



Long Life, Happiness And Prosperity



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SHORT SYNOPOSIS

In ***LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY***, twelve-year old Mindy Ho (Valerie Tian) tries Taoist magic to fix her single mother's (Sandra Oh) financial situation and seemingly hopeless romantic prospects. Mindy's misdirected charms appear to cause an aging security guard to lose his job and a local butcher to win the lottery. The guard, the butcher and her mother's stories all intersect, bound together by Mindy's attempts at magic intervention. Set in the Chinese Canadian community, ***LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY*** is a story of hope and the importance of keeping faith in this sometimes difficult world.

ABOUT THE STORY

Twelve-year old Mindy Ho (Valerie Tian) is on a mission. She is determined that she can bring happiness back into the life of her lonely, overworked, and financially struggling single mother, Kin (Sandra Oh). Mindy's methods however, are a little unorthodox. Finding a book of Taoist charms in the local Fortune Telling and Appliance Repair Shop, which is presided over by the enigmatic fortune teller Lee Tai Tai (Colin Foo), Mindy sets out to use magic to fix her mother's life. Mindy's naïve attempts at magical intervention weave her story together with the lives of her community members.

Hun Ping Wong (Tsai Chin) and Shuck Wong (Chang Tseng) are a graceful middle aged couple who's only daughter has recently left home to attend university. They are in a gentle conflict between her romantic visions of being empty nesters and his increasing time spent on the spiritual worship of the Yellow Emperor icon for which, to Hun Ping's disgruntlement, he has built a shrine in the bedroom.

Bing Lai (Ric Young) works at the local butcher shop owned by Nelson Zong (Donald Fong). All appears well on the surface with Bing, but it quickly becomes apparent that Bing is toiling under the shadow of his estranged father's great fame in the butcher trade back in Hong Kong. Even though Bing and his wife Ada (Christina Ma) came to Canada to escape his father's oppression, Bing still seeks both liberation and redemption from his father's disdain by attempting to bring his son Peter (Kameron Louangxay) into the butcher trade. Mindy's mother Kin works nights as a telephone psychic and days in the bustling Great Wall Restaurant. The restaurant is managed by the light hearted and handsome Alvin Wong (Russell Yuen), who would like very much to be Kin's boyfriend. Mindy thinks this would be a great idea and is always promoting Alvin to her mother's apparent annoyance.

When Mindy uses magic to try to create a better job for her mom she is frustrated that it does not appear to have any effect. Seemingly coincidentally however, Shuck Wong loses his job as a local security guard. Too proud to tell his wife, Shuck gets up every morning and puts on his uniform as he searches for another job. Shuck is dealt the final blow to his honor when his wife Hun Ping gets the job of her dreams. Excited about her new future, Hun Ping cannot understand what is happening to her husband. With his faith in his God waning, Shuck begins to question the value of continuing his life.

Meanwhile, Mindy's attempts at magic tricks are creating havoc for both her and her mom. Mindy schemes to have Kin and Alvin drink a love potion together, but it back fires when Nelson, the meat shop owner, shows up and drinks the potion with Alvin instead. Things go even further when, to Mindy's horror and Kin's bemusement, Nelson proceeds to woo Kin, while Alvin starts to idolize Nelson.

Mindy's next charm is intended to have her mom win the lottery, but in a sudden last minute twist Bing, the butcher, gets the ticket that Mindy knows should have been Kin's. Bing does win the lottery and with his sudden wealth he buys the butcher shop and proudly tells his son that they will now be partners in the business. In a bid to end his long estrangement with his father, Bing seeks to bring him from Hong Kong to bless the new meat shop, which is intended to continue the family meat dynasty. To Bing's chagrin his father rebuffs his overtures and his son announces he has no intention of becoming a butcher, but is going to join a Zen monk order and renounce eating meat altogether. In a fit of anger Bing disowns his son and then, shattered, he realizes he has done to his son what his father did to him.

Unaware of the havoc she may have caused in other people's lives, Mindy is increasingly distressed that her attempts at magic seem to have had no effect on her mother's life. Seeking to prove that the magic works, Mindy heads into the local park, oblivious to a gathering storm, to try one more spell. When Mindy doesn't return, Kin and Alvin are brought together out of their mutual concern for Mindy, and together they head out to find her.

In his darkest hour, Shuck gets a sign that re-establishes his faith and he and Hun Ping start to see life, and one another, in a new light. At times blindly, and at times tenderly, they reach out to one another and move towards their future of a LONG LIFE together. Bing Lai realizes that his new wealth will mean nothing if he repeats the same pattern with his son that happened between himself and his father. He struggles towards acceptance of his son's decision and re-establishment of their relationship. In doing so he finds a true meaning of PROSPERITY.

Kin and Alvin find Mindy trapped under a tree knocked down by the storm. As this drama unfolds it is not Mindy's magic that brings happiness to her mother, but Kin's realization of Mindy's commitment to her quest that helps her mother realize HAPPINESS.

In ***LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY*** the three inter-connecting stories are presented in what Director and Co-Writer Mina Shum describes as a magic realism style. The characters, the Asian Canadian community they live in, and their stories are all recognizably grounded in modern North American culture. It is left for the audience to decide if it is truly Mindy's magic that effects them all, or is the power of intention working with coincidental events - and is there really any difference?

With grace, gravity and humor, ***LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY*** explores the themes of love, hope, acceptance and keeping faith in this sometimes difficult world.

DIRECTORS NOTES

When I was twelve years old, my parents brought a new shrine into the home containing the three ceramic figures representing *Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity*. My parents dutifully light candles in worship, much like Catholics do for their God. When I was twenty-three and fresh out of film school, my father, fifty-five then, lost the security guard job he'd been working most of his life, replaced by technology. While I was choking back tears, interpreting this as great tragedy, I asked my mother how they were coping. She replied with all sincerity, "We came into this world with less."

Since then, I've wanted to make a film about keeping faith in a difficult world. I'm constantly amazed and inspired by humans. Just as we know that death is inevitable, we also have the ability to fly in the face of it. We derive meaning and truth, in a more often than not, cruel world. With this film I wanted to paint a collage of simple pleasures: our communities, our families (blood and chosen) and most importantly, our faiths. Simple pleasures, that I believe, we can derive great meaning and truth from, and consequently a little bit of comfort. I wanted to explore the interconnectedness of all humans, the idea that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. We do not act alone and this truth provides meaning. However tragic the grand timeline is, we struggle against the inevitable loss. This film is a tribute to our unique ability to find and maintain hope.

I wanted to make an O. Henry-style fable, using magic realism set in the contemporary Chinese-Canadian community. Three stories that intertwine meant that I could build on the style of my last two films, a strong sense of color dramaturgy to represent each of the three stories and the journey from light to dark to light again through changing film stocks. Working for the third time with director of photography, Peter Wunstorf and production designer, Michael Bjornson, we were able to push the boundaries of our past work together. For instance, since one of the underlying themes in the film is the public and the private self, Peter and I would progressively set the characters in more and more shadow, to the point where Kin (Sandra Oh's character) is completely silhouetted, crying in the bathroom. For our color palette, we took our lead from the Chinese color symbolism. For Shuck's story, Long Life, blue/green represents youth or age (appropriate that one color represents both stages). For Mindy's story, Happiness is red. And Bing's story, Prosperity, is gold for the color of royalty because that's what he thinks he is.

With this film, I want an audience to appreciate their own lives, their own simple pleasures and to consequently find hope. To quote William Saroyan, "In the time of your life, live!"

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The Stories

The stories originally came to Mina Shum as three short films. It was only after writing them down and working with them over time that she realized they were inter-connected.

With three interwoven stories, each with underlying themes of love, acceptance and keeping faith, plus a host of characters, Shum chose to co-write the script with Vancouver writer Dennis Foon. Shum and Foon had established a writing relationship when he was the story editor on Shum's first film, *Double Happiness*. Commenting on working with Foon, Shum states, "Having a co-writer allowed me to be harder on the script because I didn't have to be the only one the fixing problems. We could bang our heads together and come up with solutions." This close writing relationship continued right through the shoot with Foon showing up on set with re-written pages that he and Mina had discussed the night before.

The Magic

"Magic realism" is the term that is used by Shum and Producer, Raymond Massey, to describe how a film portraying real life stories in a real community can incorporate magic into its plot and action without becoming a fantasy story. Mindy's actions and intentions at first seem to be the slightly eccentric behavior of a young girl determined to improve her mother's life. Also at first, it seems that the events occurring to the characters might be just coincidence, but then the evidence grows that Mindy's spells may indeed be working, but not the way she intended. It is left for the audience to decide if it is magic or the power of intention at work and is there really any difference? Visually the subtlety of the magic is underlined by deliberate changes in lighting and camera work, but it is always on the level of the audience wondering...did something happen there?

The Food

Shum states, "I think breaking bread with people is very important, it's a sign of family on a very basic level. With Chinese people it's how we treat ourselves. Food is very important in the culture, it's a way of sharing." Shum continues, "In prep I got sick of Chinese food because I was eating every day with people, actors, crew, everybody! It would be my fifth lunch of dim sum, and I would wonder how many can I eat? Ahhh, cholesterol level going up, but it gave the crew a sense of the world where the stories were taking place. Take notice, you don't order separate dishes, you order communally, you eat off each other's plates, that's part of it. I think that people are relaxed when they're eating. You really get to know what a person is like when they are chewing, their true personality, and they become more vulnerable through that."

Sandra commented to Mina, "In *Double Happiness* there was the lazy susan scene, and in this film there's the dim sum shot. You're the only person I know that does the POV of the

food, it's the food's point of view of looking at us." Mina's response, "I guess so! I guess that's what it is. The food knows!"

The Location

"This is definitely a love letter to Vancouver," states Shum, "I said this in press around the world." She continues, "This is my home. I don't want to live anywhere else. I tried living in other places, but I always want to come back here. In fact all three of my films basically look onto the same industrial waterfront. I just like that area and I'd like to die in that area. Vancouver is my muse, it's where I get a lot of my stories, it's my roots."

Art Director Michael Bjornson started with a little offbeat commercial area in Vancouver. There he found a 200 ft. long light industrial/warehouse building that, with the addition of some facades and imagination, created an ambience that alluded to not only Vancouver's Chinatown, but in some ways to qualities existent in New York and San Francisco' Chinatowns. He elaborates, "There's a commonality amongst the North American Chinatown environment that has a bit of the turn of the century feel as well as the kind of shopping experience that comes with those environments. This is what we created and captured in the sets for this film."

The Community

This film tells universal stories that are set in the Chinese Canadian community. This cultural backdrop gives the characters and the stories cultural nuances and a depth that contributes richness and texture to the film.

Shum states, "To me this film is not about Chinese people, it's about keeping faith in a difficult world. I situated it in the Chinese community because of the magic and because it's the world I know. It could be any culture, the stories are about what people are going through, the slings and arrows of living and being. It could have been any community, it just happens to be the one that I know, this is what gives the film its flavor."

The Look

LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS AND PROSPERITY is the third time the team of Mina Shum as Director, Peter Wunstorf as DOP and Michael Bjornson as Designer have worked together. Wunstorf and Bjornson were with Shum on her two previous movies, *Double Happiness* and *Drive She Said*. Speaking about this on-going relationship Shum commented, "I think that a film like this is about community and they are my community."

On their prep process Wunstorf states, "The three of us would always get out of the office, and go to Mina's in the evening and have some food and go through the film, scene by scene, character by character. We would discuss color, lighting, mood, and music, everything, the whole tone of the film, from beginning to end. It sort of went in layers, first

of all we'd do color, then we'd do lighting, etc. Mina had the film, scene by scene, up on a wall. Mina's very specific about how a day in the film is to feel (a cloudy day or a sunny day, etc.) and we'd do what we could to create that. On set if we did not have bright sun, we would do what we could to keep in the spirit of what we've planned."

In shooting the film Wunstorf used film stock and lighting to reflect the emotional tone of the characters, subtly darkening and flattening tones as characters' stories go through difficult times and lightening and brightening as their situation improves.

Wunstorf and Shum also devised using longer lenses as the film progresses, which has the effect of heightening the sense of the characters' isolation as they travel their individual and sometimes difficult journeys.

An Asian color sensibility was adopted for the film. LONG LIFE is represented in blue tones, HAPPINESS in red tones and PROSPERITY is represented in gold tones. As a result, Shuck and Hun Ping's scenes are sprinkled with blue accents representing LONG LIFE, Kin and Mindy's environments have hits of red representing the HAPPINESS they are seeking, and Bing's environment is punctuated with gold representing PROSPERITY. Bjornson comments, "The restaurant is actually the confluence of all the story lines. They all pass through the restaurant, so it has all three colors, although the dominating feel is happiness so therefore red is prominent."

Talking about the over-all design of the film Bjornson commented that the look has a more realistic component to it than Shum's previous films. He summarizes, "The intent in this film was to create a sense of reality and a sense of place in the community."

The Shoot

Producer Raymond Massey comments, "This shoot was fantastic, hard to beat. There has been a camaraderie and level of support that's very rare and it is because everyone has left their egos at home. None of that makes it to set and if it did it dissipated right away because Mina has a sort of calming "Zen" effect. It just cancels out all anxiety. It is all because of Mina, she is the centre of all this calmness and this will come through in the finished product."

"The cast and crew are my community, and so if you are making a film about appreciating what you have in life, what better foundation to start from than a real foundation of love," states Director Mina Shum. "They came to the production with their

hearts open and that infected everyone and you will see that on screen. This creates a really strong foundation. I was solid and on the ground because the cast and crew were with me. This makes us more courageous. Having that kind of foundation takes all of us to new places."

ABOUT THE CAST

SANDRA OH plays KIN. About her character Oh comments, “She is an over-worked single mum who is struggling very hard to make ends meet and keep her daughter happy, but she is missing the mark. The magic has left her life, and, in fact, she can’t even recognize magic anymore.”

Kin toils by day slinging dim sum and by night as a cynical telephone physio. But Kin’s heart and world is slowly being opened by her daughter’s naïve manipulations, the sole goal of which is to make her mother happy.

This is Sandra Oh’s second film with Mina Shum directing. Oh won a Genie and the FIPA d’Or, Cannes, Best Actress award (1994) for her leading role in Mina Shum’s first film *Double Happiness*. She has also won a Genie for Best Performance by an Actress in Don McKellar’s *Last Night*, The Theatre World Award (New York, 1999) for *Top Kiss*, and the Best Performance By An Actor award from the Milan International Film Festival (2001) for *Dancing at the Blue Iguana* (Lion’s Gate). Oh is well known by television audiences for her regular starring role in the HBO hit comedy *Arli\$\$*, for which she has won the Cable Ace Award for Best Actress, and for her re-occurring role in *Judging Amy* (CBS). She was seen recently in the *Princess Diaries* (Disney) and *Big Fat Liar* (Universal Pictures). As well, in the fall 2001, she completed a run in the New York stage production of *The Vagina Monologues*. She will be seen in 2002 in the Steven Soderbergh film *Full Frontal*.

VALERIE TIAN plays twelve-year old MINDY who is the daughter of Kin. Valerie comments, “She (Mindy) is pretty different, to tell you the truth. She believes in Taoist magic and is pretty strong willed. She dresses different, she acts different and she is very determined.”

The only child of a single mother, Mindy is both mature for her years and still has the naïve wonder and enchantment of a child. Moving through her world with confidence, if not experience, Mindy picks up a book of Taoist enchantments and paraphernalia at the local fixit and fortune teller shop and proceeds to try and magic good things into her mother’s life, with unexpected results.

Twelve-year old Tian is a native of Vancouver and a newcomer to the screen in this, her first film role. In addition to school and acting classes, this young actress can be found practicing her piano, Kung Fu and hip-hop dancing, in addition to playing soccer.

About Valerie, Producer Raymond Massey comments, “This is her first speaking part in front of a camera and she stepped into this role easily. We gave her an acting coach for a couple of weeks to explain what marks are and what kind of banter to expect and so on. Two weeks into the show she was pointing out to the DOP that something hadn’t been lit

and was suggesting positions for a lighting source to get the right bounce off a mirror that

she was holding in the shot. So she's an engineer, a musician, she's everything! Valerie is a natural and she's a complete sweet heart. It is good to be seeing this career moment, because she is seeing it all for the first time."

RUSSELL YUEN plays ALVIN, who is the restaurant manager where Kin works. Yuen describes Alvin, "He is really a serious restaurant guy, but when he's around Kin he becomes this goofy guy trying to ask her out. She's not the best waitress around but Alvin keeps her on. Also, Alvin has fallen in love with Mindy, a big brother kind of love. Mindy would like her mom to go out with Alvin because she gets along so well with him. But Kin isn't the least bit interested because she was so devastated by her last relationship."

This is the second time that Yuen has played the love interest to a character played by Sandra Oh. In the Academy Award-winning *The Red Violin* (Rhombus Media) he plays the husband to Oh's character. Fluently bilingual in French and English, Yuen maintains homes in both Montreal and Toronto and works in both French and English film and television. His extensive television credits include *Relic Hunter*, *The Associates*, *Earth: Final Conflict*, *PSI Factor*, and *John Woo's Once A Thief*, and his many film credits include *Owning Mahowny* (Alliance Atlantis), David Mamet's *The Heist*, *The Red Violin* (Rhombus Media) and *Bone Collector* (Universal Pictures).

RIC YOUNG plays BING LAI, the local butcher who has the fortune to win the lottery and the misfortune to have been estranged from his father for many years. Toiling under the shadow of his father's greatness, he is trying to redeem himself by bringing his son, who wants to be a Zen monk, into the family's meat business dynasty. Winning the lottery dredges up the pain of his estrangement from his father and brings to a head his conflict with his own son.

About the role Young states, "It was so wonderful to get a script where I could go from the lowest to the highest, to perform all the emotions. It is so rare to get a movie where you actually have the opportunity to play a multi-dimensional character like Bing Lai."

Ric Young has starred in many feature films including *Chain of Command* (New City Releasing), *The Corrupter* (New Line Pictures), *Dragon/ Life of Bruce Lee* (Universal Pictures) and *The Last Emperor* (Columbia Pictures). As well, he has featured in *Seven Years in Tibet* (Tristar Pictures) and Spielberg's *Indiana Jones: Temple of Doom* (Paramount Pictures). His television credits include *The Monkey King*, *Nightman*, *1,000 Men & A Baby*.

CHANG TSENG brings to life the stoic yet troubled SHUCK WONG who has to cope with both the outer challenge of losing his job and the inner challenge that his God appears to have abandoned him.

Tseng comments on Shuck's struggle, "He always asks the Yellow God what is wrong? Why has he been given the severance letter? But he keeps this from his wife because he must

support his whole family and must earn the money, as is the Chinese custom. He asks himself, what is the meaning of life?”

Chang Tseng, a renowned Hong Kong film director as well as an actor, has been in the film industry for 40 years. When he “retired” to Vancouver to be near his family a number of years ago, a chance meeting with a casting agent was the beginning of a new career as an actor in North America. Tseng debuted on North American television guest starring on *Ninja Turtles-The Next Mutation*, *Breaker High*, and *The Agency*, opposite Tom Berenger and Ron Silver. Tseng is a bass-baritone who has given many recitals in Asia and he speaks fluent Cantonese, Mandarin and Japanese. Currently he is the Director of Mandarin Programming at Fairchild FM Radio and TV in Vancouver.

TSAI CHIN plays Shuck’s wife HUN PING WONG. Describing her character Chin explains, “Her only child has left home to go to university. Feeling the nest is suddenly empty, she needs more attention and affection from her husband, which she is not getting because he has lost his job and has not told her due to his pride. Then she gets a job and she is very excited, but then her husband is even more upset. He gets more superstitious, praying to his Yellow God, and she is trying to get into bed with him and not succeeding.”

Tsai Chin, originally from Shanghai, has lived in London and now makes her home in Los Angeles. Well known for her roles as Auntie Lindo in Wayne Wang’s *Joy Luck Club* (Buena Vista Pictures) and the judge after Richard Gere in *Red Corner* (MGM), some of her other film credits include *The Inn of The Sixth Happiness* (Fox) and Antonioni’s *Blow Up* (MGM). Her television credits include *Fantasy Island*, *Chicago Hope* and *Due South*.

Additional Cast

A company of stellar supporting actors rounds out the cast. Christina Ma (*ER*, *Touched By An Angel*) plays Bing’s wife Ada; Kameron Louangxay (*ColdSquad*, *L’Or*) plays Peter Lai, Bing and Ada’s son; and Donald Fong (*The X-Files*, *Millennium*) plays Nelson Zong the butcher shop owner.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Writer/Director-Mina Shum

This is the third feature film from writer/director **Mina Shum**. Her most recent feature, *Drive She Said*, premiered at the 1997 Toronto Film Festival and her first feature, *Double Happiness*, won the Toronto Film Festival Special Jury Citation for Best Canadian Feature Film, several Genie Awards and the Berlin Film Festival prize for Best First Feature. As well, Shum has written and directed seven short films including *Picture Perfect*, which was nominated for Best Short Drama at the Yorkton Film Festival, *Shortchanged*, *Love In*, *Hunger*, *Thirsty and Me*, and *Mom and Mona*, which won Special Jury Citation for Best Canadian Short at the Toronto Film Festival.

She is currently working on three new features, *The Golden Orchids Society*, *Song For The Dumped* and *You Are What You Eat*, which is based on her immersive video installation.

Shum earned both a BA in Theatre and a diploma in Film Production from the University of British Columbia.

The Producers

Christina Jennings & Scott Garvie, Shaftesbury Films Inc.

Producers **Christina Jennings** and **Scott Garvie**, as well as co-producer **Laura Harbin**, are principals in **Shaftesbury Films Inc.** (Toronto, Ontario). Shaftesbury's recent productions include the CTV television movie *Torso*; the children's series *Screech Owls*, for YTV, based on the novels by Roy MacGregor; and six television movies for CTV, based on the popular novels written by Canadian author Gail Bowen, *The Joanne Kilbourn Mysteries*.

Raymond Massey, Massey Productions Ltd.

Producer **Raymond Massey's** recent executive producer and producer credits include *Black Point* starring David Caruso; *Suspicious River* starring Molly Parker and directed by Lynne Stopkewich; *Touched* starring Lynn Redgrave and directed by Mort Ransen; and the critically acclaimed *My Father's Angel* directed by Davor Marjanovic.

Co-Writer Dennis Foon

Foon co-wrote the script for **LONG LIFE, HAPPINESS & PROSPERITY** with Mina Shum. This is their second time working together as Foon was story editor on Shum's first script, *Double Happiness*. Foon has won multiple awards for the recent scripts *Little Criminals*, *White Lies*, *Maggie's Secret* and *Skin*. The Founding Artistic Director of Vancouver's Green Thumb Theatre, Foon has written over 20 award-winning plays that have been produced in Canada and internationally.

ABOUT FILM MOVEMENT

Film Movement is an innovative new film distribution company, created as a solution for millions of consumers across the nation whose access to outstanding film is limited by geography, lifestyle or lack of information. Film Movement acquires award winning independent films from the world's top festivals, which they then release each month of the year to members on DVD through a subscription service, and theatrically through The Film Movement Series. Participating filmmakers are able to reach under-served film fans everywhere through Film Movement.

The Film Movement Series is a new theatrical film series featuring some of the best in original world cinema. Created by the team that invented the groundbreaking Shooting Gallery Film Series, Film Movement will release 6 of its 12 films per year in leading independent cinemas in major US cities to help outstanding filmmakers find the audience they deserve. All films are available to members on DVD upon theatrical release so that they may participate regardless of where they live.

Film Movement has partnered with some of the leading independent theaters in the country to exhibit the Film Series including Quad Cinema in New York, ArcLight & Laemmle in Los Angeles, The Gene Siskel Film Center in Chicago, and the Roxie in San Francisco. The schedule includes the following films:

- April 11 – Wiebke von Carolsfeld’s *Marion Bridge*
- June 13 – Eric Eason’s *Manito*
- August 15 – Scott Kennedy’s *OT: Our Town*
- October 10 – Rebecca Chailkin’s *The Last Party’s Over*
- December 19 - Tjebbo Penning’s *Morlang*
- February 20 **Mina Shum’s *Long Life, Happiness and Prosperity***