

The Story of Chinese New Year



Long ago lived a horrible beast named Nian. Nian lived in the mountains near a village. Nian terrorized the village on the first day of every year. Nian flew through the town. He ate all their grain and farm animals. Nian even ate children left outside.

The people of the village were terrified. They lived in fear of Nian. Each New Year, they boarded up their homes. The villagers did not know what else to do.

One year an old man came to the village. He spoke to the people. "Why do you fear Nian? You are many. Nian is one. Nian can't swallow all of you!"

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The villagers were too afraid to stand up to Nian. So they boarded up their homes as usual.

But Nian did not come that night. Nian did not come the next night. Nian did not come the night after that. Then the people learned why. The old man rode Nian all night. Nian returned to the mountains each night, tired and hungry.

The old man spoke to the villagers. "I can't protect you forever," he said. "I have to go."

The people were scared. They asked him to stay. They didn't want Nian to come back. But then they learned that the old man was really a god. He came to protect them. But now other people needed him. He had to go.



The old man told the villagers how to deal with Nian. "Nian is easily scared," he explained. "Nian is afraid of loud noises and strange animals. Nian does not like the color red. Put the color red all over your town and hang red signs on your doors.

Make loud noises. Play loud music. Play loud drums. Set off fireworks. Have your children wear masks. Have them carry lanterns."

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The old man left the village. The people did what he said. They did it every year.

In Chinese, the New Year is called Guo Nian. It means “get over Nian.” That is just what the villagers did. They got over being scared of Nian.

Chinese New Year is a big event. People hang red around their homes. Red is good luck. The streets are filled with music. People play the drums. They have parades. They use fireworks. They carry paper lanterns.

