

Big Horace worked as a bank-clerk by day. By night he plotted revenge on society. Big Horace had developed a plan. Big business. Captain of Commerce. Overthrow capitalism. Power.

Big Horace sent out emails each night. Posing as a member of Dutch Federation of Tie-Collectors. Emailed all the big companies. All the government organisations. "Dear Sir or Madam," emailed Big Horace. "Am simple collector of company ties. Have collection now of over three thousand. Largest collection in all the Netherlands. Would you be so kind to provide an example of tie from your esteemed company. Etc etc. Mailto: tying.dutchman@cravaticus.org.ne".

Big Horace set up post-office box in Amsterdam. Flew EasyJet every month to pick up the loot. Every month at least thirty, forty ties awaited him. Sometimes cuff-links with company logos. Once a blazer with company badge on breast-pocket. Everyone knew the Dutch were odd. Humour them. Every Dutchman a potential customer. Glad to oblige, mijnheer. Big Horace had to move from small rented room with cupboard to cupboard with small rented room. Built racks from wooden-lathes. Big Horace turned carpenter. Soon largest collection of company ties west of Saudi Arabia.

Christmas was time to select ties from rack. Companies had Christmas parties. People flocked to head-offices from outlying branches, from overseas offices, from peaceful retirement. Anxious to meet up and be seen. Social advancement. Promotion. Sucking up. Big Horace chose ties from collection. Took time off work. Dressed up smart. Took train to London. Strolled in to company headquarters. Security guards saw company tie. Saluted. Attended bash. Met people. Made friends. Cut deals. Networked.

Five, six, seven company Christmas parties in a week. Each night a different tie. Guinness. BP. Shell. Ford Motor Company. Bank of England. Virgin. Danced with Sir Richard Branson. Joked with Mr Guinness himself. Stood and smoked cigar at the urinal next to the Chancellor. Drank from shoe of Mrs Ford. Life and soul of party, all agreed. Big Horace soon got a place on the board of every major company in Britain. Found himself invited to New Year celebrations in the City. Company tie opened doors previously closed.

In the following year, Big Horace changed tactics. Contacted all the people he had met. "Sorry, old chap. Mislaid old school tie after last bash. Can you send me a new one. Reminds me of good old days." Everyone fooled. Must have been at school with him. Decent chap. Send him one from cupboard. Soon Big Horace had two growing collections.

On the following Christmas, Big Horace received smart invitations from almost all of the FTSE 100. Personally signed by the Managing Director. Honour of your company etc. And afterwards for drinks and so forth. Handwritten PS suggesting a lunch at the Savoy.

By the 1st of January, Big Horace was Governor of the Bank of Scotland. Non-executive Director of British Airways. Chairman of the Board of Governors of St Andrews University. Big cheese all round. Lord Lieutenant of Perthshire. Armani suits.

Big Horace not satisfied. Time for global domination. Sent out emails each night. Collection of company ties grew exponentially. Took private jet to Amsterdam every week. Brought back ties from America, from Italy, from Australia, Hong Kong, Brazil. Bill Gates sent a tie-pin. Great rarity. Big Horace now had same tie as worn by all the members of the Chinese Government. A Pentagon tie. The only Vatican tie ever offered to a lay person.

Then disaster. Saturday night. Oldest tie-rack in the collection-room snapped. Shoddy workmanship. Finger of blame. Only himself. Avalanche of ties brought down other racks. Domino effect. Big Horace unfortunately in cupboard conducting an inventory. 15273, 15274, 15275, crash bang slither. Big Horace out cold on floor. Twenty-seven thousand or so company and old-school ties cascaded on top of him. Dusk fell. Night drew on. Big Horace regained consciousness. Every move he made tied him up in knots. Severe danger of suffocation. Or strangulation.

Big Horace sent message on mobile phone. "Help. Tied up. Send fire-brigade." All new friends thought this a great joke. Good old Horace. Sent messages back. "LOL, Big H. Board meeting next Thursday. Drinks afterwards."

After six days, Big Horace extricated himself. Without help from friends. Leaner. Wiser. Big Horace went back to bank. No longer a collector of ties. Donated all to the Royal Dutch Cravat Collection. Made a Freeman of City of Utrecht. Presented with a tie to mark occasion. Gave it to Oxfam
