

## Big Horace's Bid for Fame

Big Horace wanted fame and fortune. Big Horace had Plan "A". Plan "A" was simple. Write a blockbuster. Big Horace wrote a blockbuster. "Scraping The Barrel". Plan failed. Sorry, don't know who you are, said all the agents. Try an agent, said all the publishers. Never even got around to discussing international film-rights.

Big Horace went to Plan "B". Plan "B" was fortune only, no fame. Rob a bank. Big Horace sent a text-message. "Bank job. High Street. Tomorrow at 11. Bring shooters". Message sent to Wee Eck, Johnny Boy Johnston, Bunny Hare. Big Horace had new phone. Message also sent to PC Garvald. By accident. Pressed wrong button.

At 10, Big Horace went to Mrs Dexter. Big Horace was left-handed. Mrs Dexter knitted left-handed scarves, gloves, socks and balaclavas. Also supplied left-handed coffins. Exclusively for the sinister. Big Horace needed to conceal his identity.

At 11, Big Horace went to bank in High Street. No one there. All his pals assumed 11 at night. Bank robberies at night were safer. Much darker. No have-a-go merchants. But PC Garvald and his colleagues were there. Big Horace walked in. Balaclava pulled down. Paper-bag with fold-up umbrella in left hand. Pretending to be a shotgun. "This is a hold-up". PC Garvald jumped on Big Horace. Plan "B" fell apart. Large Alsatian bit Big Horace on the left leg. End of robbery.

Two months later. The terrible wheels of justice turn slow. Big Horace comes up for trial. Judge Deed on the throne. Lucky break for Big Horace. BBC film crew was there. New fly-on-the-wall series. Fly couldn't make it. Otherwise engaged. They filmed Big Horace instead. Big Horace put on the performance of his life. BBC switchboard swamped by calls from admirers. Director overwhelmed by Big Horace. Gritty character. Social reality. Colourful life. Sense of humour. Tales to tell.

Big Horace goes down for ten years. Armed robbery. First offence. Director of the BBC pleaded for leniency. Offered Big Horace a contract for new series. "HMP". Daily life in a top-security gaol, broadcast prime-time Tuesdays and Thursdays. Big Horace as our guide to the low-lives accommodated at Her Majesty's pleasure. Promise of another series when he gets out. Big Horace smiling all the way back from the bank.

Five years on. Big Horace rich and famous. Still locked away. The nation loved him. Twelve million viewers, twice a week. Big Horace introduced us to serial killers, car-thieves, property speculators, tv-licence evaders. Heart-breaking stories. High humour. Low tragedy. Rich vein of human stories to mine. Big Horace already married and divorced twice to kiss-and-tell correspondents. Big Horace had two best-sellers to his name now. "Big Horace's Work-Out Book". Booker

Prize. "Cooking Slow with Big Horace". W H Smith Book of the Year. Third book due out in time for Christmas. "Single Cells: Makeovers for the Smallest of Homes". Big Horace worked on his blockbuster again. Extra chapters. Slow progress.

Six years on. Big Horace was set loose. Splendid example of a reformed character. Presented "Going Straight". Fly-on-the-wall tv series looking at probation officers and social services. Big Horace's star rose for another three months. Chat shows. Promise of a weekly column in Daily Record. "Homes of Rich and Famous". Mick and Elton. Cocaine and Ferraris.

Then disaster. "Going Straight" too straight. Dull. Haemorrhaged viewers. Plans for second series dropped. Blockbuster published. Massive advertising. Airport shops swamped. But no one bought it. Publishers blamed new life-style book by Big Brother runner-up. Big Horace out of work. Phone never rang. Agents shunned him. Fortune vanished. Fame deserted him.

Big Horace looked long and hard at his situation. Rock-bottom. Scraping the barrel. No assets. No home. No friends. Decided on Plan "C". Big Horace sent text-message. "Bank job. High Street. Next Friday morning at 9". Message sent to Wee Eck. Johnny Boy Johnston was dead. Bunny Hare had emigrated to Australia. Big Horace had to borrow phone. Wee Eck thought of fame and fortune. Tipped off PC Garvald. Took reward. Fled to Birmingham on the next Stagecoach.

At 9, Big Horace entered bank. Shot his cuffs. PC Garvald stepped out.

Big Horace sucked into downward spiral of criminality?

No.

Big Horace got the job. Big Horace now a bank clerk.

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