

# I've Heard You Get Taller

"I have money now."

"You had money before."

"Well now I have a *lot* of money."

"That's your answer?"

"You asked me why I looked so happy."

"And that's your answer?"

"That's my answer."

"But that's how you're choosing to word it? *I have a lot of money.*"

"I hit pay dirt. I'm flush with cash. My coffers are overflowing. Come on Toby, this is a good day for me."

"How much did you get?"

"A lot."

"Give me a number."

"Come on."

"I can take it."

"You know it's unbecoming to inquire about another man's finances."

"You brought it up."

"Well you asked me why I looked so happy."

"Well you looked happy."

"I was."

“So how much?”

“Toby.”

“I thought fortune favored the bold?”

“Toby, it’s a lot of money.”

“Sounds like it.”

“So let’s leave it at that.”

“You brought it up Quinn.”

“You asked.”

“Give me a number.”

“You really want to know?”

“Yes.”

“You want a number?”

“Sure do.”

“Fine.”

“...Waiting.”

“Okay. Here it is. Ready?”

“Yep.”

“Two.”

“Two what?”

“Two million.”

“Jesus.”

“See.”

“Jesus Quinn.”

“I told you -”

“That’s insane.”

“I told you not to ask.”

“That’s insanity.”

“I shouldn’t have told you.”

“And you’re keeping it?”

“What?”

“Are you keeping the money?”

“That’s generally what one does with money Toby.”

“People do a lot of things with money Quinn.”

“Well I’m keeping it. Most of it at least. I was thinking about charities.”

“Anyone can *think* about charities.”

“God Toby.”

“Choose your words.”

“You’re talking to an English teacher.”

“Is that what you call yourself?”

“Oh eat shit.”

“Just eat shit? You don’t want me to eat shit and die?”

“No I just want you to eat shit. Dying immediately after eating shit would rob you of the pleasure and privilege of tasting, swallowing, digesting, and shitting said shit.”

“I bet the kids love you.”

“They do.”

“Not for long.”

“Oh?”

“You’re a rich man now. A big bright future awaits.”

“I didn’t take the job for the money.”

“Neither do most teachers, I’d imagine.”

“I really shouldn’t have told you how much.”

“Not sure you had a choice, seeing as I’m your lawyer.”

“Is that what you call yourself?”

“Ha.”

“You were never my lawyer. And you’re a paralegal.”

“A paralegal who helped you out before you hired someone else. And if you recall, my savvy legal counsel was provided gratis.”

“And if you recall, I’ve thanked you repeatedly.”

“You shouldn’t have told me.”

“Yeah but I did.”

“And I’m so very touched.”

“I shouldn’t have to say this, but don’t tell anyone okay? I’d like to keep this a private matter for now.”

“Well that’s a two million dollar secret Quinn.”

“I mean it Toby.”

“Maybe you should pay me off.”

“Don’t joke.”

“I wouldn’t dare.”

“Jesus Toby.”

“Jesus is right. Two large. That’s just insane.”

“Large means thousand.”

“What?”

“Large is slang for thousand.”

“Then what’s slang for million?”

“No clue.”

“You should find out. You’re a millionaire now.”

“Toby.”

“It’s a whole new ballgame.”

“Listen.”

“Food tastes different.”

“Toby.”

“Your skin takes on a golden glow.”

“Toby.”

“I’ve heard you get taller.”

“Toby.”

“What what what?”

“Are you guys okay?”

“What does that mean?”

“You and Sarah and Jack. Are you guys okay?”

“Are you seriously asking me that?”

“Yes.”

“You want to know if Sarah and Jack and I are *okay*?”

“That’s what I said.”

“I was kidding earlier.”

“I’m only asking -”

“I mean it. I was kidding earlier. About you paying me off.”

“Alright.”

“Drop it.”

“It’s dropped.”

“Good.”

“So like I said, I was thinking about charities.”

“Say *philanthropy*. If you’re a millionaire, it’s *philanthropy*.”

“Got it.”

“Which charities?”

“I don’t know, the big ones.”

“Such as?”

“United Way, Feed the Children, ASAF.”

“ASAF?”

“Yeah.”

“I thought I told you to drop it Quinn.”

“What?”

“I said drop it.”

“Oh come on.”

“ASAF? Am I supposed to be impressed?”

“Please.”

“Am I supposed to be moved? Shall I fall to my knees and grovel at your well-traveled feet?”

“And what if ASAF *wasn't* on my list? You'd be alright with that would you?”

“This is a lesson Quinn. The first of many.”

“What lesson is that?”

“Your money can't buy goodwill.”

“I don't need goodwill. I'm rich, remember?”

“I'm sure you'll see to it that I never forget.”

“Toby, it's autism.”

“Yep.”

“It's autism.”

“So it is.”

“And you're going to sit there and tell me that I can't fund lifesaving research because you'll take it as a blow to your pride?”

“Autism isn't fatal. See, you're clueless.”

“Don't cloud the issue.”

“Well don't feign bewilderment.”

“I’ve got every reason to be bewildered. It’s your son we’re talking about. Who cares where the money comes from?”

“I’m getting tired.”

“Of course you are.”

“You shouldn’t have told me about the money.”

“You already knew.”

“I didn’t know how much.”

“Well I’m not telling anyone else.”

“I’m sure.”

“I mean it. Just you and Jung. That’s it.”

“We’ll see how long that lasts.”

“Why *are* you being such an ass about this?”

“It’s my default setting.”

“I’m only trusting two people in the world with this information, and you’re one of them.

Doesn’t that mean anything to you?”

“Only until you tell someone else. Which you will. Probably before lunch.”

“I don’t know what you want Toby”.

“I don’t want anything.”

“You want something.”

“I don’t.”

“Maybe you want me to insist.”

“Knock it off.”

“Maybe you think I owe you.”

“Quinn.”

“Or maybe you think you’re *owed*. That by merely existing, you’re owed. That your proximity to this money somehow means that part of it is rightfully yours.”

“Quinn.”

“You’re pissed I might donate to ASAF, but not because you think it’s my veiled attempt at some sort of restitution. Not because you think I’m being disingenuous. You’re pissed because I’m putting that money somewhere other than your pocket.”

“You weren’t here Quinn.”

“So you’ve said.”

“You weren’t here. Not when we got the call. Not when she started treatment. Not when we moved her. Not when the money ran out. You weren’t here when Sarah and Jack and I moved into this ridiculous one bedroom. Or when Sarah went back to work. Or when we went through every nanny in the book and none of them could handle Jack.”

“The woman kicked me out Toby. I was sixteen and she kicked me out. Maybe you can’t understand this, but the moment she did that she lost me. So she doesn’t get a second chance with me. She doesn’t get to atone. That’s a wound that keeps bleeding okay? I’m sorry that you got roped into it, but -”

“She was your *mother*, Quinn. She was your mother and she was dying and you used it as an opportunity to - to what? To make a statement? It’s your mother, she’s dying, you get over it. You be a goddamn *man* for once.”

“And you wonder why I didn’t come back.”

“That’s right. You didn’t come back. Not until Jung wanted to see America. Then you come back. For him you come back. Jung wants to climb the Empire State Building. Jung wants to hike the Grand Tetons. Jung wants to stuff his face with In-And-Out Burger. And while you and Jung are prancing around some gas station parking lot in nowhere Wyoming, a Westmoreland Coal Company truck - driven by a guy with a wife and three kids to feed, I might add -”

“Aww shucks, a wife and three kids you say? Well there’s a fella who should be allowed to run over whoever the hell he wants!”

“And two months after this unspeakable tragedy, where you sustained - and I’m quoting the medical report here - *minor bruising to your pelvis* - you’re a millionaire.”

“I could’ve died.”

“But you didn’t. Mom did. Mom died you psychopath.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“How about you use some of your hush money to pay for Jack’s therapy sessions. Forget research. Forget charity. My kid’s sick *now*.”

“So you do want money.”

“I want a happy son. That’s all I want.”

“And you think bullying me is the best route to take?”

“God, your persecution complex is up in the stratosphere my friend.”

“Oh you don’t hear it? Everything you say - *everything* - just drips with contempt.”

“Well maybe you shouldn’t dangle the prospect of an ASAF donation in front of me like I’m some miserable orphan dancing for his dinner. For simply existing, that’s what you said. For

simply existing. I've been *enduring*, Quinn. And you've been miming remedial English to rich kids in Seoul."

"I'm leaving."

"The room or the country?"

"I'm just leaving."

"You better."

"Tell Sarah and Jack I'm sorry I couldn't stay."

"They never expected you too."

"Jung's a good man you know."

"I'm sure he is."

"No you're not. And I don't like imagining what you say about him to Sarah and Jack."

"I don't talk about him."

"Somehow that's even worse."

"What's there to talk about? I don't *know* him. Wonder why."

"If I asked him to come here, to your apartment, right now, what would you say?"

"Jung?"

"Yes."

"Let him come, I don't care."

"And if we wanted to stay the night?"

"Why would you want to stay the night? There's no room here. And I'm pretty sure you can afford a hotel."

"All the same, if we wanted to stay the night, what would you say?"

“I’d say you can afford a hotel.”

“What if we couldn’t?”

“But you can.”

“But what if we couldn’t?”

“I’m not playing this game.”

“Of course you’re not.”

“I’m getting tired. Really. I can’t keep going on like this.”

“I’ll leave then.”

“Fine.”

“...Toby?”

“What?”

“How much is it?”

“How much is what?”

“How much is it for Jack’s therapy?”

“Ha.”

“How much?”

“I was joking.”

“How much?”

“It’s a lot.”

“And what’s a lot?”

“Fifteen large.”

“Large is thousand.”

“I remember.”

“So it’s fifteen thousand.”

“A year. Yeah.”

“Jesus.”

“Yeah.”

“Do you have a pen?”

“What?”

“A pen.”

“I was joking.”

“Toby.”

“I was joking before.”

“Never mind, I’ll find one.”

“Drop it.”

“Jung’s a good man Toby.”

“I believe you.”

“He’s great with kids. He and Jack would hit it off.”

“That sounds nice.”

“We’re going to get a hotel tonight.”

“I figured.”

“Not sure how long we’ll stay.”

“Okay.”

“We could all get together you know. Pick the most expensive restaurant in town.”

“I’m working a lot. It’s the truth, really.”

“I believe you.”

“I’ve got this budget proposal to the county board due Monday.”

“That’s fine.”

“So maybe another time.”

“Another time then.”

“Okay.”

“Toby?”

“Yeah?”

“Do you have a pen?”