

THE YEAR OF THE PIG?

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28 Plays Later 2019

Day 5

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ACT I

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP - AN EMPTY, BLACK STAGE STREWN WITH STARS. RAT, OX, TIGER, RABBIT, DRAGON, SNAKE, HORSE, SHEEP, MONKEY, ROOSTER, AND PIG ALL SIT AROUND A GLOWING BALL THAT LOOKS SOMETHING LIKE EARTH. DOG IS STANDING.

DOG: In ancient China, it was the eve of Guo Nian (过年). As they had done for centuries beyond count, all of the villagers near the sea prepared for the coming of Nianshou (年兽), a monster with a long head and sharp horns. Nian dwelled in the deepest parts of the sea all the year long, but emerged every New Year's Eve to eat villagers and livestock along the coast. And so, on the morning of New Year's Eve, everyone would gather their livestock and flee to remote mountains to hide from the monster.

But one year, an old man with white hair and a ruddy face came to visit. He refused to flee to the mountains with the villagers, but instead stayed behind and pasted red paper on every front door. He burned bamboo which made loud cracking sounds and lit candles in the houses. He dressed all in red.

When the villagers returned, they were astonished to see that the village had not been destroyed. The old man had succeeded in scaring Nian away.

And so, every year after people did as the old man had done, and Nian never appeared again.

THOSE SEATED APPLAUD, AND DOG TAKES A BOW.

DOG: Now, Pig, it is your turn to guide the world for a year so I may rest.

PIG: What?

DOG: It's your turn. You are the guide for the year four thousand seven hundred seventeen.

PIG: Oh. Yeah, I'll pass.

DOG: (confused) But... you can't pass. It's... It's your turn.

PIG: Nah. Someone else can do it.

MURMURS START BETWEEN THE OTHER ANIMALS.

DOG: But...

PIG PUTS HIS FINGER ON HIS NOSE.

PIG: Not it!!

RABBIT: Can he do that?

DOG JUST STAMMERS, UNSURE.

PIG: I just did. Later suckers.

PIG GETS UP FROM THE CIRCLE AND STARTS TO WALK AWAY.

HORSE: That is NOT how this works, Pig!

SNAKE: You don't have a choice!

PIG STOPS AND TURNS BACK TOWARDS THE CIRCLE.

PIG: But I just did. See ya!

PIG ONCE AGAIN TURNS AND BEGINS TO WALK AWAY.

MONKEY: Pig! You stop this right now. Pig! Don't make me throw poop at you!!

PIG STOPS AND LOOKS BACK, WARY.

PIG: You wouldn't.

MONKEY: Oh, I would. (threateningly) You get back here. Now.

PIG FURROWS HIS BROW AND STOMPS BACK
TOWARDS THE CIRCLE.

PIG: Fine. I'll come back, but you can't make me take the year.

TIGER: (brandishing claws) Oh yes we can.

PIG: Really, kitty cat? Don't be overconfident. You may have claws, but boars have tusks.

RAT: What is wrong with you? This is what we do. Every year.

SHEEP: Yeah, why change now?

PIG SIGHS.

PIG: Because of the children.

OX: What? What children?

PIG: ALL OF THEM.

DRAGON: You aren't making sense. Please make sense.

PIG SIGHS AGAIN.

PIG: Because every child born in the next year will one day realize they were born in the year of Pig. And so will their friends. And then the ridicule will begin. Relentless teasing. And those children will be embarrassed... and ashamed of me.

RABBIT: But that's silly!

PIG: It happens! Ask Rat!

RAT: It does.

PIG: Children are proud to be a Dragon, or a Tiger, or a horse, or a rooster. Even Snakes are cool ever since the Harry Potter craze.

SNAKE: True.

PIG: I'm tired. Tired of being an embarrassment to the children I am supposed to guide. So I just don't want to do it anymore.

ROOSTER: But your children are kind and loyal. They are optimistic. Honest. Chivalrous. Sure, they can be a little too trusting at times, but... the world needs them.

OX: Just like the wizarding world needs Hufflepuffs.

PIG: But can't we just skip me for one cycle? Just one?

DOG: I'm sorry, Pig, but each of us has a job to do. It's your time.

PIG THROWS HIS HANDS UP IN DISGUST.

PIG: Fine! But next time any of you need something, don't come to me. Got it Sheep? No more vanilla for your cupcakes! Horse? No, I won't float you a loan until payday. And Rabbit? I'm not taking you to Disneyland anymore. Nope!

RABBIT: If that's what it takes, my friend.

PIG CLENCHES HIS FISTS AND SCREAMS IN FRUSTRATION.

PIG: Stop being so nice!

EVERYONE JUST STARES AND PIG FOR A FEW MOMENTS. EVENTUALLY HIS SHOULDERS SLUMP AND HE STOMPS OVER TO WHERE DOG STANDS. THEY SWITCH PLACES AND DOG SITS. PIG SLOWLY STANDS STRAIGHTER, AND IS BATHED IN A GOLDEN GLOW. HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND LETS IT OUT SLOWLY.

PIG:

Legends say that besides the monster Nianshou, a demon named Sui would visit villages to terrify little children as they slept. The children who were touched by Sui would be too frightened to cry out. They would get a terrible fever and even become mentally unstable.

Parents would light candles and stay up all night to keep their children safe from Sui.

One New Year's Eve, in an important household, two parents gave their child eight coins. They instructed the child to play with them so that they would stay awake, invulnerable to the demon's touch. The child wrapped the coins in red paper, making an envelope. They opened the packet, rewrapped it, and reopened it for many hours, but eventually fell asleep. The loving parents took the the packet with the eight coins and placed them under the child's pillow.

In in the deepest dark of the night, when Sui arrived and tried to touch the child's head, the eight coins began to glow with a strong light that scared the demon away. It turns out that the eight coins were actually eight fairies who kept the child safe. From that day forward, the giving red envelopes became a way to keep children safe and bring them good luck.

EVERYONE APPLAUDS AS THE LIGHTS FADE TO
BLACK.