



A Happy Lunar New Year

The more we learn about our family, the stronger we become.

By Alelie Coronel-Camitan
(Based on a true story)

This story happened in Malaysia.

Claire heard the fish sizzling in the kitchen as she played with her little sister. While Mom and Dad cooked dinner for Lunar New Year, Claire and Chloe pretended to be the festival dragon.

Chloe giggled when Claire stomped through her room in her dragon mask and red shirt. Everyone was wearing red today. On Lunar New Year, red meant you'd be happy and strong. Claire loved her family's Lunar New Year traditions!

"Mom, will we talk to Grandma and Grandpa today?" Claire asked when Chloe went to bed for a nap. Usually they celebrated with Grandma and Grandpa. But they were living in a different country now.

"Yes. We'll call them after dinner," Mom said. She wiped her hands on her red apron. "Do you want to help me make cookies?"

Claire nodded and climbed onto the chair by the table. She carefully cracked eggs into a big bowl.

While the cookies were baking, Claire helped Dad set the table. They put out the special holiday plates with pretty patterns on them. Then Claire put photos of Grandma, Grandpa, and other family members on the table. Setting out the photos helped make it feel like they were all together.

Soon the kitchen smelled like buttery cookies. It was time to eat! Claire, Chloe, and their parents sat around the table.

Claire said the prayer. "Thank Thee for another year to be with my family." After everyone said amen, Claire put a sticky rice ball in her mouth and smiled.

It was so good!

When dinner was over, Dad got out two red envelopes. This was another tradition.

They meant good luck in the new year.

"One for Claire and one for Chloe," Dad said.

Claire shook the envelope next to her ear. She listened to the coins clinking inside.

"Thank you," Claire said to her parents. "Now can we call Grandma and Grandpa?"

"Of course!" Dad said. He set up his phone on the table, and Grandma's and Grandpa's smiling faces filled the screen. Claire and Chloe waved.

"Hi, Grandma! Hi, Grandpa!" Claire said. "We miss you so much!"

"We miss you too. How are you?" Grandma asked. Claire talked with them for a long time.

After Claire talked with Grandma and Grandpa, Mom asked them about people Claire didn't know.

"Mom, who are those people?" Claire asked after they said goodbye to Grandma and Grandpa.

"They are some of our family members. I'm learning their names and stories so I can include them with our family history," Mom said.

Claire thought about that. "What's family history?"

"It's when we learn about all of our family," Dad said as Chloe climbed onto his lap. "The more we learn about our family, the stronger we become."

Claire nodded. "Can you tell me the stories?"

"Of course!" Mom reached across the table and picked up the family photo album. She turned to an old photo in black and white. "This is Dad's great-great-grandpa. He lived a long time ago. But we can feel close to him when we learn about his life."

Claire looked at the photos while Mom and Dad told her stories. While she listened, she felt happy. She didn't have to always be near her family to feel their love. She smiled. It was a very good Lunar New Year. ●

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What's your favorite family tradition?