

# Chapter 1

## Life goes On

*Ob-la-di ob-la-da life goes on,  
Bra La-la how life goes on. . .*

Lennon and McCartney

The door swung open and two men entered The Bodhi Tree Café. The bartender knew right away that they were businessmen because of their suits and their unhappy expressions as they made their way across the quiet room and pulled themselves up onto stools.

The bartender, an older, bald man with a large potbelly, aggressively wiped down the counter top in front of the two men with a dirty dishrag he then threw back across his shoulder. “What can I get you?”

“Beers,” answered the older of the two as he held up two fingers. “Anything draft is fine.”

“Coming right up!” The bartender responded enthusiastically and quickly placed two beers on the counter. “If you need anything else, just give a holler.”

“You seem to be in a good mood,” commented the younger of the two. “You must like working here.”

The bartender looked perplexed as he thought about the man’s observation. “Of course I enjoy working here. Why would I do something I didn’t enjoy? Besides, I’m the owner. If I didn’t like it here I’d sell the place and move on.”

The two men gazed at the bartender in awe. It was the older one who responded. “Well, I like your attitude. If only I didn’t have a wife and a son to put through college. Somehow I don’t think they’d appreciate it if I suddenly decide I didn’t like my job and stopped bringing home a paycheck.”

The bartender thought for a moment. “Well, *do* you like your job?”

The two businessmen looked at each other and rolled their eyes. The younger responded, “I used to, but lately it hasn’t been much fun.”

The bartender looked genuinely interested. “What do you do?”

The younger man looked at his partner and shook his head slowly, smiling faintly. The older man looked at his watch then back at his friend and said, “What can it hurt? The others are late anyway. Talk to the man, maybe he can set your career straight.”

“The advice is free,” the bartender prodded. “You only have to pay for the beers.”

“Do you believe it? I’m getting business advice from a bartender.”

“The name’s Buddy,” responded the bartender as he placed a plate of cheese, crackers and toothpicks in front of his customers. “So tell me your tale of woe.”

“Nice to meet you, Buddy,” acknowledged the younger man. “He’s the Accounting Manager and I’m the Sales Manager at the factory down the street.”

“Nice titles, they must be good jobs, good pay and prestige. So what’s the problem?” Buddy asked as he wiped an imaginary spot from the counter with his dirty rag.

The younger man, who had identified himself as the Sales Manager, sighed. “We’ve had a run of bad luck. Just today we lost another large contract. This is really going to hurt our company.”

“Bad, huh?” asked Buddy.

“Really bad.”

“Sometimes,” suggested Buddy, “things aren’t the way they seem. We don’t always know why things happen, good or bad. The challenge is to make the best out of the situation and move on.”

“That’s easier said than done,” complained the Sales Manager.

“Let me tell you an old story,” offered Buddy. *“In ancient times there was this farmer who was very poor; he and his family just barely squeaking out a living. The farmer’s most valuable possession was a beautiful black stallion. Well, as luck would have it, one day the stallion broke loose and ran away into the mountains. When the farmer’s neighbor heard about it, he gave the farmer his sympathy. ‘This is horrible for you,’ cried the neighbor, ‘what terrible luck!’ The farmer only shrugged his shoulders and said, ‘I don’t know why it happened. Maybe it’s good, maybe it’s bad.’ And then the farmer continued on with his life.”*

“This is supposed to cheer me up?” interrupted the Sales Manager.

“I’m not finished,” Buddy explained. *“Two weeks later the stallion returned and with him were two beautiful, wild mares. When the neighbor heard about it, he couldn’t wait to congratulate the farmer. ‘This is wonderful!’ the neighbor cried with joy, ‘What great luck! Not only did you get your stallion back, but two valuable mares as well!’ The farmer only shrugged. ‘Who knows why things happen,’ he explained to his neighbor. ‘Maybe it’s good, maybe it’s bad.’ And then the farmer continued on with his life.”*

“So you’re telling us losing this contract could turn out to be a good thing?” questioned the older of the two. “I don’t see how.”

“I’m not finished,” Buddy said. *“A week later the farmer’s son decided he was going to ride the stallion, but when he got up on the horse it bucked violently, throwing him to the ground and breaking his shoulder. The neighbor was all sympathy. ‘This is horrible,’ he cried out, ‘What bad luck!’ The farmer only shrugged. ‘Who knows why things happen? Maybe it’s good, maybe it’s bad.’ And the farmer went on with his life.”*

“I’m going to need another beer,” complained the Sales Manager.

“Better make it two.”

Buddy placed the drinks on the counter. “The story is almost

over,” he promised. *“A month later a representative from the Emperor’s army showed up at the farm. The Emperor was going to war against a neighbor and his representative had come to draft the farmer’s boy into the army. Upon seeing the broken shoulder, the Emperor’s representative knew there was no way the boy could serve in the army and so he moved on to the next farm.”*

The two businessmen thought about the story for a moment before responding. “So, you think something good might come out of our losing the contract?”

“Maybe it’s good, maybe it’s bad,” suggested Buddy with a shrug of his shoulders. “I do know that everything that happens to us should be perceived as an opportunity for growth.”

“But the farmer didn’t really do anything,” complained the Sales Manager. “His growth was because of luck.”

“Maybe so,” Buddy agreed. “Or maybe he spent his time building a larger barn and a stronger corral.”

“I guess, but I still don’t see how it applies to our situation.”

“You can’t change the past, so why waste time dwelling on it? Your time could be better spent learning from the experience and hopefully applying it in the future. Losing sleep and giving yourself an ulcer over something that has already occurred is *not* going to improve your situation.”

“I get it,” the Accounting Manager nodded in agreement and began jotting down notes on a napkin. “Life goes on. That was quite the story. Maybe what we learn from losing this contract *will* keep us from losing another one in the future. Did you learn this from running a bar?”

“No,” admitted Buddy, “I studied in the East.”

“The east?” asked the Accounting Manager. “You mean like New York? Boston?”

“A little further east,” Buddy answered before moving down the counter to wait on another customer.

**- No matter what happens, life goes on.**

**- You can't change the past, so don't waste time dwelling on it.**

**- You can learn from the past and apply it to the future.**

Bodhi Tree Cafe'

