



(A Chinese idiom)

The Old Man Lost his Horse

塞翁失馬

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sun

太陽

太阳



live

住

住



rocks

石頭

石头



tree

樹

树



dust

沙

沙

In the remote Northern grand prairie of China, close to the border of Inner Mongolia, there lived a wise old man.

在遙遠的北方草原，在內蒙的邊境，有一位老翁。

在遥远的北方草原，在內蒙的边境，有一位老翁。



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	Mongolian	蒙古族	蒙古族
	sun	太陽	太阳
	channel water	引水	引水
	hill	山	山
	wind	大風	大风
	difficult	艱辛	艰辛
	wise man	智者	智者

Life was harsh where he lived. The Mongolians from the North frequently raided the border.

Drought and famine threatened their very existence. In spite of all adversities, the old man just took in everything with a calm smile.

北方常有蒙古人的侵擾，到處都是旱災和飢荒，以至邊境的生活非常艱苦，但面對種種困苦，老翁總是心平氣和，靜靜地一一解決。

北方常有蒙古人的侵扰，到处都是旱灾和饥荒，以至边境的生活非常艰苦，但面对种种困苦，老翁总是心平气和，静静地一一解决。



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horse

馬

马



friend

朋友

朋友



blowing dust

揚塵

扬尘



relative

親戚

亲戚



fence

柵欄

栅栏

The wise old man had several good, strong horses which were the envy of his friends and relatives.

老翁牧養著好馬幾匹，親友們都羨慕不已。

老翁牧养着好马几匹，亲友们都羡慕不已。



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left

離開

离开



broke

破

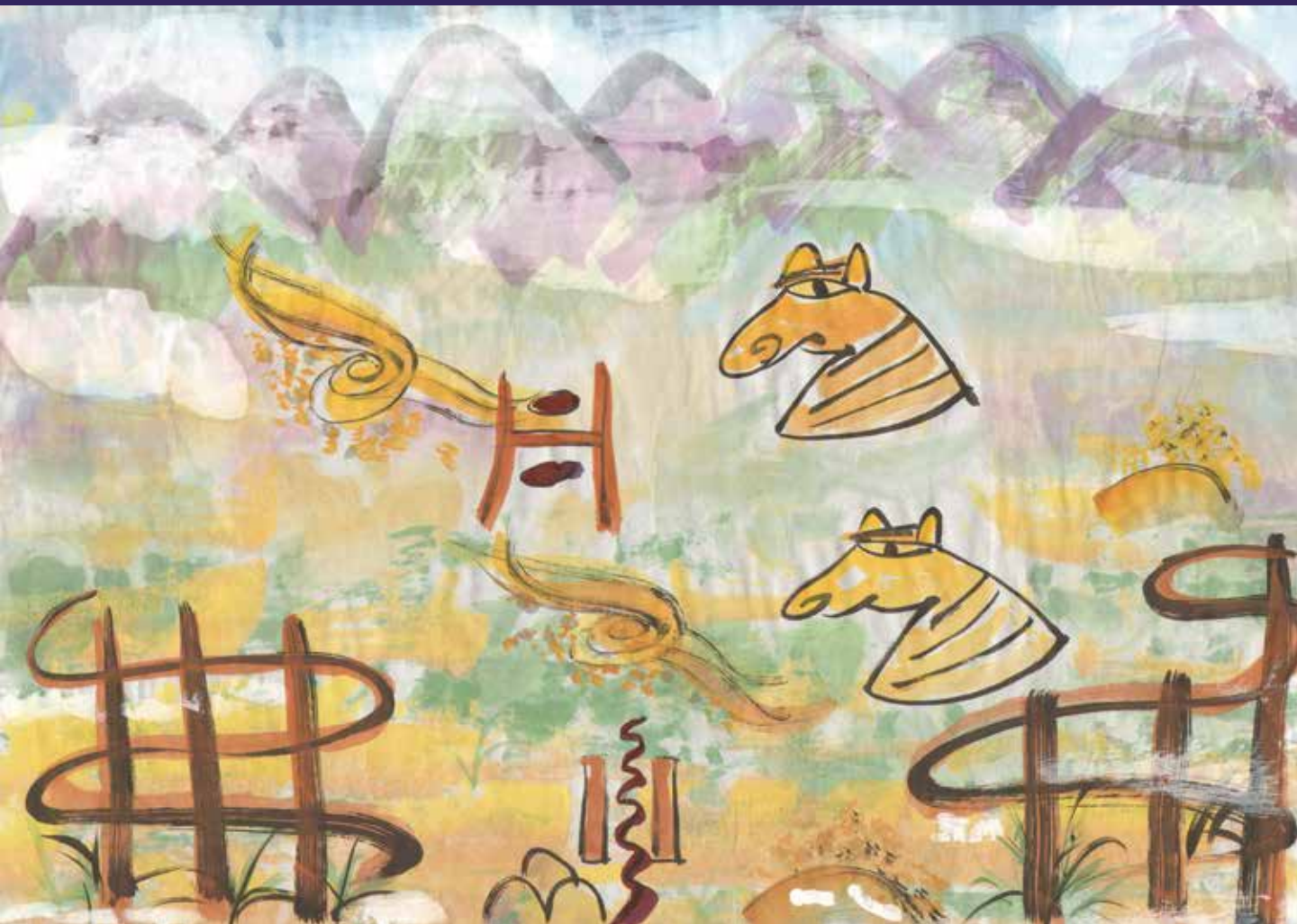
破

One day his most favorite horse disappeared. All his friends and relatives said, "How unfortunate! It was such a fine horse."

The old man replied with a calm smile, "It's just a horse and I still have other horses."

有一天，老翁最喜愛一匹馬在草原上走失了，親友紛紛上門慰問。老翁笑著說：「祇是一匹馬，我還有其他好馬。」

有一天，老翁最喜愛一匹馬在草原上走失了，親友紛紛上門慰問。老翁笑著說：「只是一匹馬，我還有其他好馬。」



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sunny

晴天

晴天



prairie

草原

草原

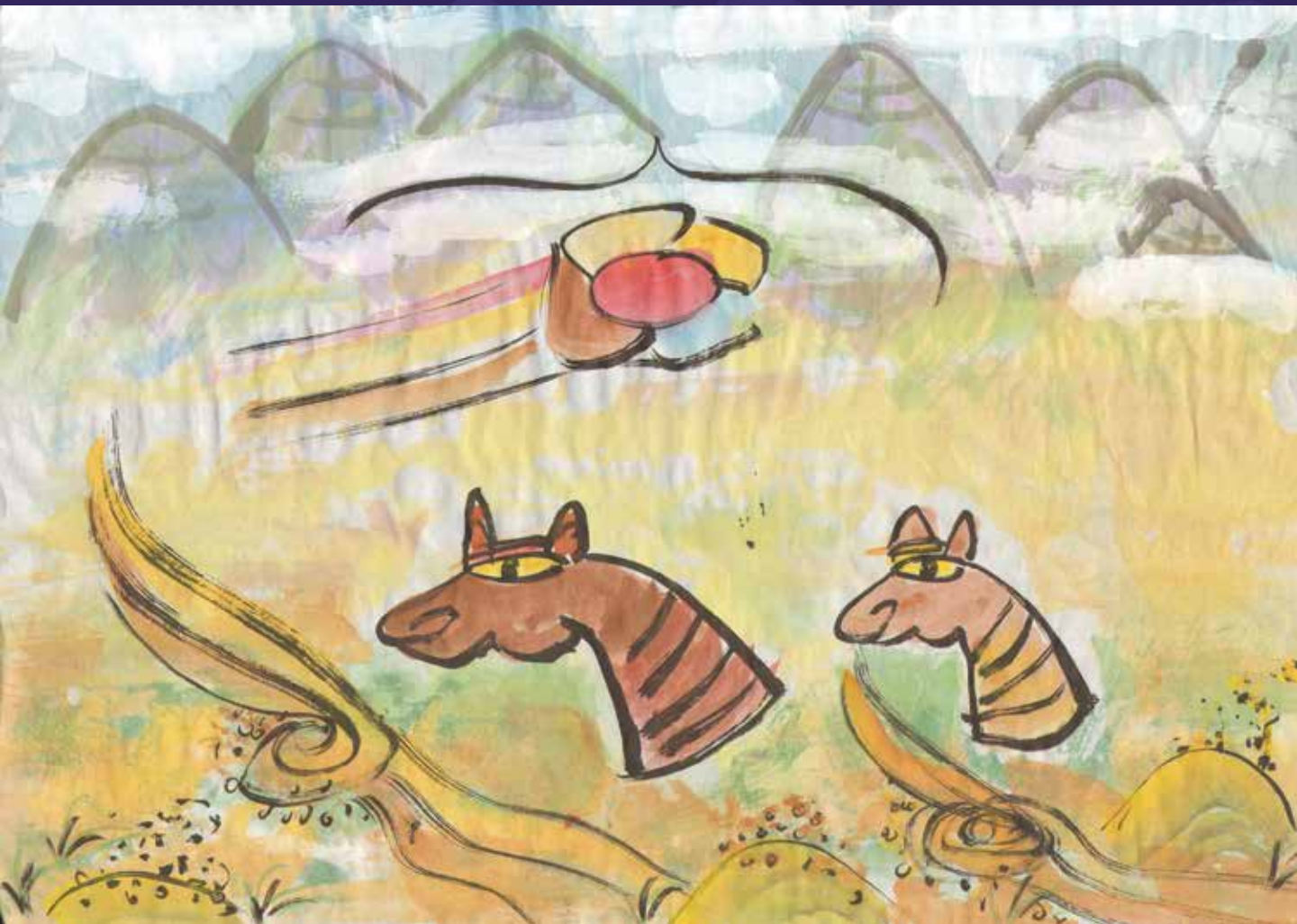
One bright sunny day, the runaway horse returned. Not only did it return, but it brought along another horse. It was a Mongolian wild horse!

Oh, how its dark brown hair shimmered in the bright desert sun. Its mane was golden against its dark hair.

Oh, how its sturdy, strong legs carried it across the land. Its tail was long and flowing, bobbing up and down as it sped across the prairie.

一個大晴天，那失去的馬又突然回來了，還帶了一匹蒙古汗馬！汗馬深棕色的短毛襯著金黃色的長頸毛，在太陽下閃閃生光。
汗馬俊美的長尾巴，一上一下的在平地滑過，那踏踏的馬匹，在草原上奔馳著，奔馳著……

一个大晴天，那失去的马又突然回来了，还帶了一匹蒙古汗马！汗马深棕色的短毛衬着金黄色的长颈毛，在太阳下闪闪生光。
汗马俊美的长尾巴，一上一下的在平地滑过，那踏踏的马匹，在草原上奔馳着，奔馳着……



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bamboo

竹

竹



grass

草

草



plum

梅

梅

All his friends and relatives came to marvel at his new treasure.

"How fortunate!" they said, "Look at those magnificent legs and its lightning speed!"

"It's just one more horse," the old man replied with a calm smile.

人人都讚嘆老翁的好運：「竟平白得了如此寶馬。」
老翁也還是笑著說：「祇是多了一匹馬。」

人人都讚嘆老翁的好運：「竟平白得了如此寶馬。」
老翁也還是笑著說：「只是多了一匹馬。」



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water

水

水



mountain

山

山



grassland

草原

草原



ride

騎

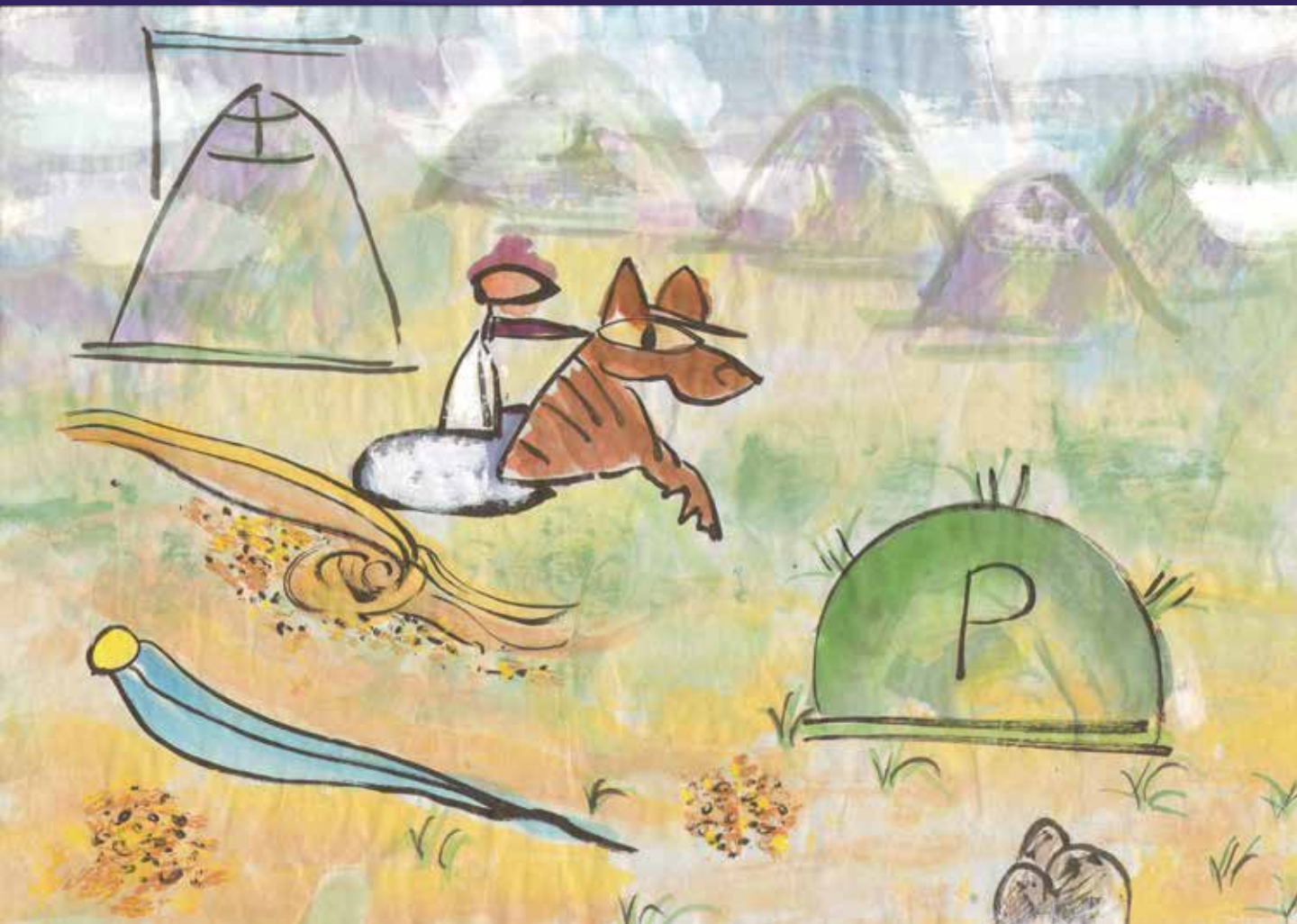
騎

The Mongolian wild horse soon became the best companion of the man's only son. The young man raced all over the desert and prairie, climbed mountains, and crossed rivers on his special horse. Yet this horse was too fast and too wild for him to handle.....

One day, he fell from the animal and broke his leg.

老翁的兒子特別喜愛這新馬。小子騎著汗馬，跑遍草原，攀登高山，越過河流；這馬太快、太野了，而年青小子卻未有能力控控，可以應付好。終於有一天，小子從馬上跌下來，跌斷了大腿骨。

老翁的儿子特别喜爱这新马。小子骑着汗马，跑遍草原，攀登高山，越过河流；这马太快、太野了，而年青小子却未有能力控控，可以应付好。终于有一天，小子从马上跌下来，跌断了大腿骨。



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a broken leg

斷大腿

断大腿



blessed, thankful

感恩

感恩

All his concerned friends and relatives came to visit.

"How unfortunate!" they said, "Such a fine, strong young man all full of life and energy. Now he will be a cripple for the rest of his life."

"It's just a leg." The old man replied with a calm smile. "I am thankful that the rest of his body is still fine."

親友都來慰問，老翁仍舊平心靜氣地說：「祇是一條腿，幸好小兒其他身體還健全。」

親友都來慰問，老翁仍舊平心靜氣地說：「只是一條腿，幸好小兒其他身體還健全。」



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cry

哭

哭



sed

傷心

伤心



village

村

村

A few months later, the Mongolians up North invaded China with an immense force. All the young men in the area were required to join the military to defend the border.

Their friends and relatives wiped their tears and wondered if they would ever see their sons or brothers alive again.

幾個月後，蒙古人入侵邊境，塞外的小伙子都被逼上陣迎戰。人們都傷心地道別兄弟或兒子，不知此生何時再相會。

几个月后，蒙古人入侵边境，塞外的小伙子都被逼上阵迎战。人们都伤心地道别兄弟或儿子，不知此生何时再相会。



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moon

月亮

月亮



happy

快樂

快乐



comfortable

舒適

舒适



starry sky

滿天繁星

满天繁星



wall

牆

墙

The whole border area was filled with sadness, but the old man's son was spared due to his condition.

The wise old man petted his Mongolian horse and looked at his son for a long, long time with a deep, deep exhale.

老翁的兒子因為斷了一條腿，免於參戰，得以留下。
老翁輕拍汗馬，看著兒子，深深地舒了一口氣。

老翁的儿子因为断了一条腿，免于参战，得以留下。
老翁轻拍汗马，看着儿子，深深地舒了一口气。



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Chinese Proverb Stories

Chinese idioms and proverbs, especially four-character expressions are an essential part of Chinese language and culture.

Understanding these idiomatic expressions is important for several reasons.

For young children in China, these stories are a guide-post for them in life. Children grow up learning and applying the values they learn from these stories. Proverb stories teach an important lesson in life. The emphases are work hard and aim high, respect life and human beings, honor the elderly and one's parents, foster good friendship, and most important of all, follow "the path" 道. The goal of every proverb is to bring a message of wisdom for the readers or listeners to contemplate and apply in their own lives.

The stories usually come from a classical document or literature. Most of the time, they are about a historical event or a famous person. Many times they bring in a traditional Chinese concept. Thus learning these stories opens a world of lengthy Chinese history and rich Chinese culture.

Chinese proverbs are an important part of the Chinese language. Chinese speakers use the proverbs in their daily communication. These idiomatic expressions are an integral part of the Chinese language and have made it so rich and meaningful.

The story "The Old Man Lost his Horse" is used frequently among Chinese speakers when one is disappointed or saddened by a certain event. To ensure a better perspective, they usually use this expression to comfort or reassure one that each event may lead to another event. Where is no need to jump to any conclusion and to judge the situation.

Illustrations

The pictures used in this book are taken directly from "Naxi Dongba Pictograph Dictionary" by Pinzheng, (Yunan Fine Arts Publishing House, 2004).

The Naxi is a minority tribe at the foot of Mt. Yulong. They live in the ancient city of Lijiang, Yunnan Province, Southern China.

The Dongba script dated approximately in the

century, though some scholars have argued for a much later date.

The Dongba pictograph is the only surviving ancient script still in use in the Naxi tribe. The Naxi people chant in praise of their nature gods in religious ceremonies.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has recognized the Dongba pictograph as part of the "Memory of the World".

Taoism 道家

The story "The Old Man Lost his Horse" came from the Taoist philosopher Nan Wei Zhi. The central theme is that the idea that mishap may be the bearer of good fortune, and good fortune may be the bearer of a future mishap. So in our everyday life, we should not be too overjoyed with our gain and not too distressed with our losses. The best way to deal with every situation in life is to be balanced and look at things in different perspectives.

This concept can easily be symbolized by the Taijitu 太極圖 (yin and yang) sign.

The symbol is made up of a backward "S": in all the black,

there is a white dot; in all the white, (or red), there is a black dot.

Taoism focuses on nature, non-action (action through inaction), detachment, emptiness, receptiveness, spontaneity, and the relativism of human ways of life.....

The Mongol Empire

The Mongolians were groups or tribes of nomads who lived in the prairie and desert of China.

In the 13th century (1266), the tribes were united by the great leader Genghis Khan.

In 1271 this nomadic empire conquered China and became the Yuan Dynasty. The Kingdom extended its strength and power into the west of Asia and even Europe.

The Mongolian Empire was perhaps the largest empire in human history in terms of geographical expanse. The military force could cover immense distance with great speed.

The Mongol Empire had an impact on the social, cultural, and economic life of the people in the Eurasian territory in the 13th and 14th centuries. It enabled the exchange of knowledge, inventions, and culture between the East and

the West.

The Mongolian riders were known for their great speed. The Mongolian horses contributed to the success of the Mongols in conquering China, Asia and even Europe in the 13th and 14th centuries.

This epoch is called Pax Mongolia.

Mongolian Wild Horses

Mongolian wild horses are found in the areas of Jogger Basin in Xinjiang, Gansu and Inner Mongolia (border of Chinese territory near Mongolia).

In these areas horses are greatly cherished. Having many healthy and strong horses in a family is considered honorable.

The Mongolian wild horse has a small, stocky build with short legs and a large head. These horses are known for their golden manes and very long tail. Their hair is mostly dark brown.

Mongolian horses are austere, arduous, and somewhat wily. They tread safely in rough terrain. They are also known for their great speed.

Most of these animals roam wild. Only a small number are caught. Once the animals have been trained to carry a rider, they will be calm, friendly, and very reliable.

(A Chinese idiom)

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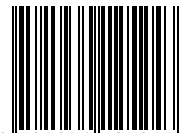
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