



MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

EVER DREAMT OF HAVING SO MUCH MONEY THAT YOU NEVER HAVE TO WORK? ..OF COURSE YOU HAVE! STEVEN SPARLING WARNS THAT THE IDLE RICH OFTEN FIND THEMSELVES PLENTY OF OTHER PROBLEMS...

Growing up, I didn't know any rich people. It wasn't until I moved to London that I met someone socially who had so much money that they didn't need to work. This was like meeting a real live Yeti.

This person wasn't living from pay cheque to pay cheque and trying to get ahead in the world through hard work. They didn't have get up in the morning and commute their way through rush hour to bring home a pay packet that never seemed to quite stretch as far as it should. They weren't overwhelmed by the task of trying to find a habitable flat within their meagre budget.

I couldn't understand or relate to their situation. This first wealthy individual – the closeted gay adult son of a shipping family – spent much of his time between a villa in Tuscany and an apartment in Paris, with regular trips to London, where he stayed in his Notting Hill townhouse. He travelled with only hand luggage as he had a complete wardrobe of clothes in each house. His appearance was modest and he underplayed his situation until he had a few drinks, when a different personality emerged. He would transform from a mild-mannered, polite person into a vile, anti-Semitic, Conservative ass. I can still remember him railing about how the current government needed to do a lot more to court 'very wealthy' people like him, otherwise he would take his money and go elsewhere! A clear picture emerged of a wealthy, unhappy, lonely, man.

Another wealthy acquaintance lives in the kind of central London flat that only exists in interior design magazines. She's hardly ever there because she spends much

of her time in Sardinia at her second home. She's depressed most of the time, perpetually single and chronically unemployed. When in work, she underperforms – she doesn't need the money (her trust fund covers her basic existence) – so there isn't much motivation to succeed. Her interest drops and she gets fired. She hasn't worked

ticking over. There is staff to hire and fire. There are events at the children's school, various fundraising events to attend and endless rounds of dinners, drinks and operas. There isn't time to relax and enjoy anything as the pressure is to be everywhere – Tuscany in summer, Val D'Isère in winter – it's overwhelming. Frequently tired,

can derive satisfaction from that. My experience of people who inherit wealth is that they miss out on the personal satisfaction that comes from earning.

I know many people who inherit do work – sometimes voluntarily; but if you remove the need to work, it could become much harder to stick at something when it gets difficult. It's too easy to walk away when the going gets tough. I have observed wealthy people who flit from one interest to the next and never really get stuck into anything. Much of the satisfaction of working is the pleasure of putting your back into something; gritting your teeth and pushing through a difficult situation in order to bust through the other side. The carrot and the stick that gets most of us through life are the fear of poverty and the need of money. Remove those two, and what motivates you?



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As gay men, who frequently don't have children, we often have more disposable income than normal. Yet one Gucci bag does not make you rich – and that's where the longing sets in. In London, we gaze across the river from Vauxhall to Chelsea at those who have more of what we'd like to have. We start to long for our own *Made in Chelsea* lifestyle. But look behind the TV cameras and *Hello!* spreads and a different, less enchanting reality emerges. Truth quickly shatters illusion.

You may think that not working would be the answer to all your prayers, but 24 hours a day is a long time to fill with leisure activities. Like a buffet table laden only with desserts, too much leisure time can leave you feeling sick. Next time you are humping yourself off to your job, be thankful you have somewhere to go and something to do. ●

in years, yet has enough money to run two households and maintain a certain level of existence, but not enough money to do any of the things she wants to do. To get at the substantial family dosh, she has to wait until her mother dies. But mummy is as fit as a fiddle... so she waits. Bitterly.

Another glamorous couple is stressed, keeping both Chelsea and country homes

always stretched, both self-medicate.

I'm sure there are happy wealthy people and I just don't know them... but what I've seen of wealth has cured me of any envy. I'm a working stiff and I thank my bloody stars every day that I am so. There's no silver spoon. There's nothing to inherit, and if I don't get out of bed and work, my rent doesn't get paid. It's a simple equation of effort in equals results out. I