

THERE IS AN OLD, OLD STORY about a farmer in China. One year the weather was very good and his crops grew strong and high, and all his neighbours told him how lucky he was to have such a fine crop and he replied, 'Maybe.' Then the day before he was going to start the harvest a herd of wild horses came running off the plains and trampled all his crops flat. His neighbours came round and said how unlucky he was to lose his fine crop. The farmer replied, 'Maybe.' The next day the farmer's son went out with a length of rope and caught a wild stallion and three mares, and the neighbours came round to admire the horses and told the farmer how lucky he was. The farmer said, 'Maybe.' In the morning the farmer's son started to break in the horses and no sooner had he mounted the stallion than it threw him, and as he fell on the ground he broke his leg. The neighbours carried him indoors and commiserated with the farmer, saying how unlucky he was that his only son was so badly injured. The farmer said, 'Maybe.' The next day the Emperor's army came to the village on the way to fight a great battle and all the able-bodied young men were press-ganged into the army. But the farmer's son was not taken because of his broken leg. All his neighbours told the farmer how lucky he was that his son had been saved from the army and the farmer said, 'Maybe.'