

Accidentally become a father

Chapter 31: A Nine-Year-Old's Military Operation

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I was sitting at the small apartment table when Yuna slid a piece of paper toward me.

Not one piece.

Two pages.

Written in neat, straight handwriting, complete with category divider lines.

"What is this?" I asked.

"A list of school and personal necessities," she replied.

Her tone was like a secretary who had just finalized a proposal.

I picked up the paper.

At the top, it read:

MANDATORY NECESSITIES - TOP PRIORITY

Below it was a bulleted list.

Summer uniform - 2 sets

Winter uniform - 2 sets

Indoor shoes

Outdoor shoes

White socks – 5 pairs

Waterproof school bag

Pencil case (large capacity)

2B Pencils – 1 dozen

Erasers – 3

Transparent 30 cm ruler

Grid notebooks – 5

Lined notebooks – 5

I stopped reading.

"Are you planning to open a branch school?" I asked.

Yuna blinked slowly. "It is better to be fully equipped than to have to come back later."

"This is shopping, not a military operation."

"Which is exactly why it must be efficient."

I looked at her.

She sat completely straight. Back upright. Hands resting on the table. A dead-serious expression.

A nine-year-old child.

"And this?" I asked, pointing to the bottom half.

PERSONAL NECESSITIES – DAILY ROUTINE

Small towels – 2

Large towel – 1

Spare toothbrush

Gargle cup

Summer pajamas

Winter pajamas

Casual loungewear – 3 sets

"You already have clothes," I said.

"Those are temporary garments."

"We aren't refugees."

"It is still inefficient."

I slowly lowered the paper.

"You're nine."

"Yes."

"Why does this list read like a legal brief?"

She paused.

"...I'm used to it."

The answer was short. Too short.

I read the very bottom section.

MISCELLANEOUS (OPTIONAL BUT RECOMMENDED)

New lunchbox

Stainless steel water bottle

Neutral-patterned handkerchief

Simple hair clips

I let out a quiet sigh.

"Do you know what optional means?"

"Worthy of consideration."

"That's not what it means."

She looked at me with an utterly serious expression.

"If we have to come back next week because we forgot something, that would be even more inefficient."

I folded the paper in half.

"We won't forget."

"We might."

"I won't."

She fell silent.

Then, she said slowly, "You are quite confident, Papa."

"Yes."

She tilted her head slightly. Observing my face.

"You do not look like someone who enjoys shopping."

"I don't."

"Then why do you look so calm?"

"Because this isn't an emergency."

She processed the answer.

Her hand reached for her pen again.

"In that case, we can start with the top priorities."

"We'll buy what's necessary first."

"All of it is necessary."

"Not all of it today."

She stared at the list.

Her eyebrows dipped slightly.

"Uniforms are necessary."

"Yes."

"Shoes are necessary."

"Yes."

"A pencil case is necessary."

"Maybe."

"Maybe?"

"You could use a plastic bag."

Her head snapped up. "No."

"That was a joke."

She was quiet for a second.

Then she gave me a flat stare.

"Your jokes are hard to distinguish."

"That was also a joke."

She let out a tiny sigh.

I stood up and grabbed my light jacket from the hook near the door.

"Ready?"

Yuna looked at the list one more time.

With utmost seriousness, she folded it neatly in half. Then into quarters. Then slipped it into her small bag.

"I will manage the budget."

"You don't know the budget."

"That is why I will observe."

"Sounds like surveillance."

"It is cooperation."

I opened the apartment door.

The air outside was slightly warmer than usual.

Yuna stood beside me. Her small bag hanging from her shoulder. Her hair tied back simply.

She looked like an ordinary schoolgirl.

Too ordinary.

"We'll start with clothes," I said.

"Understood."

She stepped out first.

Then stopped.

Looked back at me.

"Papa."

"Hm?"

"We are not going to buy unnecessary things, right?"

"I never buy unnecessary things."

She nodded, satisfied.

We began walking down the apartment corridor.

Her footsteps were orderly.

Too orderly.

But at the end of the hallway, right before the stairs, she said quietly—

"If there is something cute... it can be considered."

I kept my eyes straight ahead.

"We'll see."

She didn't reply.

But her pace picked up just a little.

Little did we know, the real test of her strict "efficiency" was waiting just behind the automatic doors of the department store, ready to launch an assault of colors she wasn't prepared for.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 32: The Survey and the Fitting Room

The automatic doors slid open, and the vibrant, overwhelming world of children's fashion immediately challenged Yuna's strict sense of order.

"We'll start here," I said as the automatic doors of the children's clothing store slid open.

The air inside was warmer.

The faint scent of new fabric and thin plastic mingled in the air.

The racks were filled with colors I had never worn in my entire life.

Soft pink. Sky blue. Bright yellow. Floral patterns. Animal characters that looked entirely too happy.

Yuna stopped one step inside.

Her eyes darted around.

Not like an awestruck child.

More like someone conducting a survey.

"We need to find the uniform section," she said.

"Do you know the way?"

"Usually, it is on the right side."

"Usually?"

"I saw it once... on the internet."

Of course.

We walked to the right.

The school uniforms were hung neatly by size. Pristine white. Navy blue pleated skirts. Little blazers hung in parallel rows like an army of miniature soldiers.

Yuna immediately checked the size tags.

"For a height of 130 cm," she murmured quietly.

"You know your height?"

"More or less."

She pulled out a top. Held it up against her body. Measuring it visually.

"This seems adequate."

"You can try it on."

She nodded.

The fitting rooms were in the back corner. The curtains were a pale cream. A tall mirror stood outside.

Yuna went in with two sets of uniforms.

The curtain pulled shut.

I stood outside. Hands in my jacket pockets. Listening to the quiet rustle of fabric.

A few seconds later—

"Papa."

"Hm."

"If the skirt length is below the knee... is that too long?"

"No."

"What if it is slightly above the knee?"

"Still no."

The curtain parted slightly.

Slowly, the pale cream curtain began to slide open, revealing the result of her careful, calculated sizing. Would the uniform finally make her look like the normal, ordinary nine-year-old child she was supposed to be?

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 33: The Definition of Ordinary

Stepping out from behind the cream curtain, the serious nine-year-old surveyor was suddenly replaced by a little girl trying to figure out what "ordinary" really meant.

Yuna stepped out.

The uniform was a good fit.

The skirt fell neatly. The white top was still a bit loose.

She stood in front of the mirror.

Adjusting the pleats of the skirt.

Tugging slightly at the waist.

She turned her body slowly.

A spin she didn't realize she was doing.

I watched her.

She stopped abruptly when she realized I was looking.

"It doesn't look weird, right?"

"No."

"Does it not look... too small?"

"You are small."

She stared at me.

"That is not what I meant."

"You look like a schoolgirl."

She was quiet for a few seconds.

Then she looked back at the mirror.

Her hand touched the chest of the top. Smoothing out a crease that was already perfectly neat.

"I look ordinary."

"That is the point of a uniform."

She turned her head slightly.

"Is ordinary a good thing?"

"For school? Yes."

She processed the answer.

Then she gave a small nod.

"I will take two."

"We will buy two."

She went back into the fitting room.

A few minutes later, she stepped out in her original clothes.

We moved on to the casual wear racks.

This was where the colors began their assault.

Soft sweaters with cat prints.

Cardigans with small floral patterns.

T-shirts with cute phrases.

Yuna stopped in front of a cream sweater featuring a tiny character holding an umbrella.

She held the edge of its sleeve.

Pressing the fabric with her thumb.

Soft.

She looked at the price tag.

Then looked away.

"We need loungewear," I said.

"Yes."

"Something comfortable."

"Yes."

She was still holding the sweater.

"If you can stand looking at it for more than ten seconds," I said quietly, "it means you like it."

She turned her head quickly.

"I was only checking the material."

"You have been checking it for twenty seconds."

She looked back at the sweater.

"...That is not efficient."

"Comfort isn't about efficiency."

She fell silent.

Then, without a word, she took the sweater and went back into the fitting room.

The curtain swayed gently, leaving me in a few seconds of silence, wondering if the girl who treated shopping like a military operation would finally let her guard down for a tiny character holding an umbrella.

Chapter 34: A Lighter Smile

Behind the swaying cream curtain, a quiet battle between military efficiency and nine-year-old childhood was about to reach its conclusion.

The curtain swayed gently.

A few seconds of silence.

Then—

The curtain opened.

Yuna stepped out.

The sweater was slightly too big. The sleeves covered half of her hands.

She stood in front of the mirror.

Tugged at the ends of the sleeves.

Then, unconsciously—

She did a little spin.

One spin.

Quick.

As if to make sure the fabric moved with her.

She stopped.

Looked at me.

Her expression grew serious again.

"Is it not too... childish?"

I looked at her for a few seconds.

The sweater did indeed feature a small character with an umbrella.

It was clearly not "neutral."

"You are nine," I said.

"Yes."

"That falls under the children's category."

She looked at the mirror again.

Her hand smoothed her own hair.

"What if it is only worn at home?"

"That is the function of loungewear."

She was quiet.

Staring at her own reflection.

Then she asked quietly—

"It doesn't look weird?"

"No."

She looked at me a few seconds longer than usual.

As if making sure I wasn't joking.

I wasn't.

A few seconds later—

The corners of her lips lifted slightly.

Not a practiced smile.

Not a formal smile.

Something lighter.

"Alright," she said quietly.

Her hands were still gripping the ends of the sleeves as she went back into the fitting room.

The curtain pulled shut once more.

The sweater was secured, but as the curtain closed, I knew the two-page list folded perfectly in her bag was still far from finished—and the "optional but recommended" items were waiting to test my budget next.

Chapter 35: The Center of the Storage System

I had assumed the clothing store would be the hardest part of the day. I was wrong. The moment we stepped out onto the sidewalk, I realized the real challenge was just beginning.

The stationery store was two doors down from the clothing shop.

The door opened with the light chime of a small bell as we walked in.

The shelves here were packed much tighter.

The colors were far more aggressive.

Clear plastic. Glitter. Animal characters with smiles that were just a little too wide.

Yuna stopped dead in front of the very first shelf.

"I'll start with the pencil cases," she said.

"Why start there?"

"It is the center of the storage system."

"Sounds like a filing cabinet."

"That is its function."

She stepped closer.

Rows of pencil cases hung on display.

Single-compartment models. Double-compartments. Trifold. Magnetic. Double-zippered. Transparent. Patterned.

Yuna took down a plain blue one.

Opened it.

Closed it.

Pulled the zipper.

Tested it again.

Put it back.

She picked up a transparent model with little specks of glitter inside.

Gave it a little shake.

The tiny grains drifted like fake snow.

She watched it for just a little longer than necessary.

Then she looked at the price tag.

Put it back.

I stood beside her, hands in my pockets.

"This is harder than picking out an apartment," I said.

"The pencil case determines study efficiency."

"You're only in fourth grade."

"It's still important."

She picked up a two-tiered model decorated with tiny rabbit characters.

Opened it.

Inside, there were little slots for pencils, pens, and erasers.

She touched the slots, one by one.

"The structure is good," she muttered.

"Are you interviewing it?"

"No."

She compared three models at once.

Her eyes darted back and forth.

Her hands took turns opening and closing them.

Ten minutes passed.

I shifted my weight from my left foot to my right.

"The clock is ticking," I said.

"I'm almost done."

That was five minutes ago.

She finally settled on a plain navy-blue model.

"This is neutral."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

Her hands stopped.

Her eyes flicked to another side of the shelf.

A cream-colored pencil case with a small embroidery of a cat holding a piece of bread.

She didn't grab it right away.

Just looked.

Then looked back at the blue pencil case in her hands.

Then back to the cream one.

She took it.

Opened it slowly.

The inner lining was a soft pastel.

She closed it again.

Checked the price tag.

Fell silent.

Put it back in its place.

Picked it up again.

I observed without comment.

She held her breath for a split second.

"...Functionally, they are the same," she said quietly.

"Yes."

"This one is more expensive."

"Yes."

"The blue one is more rational."

"Yes."

She was still holding the cream one.

Her hand simply wouldn't set it down.

"If you pick it up for a third time," I said, "it's no longer a matter of rationality."

She froze.

Looked at me.

"I was just comparing them."

"You've already compared them three times."

She stared at the pencil case.

Then, with a swift motion—

put it back on the shelf.

"I'll take the blue one."

"All right."

She turned away from the shelf, gripping the plain blue case tightly. Too tightly. She had won the battle against her own desires for the sake of logic, but looking at her stiff shoulders as she walked away, I knew the war was far from over.

Chapter 36: Diplomacy with Yourself

We moved on to the pencil aisle.

Rows of 2B pencils sat neatly organized in boxes.

Yuna took a box of twelve.

Read the description.

"The wood is soft," she murmured.

"Are you planning to whittle them?"

"No."

She dropped it into the small shopping basket we'd picked up by the entrance.

Next, the eraser rack.

There were plain white erasers.

And there were ones shaped like little animals.

Cats. Pandas. Bears.

She stopped in front of a small, gray cat-shaped eraser.

Her eyes widened a fraction.

She picked one up.

Pressed it with her finger.

Squishy.

Turned it over.

Checked the price.

Silent.

"Functionally," she said quietly, "the white ones can erase just as well."

"True."

She grabbed a plain white eraser.

Dropped it into the basket.

The cat eraser was still in her hand.

She stared at it again.

Then, slowly, returned it to the shelf.

Her fingers lingered on it for a few seconds longer than necessary.

I grabbed two of the cat erasers and dropped them into the basket.

One landed softly against the pencil box.

Yuna froze.

"That's not necessary," she said quickly.

"One is for function," I said.

I picked up the other one.

"And one is for diplomacy."

"Diplomacy with whom?"

"With yourself."

She stared at the eraser.

Then stared at me.

"Papa is inconsistent."

"I am flexible."

She fell silent.

A few seconds later—

"In that case... one is enough."

"We already have two."

She tried to sound rational.

"Two is excessive."

"We might lose one."

She looked at the erasers again.

Then, very quietly—

"In that case... this one is to use. The other is to keep."

"Diplomacy successful."

The corner of her lips twitched.

Just a fraction.

It wasn't a formal smile.

More like a tiny sense of satisfaction she was trying to hold back.

She took the basket and walked toward the notebook aisle.

Her steps were just a little lighter than before.

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The line at the cashier was short, but for Yuna, it was the final exam of the day. Every item in the basket had to justify its existence, and the judge was a nine-year-old girl staring intensely at the register screen.

The small basket in Yuna's hands felt heavier now than before—or perhaps that was just my imagination after watching its contents grow little by little.

A blue pencil case.

Two cat erasers.

One white eraser.

A box of 2B pencils.

Notebooks.

A ruler.

A water bottle.

And the sweater with the little character holding an umbrella, folded neatly at the bottom.

Yuna stood straight beside me.

Her eyes didn't look forward.

They looked into the basket.

Calculating.

Her lips moved softly, making no sound.

The cashier in front of us finished serving another customer.

"Next."

We stepped up.

The items were placed onto the counter, one by one.

Beep.

Beep.

Beep.

The sound of the scanner was consistent.

Yuna watched the small screen displaying the numbers.

Every time a "beep" sounded, the total went up.

Beep.

Beep.

The numbers changed again.

Her eyes darted rapidly.

Recalculating in her head.

I just stood there.

Hands in my pockets.

Calm.

The sweater was scanned last.

Beep.

The final total appeared.

Yuna froze for a fraction of a second.

Not shocked.

Not panicking.

Just stopping.

Then she calculated quickly once more.

Her lips barely moved.

I pulled a card from my wallet.

No comments yet.

The cashier smiled politely.

"Your total is..."

I immediately handed over the card.

Yuna turned to me.

"Papa didn't think it over first?"

"I already thought it over."

"When?"

"While you were comparing pencil cases for twenty minutes."

She fell silent.

The card terminal beeped quietly as the transaction processed.

Yuna was still looking at the screen.

"Still within reasonable limits," she murmured.

"Yes."

"We could have put back one eraser."

"A little cat won't bankrupt us."

She looked at me.

"I don't think it would."

"Good."

The transaction finished.

The cashier began placing the items into a plastic bag.

"Your daughter is very meticulous," she said amiably.

Yuna immediately stood a little straighter.

"I am simply ensuring there is no waste."

Her tone was neat. Practiced.

The cashier's smile widened.

"That's wonderful. Kids your age are rarely like that."

Yuna gave a small nod.

"Efficiency is important."

I took the shopping bags.

"Yes. She's more meticulous than I am."

Yuna snapped her head toward me.

"Papa isn't meticulous?"

"I choose not to care too much."

"That's not a strategy."

"It's a lifestyle."

The cashier chuckled, probably assuming this was normal banter between a father and daughter.

To an outsider, it was.

We walked out of the store, the little bell chiming behind us. We had successfully purchased the items, but judging by the look on Yuna's face, the transaction regarding the "value" of those items was far from over.

Chapter 38: Not a Reward System

The cool air outside usually cleared my head, but it didn't seem to stop Yuna's overthinking. She walked with a specific rhythm—the rhythm of someone who still had questions that needed logical answers.

Yuna walked beside me.

For the first few steps, she remained silent.

Then—

"Papa."

"Hm."

"If the total had been higher earlier... would you still have paid?"

"Yes."

Without hesitation.

She stared straight ahead.

"Without reconsidering?"

"I was already considering it while you were choosing."

She stopped walking for a single second.

"So you aren't worried?"

"About what?"

"That it was too much?"

"We buy what we chose."

She fell silent.

Her steps matched mine again.

A few seconds later—

"If I get good grades... can I buy another cute eraser?"

I stared straight ahead.

"You can buy one even if you don't get good grades."

She stopped immediately.

"Why?"

"Erasers are not a reward system."

She processed the sentence.

For a few seconds.

Then—

"That's not educational."

"Maybe."

"It doesn't build motivation."

"Maybe."

"Then why?"

"You like them."

She looked at me for a long moment.

Her face changed slightly.

Not a practiced expression.

Not a formal face.

Softer.

"Oh."

Just that.

She started walking again.

Her steps were slightly closer to me than before.

I had three shopping bags in my hands.

One held clothes.

One held stationery.

One held miscellaneous small items.

Yuna held the lightest bag.

It contained the erasers and notebooks.

"Are we going straight home?" she asked.

"Yes."

"We don't need to buy anything else?"

"We've almost cleared your list."

"Almost?"

"We haven't bought soap refills."

"That can wait."

"That is an inefficient statement."

"We don't live solely to be efficient."

She stayed quiet for a moment.

We walked through the corridor of the small shopping center. The polished floors reflected the overhead lights. The voices of people blended into a soft hum.

A few steps later—

Yuna's pace slowed slightly.

Nothing drastic.

Just half a step behind me.

I didn't look back.

A few seconds passed.

Her steps grew shorter.

"Papa."

"Hm."

"How long... have we been walking?"

"Not long."

"Oh."

Two more steps.

"Papa."

"Hm."

"If we sat down for a bit... would that count as inefficient?"

"Yes."

She fell silent.

"But is it allowed?"

"It is."

I spotted a bench near the exit. It wasn't on our schedule, and stopping now would delay our return home by at least ten minutes. But looking at Yuna's slightly dragging feet, I knew efficiency was about to take a backseat to necessity.

Chapter 39: Diplomacy Successful

The bench was hard and cold, facing the glass doors where the evening light was starting to fade. It was a pause in our mission, a stillness in the middle of a moving crowd where the only thing that mattered was catching our breath.

Near the exit, there was a long bench facing outside. I stopped there.

Yuna sat down slowly.

Her feet didn't quite reach the floor.

She swung them a little.

Not on purpose.

A reflex.

I stood for a moment.

Then I sat beside her.

I placed the shopping bags by my feet.

She stared straight ahead.

For a few seconds.

Then leaned back a little.

"Tired?" I asked.

"No."

Silence.

Then—

"A little."

"That means tired."

"I am just not used to walking this long."

"You were the one who chose to look at every shelf."

"That was part of the process."

"You enjoyed the process."

She turned her head quickly.

"I didn't say that."

"But you looked at the stationery shelves like you were sightseeing."

She fell silent.

For a few seconds.

"...The eraser is cute."

"Yes."

"We really bought two."

"Yes."

She looked down slightly, peering into the small bag in her hands.

She reached inside.

Pulled out one of the cat erasers.

She held it with both hands.

Observing its tiny details.

"We didn't need to buy two," she said softly.

"We already did."

She pressed the eraser with her thumb.

The little piece of rubber bounced back to its original shape.

Suddenly, she smiled.

Not a polite smile.

Not a formal smile.

Wider.

"If I lose this one, I still have another."

"Yes."

"That's a good strategy."

"You called it diplomacy."

"Diplomacy is also a strategy."

She let out a small laugh.

Not a suppressed sound.

Not a calculated one.

Light.

A few passersby glanced over briefly, then moved on.

Yuna stopped laughing.

Then she looked at me.

"Papa."

"Hm."

"You never look tired."

"I am tired."

"But your face is exactly the same."

"This is my default face."

She studied my face for a few seconds.

As if trying to spot a difference.

Then she said softly—

"If I look tired, does my face change?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Your steps slow down."

She fell silent.

Stared straight ahead again.

Then, in an even quieter tone—

"I didn't realize."

"That's because you're nine years old."

She didn't argue.

A few seconds of silence.

Then she stood up first.

"I've rested enough."

"It's only been two minutes."

"It's enough."

She gripped her small bag again.

But this time—

As we started walking out the automatic doors—

She walked a little closer to me.

Not touching.

Just closing the distance.

Her hand almost brushed the edge of my jacket.

Accidentally.

Or perhaps a little intentionally.

"Papa."

"Hm."

"Shopping isn't as simple as a list, it turns out."

"No."

"The list looked easier."

"All lists look easy."

She thought for a moment.

Then said softly—

"In that case... today was quite successful."

"We didn't lose anything."

"Except energy."

"That can be recharged."

She nodded.

The automatic doors opened.

The late afternoon air greeted us.

She gripped her small bag tighter.

And without looking at me, said—

"Tomorrow, I want to organize the stationery myself."

"You were the one who picked them out."

"Yes."

Her steps did not lag behind anymore. The distance between us had closed, both physically and perhaps in a way neither of us could quite calculate yet.

Chapter 40: Kitchen Operation 05:00 AM

The alarm went off at exactly five o'clock.

I turned it off on the first ring.

No snooze button.

Snoozing only delays what must be done anyway.

I got up in a single motion and headed straight for the apartment's small kitchen.

I turned on the gas stove.

Click.

Fwoosh.

The kitchen in this apartment wasn't big. If I stood in the middle, I could touch the fridge and the sink without taking a single step.

Quite efficient.

The water began to heat up.

I took a boiled chicken breast out of the fridge, cutting it into square pieces.

Simple.

Protein.

Quiet.

The sliding door to the bedroom opened slowly.

I didn't turn around.

Small footsteps stopped at the threshold of the kitchen.

"Papa."

"Hm."

I placed the pieces of chicken on the cutting board.

When I turned to look, Yuna was already standing there.

Her school uniform was perfectly neat.

Navy blue pleated skirt.

White shirt.

Her hair tied back cleanly.

The clock still read 05:02.

"You woke up too early."

"I didn't want to be late."

"School starts in two and a half hours."

"Preparation is important."

She smiled.

Her smile was wide.

Too wide.

Like someone posing for a photo.

I pointed at the cutting board.

"If you want to help, cut the broccoli."

She immediately stepped forward.

"Three centimeters in size."

She stopped.

"...Three?"

I took a plastic ruler from the drawer.

"Use this."

She accepted the ruler with both hands.

Like receiving an important document.

The boiled broccoli was placed on the cutting board.

Yuna looked down.

Measuring.

Sliding the knife slowly.

Slice.

She lifted the first piece.

Looked at the ruler.

A little too big.

She cut it again.

"Precision is important," she muttered.

I scooped rice into the gray bento box.

The box wasn't cute.

There were no pictures of pandas.

No pastel-colored lid.

Plain gray.

Like a storage box for bolts.

I began packing the rice on one side.

Compact.

Even.

The chicken pieces were arranged next to it.

The broccoli would go into the remaining space.

A simple rolled omelet was placed in to seal the gaps.

Everything was packed tight.

No empty space.

Beside me, Yuna was still measuring the broccoli.

Slice.

Check the ruler.

Slice again.

"Are bentos usually... arranged like this?" she asked.

"Yes."

"No... decorations?"

"No."

"No octopus sausages?"

"No."

She fell silent.

The knife stopped for a moment.

Then she resumed slicing.

The last piece of broccoli went into the box.

I pressed it down slightly so it would fit into the gap.

The bento box now looked like a food Tetris block.

Compact.

Organized.

Efficient.

Yuna stood beside me.

Her hands still holding the ruler.

She looked inside the box.

For a long time.

A very long time.

She gave a small swallow.

The corners of her lips twitched upward.

A smile.

A bit stiff.

"I-It's very... compact, Papa."

I closed the lid of the box.

Click.

Airtight.

"A sound structure prevents destruction when dropped."

Yuna blinked.

"...Dropped?"

"The possibility always exists."

She looked at the bento box again.

Her hands slowly placed the ruler on the counter.

Her smile was still there.

But her fingertips began to nervously grip the hem of her uniform.

Just a little.
