

#### **Namahage Performance, Part 4: The Arrival of the Namahage**

The head of the household gives the Namahage his New Year's greetings, thanks them for coming, and passes them cups of sake. This is done to honor and appease the deities. The Namahage respond by reminding the man that their annual visit is a necessary one, since without it, the villagers would become lazy and disease would spread. The latter is a reference to the role of the Namahage as purifiers who drive away evil spirits from homes so that residents can welcome the New Year without fear of misfortune.

The discussion then turns to the sake the Namahage are drinking. The head of the household talks about how his elderly mother, who lives with the family, made this sake especially for the Namahage using local Akita Komachi rice. This is a reference to a renowned Akita brand usually considered far too fine for sake brewing, suggesting that the drink the Namahage are enjoying is a rare delicacy. The head of the household implores his guests to have some more, and the tension in the room appears to lift.