

## Story by Cheque

"Lawrence!" Marie's sing-song voice called. "Just look at this beautiful basinet! And these clothes! Oh, they are absolutely adorable! I must have this diaper bag! Oh, look..."

My wife has gone insane. Is it genetics, hormones, or just some kind of madness that overcomes females when they walk into a baby store? Whatever the cause, whatever the reason, I have made myself clear. Marie knows just as well as I do that I refuse to spend more than \$150.

--3 hours later---

\$148.50. She manages to buy two carloads of stuff, and still be \$1.50 under her shopping limit. My 8 months and 20 days pregnant wife never ceases to amaze me.

---3 days later, September 2nd, 1903---

I, Lawrence Jonathan Exeter, am a father. I am still in shock. Is it possible that this little wriggling bundle of joy is mine? As I looked at the baby, at my son, I felt a rush of love so strong, it was terrifying. I held him in my arms as my wife looked on smiling. I touched his wrinkled cheeks, and smoothed the reddish-gold fuzz on his head. I saw his eyes open, I heard his first cry, and I was there when my wife finally decided on a name for him - Lawrence Jonathan Exeter, Jr. I have a son!

---31 days later---

Today was Junior's first check-up with Dr. David M. McCoy. I paid \$475 for 6 years worth of check-ups. Marie and I hovered over Dr. McCoy. The entire time took to make sure Junior was healthy. Aside from a slight bit of jaundice, which would be easily solved by spending some time in the sun, Junior is perfectly healthy. Today, my wife started talking about baby Lawrence's Christmas gift. God save me!

---1 month later, December 3rd, 1903---

I believe my wife is stalking me. Everywhere I look, I see pictures of what she wants to get from Toyland. Oh, she is ever so subtle about it. A newspaper article on baby swings, an offer sheet with cars and trains circled. A Christmas wish list she made with Junior to give to Santa. Marie is very clever, but I refuse to cave!

---December 19th, 1903---

Went Christmas shopping today. I used to believe my wife was sane. I now know better. We spent \$83.20 on toys for a boy who is a little over 2 months old! I love my wife to pieces,

and my son is my life, but while I understand that I am one of the richest men in the world, at this rate we'll be destitute by the time this child is 5!

---6 years later---

It breaks my heart to do this, but I must carry on the Exeter family tradition. My 6 year old son is about to leave the loving home Marie and I have made for him for his first year at Palisades boarding school. I truly do not wish to send him, but I fear young Lawrence will not see it that way.

---April 18th, 1910---

Can you believe this? First, my father sends me off to a boarding school in the middle of nowhere, and then, to make up for it, he sends me a bike! As if bribery will work on me. I mean come on, I am almost 7! Does he think I'll fall for something as stupid as this? It's bribery, plain and simple!

---August 26th, 1915---

After that stunt I had pulled with the bicycle 5 years ago, Dad thought that I was getting wild. He and Mom decided to send me to Columbia Military Academy, a school for rich juvenile delinquents. When I pointed this out to Father, he simply shook his head and said, "It's for your own good." Whatever. At least the instructors here are good. I'll get a good education, and I'll show them what I can really do once I get out!

---6 years later---

Junior has spent the past six years at Columbia Military Academy, one of the best schools in the country. He has behaved, and is heading off to college next year, so Marie and I have decided to buy him a car. We bought him a luxury sport Cadillac, that was \$3885.

---September 7th, 1921, 4 days later---

Dad bought me a car 4 days ago. I crashed it today. Will that get their attention?

---October 15th, 1921---

Apparently my car crash didn't work. My parents are sending me to Stanford.

---June 1st, 1923---

So sending me away wasn't enough. They hired a shrink for me. Her name is Miss Daisy Windsor. If her name sounds so prissy and boring, what will she be like?

---June 3rd, 1923---

Miss Windsor will come tomorrow to fill me up with her inspirational wisdom. I'm planning on heading to the local speakeasies with my friends to enjoy my last day alone. Starting tomorrow, my life will be a slide under Miss. Windsor's microscope. Can't wait.

---3 days later---

Miss Windsor, or Daisy, as she has asked me to call her, is nothing like what I expected. From the long flowing black hair, to the sparkling emerald eyes, she is the epitome of young, cheerful beauty. Since that first glance I had of her glowing face, I believe I have been in love. When Father came to visit me, he took one look at me and suggested that Daisy and I should go to Paris for a vacation! I thought it was a great idea!

---4 days later---

Our ship ride to Le Havre was fairly uneventful - aside from a couple of dolphin sightings, it was very dull. The train trip into Paris, however, was amazing! We traveled on a parallel course to the Seine River for most of the time; Daisy couldn't stop exclaiming about how beautiful the scenery was. I couldn't help but agree with her, but, being a manly man, chose not to voice my opinions. Every time she gushed about the landscape, I gave a very manly grunt. She just laughed.

---August 23rd, 1923---

Lawrence sent me a wire asking me to cover a loan he has taken out from the Banque de France. Apparently, he and Daisy wish to stay longer. This letter gave an old man hope - has my son finally forgiven me?

---February 13th, 1926---

Does buying a woman flowers mean that you are courting her? Does a woman think you are courting her if you give her flowers? I really hope so, as I have just spent \$76.50 in flowers for Daisy.

---June 22, 1926---

I am scared out of my wits. I am about to ask Daisy to marry me. I bought her \$312.75 worth of flowers! Will that be enough? I should have bought 4 dozen roses, not 3! Oh god, I love her with all my heart!

---A day later---

She said yes! I am the happiest man alive! We plan on living in Paris, so I have made an appointment with the Riviera Heights Land Company to see different plots of land.

---August 11th, 1926---

We saw the best plot of land today! It has an old mansion on it, and is just on the outskirts of Paris. I grabbed it right away, ready to offer as much money needed to buy it.

---October 30th, 1926---

We hired the Renaissance Interior Decorators today. Both Daisy and I agree that instead of building a new house, we should simply restore the old one in all of it's glory. When we get to dreaming, we imagine soaring ceilings and gleaming oak floors, crystal chandeliers and sweeping staircases.

---November 18th, 1926---

I finally found time to go to Beverly Diamond and Gift Shoppe, to get a wedding band for Daisy and me. When Daisy saw her rings, I swear her face began to glow. 2 days ago, I bought honeymoon tickets to Hawaii. This is my surprise for Daisy. Father says he will give me \$200,000 for the wedding expenses, and will rent the ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel for the ceremony.

*For the next four years, Lawrence Jonathan Exeter Jr. was a faithful husband to Daisy. They were a couple to envy. Daisy threw lavish parties and bought beautiful gowns—and many, many shoes. Lawrence sent his wife on a weekend spa trip, worked to earn money for his whims, and bought himself a bike to replace the one he had crashed over 18 years ago. They hired Tony Spagoni as their butler, and quickly learned his lasagna was to die for. They even hired a maid, Miss Flossie Wentworth; she, however, was their downfall.*

---November 14th, 1930---

Flossie claims that I had an affair with her. I didn't! I love my wife far too much to have been unfaithful! She is suing me for several thousand pounds. Daisy and I are hiring attorneys from Wall and Smith to represent me. I am planning on sending my love to a spa for the weekend so she can relax whilst I fight this battle.

---June 20th, 1931---

It has been almost a year since Flossie made her original claim against me. She had kept this fight on for so long by subtly changing her claim every time she felt she was losing - she went from us having an affair to me raping her. I fought long and hard against her, and I finally won! Today I paid the last of the court fines to the Clerk of Reno Municipal Court. Mother had been having some hip problems so I also had to send her a check for her hip surgery.

On another note, Walker and Walker came today to appraise my will. Call me morbid, but I have a feeling that something is wrong. I cannot help thinking I don't have much time left.

*I am dying. I know it. I have come to terms with the disease in me, and can only hope that I will get one glance of my baby girl before the disease takes me completely. The hope that my daughter will be able to carry on the Exeter name is all that keeps me alive. My daughter will grow up with her mother and her grandparents in California. She will be born a citizen of the US, and I will die a citizen of the US. I am relying on our faithful butler, Tony Spagoni, to find Peter Ventizzi, an old friend of mine. I will call on him to fly my family to the Hollywood Hospital.*

"Lawrence!" Marie calls. Tony must have found Peter.

"Coming, dear." I call weakly.

---2 days later---

"There! The hospital! Peter land! I am going into labor!"

---4 hours later---

"My daughter. My beautiful, beautiful Alexandra. I love you more than you could know. Goodbye, Daisy, my heart. Goodbye Alexandra, my life. I will see you again in the Peaceful Realms."

"No! Lawrence! No! Don't go! Please!"

---July 15th, 1931---

I sit in my study staring at the checkbook in front of me. I do not believe I will ever use this checkbook again—every check is a piece of my son's life. Tomorrow I shall send a check to Hollywood Mortuary, for the preparation of the body of Lawrence Jonathan Exeter Jr., and I know writing that check will break my heart. The check I write today, though, was not supposed to be mine to write. Today I write a check to Dr. David M. McCoy, one for my granddaughter's first check-up. I write a check that, by all rights, my son should have written. A check that, if he had lived, my son would have taken great pride in writing.