



*Until I got further down this rabbit hole, I didn't fully appreciate the value of hollow flattery. Turns out, I am susceptible.*

# Please, you, attend our most lovely meeting

C. Douglas Phillips, MD, FACR

*"Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations."*

—Oscar Wilde

I think I noticed the first one about two years ago. The invitation was stuck in my email folder, unopened, as I recall, between a few letters from people telling me that all I had to do was provide my account number and a current tax ID number, and they would send along that \$23 million they seemed to have found in a previously secret account. You know, just give us **your** account number and **you** can keep the money for us.

This invitation seemed new, though. It beckoned me (in very, very bad English, as in "Greetings for the day!") to come to—no, actually to PRESENT AT—a meeting. An international meeting, in China. The **first annual** meeting. And, they wanted ME to speak. You're famous, it said. You're awesome. Please bless us with your attendance. Wow.

I have been around long enough now to be comfortable with my standing in life, or lack thereof. I know what I am likely worth on the open market. I know I occasionally get invited to speak. I hope I do okay. I didn't previously get invited sight unseen to travel to China (*China!*) to give a lecture of my choice. And, until I got further down this rabbit hole,

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"Hell yes, I'll speak. And here's some talks I'd like to give. Talk to me about the arrangements, please." I sent off my reply while simultaneously grabbing for my luggage. Well, the wheels fell off this cart **WAY** fast.

Hold back there, our most excellent friend and speaker, Dr. Phillips. We will give you a reduced registration fee (only \$2,000 now, with your discount), and we don't provide rooms or meals for our most honored invited faculty. And airfare? Why, we will give you a voucher for one free checked bag on the final leg of your journey, on a small, single-engine (intended to be two, but you know how pesky keeping **all** of those engines running can be) WWII-era cargo plane to the heart of our little province. You'll have to cover the rest.

I now get these invitations regularly, and I have come to appreciate them. I always answer that I am happy to attend and lecture, upon payment of my \$20,000 honorarium. They never write back. Hey, if you ever see me speaking at one of these, please come by and say hi. I'll know that they paid your honorarium, too.

Keep doing that good work. Mahalo.

*Dr. Phillips is a Professor of Radiology, Director of Head and Neck Imaging, at Weill Cornell Medical College, NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, New York, NY. He is a member of the Applied Radiology Editorial Advisory Board.*