

\$20,000

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by [SuedeScripture](#)

Summary

If only they had a free evening to figure this out before Zach goes to New York and Chris is off to be Prince Charming.

Notes

This is silly and I suspect it's Eff's fault. No apologies though.

- Translation into Українська available: [Двадцять тисяч](#) by [Nettle](#)

"You busy tonight?"

"Yeah, unfortunately," Chris laments across the line, "I, uh. I got roped into this thing. I don't really want to do it, but I'd practically have to come down with appendicitis or something at this point. What about you?"

Zach nods, "Eh, I have a thing too, but I haven't decided if I'm going. I don't really feel like mingling, you know? I'd rather just stay in tonight, order pizza."

"Yeah, totally," Chris sighs with frustration. "Zach, I just... it's nice that you're back in LA for a few days. We really should get together before we leave. I just keep thinking about Europe, and..." the words falter off.

Zach's heart squeezes in his chest. This is the way it's been with them for months now, ever since the press tour. Some balance had been tilted in their universe both by happenstance and proximity in Europe. He knows what it is on his end—what it always has been—he's just not so sure about Chris' end.

"Shit, well," Chris grumbles, and Zach can nearly see the irritated lip-lick he does. "I gotta go get ready for this stupid thing."

"Okay," Zach mumbles, sliding lower on the sofa. "Um, let's...let's try to do dinner sometime. Before Friday."

"Yeah. Friday? God, that's only... okay." Chris says, a huff in his voice, "Okay. Soon. Later, man."

Zach exhales as he taps the end button and presses the phone to his mouth, bumping it against his lips. Just the way Chris sounded, irritated, anxious, and genuinely wanting to see him before he's off back to New York and Chris heads to London... it's like the press tour came though like a hurricane and broke some sort of barrier they'd been carefully bricking up between each other for the last few years.

He reads the email from his publicist again, urging his attendance at this event, a charity fundraiser and auction put on by one of his favorite LGBT outreach organizations. Going isn't mandatory, but having made a donation gives him an automatic invitation. The words on the email try to be convincing by saying 'It's good for his image' and 'sends the right message' and other bullshit that makes him not want to bother at all. But he doesn't want to be alone at home tonight either. At the very least, he knows he'll have a large number of friends and acquaintances at this thing, even if the only one he wants to spend his time with isn't one of them.

He gets up, feeds the animals and goes to pull something out of his closet to wear.

*

It isn't so bad. In fact, it helps to get Chris off his mind a little bit, talking to industry people. At least until people ask about Trek. And of course they do, the sequel did alright, the buzz is

still there, and quite a few people in the room are fans, so he has to be gracious.

He's chatting with a friend of a friend when his phone vibrates in his pocket. As soon as he has an opening, he excuses himself to glance down at it.

UGH why didn't I just get appendicitis. SAVE ME.

Zach giggles and types back, *Poor bb.*

He grabs a glass of wine from a table and leans against the wall, thinking about their conversation earlier. 'I just keep thinking about Europe,' Chris had said. God, Zach hasn't forgotten either.

It was ridiculous, really. With all the junket crap they were doing, they shouldn't have gone out every night, but they needed to burn the edge off and be reminded of their humanity after being herded around like sheep for fourteen hours and sleeping in strange beds and airplane bunks the rest of the time. In Tokyo, it had been the private karaoke rooms and the Japanese drinking ethic, and Chris had ended up snuggled against Zach in the booth after too much warm sake, overheated and cuddly in ways that defied even his usual lack of personal boundaries.

And then again in Paris, after the all-night bars and burlesques of Pigalle, Chris had fallen into Zach's bed rather than his own across the hall, and he'd managed to get out of his shoes, tie and one leg from his pants before Zach could even steer him back in the right direction. Once he'd dragged Zach down with him and horizontal on Zach's bed, he'd been snoring within seconds against Zach's neck, the beard scratching lightly at his skin. By the next morning, Chris was his collected, professional self even while battling a world-class hangover, looking only a little exhausted and unusually quiet. Zach did most of the talking.

They'd traded jabs and teases across the continents, both on camera and off, trying to trip each other up, giving this a flavor other than the part of this job that was necessary but so fucking boring and repetitive. But what it was, was flirting. Not that Zach wasn't seasoned, especially in flirting with Chris, but it had always lacked any sort of destination. Even with Chris landing in his bed and waking up with him in the morning, bedheaded, bleary eyed and impossibly gorgeous, Zach had kept those carefully outlined boundaries in check.

But then there had been Berlin.

Remember berlin, he types into the phone, and hits send before he can stop himself. He doubts Chris does, because what had transpired wouldn't have happened if he'd been anything less than completely shitfaced.

Yes, comes the answer. *We danced.*

Zach takes a deep breath and a large gulp of the wine. They probably should not have tried the house absinthe cocktail. They probably should not have combined it with whiskey shots. They had danced, if you'd call it that, because clubs in Berlin were like no other clubs on earth, and the crush of Alice and Simon and Zoe with them had scattered, the press of bodies gone and suddenly it had been only them, circling like stars colliding. Chris—who didn't

dance at the best of times and usually looked like an idiot when he did—turned into an unearthly thing that Zach had never imagined even in his darkest fantasies, much less had burning and shifting against every inch of him, hands, hips, thighs, ass in the dark, strobing light, the throbbing rhythm of the music matching the pulse under his fingers. Absinthe didn't make one hallucinate, Zach knew this was a myth. He had felt so lucid, and yet not, because he would not have done it if he had any sort of control over himself.

You kissed me.

There is a certain safety about texting, a knowledge that these confessions live in the ether. They are thoughts not entirely formed, unspoken in the true air, much like whatever the fuck has been going on between them since the tour, and so they didn't quite exist in reality.

I had to, he types. I'd never have the chance again.

No? comes the answer.

Zach bites his lip hard and drains the glass. Fuck, ever since they'd been back at Paramount something had shifted back in place in his head, something he'd thought he'd gotten over a long time ago, something that essentially ended his last relationship for all his distraction.

Chris, he types and sends it, just the name, but he has no idea what to say now, and isn't sure he wants it to exist in this form at all. He hovers on the threshold of the other room of the event, phone still in hand, waiting for this night be over, waiting to see if Chris' confessional is ongoing.

The auction is going strong in the next room. Neil Patrick Harris is the emcee and auctioneer, which is decidedly helpful as the crowd seems to be enjoying themselves. Zach hasn't even perused the list of items on the block, though he doubts there'd be anything on it he really wants or needs, but he's presented at the door with a numbered paddle as he enters and has his name taken down.

"And now, in a last minute addition to the docket that is not in the print copy, and you'd never believe it if he wasn't standing here right now... Get up here, man, come on."

Another text comes though, giving him a little kick in the heart, but all it says is, *Fuck, gotta go.*

"Ladies," Neil leers from the stage, cocking an eyebrow, "*Gentleman*. I hope you're hungry and your bank accounts are offshore, because the highest bidder gets to spend the rest of their evening tonight being wined, dined, opined, and if you're lucky supined by none other than Captain Fine himself, Chris Pine!"

Zach jerks his head up as the crowd hoots and yells, and he sees Chris climbing the stage stairs and leveling a icy glare at Neil for that Captain Fine remark, or possibly the inventive verbiage, before cracking one of those megawatt grins at his shoes, standing on the stage in quite a nice cream summer suit and blue shirt, his hands stuffed deep in the pockets.

"Oh," Neil wilts, "Guys, I'd bid myself if I was allowed, but David would probably just make the man babysit. The bidding starts at...\$500? Come on, no. For this? Ladies and gentleman, I think Captain Kirk is worth a little more than that. How about \$1000?" The cheers erupt, and Zach cackles. Evening: made. So this is what he'd had been so annoyed about. Win a date with Chris Pine.

It doesn't take long before paddles are going up all around the room. Zach works his way into the middle of the crowd, not wanting to be seen just yet, if at all. Neil works the room, cracking jokes and appealing to Chris' ego.

Soon the bids are up to \$7000 and slowing, though Neil is milking it. "Bring it in for charity, ladies and gentleman, this is your working class Hollywood anti-nepotism nepotist, and he even went to Berkeley." Chris grabs Neil by the neck and pretends to wallop him hard. "And look, he doesn't go for the face, what a guy. The bid is now \$7000, and for all the secrets of the Star Trek set including how long it took to get into—and out of—that blue wetsuit, do I have \$7500?"

A paddle goes up and Neil points, "\$7500 from Mr. MacFarlane, man, that figures. Was it the wetsuit bit?" Neil vamps, "\$7500, do we have \$8000?"

Zach stands a little bit behind and to Seth's right, with several people in between, and he can see him canoodling with the people round him. In a spark of glee, he shoots another text off to Chris' phone, *Watching family guy*.

He can see Chris' hand twitch minutely inside his pocket, wrapped around his phone and he grins privately. He knows it's only a matter of time before Chris can't help himself.

The crowd hums, but no more paddles go up. "\$8000 for charity, people, and a night on the arm of the captain of a starship. \$8000. Would it help if we got Benedict up here to do the voice?" Neil drops his own voice to a low, surprisingly accurate baritone, "\$8000, Captain, hit me again and again until your arm weakens."

As Neil is off and running, Chris subtly turns to the curtained wall and pulls the phone out enough to peek at it, then it's back in his pocket. His face is soft and he's biting his lip.

"\$8000 for a single evening with a man who can tell dirty stories about green women and pointy-eared men, and I know Seth wants to know these things, but who wants it more?"

Zach snorts and then sends, *Stewie wishes he had more money*, and Chris subtly checks the phone again, brows gathering as he glances around for MacFarlane in the crowd.

Suddenly another paddle goes up. "We have \$8000 to Our Lady of Orange County, ladies and gentleman. \$8000 for a night with the fine Chris Pine, can we get \$8500 out of Mr. MacFarlane?"

Zach stands up on his tiptoes to see the woman who had bid glaring in Seth's direction. She has middle-aged socialite written all over her—fake tan, fake blonde, fake lips, fake boobs, fake 34 in a 52-year-old body. Zach can only hope Chris would want to spend time with Seth than with that.

Seth raises his paddle, and Neil lights up, "\$8500 to MacFarlane, can we get \$9000? For charity?"

Orange County raises her paddle. "We have \$9000, Captain. How about \$9500?"

Another paddle goes up, and it's a familiar face, "\$9500, my god," Neil grins, shaking his head, "Oh man, Chris, are you in for it now. \$9500 to Miss Kunis, otherwise known as Hollywood's Nerdiest Darling. What would Ashton say?"

Mila Kunis shouts from her entourage of friends, "He can suck it!"

"Can we get a round \$10,000 out of you, Orange County? Seth? Anyone?" Neil crows, "\$10,000 for arguably the hottest piece of ass the Captain's Chair has ever had the pleasure of seating, come on."

Chris is shaking his head, blushing and laughing and clapping on the stage like he's owning this, but Zach knows his tells, the cant of his shoulders, his tucked chin, the way he scrubs at his hair. Chris would so much rather be elsewhere, at home and in jeans, certainly not entertaining Trekkies, even of the well-known persuasion.

Zach makes a snap decision, and taps out another message. *I always have to rescue that hot piece of ass.* He lets Neil work on loosening Seth's wallet for Chris to check his phone again, eyebrows knitting together in confusion.

"\$10,000," Zach calls out, lifting his paddle up. He strides up a little closer to the stage lights and to Mila, Seth and Housewives of Orange County, the crowd parting, gasping and laughing as soon as they realize who he is. Seth nearly squeals. Neil just laughs like Doctor Horrible upon seeing him, mic down at his side, and then Chris spots him.

Zach can see the rush go over him as his jaw drops. His whole body goes loose and his eyes do that thing that makes Zach's heart pound for hours, but he just smiles up at his friend, the smile of knowing he's absolutely made his night by turning up.

"Alright, ladies and gents, it just got real," Neil says, "\$10,000 for a night with Chris Pine to Mr. Spock himself, Zachary Quinto... you can't make this shit up. Seth? Your bid."

Seth merely holds his hands up in pacification, and then makes a distinctly *I'm not worthy* bowing gesture and points his paddle to the floor.

"That's what I thought," Neil grins wickedly into the mic. "Mila?"

"UNFAIR," Mila yells across at him, though she's bright and smiling, "You talk to him all the time! You two fuckers are at LaMill eight days a week!" She raises her paddle defiantly.

"\$10,500 Miss Kunis, it's on now," Neil says.

"Damn right it is!" says Mila.

Zach shrugs. Perhaps that had been true in the past, but recently, sadly no. Mila's obviously had quite a lot to drink.

"Dare I ask for \$11,000?" Neil quips.

Still want pizza? he texts, and Chris doesn't even hide it when he looks at the phone in his hand, then back down at him with incredulity and hope.

Zach raises his paddle again, and Neil grins, "\$11,000, Mr. Quinto, it's like you two aren't even neighbors."

Suddenly Orange County is back in it, waving her paddle, "And we have \$11,500. \$11,500, Mila, do we have—"

"\$12,000!" Mila shouts.

"\$12,500," Zach says, loudly but calmly, still watching Chris.

"\$13,000!" calls out Orange County.

\$13,500!"

"Wow, I don't even need to be here," Neil mutters into the mic, handing it to Chris momentarily while he pretends to check his own phone and getting a laugh.

"\$14,000," Zach calls, getting an eyeful of Mila's wrath.

"Fuck you, Sylar. \$15,000!" she says, and Zach unleashes the eyebrows at her, raising his own paddle.

"\$15,500, Mila, do not get in the way of a Vulcan with sociopathic tendencies," Neil calls.

"\$18,000," Orange County calls out her bid, and a hush goes through the crowd, making Mila's loud, "Fuck!" that much louder and slams her paddle at a friend. She's out. Chris is looking a little stunned up on stage, dispensing with the false modesty and now looking genuinely nervous.

"\$18,000, we have \$18,000 for a night with Chris Pine, wow," Neil glances over at Chris, who is openly composing a text right there on stage. "\$18,000, do we possibly have \$18,500 from Mr. Quinto for his Captain, and for charity? Who knew auctioning off a beefcake would bring such a crowd, and he's still wearing clothes. \$18,500."

The text buzzes in his hand: *You don't have to do this. That's way too much.*

Orange County is glaring at Zach as haughtily as her botox will allow. Mila's chattering to a friend as they head to the door, already pulling out packs of cigarettes. Seth is standing with his hands behind his back, watching with a thoughtful look on his face. Neil is looking between him and Chris like this is rainbow sprinkles on the top of a sundae.

Zach looks up at Chris and lifts the paddle, and calls out his intention to end this, right here and now. "\$20,000."

Even Neil's mouth drops open. "\$20... \$20,000? \$20,000 for a night with Chris Pine to Zachary 'most loyal bromance ever' Quinto. My god, I hope you're worth it."

"So do I," Chris says, and the crowd laughs, but his wide eyes never leave Zach's.

"Dare I even ask, going once?" Neil looks at Orange County, who looks like she's sucking on a lemon. "Going twice? Anyone else going to challenge this?"

Orange County finally shakes her head with a huff and walks off, and Neil yells, "SOLD."

Chris is jumping down off the stage and pushing through the crowd to him in seconds, his smile enormous as he envelopes him in a huge hug.

"You asshole," he mutters into his neck before pulling back. "You didn't say you'd be here!"

"Well, I didn't know *you'd* be on the block," Zach laughs. "If I did, I might have moved some money around first."

"Zach," Chris says, pulling back, but a woman with a clipboard assails them with a clipboard of forms to sign. They follow her to a table, jotting down numbers to accountants and various other people. There's a scuffle among Chris and the event coordinator regarding how this evening was expected to go. Chris waves it all off, insisting whatever plans had been in place were unnecessary. There is a reporter demanding interviews, which the event staff luckily head off. Soon after that, there is annoyed talk through the crowd of a very large flock of paps at the front door.

They mingle. They have to; people surround them, asking after projects and gossip, and it's easily a half hour before Neil reappears and distracts the group containing them.

"Get out of here," he hisses at them when the attention finally shifts. "You're ridiculous. Go out the back. There's a car waiting."

They shuffle and grin among well wishers, trying to make a covert escape, and Zach feels Neil's hand on his shoulder, lifting that patented eyebrow at him and then at Chris beyond, who's looking anxiously toward their escape route. "I'd do you if you did that for me, Romeo," Neil teases.

"Hush," Zach laughs lowly, patting his hand and then grabbing for Chris'.

He pulls Chris out through the service entry. There are a couple of paps at the end of the alley here as well, the few unsettlingly clever ones that are headed off by event security, and they dive into the car and finally head towards home, back to where both of them would rather be.

"I can't believe you did that, man," Chris says, shaking his head with a laugh across the backseat of the car. "I can't believe you'd even drop that much cash without thinking."

"I didn't think?" Zach arches a brow at him. "Do I ever not think a thing like that through?"

"You said you didn't know about it!"

"I didn't," Zach shrugs. "It's fine. Tax deductible."

"Oh it's fine, I'm tax deductible," Chris cackles for a moment and then sobers, looking out the window on his side. "That's a lot of money though, Z."

Zach smirks, "I got the same payout that you did. I can splurge if I want." He grabs his phone again, thumbs through his contacts for his favorite Silverlake pizza place and dials out, reaching over to poke Chris in the thigh, "Margherita?"

A smile breaks on his face again, turning back, "Yeah. I'll buy."

"You'd better believe you'll buy," Zach chuckles and puts in the delivery order as Chris' own phone starts to go off. By the time Zach finishes with the pizza place, he's getting incoming calls and texts in droves: friends, managers, publicists, likely having absolute fits over what just transpired.

Chris snorts down at his own phone, "I am *not* answering this."

"Me neither," Zach grins, declining the calls. "Deal with that shit tomorrow."

"Fuck, it's going to be all over the place," Chris mutters. He rubs at his eyes, laughing, "TMZ probably already has their headline up. 'Spock and Kirk's Gay Slave Auction'."

Zach looks across the seat at him and finds Chris staring back, something bright and nervous underneath his features. Zach drops his eyes and smiles, "So, how was this evening supposed to play out? If Stewie or whoever had won you?"

"Fuck that, you cockblocked my chances with Mila."

"Mila? No, no, sweetheart," Zach waves a finger at him, "I believe I *rescued* you from a lovely evening with Paris Hilton's Great Aunt Kandy or whoever. That's hot."

Chris laughs and shrugs. "They had a whole evening planned, I don't know. Private dinner, dancing maybe. Basically being a fucking escort. I'm glad I don't have to do it."

"I'm surprised you'd do it at all," Zach wonders, "It's not your style."

Chris lifts his shoulders again, "I didn't know what it was really going to be until the last minute. But I knew it was a charity you liked, so I kinda signed on before I realized what it was."

Zach looks back at him, a little touched that it had anything to do with him in the first place, which just raises more questions in his head about their earlier conversation. He glances at his phone again, noting that the number of emails in his inbox are climbing exponentially while he thumbs into his texts to read what Chris had said again. Chris leans his head back against the seat near his window, watching the city lights go by as one of his feet invades the floorspace near Zach's shoes. But the stillness and silence between them as the car pulls them closer and closer to home is nothing but comfortable, content.

On a whim, Zach types out one more text: *Priceless*.

He can hear it vibrate through into Chris' pocket, where he pulls it out reflexively, reads, and the glances back over the seat with a smile that shines brighter than anything else.

The car pulls up to Zach's in the dark twilight and they silently shuffle up the walk, Zach opening the door and the pair of them treated to an enthusiastic furry greeting from the kids before they settle back down to their places on the couch. He heads to the kitchen with Chris trailing, looking through his wine rack for something white and dry, though he knows Chris will want a beer.

"Thanks for this," Chris says, shrugging out of his jacket to drape it over a barstool and leaning a hip against the island. His voice is sincere, for the shy smile on his face. "I don't think I said it before, but really. Thank you."

"Easy, princess," Zach smiles, setting the wine on the counter, "Let me get off my white horse before you kiss me." And because it's them, he mimes the act of dismounting an imaginary destrier.

Chris giggles, coming closer. "Have you ever actually been on a horse?"

Zach sticks his tongue between his teeth to think, "Tommy Blanchard's tenth birthday party. It didn't end well. Daisy didn't like me."

Cackling, Chris lurches forward and kisses him square on the mouth. One warm hand curls around his neck and the other grips his shoulder, and his lips could not be softer or sweeter as they dip and curve against his own. Zach sputters a half-formed noise, brings his hands to Chris waist, then shuts his eyes and takes all he's given until Chris pulls slightly back, mouth wet and eyes sea-blue.

Zach breathes, "I didn't mean it literally, but okay."

When Chris leans in again, Zach inhales and holds him gently at bay. "Chris..."

"Shut up and let me," he whispers, pushing his blocking hands down and getting their mouths slotted together again, and Zach can't help but sigh against it, let it happen, god. The warmth of Chris against him feels like he carries the sunlight with him, the softness of his mouth like he might kiss a woman, sweetly, tenderly. He never thought he'd feel this again since that night in Berlin, one moment that had happened only because of alcohol, lack of inhibition and the fact that neither of them had attachments for the first time since they'd known each other. Chris can have anyone he could possibly want right now, but he's here.

"Why?" he ventures in a breathing space.

"Hey," Chris grins, eyes on his mouth, "You bought a night with me, I'm obligated to put out, right?"

Zach immediately tries to back away at that, but Chris just follows him until he's up against the fridge door. "I didn't mean—"

"I know you didn't," Chris murmurs, hovering so close their mouths still brush, "Tell me you don't want this. Tell me you didn't want it in Europe. In Berlin."

"I'd be a liar," Zach breathes, "But—"

"Tell me you dropped twenty large *just* so we could hang out and eat pizza because neither of us have a free evening before we leave town for months."

Zach smiles, "That part was true."

"A free evening you could have spent with your new boytoy?"

Growling, Zach pushes Chris away, turning to pull a beer out of the fridge and a glass down for his wine. That would have been free, but bland. The scenery's nice, but the conversation's sadly lacking.

He hears a smirked noise, and Chris' arms encircle him warmly from behind as Zach pours his wine. His voice in Zach's ear is a smile, "I kinda feel like Julia Roberts."

Zach finally laughs again, shivering a little to feel Chris fucking Pine necking at him with those lips. "You'd look like shit in that spandex number, though."

Chris snickers into skin, paraphrasing the line, "Eighty-eight inches of therapy, wrapped around you for the bargain price of twenty grand. I would have stayed for ten."

"I would have paid fifty," Zach supplies, and is unable to resist the innuendo available, "And taken eight, but you can exaggerate if you want."

Chris presses his face into his shoulder and laughs, and god, he feels so goddamn good like this, close, cuddly and sensual in a way he's never been with Zach, except that once. But the bell rings and the dogs start barking their heads off, so... "Go get the pizza, Vivian," he says, snapping his fingers at the dogs to come so he can put them out the back. "And make sure you tip the man generously for his services."

Face bright and gorgeous, Chris laughs his way to the front door while Zach corrals the dogs outside and then takes his wine and Chris' beer into the living room. He removes his own jacket and settles himself on the couch while he listens to Chris spend a few minutes charming the hell out of the pizza guy, who by the sound of it may have been a pizza girl.

"Christopher," he eventually calls, impatient and smiling as he twists his wine glass so it sparkles in the lamplight, "Get that \$20,000 ass back here." Might as well give the tabloids more ammo and keep their publicists slammed for awhile.

The ass in question returns carrying the pizza box and a wide, red-faced grin, eyes looking him up and down where he sprawls casually as a king. Zach lifts his wine to his lips, working the tannins around in his mouth.

"Hungry?" Chris asks setting the box on the coffee table, his voice quiet. Zach sets his wine glass back on its coaster on the end table and looks up at him from under his lashes, silently conveying that he's famished, in so many ways.

Chris' eyes are damn near the same color blue as his shirt as he pulls his wallet and phone from the pockets and leaves them beside the box, before his thighs come to either side of Zach's hips, hands to the back of Zach's hair and their mouths meet once again.

If Chris wants nothing more than to stay here and make out for the rest of the evening, it would have been worth the considerable dent in his bank account. But the intent behind his tongue and the heat under his slacks tells Zach that it's entirely possible Chris intends to make this night worth every red tax deductible cent.

Works inspired by this one

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