

The Magic Paintbrush – a story for older children - told by Hema Acharya

“Ne how” that’s in Chinese. And do you know what, I’ve got a story for you when I went to China. Once upon a time stories from Leicester libraries, Neighbourhood Services, I am Hema and the story I am going to share with you is all about The Magic Paintbrush. And this is how it all started.

There was a horrible Emperor and he always wanted things doing. And then one day he heard that in his city there was a little village, and in the village, there lived a little boy, and the little boy had this beautiful magic paintbrush. So, he said [clapping hands] “Summon the boy here now!” (huh). Well, the boy was summoned, and the boy came, and he was a bit scared.

“Ne how.”

“What ‘ne how’? I want some magic paintings in my palace.”

“Your Majesty you can’t just demand it, you can have it, but you can’t.”

“So, what’s this magic about your pictures?”

“Well, the magic about my pictures is when I paint it the pictures come alive.” “What! Pictures come alive? It’s not true!”

“Yes it is.”

“Let’s see!”

“OK,” he said.

Aha, so he got his paper. Initially he dropped it because he was a bit nervous wasn’t he, but it was fine. Then he said, “Right, Your Majesty, what would you like me to do for you?”

“Well, I want you to draw me a cow.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I want to see a cow eating grass.”

So, di..di..dii...di..di.. he got his magic paint brush and he started to draw and he started to paint di.. di.. di.. di.. “Your Majesty one cow.”

“I said a cow eating grass, not just a cow on its own. Now get on with it boy!”

Of course, what could he do? The boy thought about it.

“OK, Your Majesty.”

So, he started on it again du.. du.. du..

Your Majesty here it is, the grass.

“I said a cow eating grass, not grass on its own!”

“Oh sorry, Your Majesty I do get a little bit confused sometimes.”

The boy was trying to think of a plan of what to do. Oh, my goodness me! So, he started painting di.. di.. du..

“There you go your Majesty, your picture.”

Now if you saw a picture like this on your wall would you be happy? So was not the Emperor.

“Where is my picture of the cow eating the grass! Where is it, you little terror what are we going to do with you?”

“Wait, wait a minute Your Majesty. Let me explain to you about this fantastic picture. You’re not looking at the picture beyond the picture. You know it’s like reading between the lines, do you understand? You look beyond the canvas.”

“Well, what is it then?”

“Well the cow arrived, and the cow was hungry, so the cow ate the grass, and now the cow’s gone to get a drink of water.”

“Oh my, my how can that be. Impossible! Gone to drink water at the river! What river? I can’t even see a river anywhere. If you had drawn me a river, I would have known wouldn’t I or painted me a river.”

“A river Your Majesty, a big river di.. di.. di..”

He took his magic paintbrush and he drew a river. A river on a rainy day, and the waves were like as if it was the ocean. The waves rolled, and rolled and rolled, and you know what happened next don’t you? They did come alive. The waves came alive and flooded the whole of the Emperor’s palace!

“Hey, help me! What are you doing?”

The Emperor began to run from room to room. Down the stairs, up the stairs round his garden path. But the waves were too strong. Soon enough the waves lifted the Emperor and you know what it did don’t you? The waves took the mad, nasty horrible Emperor away from the palace. He was gone!

As for the little boy. Well, soon the sun began to shine, there was a rainbow up in the sky and the people of the city and the village all came together and said “Wow! how fantastic, look at our city! How peaceful is our city! Who will be the next Emperor?”

Well, you decide who will be the next Emperor and what did he do. Well, the little boy had a little pet, a dragon. And the dragon took him on some trips and so on. And the dragon helped him to become a good Emperor. How? Well that’s another story isn’t it? So, you’ll have to wait til next time.

Until then why don’t you share the story of the magic paintbrush. Maybe you could even decide you have a magic paintbrush and what pictures will it draw and will come alive! What a challenge! We’d love to hear from you!

So, til then, enjoy ‘ne how’!