

The Story of the Taoist Farmer

Once upon a time there was a farmer who had only one horse. One day, the horse ran away. His neighbors came over to console him over his loss. The farmer said, "What makes you think that's so bad?"

A month later, the horse came home, and brought with it two beautiful wild horses. The neighbors became excited at the farmer's good luck. Such lovely strong horses! The farmer said, "What makes you think that's so good?"

The farmer's son was riding one of the wild horses and it threw him. He broke his leg. All the neighbors were very distressed about the bad luck of the farmer's son. The farmer said, "What makes you think that's so bad?"

A war came and every able-bodied young man was drafted and sent into battle. Only the farmer's son, because he had a broken leg, was able to remain at home. The neighbors congratulated the farmer. The farmer said, "What makes you think that's so good?"

As told by Executive Editor, Elise Hancock, in the [Johns Hopkins Magazine](#), November 1993, page 2, in the section entitled, "Editor's Note."

Similar to...

In *Kung Fu Panda*, Master Shifu (the red panda) has a conversation with Master Oogway (the turtle):

[Shifu](#): Master! I have... it's very bad news!

[Oogway](#): Ah, Shifu. There is just news. There is no good or bad.

Rhythms of Nature:

[Oogway](#): My friend, the panda will never fulfill his destiny, nor you yours until you let go of the illusion of control.

[Shifu](#): Illusion?

[Oogway](#): Yes. [*points at peach tree*]

[Oogway](#): Look at this tree, Shifu: I cannot make it blossom when it suits me nor make it bear fruit before its time.

[Shifu](#): But there are things we *can* control: I can control when the fruit will fall, I can control where to plant the seed: that is no illusion, Master!

[Oogway](#): Ah, yes. But no matter what you do, that seed will grow to be a peach tree. You may wish for an apple or an orange, but you will get a peach.