

## **An Idle Complaint**

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I hate chores. Mom always makes me do everything just because I'm the eldest. Sweeping, taking out the trash, helping with the dishes, it's always me stuck with the lousy jobs. Meanwhile, my little brother can play around all day, or stay cooped up in his room like he does now. Must be nice. It's even worse, now that she's away. "You're the man of the house now. Take care of your little brother". Like I haven't already been doing that since he was born! But now I have to do everything else, too. Cooking? Me. Cleaning? All me. And now I have to deal with snow, too! Who ever heard of snow in August? We may have a roof, but it leaks when it rains, and this snow melts as soon as it touches it. All day running around with pots and pans to stop those leaks, and the melted snow is so dirty that it ruins everything it touches. I tried washing them, but it's like the soot became a part of the metal. Mom was only supposed to be gone for a few days, but I really don't know how I'll manage. If only Dad were still around, he'd know what to do.

We should have enough food for a while, especially after I found some intact rice in that abandoned storehouse. The bags were burned on the outside, but the rice in the middle was fine! You wouldn't believe how happy I was when I found it, but Mom still wanted to find milk for the baby. I don't know why my sister can't just eat rice like the rest of us, but Mom was willing to leave us just for some milk. She can't breastfeed. Maybe because of stress? I don't really get it. I guess I shouldn't complain. It is all for my sister's sake after all, but I do miss them.

My little brother misses them as well. He doesn't speak that much nowadays. Maybe he's not as lively as he used to be, but he's getting better, I think. I know I complain about chores, but I don't mind taking care of him. I still don't like doing it, it's pretty gross to change the bandages, and the way his skin looks is scary, but Mom taught me how to disinfect the burns without needing to touch him. The hospitals are full of wounded, and they don't have enough medical supplies, so I'd much rather deal with some gross stuff than send my brother away to die like that. I wish he'd get up sometimes and maybe help me with the house, but the fallen beam has left him weak, so it's all up to me.

Not everything is bad news, though. My hair's growing back! After seeing that soldier with his hair falling out I was really scared the same thing would happen to me, but not only did I not die, it seems I beat whatever that sickness was. I didn't bleed, I didn't puke, and everything's doing just fine.

And even better, it looks like there won't be an invasion! The Emperor got on the radio and said we surrendered! I guess some people would consider this unpatriotic, but they haven't seen what I've seen. If we hadn't surrendered, the Americans would have kept doing what they did here and in Nagasaki. It's the war that killed my father, burned my brother, and destroyed our city. I don't care who won, I'm just glad this hell is over.