

Tao Stories for Everyday Calm

Modern Taoist-Inspired Tales for Everyday Calm

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Contents

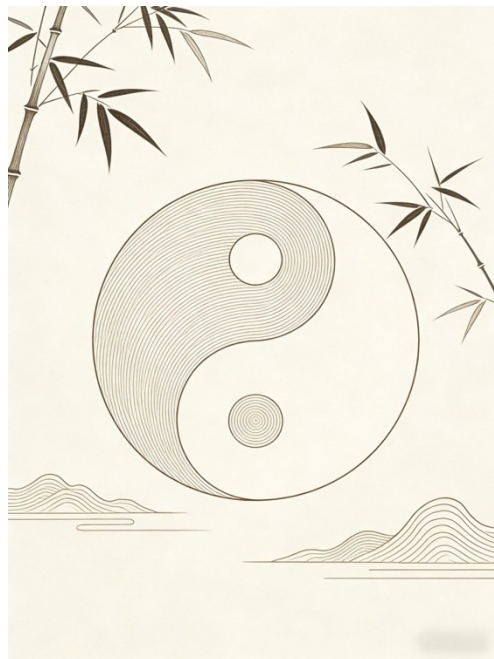
Foreword.....	3
1. The Wisdom of the Empty Cup.....	5
2. The Carpenter's "Axe-Forgetful Heart".....	6
3. Water Does Not Rush to Be First.....	7
4. The Farmer and His Horse.....	8
5. The Man Who Planted a Peach Tree.....	9
6. The Heart Like a Mirror.....	10
7. Two Men Arguing.....	11
8. The Imperfect Clay Pot.....	12
9. The Lantern at Night.....	13
10. Slow Down Your Pace.....	14
11. The Lesson of Bamboo.....	15
12. The Greedy Fisherman.....	16
13. The Reeds in the Wind.....	17
14. The Master's Teacup.....	18
15. The Lost Traveler.....	19
16. Unforced Kindness.....	20
17. The Answer in Time.....	21
18. Simple Joy.....	22
19. The Courage to Admit Mistakes.....	23
20. After the Rain Comes the Rainbow.....	24
21. The Wisdom of Listening.....	25
22. Don't Fixate on Results.....	26
23. The Cycle of Kindness.....	27
24. Living in Harmony with Nature.....	28
25. The Weight of the Heart.....	29
Afterword.....	30

Foreword

Welcome to a collection of short stories that use Taoist themes to invite reflection during ordinary moments.

The stories are written for readers who want a brief pause from a busy day. They use plain language and contemporary situations while drawing on themes commonly associated with Taoist reflection.

This book is a little different. Instead of step-by-step practices or practical tips, we're leaning into the power of stories—short, warm, and full of Taoist truth. These are modern illustrative retellings inspired by Taoist themes. They are not translations of historical source texts, and they do not claim to represent every Taoist tradition.



Each story is brief enough for a short pause during a morning, workday, or evening.

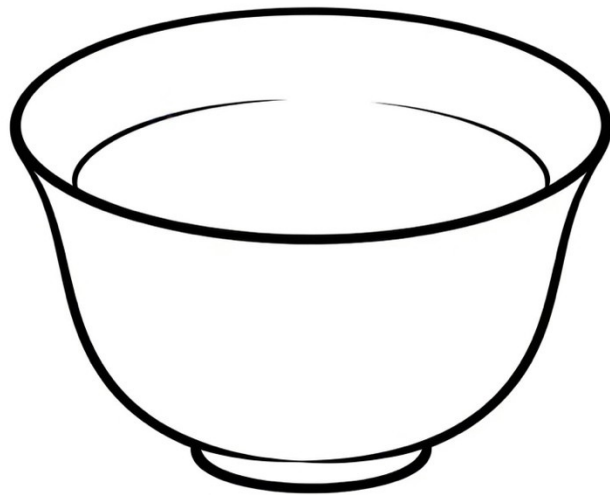
Each tale ends with a small, modern takeaway that invites you to notice stress, loosen an unhelpful thought, or choose a more deliberate response.

My hope is that these stories feel like a friend sharing a little wisdom—no lectures, no pressure, just calm. Whether you're new to Taoism or have been following this series from the start, these tales are here to remind you: life doesn't have to be hard. Sometimes, the most powerful wisdom is the simplest.

Let's dive in—one story, one moment of calm, at a time.

1. The Wisdom of the Empty Cup

A young man hurried to a Taoist master, complaining that he'd learned so many lessons but still felt anxious. The master said nothing—he just picked up the young man's cup and poured tea into it. When the cup overflowed, the young man shouted, "It's full! You can't pour any more!" The master smiled and stopped. "You are like this full cup—filled with your own obsessions and prejudices. How can you take in new wisdom if you're already full?" Let go of the "fullness" in your heart, and you'll be able to embrace life's gentleness.



2. The Carpenter's "Axe-Forgetful Heart"

There was an old carpenter in the village whose furniture was always exquisite and durable. When someone asked him for his secret, he said, "When I work, I only see the wood and my tools. I forget myself, and I forget the eyes of others." Once, he lost his axe and grew frantic, suspecting everyone around him. When he found the axe later, he looked at everyone with kindness. The story suggests that overthinking can grow from our own assumptions.

3. Water Does Not Rush to Be First

A stream made a bet with a rock, saying it could pass through the rock. The rock laughed at it: “You’re so weak—how could you possibly cut through me?” The stream didn’t argue; it just flowed slowly through the rock’s cracks day after day, unhurried and steady. Years later, people found that the hard rock had a smooth groove carved by the stream. Gentleness is not weakness; moving steadily can be a form of strength over time.



4. The Farmer and His Horse

A farmer's horse suddenly ran away. His neighbors came to comfort him, saying he was unlucky. The farmer smiled and said, "Who knows if this is a good thing?" A few days later, the runaway horse returned—bringing a wild horse with it. The neighbors came to congratulate him, but the farmer still said the same thing: "Who knows if this is a bad thing?" Later, his son fell off the wild horse and broke his leg. The neighbors comforted him again, and the farmer remained calm. Life's ups and downs are never absolute—judge less, accept more.

