

# **THE GOOD LIFE**

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**By**

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Sex, money and violence. The sex -- frequent and often rough. The money -- lots of it. And the violence...animalistic.

I am guessing I have your attention. And I could only imagine what *your* guess might be as to the topic of my paper. Maybe Hollywood's latest. No, this story is too good for "Tinseltown," though I could see an Oscar on the shelf. Because this is one great story, a true story, of one lucky cat. Storm Cat, to be exact.

Storm Cat just may have THE greatest job, heck... the greatest life any one could imagine. Thus, the title of my paper: "The Good Life" It has been said he enjoys three things...three things rarely enjoyed, all at once:

1. retirement;
2. plentiful sex; and
3. cash-flow.

And Storm Cat enjoys it all in one idyllic setting. That setting: W. T. Young's Overbrook Farm, with its lush pastures, rolling hills and white fences.

Imagine the crisp cool Kentucky air, blue skies, and the peaceful mist of morning on the farm. Storm Cat's day begins like well... most every other day for him, at least those days in which he works, if working is what you call it.

He awakens to handlers and trainers, all caring folks...enjoys a nice breakfast, a warm bath, and a rub down that rivals any therapeutic or sports massage. If he's *still* hungry, he eats some more. Then, and only if he feels like it, he goes for a run or a slow trot around the paddock. Then he waits... and waits... for his lady of the morning, or *mare of the moment*.

She, his date for the day that is, arrives. He usually has two dates a day during season. And Storm Cat is ready, ready as always. You see, Storm Cat is a stud. A pro. Nobody does it better, and nobody gets paid more *to do it*. As you will soon discover, Storm Cat is living the good life.

He is the world's number one stud. And he resides right here in Kentucky, in case you missed it. He is the star stallion at Overbrook Farm in Lexington.

Back to Storm Cat's Day, a day not unlike any other. And his date. Dr. Joe Yoakum, the farm vet, stands a few feet from his office in the breeding shed. Yoakum listens for the sounds that sire champions. Suddenly, above a noise that sounds somewhat like Marlon Perkins intruding on an intimate moment between lions on the Serengeti, the Doctor says, "he just jumped on her, I'll look out my window here and tell you when he's finished...yep". The doctor chuckled, "he wouldn't be real popular with the women." You see, Storm Cat typically does the *deed* in a few seconds, three (3) to five (5) usually.

So, if the Kentucky Derby is the most exciting two minutes in sports, then Storm Cat is its most expensive thirty seconds. Five-hundred-thousand dollars (\$500,000), that's his stud fee, and it has been for several years. That's nearly double his closest rival. In 2005 alone, Storm Cat was bred to one-hundred and nine (109) mares. Ninety-five (95) became pregnant. You can do the math. *And it don't take no fancy ciphering to know that Storm Cat makes*

a lot of money. Enough to make him the highest paid player in the NBA.

So what's the fuss? Why would anyone, in their right mind, pay five-hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for one live foal sired from a fairly average racehorse. Well, from 1989 to 2005, Storm Cat's stud services produced one-thousand (1020) foals, five-hundred seventy (570) winners, one-hundred forty-two (142) stakes' winners and almost ninety-six million (\$96,000,000) in earnings. And that's not all. Several of Storm Cat's kids, it's a family business, have become studs in their own right: Storm Boot, Hennessey, and Forest Wildcat have all done quite well, siring stakes' winners and high-priced yearlings. As you might imagine, each of these studs demands a big fee.

So maybe half a million dollars isn't such a bad deal after all? For just 30 seconds with Storm Cat gives the mare's owner the chance of producing a franchise thoroughbred. But many in the horse business would rather turn a quick profit, opting to sell

Storm Cat babies at the yearling sales. On average, the studs' little ones go for about two million bucks.

So what sets Storm Cat apart? Career earnings at the track? No. They only amount to a little over his stud fee, five-hundred fifty-thousand (\$550,000). Looks? Maybe. Personality? He's definitely got that. But most of it has to do with the success of his offspring. Storm Cat also has something else: libido, and lots of it. Trainers and handlers all agree. His libido is second to none. One trainer said of Storm Cat, "he still has the greatest libido of all the stallions at Overbrook Farm, and they're all younger than him."

*Gives us all hope, doesn't it?*

So, with the energy of a hormone-crazed sixteen-year-old boy, Storm Cat goes to work, without the need for any stimulation, other than the mare in waiting. Storm Cat is always ready, but not other studs, at least not always, like the greatest. They're often led around the paddock, and made to listen to the act of breeding, in the hope the action will get them in the mood. Other techniques

are used as well, but not with Storm Cat. Yes, he is simply superior in every way.

Take the example of Cigar, who won sixteen races in a row and was put out to stud in 1997, but not before earning a record 9.9 million at the track. Cigar's owner envisioned a stud career much like the one Storm Cat enjoys. But there was just one problem. *Cigar's boys couldn't swim.* Eighty times during his first and only stud season, Cigar got down to business, and not one of the mares became pregnant. Bad luck no doubt, but Cigar's owners, who had already reaped rewards at the track, cashed in on a twenty-five million dollar (\$25,000) infertility insurance policy. However, infertility is by no means the only problem. Breeding mediocrity is much more common.

And there are no insurance policies to cover mediocrity. To put things in perspective, Seattle Slew's groom once said, "Just because a horse wins a million dollars, that don't make him no stud."

Seattle Slew was the 1977 Triple Crown winner, who suffered major physical problems which threatened his career as a stud, but also made him a modern medical miracle, and the subject of a news story on Saturday Night Live's Weekend Update with Bill Murray and Jane Curtain. *As an aside*, I only remember Dan Akroyd doing Weekend Update with Curtain. But my research insisted that Bill Murray must have been sitting in for the following segment, when he said:

“Tragedy struck the world of horse racing this afternoon when Seattle Slew was accidentally impaled on a hurdle he failed to clear. While the former Triple Crown winner looks as though he will fully recover, veterinarians have reduced his stud fee from 12 million dollars to \$14.95.”

Funny as that may be, I don't think it actually happened. Ironically though, Seattle Slew did later suffer major physical problems. In April 2000, a neurological disorder sidelined the brilliant horse. To fix it, he underwent surgery to fuse the joint between two vertebrae in his neck. The surgery was successful. Unable to walk prior to the operation, Seattle Slew was once again



on his feet, or hooves, and returned to the breeding shed at Three Chimneys Farm in 2001. But as you know, on May 7, 2002, exactly 25 years after he won the Kentucky Derby, Seattle Slew died in his stall at Hill 'N' Dale Farm. He was 28. By comparison Storm Cat is now 22.

Slew was a true thoroughbred champion, a legend. He sired 102 stakes winners himself. But more importantly, Slew is one of a dying breed; *the celebrity racehorse*. In today's game, the lack of racehorses which develop fan followings is hurting the popularity of the sport. And this decline owes as much to the big business of breeding as anything. Here's why. Given the uncertainty, and the danger of racing, owners opt to make a big splash in racing only for a short period of time, then set their studs...*out to stud*. Most who would know, the experts, say such selfishness is simply no good for the sport. They offer examples such as Seabiscuit, Citation, Spectacular Bid, and of course, Seattle Slew. These legends of the sport all had long racing careers and

developed rabid fan followings. The experts opine that horseracing's decline in popularity is no coincidence.

But those who feel that way obviously haven't considered the dynamics of a stud's life. It's only a matter of time before those in Hollywood get a hold of Storm Cat's story. Seriously, how many more human dramas can Hollywood recycle? And what other animals offer as much to a story? I asked myself that very question. Then I went looking. I found nothing, at least nothing that compares to the nobility, the beauty, the science or the money.

My search started with dogs. *If horses are Hollywood, then canines are cable access television.* But in defense of dogs, their relative inferiority in breeding *ain't* from a lack of tryin'. In fact, I think one would be challenged to drive much over a thousand feet in Christian County, or anywhere for that matter, without running into a backyard breeder, a puppy mill, or a stray tryin' to jump a fence. Whatever the case, dog stud fees just don't compare, only ranging between two-hundred fifty dollars (\$250) and one-thousand dollars (\$1,000), at the high end. Though I did find a

champion greyhound stud who demands three-thousand dollars (\$3,000) per pup.

Even the best stud dogs pale in comparison to Storm Cat's half-million dollar fee, and all else that comes with his celebrity. But there is hope for man's best friend. Consider reigning Westminster Kennel Club champion "Rufus", a tan and white Bull Terrier, who delighted a sell-out crowd recently at Madison Square Garden. According to his owners, Tom and Barbara Bishop, of the world's top dog they said, his best feature is his "egg-shaped head." If such commentary is any indication of, well, anything, it would seem that no dog has a chance to match a horse, by any standard. Well, maybe one standard that is – humor.

Take my law partner Jason Holland's dog, Grisham, an English Bulldog, named after the prolific author, John Grisham. As a pup, Grisham developed an affinity for a stuffed animal; none other than Winnie the Pooh. So when the Hollands were approached regarding Grisham's services as a stud dog, they were intrigued. So they scheduled a hook-up at a Paducah veterinary

clinic. On the day of the date, Jason had bankruptcy proceedings in U. S. District Court, in Paducah, and was dressed in his most conservative business attire, leash in one hand, Winnie in the other. As he strolled into the clinic, stares, snickers, and outright chuckles were soon abound. It was all Holland could take. Then to add to his embarrassment, Grisham suddenly lunged at Pooh, sinking his teeth into the stuffed animal's crotch, and flinging him to the ground before mounting him.

It was only thanks to Jason's quick response and save *that Grisham was saved* for the bigger act. Moments later, they retired to the breeding room, where Pooh was placed on the floor for his second mounting of the afternoon. Grisham obliged and the entire staff looked on in amazement. The sample of pooh juice collected, the deed done, Pooh exhausted, and Grisham satisfied, the trio headed back to Hopkinsville, to await news of a successful union.

What about cats? Their story is good for some humor as well. For instance, did you know that the female cat is called the queen, in a breeding situation, and the male cat, a stud, of course.

For other useful and fascinating information just like that, you can log on to the website of the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy, run by our neighbors in Great Britain. Big surprise there. Among the tips: make sure your queen avoids the local *tom*, at least when she begins to *call*. That means she's in heat, in case you were wondering.

Other tips: prepare a proper *stud house*, which as best I can figure, is designed to isolate the stud cat, so he is ready for action at a moment's notice. And above all else, the floor of your stud house must be non-slip, so the stud cat can maintain proper footing.

In defense of cats, the business of breeding felines is a tough sell, considering that each day on national television, there is a reference to having them spayed or neutered. Bob Barker's daily plea seems to have had an effect on the cat population, which is a positive. But I don't think Bob had in mind the West Kentucky method of neutering potential stud cats by tightly fastening a rubber band around their testicles, until they fall off. Somehow, I

don't think that method of neutering would be accepted by the Governing Council of the Cat Fancy, or Bob Barker, for that matter. As for stud fees for cats to compare, I found nothing. Then again, what the hell does it really matter?

So I moved to cattle for a quick comparison. No such luck, though I did find countless advertisements of semen packages for both public and private sale. Never could discern the difference between the public and private sale, outside the obvious. Nevertheless, this business of breeding champion cattle seems to be big in Australia, which I can't understand. But then again, I've never really understood the popularity of the boomerang either. Whatever the case, back to Storm Cat.

Have I shared with you the definition of a stud? A male animal employed for breeding, which may also refer informally to human males as a complimentary comment on their virility and attractiveness. And by all accounts, Storm Cat would be a stud by human standards. His libido is well established, as noted previously. He's good-looking, often described as dark bay, with

flashes of honey-gold color when the sun shines on his coat. Mostly he gets his looks from Terlingua, his dam, or mother, and his grandsire, Secretariat.

Studs are athletic, and Storm Cat certainly qualifies there. He is often seen high-stepping and prancing around his paddock, and at twelve hundred-sixty (1260 lbs.) pounds, he is said to have the nimbleness of an NFL linebacker. If he is agitated, he bites, which lacks relevance to his stud-like qualities, but is interesting nonetheless.

But none of these qualities really matter. Rather, his efficiency in “the shed” is what sets him apart. If he were any other breed – miniature, trotter, quarter-horse, standardbred, Lipizzan, Arabian, or American Warmblood, Storm Cat might miss out on the real thing, the act. These other breeds have the option of jumping on a phantom padded breeding mount, compared to a pommel horse. These pommel horses are natural and mare-like and equipped with a side opening and quick release valve. Horses that do it the artificial way have their part of the

equation frozen and shipped Fed Ex to any mare in the world. But not Storm Cat. He would never suffer such. That's because the Jockey Club, the official registry of thoroughbred racing, forbids artificial insemination. The Jockey Club only allows those horses to be conceived by what is delicately termed "natural cover". So add job security to the list of things that Storm Cat has going for him.

His only relative lack of security could be the danger involved in "natural cover." It's not uncommon for studs to be euthanized following accidents with mares. Mares tend to kick during the act, often breaking the legs of studs. *Thankfully, this is one area where the comparisons to human studs end.* But the humans involved in the breeding process are in significant danger as well. The legendary trainer of the horse "Woodman" had his thumb bit off by the horse. Other injuries have also become run of the mill. But breeders DO take precautions, and stress safety.

One stallion manager at Overbrook Farm relayed that Viagra had been tested on horses and rejected, mainly because the folks



working in the breeding shed wanted nothing to do with a half-ton, hormonally-enraged animal trying to set a personal endurance record. For the record, Storm cat needs Viagra about as much as fellow athlete/sex-symbol Wilt Chamberlin, if he were alive today. Hopefully, by now, you agree with me that in a business filled with color and character, this business of breeding, Storm Cat stands out, above other fascinating topics like harem stallions and the breeding habits and sexual behavior of wild horses.

His unique and valuable talents are unmatched, as is his net worth. And his popularity is on the rise, recently having been the subject of several articles and television segments, not to mention a book entitled, "Stud: Adventures in Breeding." Despite the fanfare, this horse, guarded more heavily than the gold at Fort Knox, goes about his daily business with unparalleled professionalism. He is truly master of his domain.

So as the sun sets on Overbrook Farm, the world's number-one stud prances toward the end of his paddock, awaiting the next mare, the next good meal, bath and rubdown, the next good day,

and echoing in his ears is the advice left to him by his grandsire, Secretariat: "Son...find what you love most in life, make it your work, and happiness will come." Ole' granddad was right, Storm Cat is living the good life, and couldn't be happier.