

THE STAR AND I  
CHAPTER 1: Bittersweet Venture

When our family returned to something like normal in the aftermath of that fairytale Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe success, my father shocked us all by declaring that we should get out of horseracing.



Father running away from horseracing

He insisted that the Arc was the pinnacle of flat racing. We had reached that summit, he said. Anything else could only be second best. I understood that it was my father's philosophy: One should always have something to look forward to.



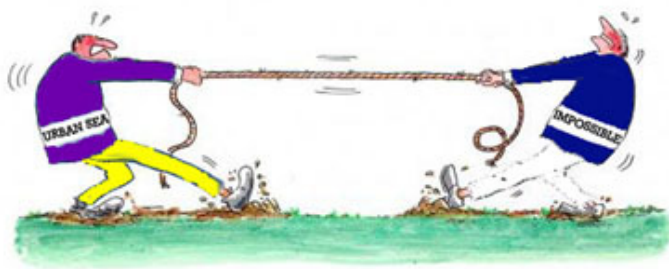
Dad told me that I should not buy a Rolls Royce Phantom as one of my first cars otherwise I would have nothing to look forward to

Understandably, my mother could not agree. Urban Sea remained in training but became unsound. One of her legs was giving her pain. My mother refused to sell her, fearful that her new owner might try to race her in America on painkillers.



Painkiller

Father encouraged me to take up tennis during my week-ends instead of only going to Chantilly all the while my mother was keeping herself busy struggling against all odds to breed Urban Sea as a breeder without any previous experience, all by herself.



Isn't it tough to pull through?



She could only speak to the SEA

She became the laughing stock of the horse milieu and the snob breeders would call her "la Femme Chinoise avec sa Jument" (The Chinese woman with her mare). I thought breeders rejected my mother not because of their malicious intent but because breeding business has always been a discipline which was passed on from generation to generation comprising many rules.



My mother's love for Urban Sea helped her go through such an ordeal



knowing my mother, I would rather describe her as a samurai woman with her mare

For her unknown new venture, my mother leased the stud recently vacated by her friend and mentor Daniel Wildenstein. Urban Sea became the only resident of the Haras de Victot.





Mother and Christine spent week-ends in Haras de Victot near Deauville



Ling Tsui and General Zhang Pin, son of former Minister of Defense Zhang Ai Ping after visiting Urban Sea in Haras de Victot



Mother feeding one of her foals

Urban Sea was duly mated in 1995 to Bering, the best stallion in France and on the 15th of February 1996, Urban Sea gave birth to beautiful colt foal, Urban Ocean.



Urban Sea and Urban Ocean were the only residents in Haras de Victot



Urban Sea with her new born colt Urban Ocean in Haras de Victot



Urban Ocean, Ling Tsui, and Sun Zhong Liang, son of Minister Sun Jia Dong



Ling Tsui and Urban Ocean

For breeding season 1996, my mother had selected Lammtarra, Sheikh Mohammed's unbeaten winner of 1995 Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe to cover her precious Urban Sea. Mother heard that they have a saying in racing circle 'mate the best to the best and hope for the best'. She just followed that saying without any deep professional knowledge yet.





Mother with Urban Sea and her 1997 filly foal Melikah by Lammtarra

But my father had had enough. Irritated by remarks about the 'Chinese woman and her mare', father sold Urban Sea, carrying her Lammtarra foal, to a business associate of his. That was to be the end of the Tsuis' racing adventure. Except it wasn't, not by a long chalk.



The horse, God's favourite animal



Could mother turn her back to these lovely creatures?

Mother, who couldn't let go of her passion set up her company and bought Urban Sea back secretly with a substantial amount of money.



Money or my mother's energy ? She used to compare money to energy

Urban Sea rejoined the Tsui family but my father was not to know what his wife had done.



Welcome Home, Tom and Jerry



What had my wife done?

Just as she did with Christine and I, our mother wanted the best for Urban Sea. The 'best' in this instance was the fabulous Sadler's Wells, champion sire, sire of champions. So it was that Urban Sea crossed the Irish Sea to Ireland – the land of the horse – and to a Stud in County Tipperary.





Ireland, the land of the horse



Sadler's Wells, Champion sire, Sire of Champions

Now began a 'dialogue of the deaf'. My mother had learnt English in her university days but the accent was very different from the standard English of the land of the horse. That Stud is an international operation where " Irish" English is the common tongue which was beyond my mother's ability to understand, particularly the unfamiliar, complicated breeding terms. The personnel did not speak French either and it was hopeless to expect they would have a Chinese translator. Having struggled to make herself understood by French breeders, now their Irish Colleagues were in her way! Mother told me that she felt like she was in the film "Lost in Translation".



"You deaf too?!!"

Dialogue of the deaf



My mother was always ready to fight against all odds





Language and culture are the human wall between two nations