



## The Story of 年 nián

Once upon a time, in ancient China, there was a monster named 年 nián who lived in the mountains. He wasn't a very nice monster. He was very naughty and had bad manners. He never said please, he never said thank you, and he liked to take things that didn't belong to him, and on top of all that, he acted like a bully. Boys and girls, do you know what a bully is?

On 除夕 chū xī (New Year's Eve), 年 nián went from village to village, entering houses to take food and toys. As he went through the houses, making a mess, he never once said please, he never once said thank you and he never asked if he could share with anyone. Boys and girls, do you think 年 nián would

make a good friend?



A few days before <sup>chú xī</sup> 除夕 the villagers got together to talk about <sup>nián</sup> 年 .

Every year he came without an invitation. All the mommies were sad that

<sup>nián</sup> 年 came into their kitchens to eat the special New Year's Eve food. All

the daddies felt bad that <sup>nián</sup> 年 made a big mess. And all the children were

mad that <sup>nián</sup> 年 took their toys without asking to share.



We should talk to his mommy, said one villager. We should talk to his

daddy, said another. We should run and hide said another. What were they

going to do?

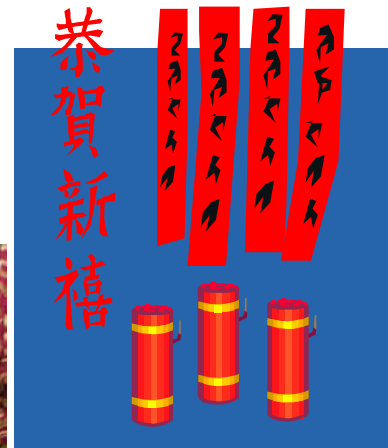
Just as they were talking, <sup>lǎogōnggong</sup> 老公公 (a wise old man) walked up and said "I know what to do. <sup>nián</sup> 年 is afraid of lions, loud noises and sunshine. If you do these things <sup>nián</sup> 年 will be too scared to visit your house: hang red lanterns from your roof, paste bright <sup>chūnlián</sup> 春聯 (New Year Couplets) on the door, and celebrate the new year by dancing the lion dance, setting off fire crackers and beating loud drums," Everyone laughed at this silly idea. But <sup>lǎogōnggong</sup> the 老公公 said "wait and see." The villagers agreed that they couldn't think of a better idea, so they worked together to get everything ready.

They hung <sup>dēngguāng</sup> 燈光 (bright red lanterns) from their roofs, wrote <sup>chūnlián</sup> 春聯 (new year messages) on bright red paper with gold ink to hang on the front door of each house, practiced the lion dance and gathered drums and firecrackers to make loud noises.

As night fell, the village remained as bright as daylight. All the families celebrated the new year under the <sup>dēngguāng</sup> 燈光, ate a big new year's dinner, and enjoyed the lion dance. As <sup>nián</sup> 年 approached the village, he saw the bright lights and heard the loud noises. He began to tremble. The village was bright and cheerful. Then he saw the fierce lions and heard the drums and firecrackers! He became so scared, he ran home as fast as he could.

As he ran away, the villagers celebrated and wished each other a happy new year “ <sup>guònián le</sup> 过年了! <sup>guònián le</sup> 过年了! ” Which means <sup>nián</sup> 年 has gone away.

They were so happy, they decided to celebrate new year's eve the same way year after year. And <sup>nián</sup> 年 never came back.



## About Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year festival is 15 days long and has many festivals and traditions. Preparations for the new year start before the end of the

year with the <sup>Làbā jié</sup> 臘八節 festival on the 8th day of the last month. People eat

<sup>Làbā</sup> 臘八 to remember the sacrifices parents make for their children and to

remind children to help their parents. Beijing <sup>Làbā</sup> 臘八 is salty and southern

<sup>Làbā</sup> 臘八 is sweet. <sup>Làbā</sup> 臘八 is a hot porridge of grains, dried fruit and nuts.

Kitchen God & his Wife



Jade Emperor

On the 23rd day of the 12th month, everyone begins to clean house.

sǎo chén rì

掃塵日 or sweeping the dust is a festival of house cleaning. Everyone

tidies up, sweeping, cleaning, buying new clothes, and repaying debts. On

Zào Wángyē

Zàojūn

this day, the Kitchen God 灶王爺 (also called 灶君) is sent off

sòngzào

Yùhuáng Dàdì

送灶 to report on each family to 玉皇大帝 (the Jade Emperor). This

xiǎonián

important event is called the little new year or 小年.

On the 3rd day of new year, women return to their natal home - to visit

Yuánxiāojié

their mothers. The last festival of New Year is on the 15th day 元宵節

Dēngjié

or 燈節 - colorful lanterns are put on display for everyone to enjoy. Many

cities hold lantern contests with colorful lanterns put on display for

everyone to enjoy.



## Words for New Year

chúxī  
除夕 New Year's eve

dēngguāng  
燈光 New Year lanterns

pào zhú  
炮竹 Firecrackers

chūnlián  
春聯 New Year Couplets - New Year messages to hang on your door

fú dào le  
福到了 Hang your 福 upside down because 到 (arrive) & 倒 (upside down) sound similar.

ménshén  
門神 Door Gods - paste them on your door to protect your home

hóngbāo  
紅包 on 除夕 at the family reunion dinner, give kids a 紅包

