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Lin's Tangyuan for the Longest Night

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The Longest Night

"Tonight is Dongzhi," said Nai Nai. "It is the longest night of the year, when winter is at its deepest. Families come together. And we eat tangyuan!" Lin clapped. Tangyuan were her favourite.





Sticky Hands

Nai Nai poured rice flour into a bowl, and Lin added warm water. Squish, squash! The dough was soft and sticky. Soon it was on Lin's fingers, on her cheeks and on the very tip of her nose.

Round and Round

They rolled little pieces between their palms, round and round, into small balls. "Why are tangyuan round?" asked Lin. "Round like a family sitting in a circle," said Nai Nai. "Everyone together."





A Very Big One

Lin rolled and rolled. She made one tangyuan as big as an orange! "This one is for everybody," she said. Nai Nai laughed so much her glasses wobbled. "It is too big to cook! Let's make it into lots of little ones."

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Float Up

Dad put the little tangyuan into a pot of bubbling water. Lin watched from the table. Plip, plop! At first they sank. Then, one by one, they floated up to the top. "They float when they are ready!" said Dad.





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Around the Table

They ate their tangyuan in warm, sweet ginger soup, sitting all round the table. Soft and chewy. Nai Nai, Dad and Lin, all together, on the longest night.

A Bowl for Dara

Across the courtyard, Dara's window glowed too. His family was keeping Yalda, on the very same long night. Lin carried a covered bowl of tangyuan over with Dad. Dara gave her a handful of shiny red pomegranate seeds.



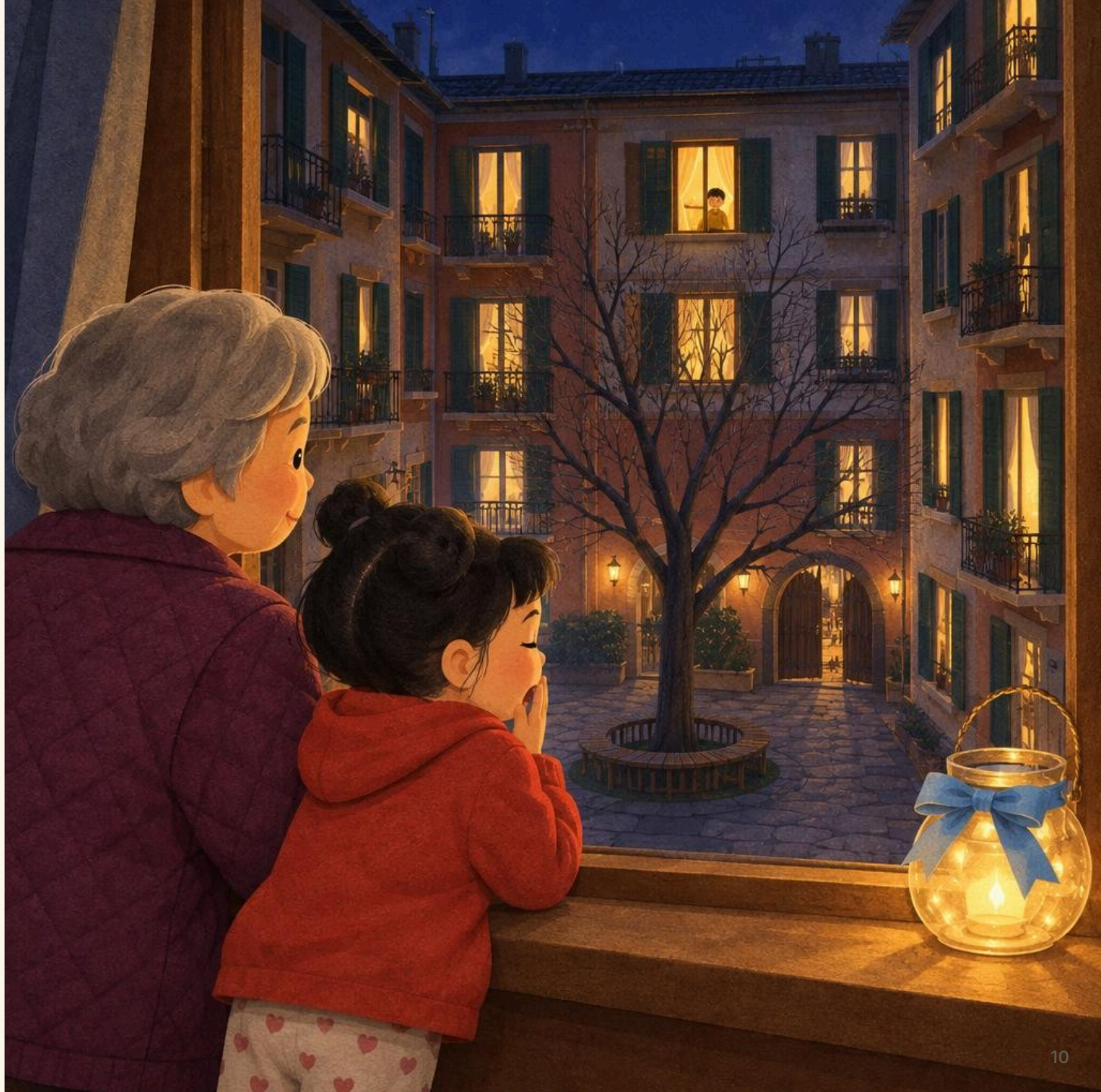


A Year Older?

Back home, Nai Nai smiled. "There is an old saying," she said. "When you eat tangyuan at Dongzhi, you grow one year older." Lin gasped. "Am I six now?" Nai Nai laughed. "Only in the saying, little one."

Longer Days Coming

Lin looked out at the dark courtyard. "Is it still the longest night?" "Yes," said Nai Nai. "And tomorrow the days start to grow longer." Lin yawned a big, round, tangyuan yawn.



THE END

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