoken?

WIFE Well now, who is next?

TARO The next one is Somebody (name of actor playing the HEAD FRIEND).

WIFE Come, come, be on your way to his place.

TARO As there were so many of them, I see no reason for going to all their places.

WIFE Hey, hey! You must indeed go to all their places.

TARO If that is the case, come, come, be on your way.

WIFE With all my heart.

TARO Well, I must say, I never lose to most people, but that Somebody (name of actor playing the HEAD FRIEND) is so very strong that he just twisted my arm right up behind my back and stomped on me very hard.

WIFE That rascal is one whose face I never want to look upon. Did he really stomp on you all that hard?

TARO Here we are, here we are.

WIFE Is this the place? Come, come. Stomp right on in, stomp on in.

TARO I will, I will. You just go all the way over there.

WIFE What a dithering rascal you are!

TARO Is Sir Somebody (name of actor playing the HEAD FRIEND) at home?

WIFE Hey, you rascal!

TARO What is it, what is it?

WIFE As you have come to kill him, what do you mean calling him Sir? Call him rascal, call him rascal.

TARO If I call him rascal, he will likely get angry.

WIFE What does it matter if he gets angry?!

TARO Are you certain it is all right to call him rascal?

WIFE Oh, of course it is all right.

TARO If I call him rascal, I am sure he'll get angry. (Calling at the door.) Rascal. Is anybody there?

HEAD FRIEND Nobody.

TARO You say nobody is there?

WIFE What did he say, what did he say?

TARO Nobody's here either, nobody's here either.

WIFE Oh, I must say, what a pity.

TARO If it is true that you are not there, just come out here and see what will happen to you. The instant you show your face, I'll punch you with this stick right between the eyes. That will make you fall flat on your back. Then I'll grab you by both legs and drag your through five or ten neighborhoods, until I drag you to death, until I

drag you to death!

WIFE Oh, I say. That was well spoken.

TARO Am I not strong?

WIFE Well now, who is next?

TARO The next one is Somebody (name of actor playing FRIEND TWO).

WIFE Come, come. Let us go to him place, let us go to his place.

TARO Hey. Let's not go there.

WIFE Why not?

TARO Different from the way he looks, he is so impetuous that once he loses his temper, neither arrows nor shields will stop him. Let us give up going to his place and go somewhere else.

WIFE No, no. It is just because he is like that that we must go to his place.

TARO What's that? You say we must go to his place just because he's like that?

WIFE Come, come. Be on your way, be on your way.

TARO What a bother this is. If only you agree, we can get by without arousing the wind and the waves.

WIFE It is that attitude of yours that gets you stomped on, that's what gets you stomped on!

TARO Oh, what a vexing spot I'm in.

WIFE Be on you way, be on your way.

TARO Here we are, here we are.

WIFE Come, come. Stomp right on in, stomp on in.

TARO First wait a minute, wait just a minute.

WIFE Wait for what?

TARO We must stop and think things over now. Everything will be all right if nobody is there like at the others' places, but if he should happen to be at home, neither arrows nor shields will stop him. Now that we have come this far, everybody already knows what we have accomplished. Come with me and let us go home.

WIFE How luke-warm you are. Just give me that stick, give it to me. (She jerks the stick out of his hands and he goes to hide behind the upstage right pillar.)

WIFE Hey, Somebody (name of actor playing FRIEND TWO.) Is anybody in there?

FRIEND TWO Nobody.

TARO Here, here, Wife. What did he say?

WIFE There's nobody here either.

TARO You say there's nobody here either?

WIFE Most certainly.

TARO Oh, well, if it is true that nobody is there, you are not the one for the job. Give me that stick, give me that stick. (He jerks the stick out of his WIFE's hands.) Hey, you pushy woman! Just go all the way over

there. (Calling out at the door.) Hey, you cowardly Somebody (name of actor playing FRIEND TWO)! If it is true that you are not there, just come out here and see what will happen to you. The instant you show your face, I'll punch you so hard in the chest that you will stagger about in a daze. Then I'll draw the sword at my hip out swiftly and slice off both your arms and both your legs, and with no arms and legs, you will be a most pitiful sight to see.

WIFE Oh, how right you are! He will be a most pitiful sight to see indeed.

TARO Then I will jump on your stomach and stomp on you ten or twenty times until I have stomped your to death, until I have stomped you quite to death.

WIFE Oh, I say. That was well spoken.

TARO Was it not indeed well spoken?

WIFE It was indeed well spoken.

TARO Well now, just what do you think? Though it is not likely that there was nobody there at their places, they all pretended not to be there out of fear of our dauntless power. At such a time as this, we should sing a lusty song as we make our way home.

WIFE That is a fine idea.

TARO (Singing.)

We went here and were told nobody was there,

CHORUS (Singing.)

We went there and were told nobody was there.

Might this be what is mean by the saying

That nothing is as fruitless

**As swinging your stick about
After the battle is done?**

TARO Hip, hip, hooray!

WIFE Oh, Darling, come along with me.

TARO With all my heart.

(They go off toward home together.)

(Source: *Kyogen Shusei*, 273-277, Nogaku Shorin, Tokyo, 1974)