THE HOUSEWARMING GIFT

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April 3

Wow, where do I begin? It's all so unbelievable.

Twelve days ago I got the phone call that changed everything. I was selected for a physics fellowship at Elysium Institute in Connecticut. This lab has produced at least twenty Nobel winners. Could that be me someday?

My Mary, she's pregnant, four months along. We need a place to live, so I did something a little bit crazy. I bought a house sight unseen. It was an online bank auction. Who knows why the previous owners stopped making payments? The photos looked great and the price was amazing.

It's a long way from Vancouver to the backwoods of Connecticut, but we're ready to make the change. Well, I am; Mary's not so sure.

April 10

I'm in the Connecticut house while Mary's back at our Vancouver apartment packing up. This house is so beautiful. It's even better than the photos.

I found a note on the kitchen counter from the former owners. Sort of a melancholy thing, I guess. The note said, "To the new owners—we hope you love this house. We had to leave. It was sadly unavoidable."

Strange note, but very kind. They also left me an odd present. It's a rabbit's foot. "For luck," the note said.

It's a weird shriveled up thing, the fur dyed a bright garish blue. I haven't seen one of these since I was a kid, but I'll take any lucky talisman I can get!

May 1

Wow, I promised I was going to write something every day, but life sure gets in the way.

Mary and all of our furniture are finally moved in. We're living out of boxes, but we're here. Mary says her back hurts and the baby is kicking hard. I can't believe I'm going to be a dad!

The most curious thing happened today. I gave a presentation to the oversight committee for the Physics department. I need their approval on my research project. The presentation went well, but about halfway through someone pointed to my leg. I was bleeding.

One of the little claws from that damn blue rabbit's foot must have gotten stuck in my thigh. Boy, did I bleed. How embarrassing!

I don't even remember putting it in my pocket.

Blood or no blood, the luck worked. I got my approval, and the long research hours begin.

June 6

Mary and I have adopted a dog, Otto. He's a mutt, but he's cute. We found him shivering and hungry in our backyard, so we took him in.

He's pretty mellow and will do okay when the baby comes, I think. He's very protective of Mary, which I like. She needs all the protection she can get.

Mary is such a superstitious girl. She says our house is haunted, which of course, is very silly. She really believes, but I'm a man of science and can't be bothered with that sort of talk.

Although something did happen that I can't quite explain. Two nights ago I took Otto outside for his evening walk and after a couple blocks he was feeling poorly. At one point the heaves overtook him. Poor pup, he vomited what looked like two days' worth of food, and there was a lot of blood.

I found that damn bright blue rabbit's foot. Otto must have swallowed it, though I could have sworn I threw it away in my office at the university.

A few nights at the veterinarian and three thousand dollars later, Otto is going to be okay.

Not sure how to pay for all of this. When we moved, our finances were great, but in just a few months, we're having trouble making ends meet.

Where did all of our savings go?

July 16

I'm a little on edge these days. I can't sleep. My work is suffering. One minute I'm fine, and the next I have the terrors like my life is in danger.

I should probably see a therapist, but I don't have the time. Or money.

Since she's been pregnant, Mary hasn't wanted sex, but yesterday it was different. I welcomed her advances and it was wonderful, but the sheets ended up covered in blood. I thought I had hurt the baby and was terrified, but it was just a cut in Mary's back. A scratch, actually.

We found that blue rabbit's foot in our bed. How can that be? The vet had said he would incinerate it so Otto wouldn't get at it again. It found its way back into this haunted house.

I don't understand.

August 4

Oh God, I don't even know where to start. My sweet Mary, she went into labor eight weeks early.

I stood there watching my boy come out of his mother. He was just a little thing, maybe four pounds. The doctor put him in my arms, and

I noticed my baby clutched something to his chest. In his tiny hands was something wet and fuzzy and bright blue.

I pulled his fingers away. The rabbit's foot. How? I fiercely pulled the thing away from my child and his heart came with it. My son's heart. I held my son's beating heart in my hand.

It was fused to a bright blue rabbit's foot.

It was in that moment that his mother died. The talisman had attached to her uterus and was ripped free by the act of birth. She bled to death without a sound.

My beautiful son, whom I named Joseph, lived for only a few moments longer than his mother.

Otto ran away while we were at the hospital.

Everything that ever mattered is gone.

Coming to Elysium was a mistake.

September 1

The bank has foreclosed on this house, again. The medical bills, the expenses, the alcohol. It's just too much.

I have a large tumor in my forearm. It itches. When I scratch, more bright blue rabbit fur pokes through my skin.

I wrote a letter for the new owners. I'll leave it on the kitchen counter, next to this journal. And a bright blue rabbit's foot.

For luck.

The gun is ready. So am I.