

Traditional Chinese Fairytale  
THE MAGIC PAINTBRUSH

By Paulie Caccamise

\*\*\* CURTAIN IS CLOSED \*\*\*

CUE MUSIC: Shen's Poor Sad Family Theme  
*Moonlight Reflected On The Er-Quan Spring -edit-*  
*by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)*

*Enter Actors. Form Half Moon Circle Around CS to form "Nosey Town"*  
*They peer in in different ways to Shen's Family Home.*  
*Shen, Mother, Father in middle of Half Moon*

\*\*\* CURTAIN IS OPENED \*\*\*

SCENE 1: A MOTHER'S REQUEST

*Shen's House. Shen is on the floor drawing. Her father is holding empty bowls. mother holds baby swaddle. Around their house are towns people looking in and worrying.*

Mother: Shen. Come and give us a twirl.

Father: Now listen my sweet girl.

Mother: Our family has very little.

TOWN PERSON 1: And all of us have plates with nothing in the middle.

FATHER: We have only empty bowls and frying pons.

MOTHER: Shen go to the sea and try to find shrimp and fish and clams.

SHEN: Yes Mother. Yes Father. I wish I could bring the world to you.

TOWNS PERSON 2: Please help bring us food. Maybe oysters for a stew.

FATHER: We know this is something you can do.

SHEN: You have a rest. I will go and try my best.

{SCENE CHANGE}

CUE MUSIC: Shen By The Seashore -full instruments edit-

*The Crescent Moon Before Dawn* by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)

SCENE 2: A HOPELESS SHEN

Three actors are hiding under a blanket to form a rock

*Shen is walking to the edge of the sea shore. She picks up a stick. Kneels Down CS and draws in the sand and waves.*

CUE MUSIC: Shen By The Seashore -single instrument edit-

*The Crescent Moon Before Dawn* by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)

SOUND FX: Ocean Waves (*Optional*)

SHEN: But I'm only of little age.  
I can only think of horses and flowers and ants on a page.  
I can draw fish in the sand,  
but they will never jump into my hand.

SCENE 3: AN OLD MAN'S MAGIC GIFT

CUE MUSIC: The Old Man Appears

*Picking Red Chestnuts by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)*

FADE TO STOP MUSIC: The Old Man Appears

*(The old man rock with many actors is still under the blanket)*

OLD MAN: Shen, having to feed your family has gotten you down.

SHEN: And... I want to help the whole town.

OLD MAN: Please Shen, do not cry and stand.

SHEN: What can you do?  
You are only an old man!

OLD MAN: Shen. Am I?

CUE MUSIC: The Old Man Appears

*Picking Red Chestnuts by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)*

*(Old Man paints and then another person from the "OLD MAN ROCK" jumps out from the blanket and appears.)*

*(Each time the next person appears that new person says AM I?)*

OLD MEN 1, 2, 3 AM I?

SHEN: What do I see with my eye?!

OLD MAN: Your family and town do not have much,

*(Old Man Gives The Paint Brush To Shen Together As A Little Ceremony)*

ALL OLD MEN: So take this Magic Paint Brush.

SHEN: *(Loud)* Thank you! Thank you for this Magic Paint Brush!

ALL OLD MAN: Shhhhhh! Hush!

SHEN: What's wrong?

OLD MAN: We do not want all the world to know..  
OLD MAN 2: ... like those who are rich and strong.  
SHEN: I will only paint for the townspeople by the seashore.  
OLD MAN 3: Promise me you will never paint for wealthy folk..  
ALL OLD MEN: but only for the poor.  
SHEN: I am sure.  
OLD MEN: Keep your heart pure.

*(SHEN starts walking back to the town the Old Man Group surrounds her - Shen walks a little and the OLD MEN GROUP shuffles around her in different directions until Shen stops and looks all around with hands out indicating - What?!)*

*(Stops Shen)*

OLD MAN 1: Only paint for others. If you paint for yourself..  
ALL OLD MEN: ...the brush will be like any other paint brush on the shelf!

{SCENE CHANGE}

CUE MUSIC: Shen Dances Home From The Shore  
Morning Star Lilly by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)

#### SCENE 4: HAPPY NEWS FOR A SAD, POOR FAMILY

*(Shen runs home with the magic paint brush in hand. She is happy and laughing and joyous!)*

*(Mother is taking care of a baby, father is reading or looking at empty bowls)*

MOTHER: Did you catch some fish SHEN?

FATHER: Your hands are empty. We will all go hungry then.

SHEN: Please. Cheer up and hand me that cup!

*(Mother holds out a cup)*

*(Shen performs magic wave with her magic paintbrush over the cup)*

SHEN: Take a sip and see!

*(Father takes the mug and sips it.)*

FATHER: It's Milk Tea!

SHEN: I can paint anything for dinner.

MOTHER: We can eat good meals - even in winter!

SHEN: Look at all the townspeople, oh my!

FATHER: You can trust them to give it a try!

## SCENE 5: OUTSIDE THE TOWN SQUARE

*(There is a gathering of people excited to try the paint brush.)*

TOWNS PERSON 1: This is good news!

TOWNS PERSON 2: I need a pair of shoes!

TOWNS PERSON 3: My clothes are a mess. Can I have a dress!

TOWNS PERSON 4: Wow! Look at that!

TOWNS PERSON 5: We can both have new hats!

TOWNS PERSON 6: Can I have a basket...

TOWNS PERSON 7: ...and me a coat?

TOWNS PERSON 8: I need a stool...

TOWNS PERSON 9: ...How about a toy boat!

TOWNS PERSON 10: Lets draw a huge pot on this spot!

TOWNS PERSON 11: Draw me a doodle of some noodles!

TOWNS PERSON 12: I really really need a new house!

TOWNS PERSON 13: Can I just have a pet mouse?

## SCENE 6: SHEN SHARES THE PAINTBRUSH ACROSS FARMLANDS

*(People spread the news of Shen's paint brush.)*

*(Shen ends up traveling across the land.)*

LANDS PERSON 1: Did you hear?!

LANDS PERSON 2: This Magic Brush can bring to life anything you paint!

LANDS PERSON 3: Oh I think I'm going to faint...

LANDS PERSON 4: But, can I paint a horse?

SHEN: Of course!

LANDS PERSON 4: This brush has an amazing magic force!

LANDS PERSON 5: Ok... But can it paint a basket full of rice?

LANDS PERSON 6: Or some jars filled with spice!?

LANDS PERSON 7: Or a trap for these mice?

LANDS PERSON 8: That is such a nice device!

LANDS PERSON 9: Wait. Wait. WAIT! I heard what you said.

SHEN: Oh no! Your hands and feet are cold and red.

LANDS PERSON 10: How about a warm shed!

LANDS PERSON 9: Thank you thank you there's even a bed!

**CUE MUSIC: The Emperor's Theme 1**

**EXIT Land's People In Fear**

## SCENE 7: THE EMPEROR IN HIS PALACE

(The emperor is made up of three actors high to low. One stand on chair, one stand in front of it, one kneels to form a tall powerful tower like Emperor)

EMPEROR:                               YOU! Tell me what is all the fuss!

SOLDIER 1:                             Shen can make anything with a Magic Paint Brush.

EMPEROR:                             Anything? Like maybe... a ruby ring?

SOLDIER 2:                             Yes... She even made a canary that sings.

EMPEROR:                             Bring her here in front of me... so that I can see.

SOLDIER 1 & 2:                       Yes, your Emperor. We will quickly bring Shen to thee.

CUE MUSIC: Emperor's Theme 2



## SCENE 8: SHEN BEFORE THE EMPEROR

*(Shen is held by the arms and dragged to the Emperor. The paint brush is in front of her.)*

EMPEROR: Sooooo. I am told. That what you hold is very ... bold.

SHEN: Tis' true. But I will not paint for people like you!

EMPEROR: I want you to paint me a tree of... GOLD!

SHEN: Never. Your heart is too hard and cold.

EMPEROR: This is your last chance. Paint me that tree!

SHEN: I can not, will not, shall not paint gold for thee.

EMPEROR: Then, I will lock you up for all eternity.

*(Actors create three walls of a prison around Shen)*

SHEN: I *can* paint you an apple tree.

EMPEROR: Paint me a tree of gold then you will be set free.

*(whispered & repeated)*

PRISON WALLS: Do as you're told and paint a tree of GOLD!

*(Emperor exits)*

*(whispered & repeated)*

PRISON WALLS: Do as you're told and paint a tree of GOLD!

*(Shen is alone)*

SHEN: WHY... WHY ME!?

*(whispered & repeated)*

PRISON WALLS: Do as you're told and paint a tree of GOLD!

CUE MUSIC: Shen Trapped In Prison

*(The following monologue can be a recorded as an audio track)*

SHEN:                    OH NO! I have a fear,  
                              if I paint something for myself,  
                              the magic in the brush will disappear.  
                              and be like every paintbrush on the shelf.

                              I can paint a crack in the prison walls.  
                              Push... and push... until they fall.

                              Now to try a Horse to ride away.  
                              If it doesn't work I'll have to stay!

                              It's not for me.  
                              But for the town to stay free.

*(She covers her eyes with her arm and paints with the other - as she is painting 2 actors are forming a horse formation)*

{SCENE CHANGE}

CUE MUSIC: Emperors Theme 2

## SCENE 9: THE EMPEROR RETURNS FOR HIS TREE OF GOLD

*(The Emperor appears in his tower formation and discovers the walls have fallen - he is upset)*

EMPEROR:                      Guards! Where is Shen?!  
                                     Why have my prison walls crumbled?

*(Soldiers wake up and go into their positions)*

SOLDIER 1:                      (Mumbles) Shen escaped.

EMPEROR:                      Do not mumble!

SOLDIER 1:                      Shen escaped!

SOLDIER 2:                      She painted a horse and it took shape.

EMPEROR:                      Where did she go with that Brush!?  
                                     We will take her down!

SOLDIER 2:                      She rode fast back to her town.

SOLDIER 1:                      Should I ready your horse?

EMPEROR:                      Of course!  
                                     Then we will take the Magic Paint Brush with force!

## SCENE 10: SHEN RETURNS HOME & PAINTS A RIVER

CUE MUSIC: Shen's Poor Sad Family Theme  
*Moonlight Reflected On The Er-Quan Spring -edit-*  
*by Lei Qiang (Chinese Traditional Erhu Music)*

MOTHER: Shen! My beautiful girl!

FATHER: You are our world.

TOWNS PERSON 3: The Emperor and his army are fast on their way!

TOWNS PERSON 4: We must keep him far away!

TOWNS PERSON 5: I've been told,  
He only wants to use the Magic Paint Brush for gold.

CUE MUSIC: Painting The River, River Crossing - Dragon

SHEN: I have a hand that's steady  
and a mind that's ready.  
It will not quiver  
as I paint this mighty river!

*(Actors create a river with a blue cloth & blue chinese ribbon dancing)*

*(Emperor & Soldiers cross the stage slow and steady from SL to SR)*

EMPEROR: You can not stop us Shen.  
I'll swim across your river, and so will my men.

SCENE 11: SHEN & THE TOWNS PEOPLE DEFEND THEIR HOME

SHEN:                               Emperor! I could paint a friendly falcon,  
  but no! I will paint an angry Dragon!

*(All actors create a dragon formation and fly around the stage as an ensemble)*

SHEN:                               Leave our town alone!

EMPEROR:                       Soldiers away!  
  What great power the town has shown!

*(Emperor and soldiers exit return back)*

*(The water recedes, the townspeople come together and do a circle dance, ribbon dancers come out with different colors.)*

*(Shen and family gather in a different part of the stage and hug)*

{END OF PLAY}