

THE STAR AND I
CHAPTER 7: Derby day Eve

DERBY DAY EVE 5 June 2009

I don't like long distance flights and not just because I'm over six feet tall. They leave you too long alone with your thoughts. This one – from Hong Kong to Heathrow – had been the worst of my twenty-seven years' existence. Sea The Stars – my horse – was favourite for the Derby, the greatest flat race on earth, the Blue Riband of the Turf.



Derby, The Blue Riband of the Turf



The presence of Her Majesty the Queen of England on Derby Day every year

The tension, the anxiety, the weight of expectation, the awful possibility of failure made me turn to Confucius for consolation. 'Better,' that sage suggested, 'to travel hopefully than to arrive'.



The tension, the anxiety and the weight of expectation

But arrive for the Derby I did, two days before the great race. I checked into the Mandarin Oriental in Knightsbridge.



Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Knightsbridge, London

Because gentlemen have to wear morning suits in the enclosure at Epsom on Derby Day, Mother asked me to have my morning suit tailor-made but as usual I like to handle things in my own way. I went as advised by an university friend to Moss Bros in Covent Garden where they provided all that I needed.



Gentlemen have to wear a morning suit in the enclosure at Epsom on Derby Day



HRH Prince Charles at Epsom on Derby day

After that, I did some shopping in places familiar to me in Knightsbridge where I had been living with my mother and Christine since my university days in CASS until I got my master's degree in 2008 to my mother's delight.



Knightsbridge, shopping paradise



CASS Business School Hall

Christine had been studying law during my Orlando days but since she had realized that becoming a lawyer was not her calling, she had decided to join me in London to study business with me. This explains Christine's presence in London at the time. Mother had also decided to come and live in London as to offer us moral support in achieving our academic goal which was a difficult task for me, after spending 5 years on the golf course. For my sister, things might not have been as challenging since she had always been into learning through books.



Christine, our family's bookworm can obtain any degree with distinction



Christopher, going along with the motions

To pass some more time, I went to see 'The Terminator'. But still time passed so slowly that I began to wish I had left my arrival in England until the Friday, eve of the great race.



Terminator

Back to my Hotel room, I watched some of the tennis from Wimbledon. While golf is my principal sport, I used to enjoy playing tennis too. From childhood, Christine and I have been encouraged by our mother to acquire as many skills as possible as she had done herself which had enabled her to be a jack of all trades (femme a tout faire).



Mother is a femme a tout faire



Mother encourages us to acquire as many skills as possible

One such opportunity to experiment that I have rejected concerns food. I like pizza, so I indulged this passion in the Harrods Pizzeria..



Famous Harrods Department store in Knightsbridge



Pizza, I like Pizza

After all, I would be dining that night with other members of the Sea The Stars team. John and Monica Clarke were coming from the Irish National Stud - Sea The Stars' birthplace and nursery. They were to be joined by John and Caitriona Oxx from Currabeg Stable. Completing the party was Mr Jean Lesbordes who had trained Urban Sea, dam of Sea The Stars, for Mother.



Dinning with a Chinese client

John Clarke is an Irishman and Irishmen always want to discuss the weather. It is a national obsession. But on this occasion it was an obsession that this Chinese owner shared, for Sea The Stars did not need any more rain to fall on Epsom Downs before Saturday afternoon.



We needed a great deal of sunshine

Mr Oxx, his most skillful trainer, was adamant that Sea The Stars had to have good, fast ground to perform at his best. And if my 'ling' horse was to become the first horse to complete the Guineas-Derby double since Nashwan twenty years before, he would need to have everything in his favour.



Nashwan the last horse to complete the
Guineas-Derby double 20 years ago

The fact that Urban Sea had already proved herself in producing one Derby winner was, if anything, inauspicious. How many mares had ever produced two winners of the Derby, I wondered aloud. John Clarke and John Oxx conferred, food and wine for the moment forgotten. These two experts in their field came up with just two such mares, apologizing that they could not go back more than a hundred years or so.



Just two such mares who had produced 2 Derby winners in 100 years;
Perdita II and Morganette

Well, racing is often referred to as the Sport of Kings. And one of those great broodmares just happened to belong to King Edward VII, still Edward Prince of Wales when he won the Derby with Persimmon in 1896 and again with Diamond Jubilee in 1900. Both were by St Simon out of Perdita II.



Her Majesty the Queen's great-grandfather King Edward VII won the Derby twice in 1896 and 1900, both colts were out of the same dam Perdita II

The second mare to breed two winners of the Derby sounded better. Galtee More (1897) and Ard Patrick (1902) both out of the same dam Morganette but by different sires. Galileo is by Sadler's Wells. Sea The Stars is by Cape Cross out of Urban Sea.



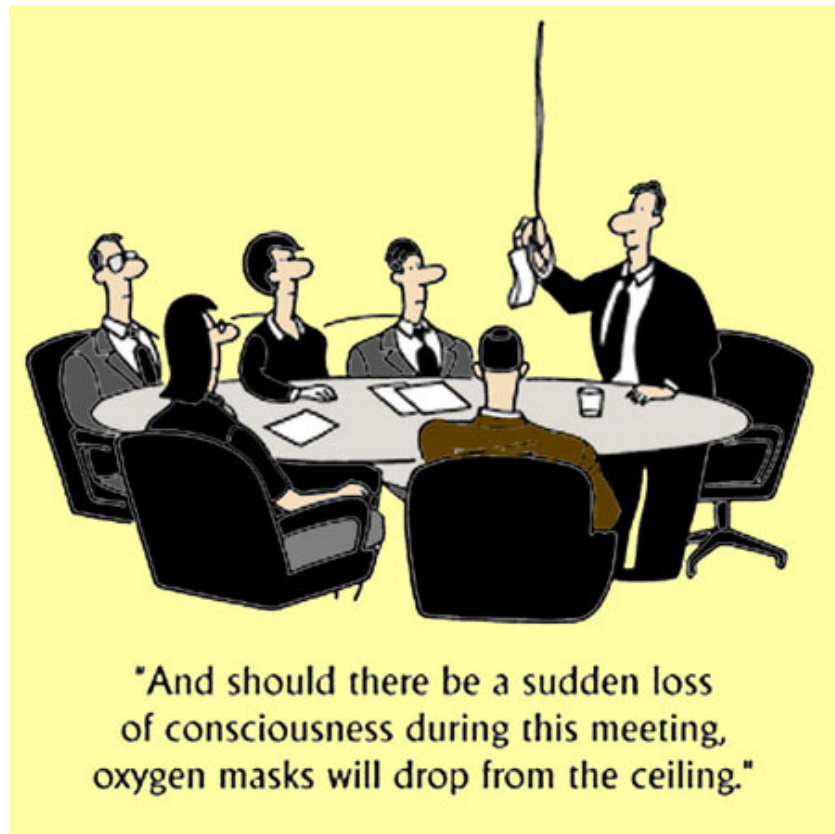
Galileo foaled in 1998 by Sadler's Wells out of Urban Sea



Sea The Stars foaled in 2006 by Cape Cross out of Urban Sea

Can Sea The Stars emulate Nashwan tomorrow? Can Urban Sea emulate King Edward VII's Perdita II? Can the rain please, please hold off until after the Derby?

That Friday night the heavens opened ...



I may need oxygen masks in this Derby day Eve dinner party