

Parable of the Chinese Farmer



Once there was a Chinese farmer who worked his poor farm together with his son and their horse. When the horse ran off one day, neighbors came to say, “How unfortunate for you!”

The farmer replied, “Maybe yes, maybe no.”

When the horse returned, followed by a herd of wild horses, the neighbors gathered around and exclaimed, “What good luck for you!”

The farmer stayed calm and replied, “Maybe yes, maybe no.”

While trying to tame one of wild horses, the farmer’s son fell, and broke his leg. He had to rest up and couldn’t help with the farm chores. “How sad for you,” the neighbors cried.

“Maybe yes, maybe no,” said the farmer.

Shortly thereafter, a neighboring army threatened the farmer’s village. All the young men in the village were drafted to fight the invaders. Many died. But the farmer’s son had been left out of the fighting because of his broken leg. People said to the farmer, “What a good thing your son couldn’t fight!”

“Maybe yes, maybe no,” was all the farmer said.