

ACCIDENTALLY BECOME A FATHER

Chapter 8: The Purchase That Made It Real

"Papa, you pick."

"Why me?"

"So the color won't be too loud."

I surveyed the available options.

Solid gray.

Navy blue.

Brown.

"Gray," I said.

She stepped closer to check the price tag.

"Is it expensive?"

"It's still within the painless threshold."

"Does Papa have a lot of money?"

"No."

"Then why are you so calm?"

"Because panicking doesn't increase your bank balance."

She fell silent for a moment.

Then said quietly,

"I can use the cheapest one."

I looked down at her.

Her expression was neutral, but entirely too neutral for a nine-year-old.

"Gray," I repeated. "This one."

I picked up one of the rolls.

Not too thick.

Standard.

Yuna gave a small nod.

As if the decision wasn't about color, but about something much larger.

As we made our way to the register, she walked a little closer to me again.

She didn't hold my jacket this time.

But the distance was practically the same.

The cashier glanced at us.

Looked at the futon.

Looked at Yuna.

Then went back to the register screen.

Didn't ask a single thing.

Good.

After paying, I carried the rolled-up futon under my arm.

Yuna stared at it as if she were looking at something official.

"We really bought it," she said quietly.

"Yeah."

"Does that mean I'm really staying?"

I looked at the automatic sliding doors opening in front of us.

The night air greeted us once again.

"You've made it this far," I said.

She walked out first this time.

Two steps ahead of me.

Then stopped.

Turned.

Waited for me to catch up.

And for the first time that night,

she walked without holding onto my jacket.
