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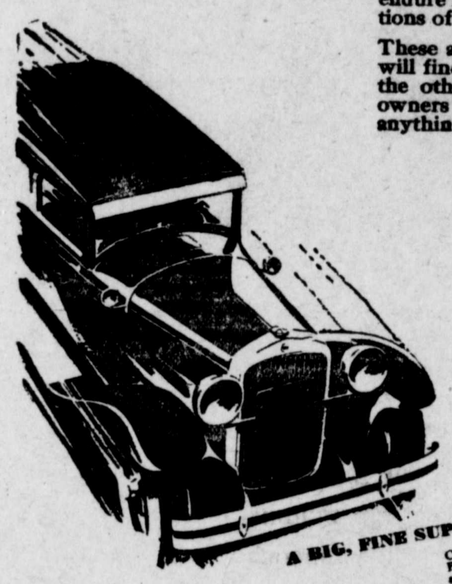

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Horton, the Matchmaker

By EDGAR T. MONFORT

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OLD man Horton's eyes narrowed as he stood at the window and watched Harold Banks and Lucy Forester slowly approaching the big office building. He saw Banks smile down at the girl as he took her arm and helped her across the street. At the curb they stopped a moment while Banks took two or three puffs at his cigarette, then tossed it away preparatory to entering the Horton building where no smoking was allowed. Then as they started on again Banks said something to Lucy and she looked up quickly and laughed, the merriest little laugh.

"So that's the way it goes," he thought. "Banks is daffy about her, but he shan't have her. I've got first rights. She's young and she's pretty and she's sweet, and even if I'm not so all fired young I've got the dough and she's struggled to make a living long enough to know how to appreciate it. Banks won't have a chance once I let her know my intentions. Any stenographer would jump at the chance of being Mrs. James Horton."

He leaned back complacently and eyed the young girl as she busied herself with her typewriter after she came into his room.

But then she was young and Banks was darned attractive, he reasoned further. Perhaps there was some danger. Should he propose to Lucy right away? No, he vetoed that idea immediately, for instinct told him that, as he had not yet shown her any personal attention, he would have to wait and let things develop a bit further. Should he dismiss her so as to get her away from Banks? Propinquity was a dangerous thing. But in that case he would be sending her away from himself, too, and killing the opportunity of letting propinquity help her in his own case. Should he dismiss Banks? That would be difficult because Horton's partner might kick and ask for a reason. Banks was a very valuable man. If he could only get rid of him without causing comment. But how?

After an hour of useless thinking only one thing remained clear in his mind: the two had to be separated at once. He wasn't going to have an underling cutting him out; nobody had ever beaten Horton yet and he didn't intend to be conquered this time. He felt certain of one thing: even under the circumstances there was very little danger of Lucy's refusing the hand of James Horton, but there would be absolutely none, provided there were no one else in the field.

Then out of nowhere an idea came tumbling into Horton's mind that almost made him jump up and down for sheer relief and joy. And at the directors' meeting that very afternoon he laid his first plans.

"Gentlemen," he said sententiously, "I've been thinking a lot about young Banks lately. He's a darn capable fellow. Why not send him out to South America to open our new branch? He's been right with me for three years and knows the business from A to Z. We might send him down right away to get the lay of the land and rent a site."

The idea was discussed and finally adopted. The next morning Horton called Banks into his inner office and made him the offer which included a raise almost beyond belief.

"You'll have to give me your answer tomorrow morning and be prepared to leave on the midnight train," Horton answered, turning back to his desk. "Think it over."

"I surely appreciate the opportunity, Mr. Horton," Banks said warmly, gripping the older man's hand, "and I think it'll be all right, but of course I'd like to speak to my mother about it first."

Then as Banks walked back to his desk it struck him like a blow that it would mean leaving Lucy and that he simply could not bear to do. Never before had he associated himself with her in that way. She was just always there when he wanted to look at her. She was always willing to let him come over in the evening when he wanted to talk and get some sympathy. Always on tap—that's what she was—and until the prospect of leaving her had come to him, he had never fully realized just how much she meant to him.

No, he couldn't get along without Lucy; then something dawned on him with a suddenness that was like an electric shock and sent little thrills of excitement tingling through his body. Why not marry her and take her along? If only she were willing. But he hadn't prepared the ground. How could a man make love, propose and get married all within twenty-four hours? It simply wasn't done. But he was so enthusiastic about the idea that he made a date with Lucy for that evening and put the whole situation before her.

"It's up to you, dear, I've got my chance of promotion but I'm hanged if I'll go without you. Now, you can make me or break me."

"I believe I'll—make you," she laughed happily as Harold caught her in his arms and kissed her smiling lips.

The next morning in an outburst of joy Harold accepted the offer and told his boss of the approaching wedding and after he had left the office all Horton could say was:

"And me the match maker! Well, I'll be darned!"

Home Manufacture

A radio-loving family has been greatly annoyed lately by a man in the neighborhood who has an electric work shop, saw, lathe and so on. He was running it full-blast one evening when one of the family, giving up the radio in despair, complained: "I wonder what on earth he's making." Then up spake five-year-old Bobby. "I know," he asserted, "he's making static!"

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