

The Story of Chinese New Year



Long ago lived a horrible beast named Nian. Nian lived in the mountains near a village. On the first day of every year, Nian terrorized the village. The wicked creature flew through the town eating all the villagers' grain and farm animals. Nian even ate children unlucky enough to be left outside.

The people of the village were terrified. They lived in fear of Nian. On the eve of each New Year, they boarded up their homes to keep the demon out, for they 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 and Nian is one. Nian can't swallow all of you!"

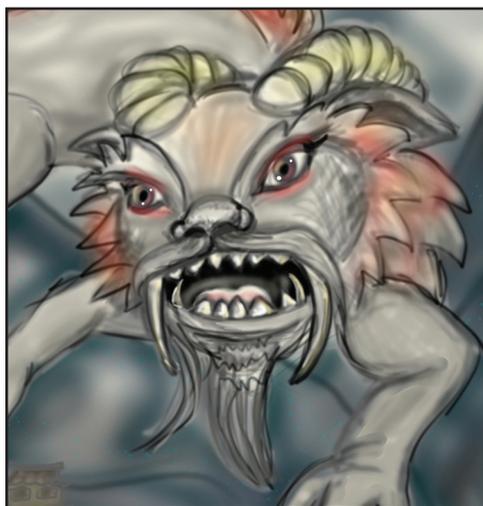
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However, the villagers were too afraid to stand up to Nian. So they boarded up their homes as usual for New Years.

But Nian did not come that night. Nor did he come the following night or the night after that. Soon, the villagers learned why: the old man rode Nian all night so that 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 and asked him to stay. They didn't want Nian to come back. But then they learned that the old man was really a god who was there to protect them. But now other people needed the god's help, too. He had to go.



The old man informed the villagers about 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,

bang loudly on drums, and set off fireworks. Have your children wear masks and carry lanterns. If you do all this, you will scare Nian away."

After the old man left the village, the people did what he said. They painted the town red, they made loud music, they set off fireworks. The children wore masks and carried lanterns. Nian never came back. The villagers did this every year after that, and in time it became a great celebration.

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In Chinese, the New Year is called Guo Nian, which 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. The color red is considered good luck. There are parades that fill the streets with the sound of loud music and drums. People set off fireworks all day long. They also carry different kinds of paper lanterns.

