

New Year Surprise!

By Christopher Cheng, illustrated by Di Wu

Little Brother is told by his brother and his friends that he's too small to help out at the Spring Festival. He's too little to fly a kite and he's not strong enough to hold a dragon pole. But Father says he has a special job to do. What can it be?

He knows it's not hanging the lanterns up, as Father has already done that.
He knows it's not choosing the treats from the hawker as Father has already chosen a duck.

He knows it's not serving tea or lighting fire crackers as he did those jobs last year.

Follow Little Brother through the village to find out what his special job is.

Christopher Cheng's story and Di Wu's paintings recreate the magic of celebrating New Year in snowy rural northern China. Di's stunning artwork reflects Chinese traditional techniques, using rice paper and Chinese brushes and the colours of traditional paintings. The original artworks are on display at the National Library of Australia on level 4 until Sunday 22 May 2016.

At the back of the book, read about some of the different festivals held in China and about the rural setting of the book. Images from the National Library of Australia's collection illustrate this section.

Publication details

ISBN 978-0-642-27883-8 (hardback)

255(h) x 245(w) mm; 36 pp

RRP \$24.99

This publication is available from our online shop and through bookshops nationally.

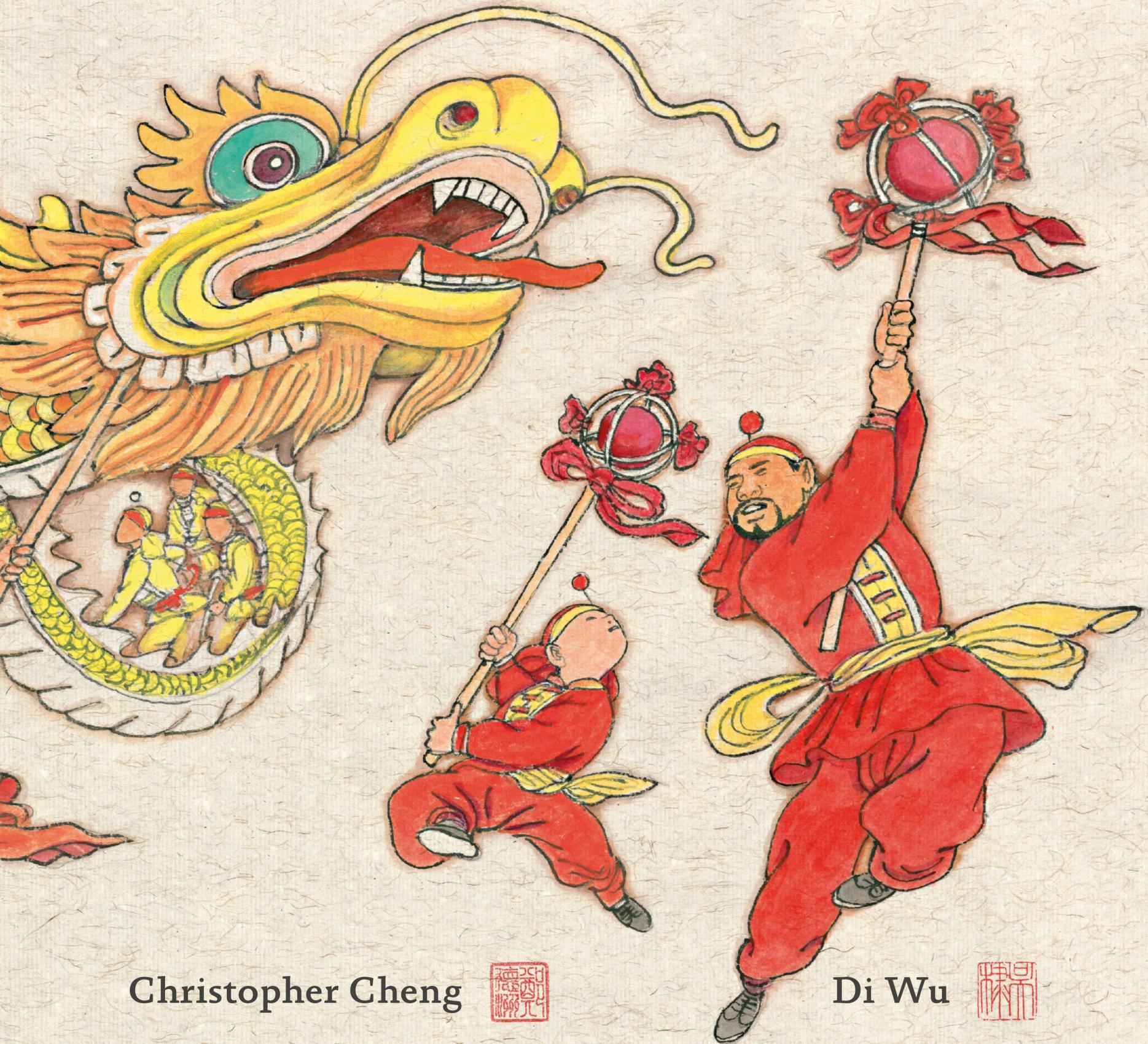
Caption for images: *New Year Surprise!*, National Library of Australia 2016

Please Note:

Images in this PDF are provided at approximately A4 @ 300dpi.

To extract the images from this PDF for reproduction, Adobe Acrobat Professional or Adobe InDesign software is required

New Year Surprise!



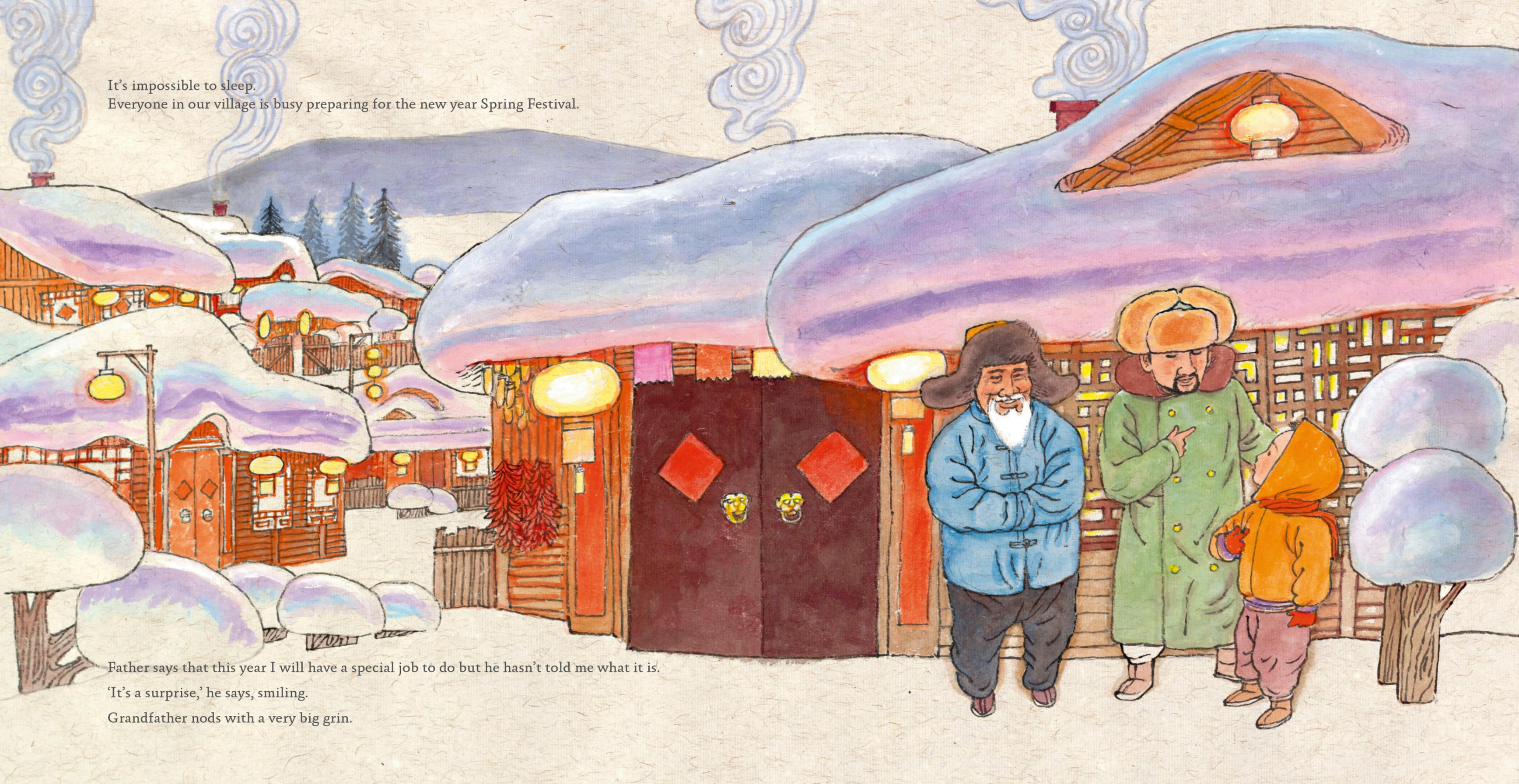
Christopher Cheng



Di Wu



It's impossible to sleep.
Everyone in our village is busy preparing for the new year Spring Festival.



Father says that this year I will have a special job to do but he hasn't told me what it is.
'It's a surprise,' he says, smiling.
Grandfather nods with a very big grin.



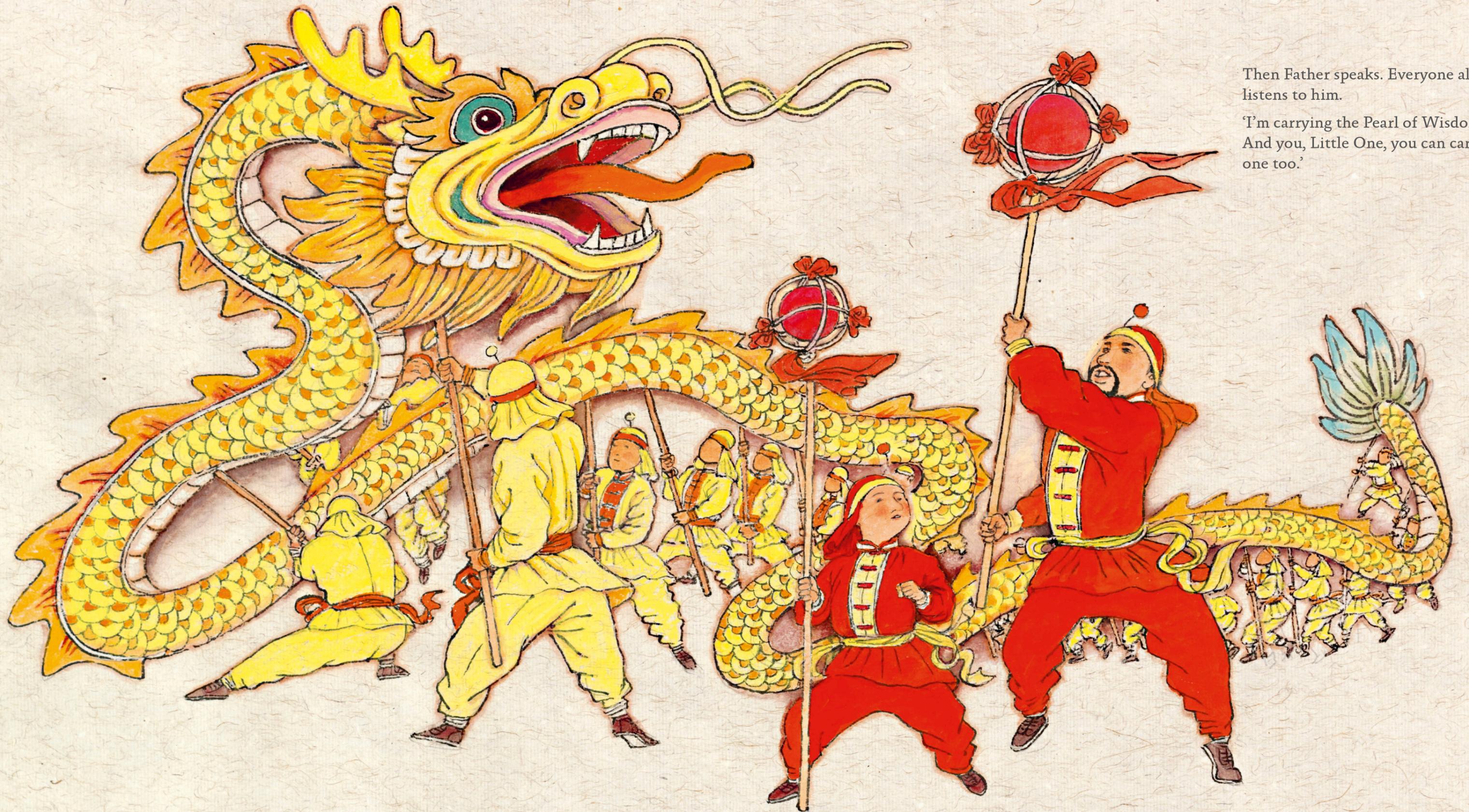
'Gong Xi Fa Cai! Happy New Year, sleepy head!' shouts Sister ruffling my hair. 'I wonder what you'll do on this special day.'



Brother's going kite-flying with his friends. Maybe flying his favourite kite is my special job.

'You can come and watch but you're too young to fly a kite, Little Brother. You'll get blown away!'

... so that's not my special job.



Then Father speaks. Everyone always listens to him.

'I'm carrying the Pearl of Wisdom. And you, Little One, you can carry one too.'

On Writing This Book

I was inspired to write this story when I read a book about festivals in China called *Long Established Customs of Chinese Festivals*. This book is in the Asian Collections of the National Library of Australia and is available online at nla.gov.au/nla.obj-32292821. You can see some of the pictures from this book on these pages:

A Few Words from the Illustrator, Di Wu

Forty-seven years ago I was working as a farmer in north-eastern China. During the Spring Festival, it was snowing everywhere. I decided to go back to Guangzhou in China to paint the pictures for this book. I have tried to depict this festival in a traditional way, by using Chinese brushes and the colours of traditional Chinese painting, as well as by painting on rice paper.



About the Setting

New Year Surprise! is set in northern China where there are still villages like the one in the story. In the north, it is cold and snowy at the time of the Spring Festival (also called Chinese New Year). People wear lots of thick clothing to keep warm and beds are often platforms that are built over small wood-fired furnaces. When needed, these beds become eating places, the quilts piled high nearby.

Many ways of life in northern China remain the same—little boys have haircuts like Little Brother, brooms are made of brush, and plates of bamboo. All over China, preparing and serving tea to visitors is done in a particular way, using special teapots, cups, trays and tea strainers.



Dragon dances are a special part of the Spring Festival.

Festivals in China

Festivals have been part of Chinese culture and life for generations and generations. In the past, they marked the passing of the seasons and the growing and harvesting of crops. Today, festivals continue to be a time for families to come together and celebrate. There are sumptuous feasts of exquisite food, like dumplings, noodles, buns and cakes, all prepared just for the occasion. Fireworks light up the skies to scare away evil spirits and people wish each other happiness, good health and prosperity.

One of my favourite festivals is the **Spring Festival**, or Chinese New Year, the most important festival of the year. It is celebrated between the last day of the last month on the Chinese calendar and the 15th day of the first month in



'Happy New Year!' people say to each other on New Year's Day. A child is holding firecrackers on a stick.

the New Year. The Spring Festival finishes with the **Lantern Festival**, usually in February or March, when lanterns of all shapes and sizes are carried or hung in the streets.

Relatives travel from all over China to be with their families to celebrate the year that has gone and to welcome the New Year. People write New Year wishes for good luck on red pieces of paper and paste them to doors or hang them in houses. Occasionally, these pieces of paper are placed upside down. This means that good luck is coming. Young children let off noisy fireworks and receive money in red envelopes, and sometimes gifts and sweets. Spring Festival is a time to wear traditional jackets—red in the past, but in lots of different colours today. Fish, a symbol of good luck, is on the menu of Spring Festival feasts.



Dragon boat racing is held in the hot summer. The rowers pull their oars in time with the beats of a drum and a gong.