

PATHWAY TO STARDOM

CHAPTER 11: The Star's mother : Precious Urban Sea

By 1991 Christine and Christopher had become pretty fluent in French – the object of their exile – and began to hanker for return to home, family and friends in Hong Kong. Back home they would be reunited with their dad, grandparents and extended family, back in their own 'comfort zone'. Already my children were aware that their life paths were totally different to those of their cousins. They completed secondary education in Hong Kong, progressed through MIT, Harvard, Oxford or Cambridge, and duly returned to commence commercial careers or adopt professions in Hong Kong. Why did my children have to be different? (this was the way they felt). Was I just being plain contrary? It sure looked that way to them. They only understood later when they were older that my objective was to give them more opportunities in handling their future career and lives.



Oxford University



Cambridge University



Ling Tsui's school day in London



Harvard University

Happily, my unexpected encounter with M. Lesbordes and my impulse to come to his rescue by buying all those racehorses changed my children's young lives utterly. M. Lesbordes did not only train the horses, he and his family became their social circle. Clement Lesbordes, though eight years my son's senior, became the older brother he had never had. His sister Ena, nine years older than Christine, became her big sister and even mathematics mentor. Maths were never Christine's forte. Of Madame Lesbordes they saw little, preoccupied as she was on the tennis court or taking part in marathons. But Christopher does remember her willingness to produce his favourite dish – French fries. Every Saturday (after those painful piano sessions) Pierre would drive my children out to that other, magical world in Chantilly.



Jeon Lesbordes' home, Chantilly



Christopher playing with Bobby and his remote control car

Just as M. Lesbordes had instantly identified Urban Sea as the jewel in my new, crazy crown, so did Clement indoctrinate my children. Adieu au Roi had his claims to their affection, though unfortunately not for very long. As for Take Risks, he felt demeaned by his role as Urban Sea's lead horse in morning gallops. Champion miler as he considered himself to be, Take Risks felt insulted by playing second fiddle, stalking-horse to a mere mare! My daughter resolved to work these characters into one of her beloved detective stories, the plot becoming ever more convoluted. Did she? If she did, she has never shown it to Christopher. Perhaps her enthusiasm waned when Adieu au Roi 'disgraced' her by his antics and his refusing to race. As for going to the races, having watched Urban Sea finish only sixth in the Prix de Diane, Christine decided there and then that henceforth she would join me in following racing through television.



Mr. Lesbordes in great need for rescuing



Beautiful Urban Sea with her hair band

In my boundless enthusiasm for my new pastime I invited a succession of groups from the delegation of Chinese Government leaders out to Chantilly, principally to watch Urban Sea going through her paces, almost invariably ridden by Clement. Christine was mesmerized by their reactions. Why, she demanded, did they all applaud each and every time Urban Sea passed by? After all, she was only cantering, not galloping. Simple, I explained. They had been told that Urban Sea was my goddess as Urban Sea was my blood sweat horse. Emperors since the beginning of times have always had great respect towards horses and as such she demanded veneration. Okay, so one needs to be Chinese to empathize!



Clement Lesbordes with his parents wearing the Tsui's official colours



a friendship has blossomed between the young Christopher and Jean Lesbordes