The Magic Paintbrush
A Chinese Folktale
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Once there lived a young boy named Ma Liang. He was very poor and very kind. Ma Liang loved drawing and drew pictures everywhere.

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One night, when Ma Liang was asleep in bed, he dreamt that an old man gave him a magic paintbrush. In his dream, the old man asked Ma Liang to use the magic paintbrush to help poor people.

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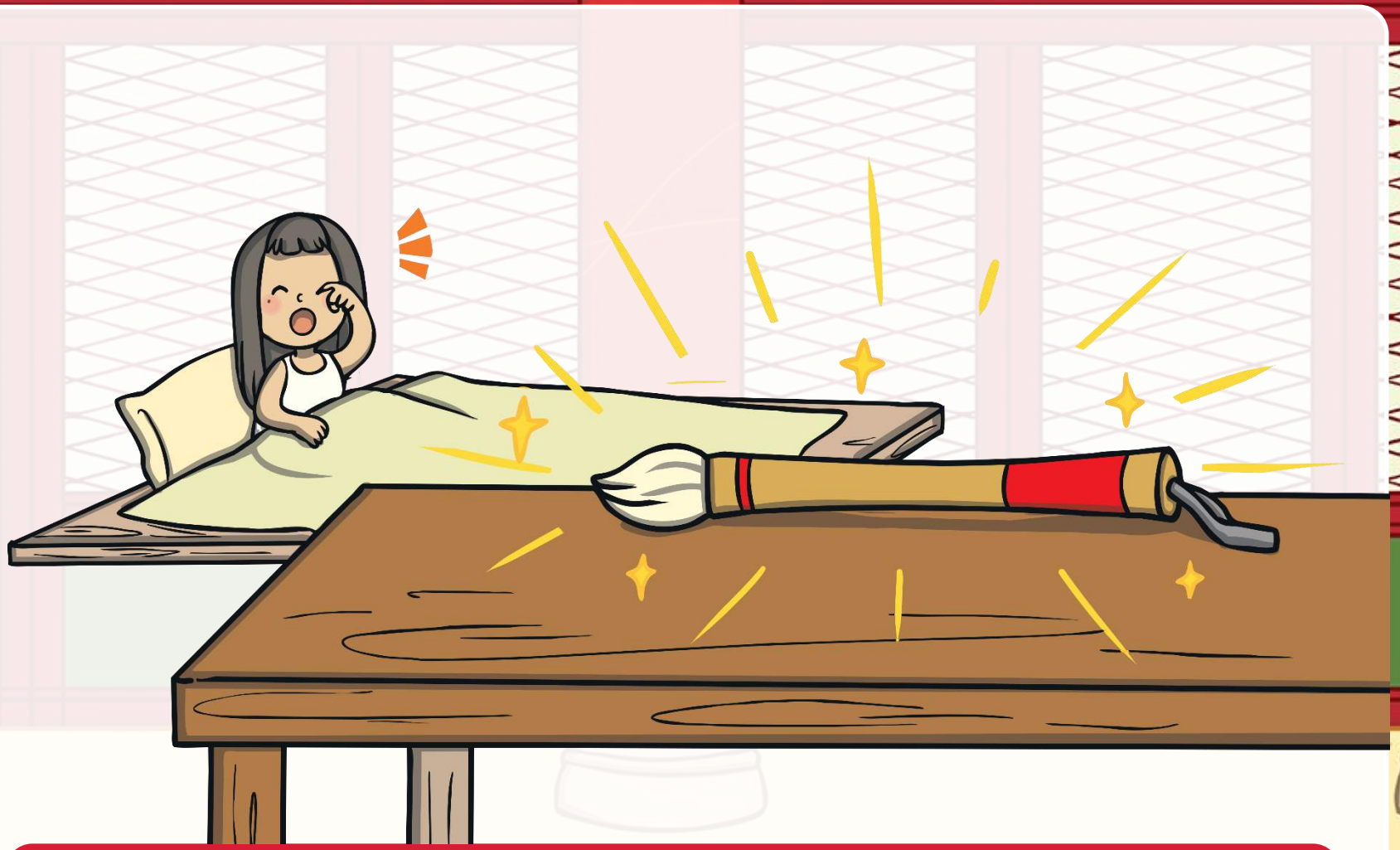

When Ma Liang woke the next morning, he found the magic paintbrush on his desk.

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Ma Liang did as the old man had asked and used the paintbrush to help poor people. Ma Liang spotted a dry field with no water for the crops to grow, so he used his paintbrush to paint a river.

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The river came to life! The poor people collected water from the river and used it to help the crops in their fields to grow.

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Ma Liang saw some farmers. He noticed that they worked really hard, but they still struggled to feed their families. He used his magic paintbrush to paint more food for them to eat. Everyone he helped was very grateful to Ma Liang.

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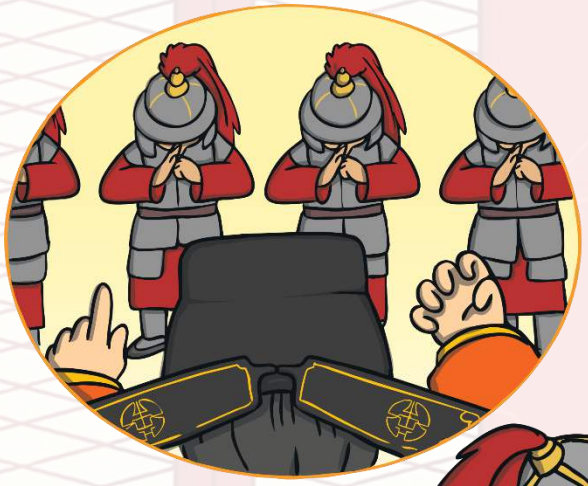

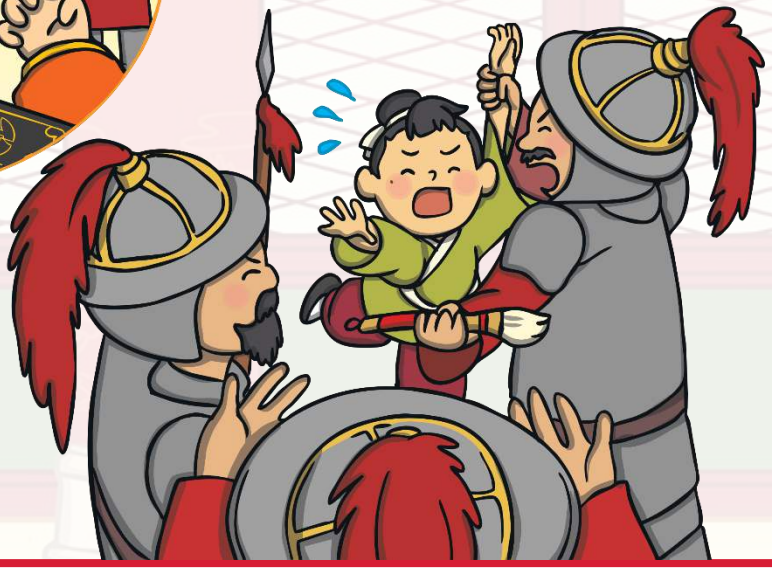

Everyone, except for a mean, rich man who lived in the village. This man was very greedy and he thought that owning the magic paintbrush would make him even richer. He made a plan and sent his servants to steal the magic paintbrush from Ma Liang's home.

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The greedy, rich man had the paintbrush and was very happy. He invited all of his friends to come and look at his new magic paintbrush and show them what it could do. He drew painting after painting, but none of them came to life. This made the man very angry and he sent for Ma Liang.

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Later that day, Ma Liang arrived at the rich man's house. The rich man said, "If you paint me some magic pictures that come to life, I will set you free." Ma Liang didn't want to help the greedy, rich man, but he wanted to escape. Ma Liang thought up a clever plan...

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Ma Liang asked the greedy, rich man, “What would you like me to paint for you?”
The greedy, rich man said, “I want a picture of a golden mountain. I will go there to collect gold.”

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But Ma Liang did not paint a golden mountain. Instead, he drew the sea. This made the greedy, rich man even angrier. “Why have you drawn the sea? I want a golden mountain. Draw it for me now!” he demanded. So Ma Liang painted the golden mountain far away from the sea.

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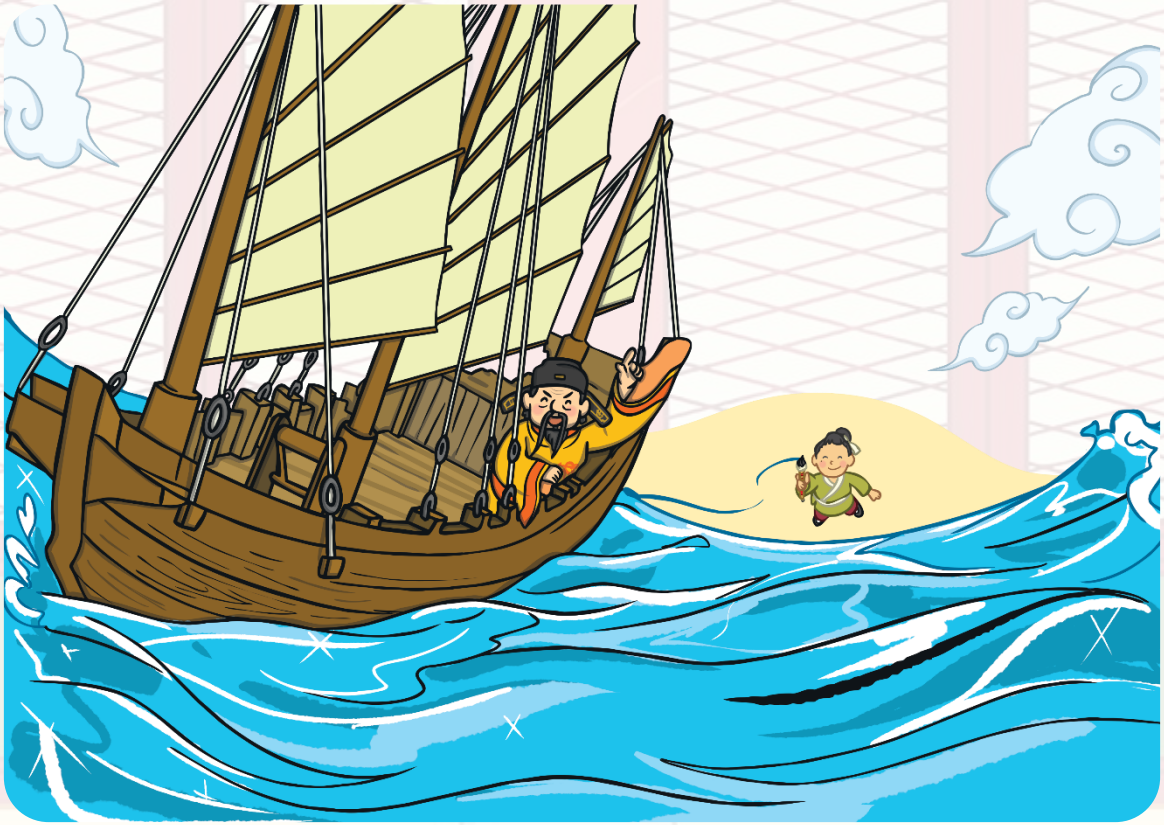

The greedy, rich man still wasn't happy with the painting. "Draw me a large ship. I want to go there now and get the gold!" he said. Ma Liang painted a large ship and smiled to himself as the greedy, rich man jumped into it.

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The greedy, rich man started sailing towards the golden mountain to find the gold. When the ship reached the middle of the sea, Ma Liang painted a huge wave which destroyed the ship. The greedy, rich man wasn't seen in the village ever again.

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Ma Liang lived a long and happy life with his family. He continued to use the magic paintbrush to help poor people, just as the old man had asked him to in his dream. Ma Liang, and his magic paintbrush, was loved by everyone.

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