

Namahage Performance, Part 3: The Arrival of the Messenger

The head of the household, whose role is to protect his family from the Namahage, is the first character to take the floor. He is soon joined by the messenger, who informs him that the Namahage will be arriving shortly. The two exchange New Year's greetings and remark on the amount of snow outside before the host asks where the Namahage are now.

The messenger relates that the Namahage are taking some time at the neighbor's house because one of the children there has been disobedient and is being lectured. He says the Namahage are threatening to take the child with them into the mountains. This is a traditional warning used locally to keep adolescents in line, and one that ties into the first of the Namahage's central roles: that of teaching children discipline.

Next, the messenger suggests that the Namahage have finished up at the neighbor's and are heading this way. Before the head of the household has time to move, loud noises are heard outside. The Namahage let out a sudden roar in front of the house and bang on the door. They then storm into the house and go through all the rooms on a hunt for any family members who might be hiding. After a quick search, the two Namahage sit down in front of trays of food the family has prepared for their fearsome guests.