

The successor

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THE SUCCESSOR

by Marsh Haris

David was the epitome of the 'kept' type. Like a demanding woman, he saw no reason why he shouldn't be afforded this luxury. And for better than three years now, this had been precisely the situation, the fact that he did not love the man who kept him notwithstanding. Bill, on the other hand, loved the attractive young David very much, and since there had been no shirking of his physical obligation no complaint had been made. David allowed this situation to linger on simply because there was no one else, no one of whom he was particularly fond, and certainly no one willing to keep him outright. Living alone was out of the question, of course. He disliked being alone, and too this would necessitate employment.

Then one day he met a remarkably handsome young man very nearly his own age. There was an immediate attraction and the two were eager to live together. But there was one great problem, as far as David was concerned; he would have to work, since Larry was in no position to keep him. Such a possibility had never occurred to him before; falling in love with someone who wouldn't keep him.

David gave this a great deal of thought. Even love wasn't quite worth giving up sleeping until noon, lounging about during the day, then staying up most of the night. At length, then, he fell upon an idea and went to Bill, confessing his new love.

«Oh please, Bill, I do so want to live with him; I love him. But . . . but that will mean I shall have to go to work. And don't you see, I can't do that, I just can't. There isn't even a job I know how to do. But I'll have to have money. Larry doesn't make very much, you see. Could you maybe . . .?»

Bill so loved the young man that he consented. To make him happy, he would continue to keep him, even while he lived with another man. Weekly, he would send him an allowance, and Larry would never know.

Thus almost immediately, David and Larry took an apartment together. Things went along smoothly, perfectly. David even went so far as to introduce Larry and Bill, taking great care, of course, to conceal his secret.

All was all right until one evening Larry came home and informed David that he had lost his job. Immediately, David was frightened, knowing that he was getting all he possibly could from Bill, and it was by no means enough for the both of them. If Larry didn't find another job quickly something would have to be done.

But the worry was short-lived as Larry soon announced that he had found another job. It wasn't well paying and he would be working at night, but they should be able to get along if they budgeted closely.

This, however, was unfounded optimism and they did not get along. Thus within a couple of weeks, David found himself rising in the pre-dawn hours for the first time in his life and forcing himself out to an office. Larry continued his own job, leaving shortly after seven in the evening and returning home again early in the morning. David laboured on though, contributing the greater part of their up-keep and rarely even getting to see Larry.

Then one evening as David sat home alone, Larry and his boss were having a conference.

«I think it would be best, Larry, owing to the nature of your work, your difficult hours, and the fact that I should like to have you for week-ends from now on, that you come to live on the premises. Do you agree?»

«Oh completely,» Larry said brightly. «But Bill, dear, how am I ever going to tell this to David?»

FIVE EGGS

by O. F. SIMPSON

When I was a boy, our grandmother used to read to us children in the evening endless long and improving Victorian romances, to which, because we loved her, we used to listen for hour after hour with at least half our minds; but I and my sister could never resist bursting into helpless, uncontrollable giggles when the point was reached—as it was in nearly every story—at which the hero suddenly lost all his money and had to leave «for foreign parts» in disgrace. It always seemed to us so absurdly drastic and unthinkable; no one in our own comfortable circle ever seemed to lose all their money, just like that, it was inconceivable, so it always struck us as impossibly funny.

It struck me as much less funny when two years ago at the age of 40 I myself came to lose all my money, through the collapse of the respectable but rather backward chemical company for which I worked. There was no prospect immediately of another job of the kind I specialised in, I am just not one of those excellent people who save money—so there we were. Among other things I had to give up my car, and not liking to be entirely without personal transport I thought, though I was far beyond the motor-cycling age, I'd try a Lambretta—just the thing to buzz about on over our short crowded English roads. I found a local garage in my small town which gave me a fair deal on the exchange, and in the course of taking delivery and trying out the scooter I came across Harry—24 perhaps, a tumble of shining black curls, dark blue eyes, wide shoulders and fine narrow hips. He had nothing to do with the sales side but managed the petrol pumps, so he was always about, and I came to like and look for the pleasant, open and rather sheepish smile he always seemed to have for me.

I soon discovered that the real pride of his heart was a silver and black Triumph 648 motor-bike, which he spent all his spare time tuning, and on which, he once confided to me with shining eyes, he'd several times 'done the ton' (the current phrase for exceeding 100 m.p.h.) One day the wild idea entered my head that I too would like to do the ton before I died, and that as scooters wouldn't get me much more than half way there, why shouldn't I hitch up behind Harry next time he did his stuff? I put it to him.

«No, couldn't. Tyre pressures, you see. Then she just wouldn't carry the load that fast. Dangerous too, you might bump off.» But from the very number and variety of objections he cooked up, I was sure that the idea had somehow taken root—indeed his face was so transparently honest and attractive you could almost see the idea chasing itself round and round inside his head.

To cut a long story short, after some time and a lot of talk I persuaded him. I particularly remember one sunny evening when I stayed late working in a corner of the garage yard applying paint to the fender of my Lambretta where it had got scraped, and exchanging desultory remarks with Harry, who always thought it most odd that one of the garage customers (he always called me 'sir')