

## PAW 1501

Chapter 1501: Everything is ready

County Committee Compound.

The emergency standing committee meeting concluded.

After leaving the meeting room, Jiang Fangfang called Dong Xuebing, " Mayor Dong, come to my office in a moment." Then she walked away.

"Okay," Dong Xuebing replied.

Ci Boyang glanced at Dong Xuebing from behind, feeling extremely frustrated.

He had been wondering when this Dong surname became so noble. This official enthusiast took the initiative to unload responsibilities and handed over the Development and Reform Bureau, a relatively good department, to himself. Now Ci Boyang understood. Noble my foot, this Dong surname guy never had good intentions. Handing over the Development and Reform Commission was just a smokescreen. What he truly coveted was the science and technology department under his control. This Dong guy used the excuse of feeling unwell due to pressure to surreptitiously switch Ci Boyang's jurisdiction from the Science and Technology Bureau. It was downright despicable.

This bastard.

This is too damn outrageous.

A perfectly good achievement opportunity was snatched away. Ci Boyang was extremely annoyed.

This achievement would have been his if Ci Boyang had just held onto the science and technology department. But now, it was all for nothing. After managing the science and technology department for so many years without any results, Dong Xuebing had only been in charge for a few days and already achieved success. The beneficiaries of this experimental base should have been Ci Boyang alone. But now, with Dong Xuebing's scheming, the immediate beneficiaries were Dong Xuebing, Meng Rui, and Jiang Fangfang. The second beneficiary was the Science and Technology Bureau. Ci Boyang had no part in it at all. How could he not be angry? But now that things had come to this, he could do nothing. Ci Boyang could only be angry, but there was no solution.

Other county leaders glanced at Ci Boyang with some sympathy.

Ci Boyang fell into Dong Xuebing's trap this time, but there was nothing he could do. Dong Xuebing could connect with projects from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which was his capability. They couldn't envy him.

County Mayor's Office.

Dong Xuebing knocked on the door and entered, "County Mayor Jiang, you were looking for me?"

Jiang Fangfang didn't even look up, she was organizing meeting documents, "When did you make the contact?"

Dong Xuebing didn't need to hide anything from Jiang Fangfang. He smiled and said, "I ran into an old friend while I was in the capital last time. She worked at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and mentioned this matter in passing. I asked her to monitor it for our county and try to secure a site for

us. I forgot about it afterward and didn't pay much attention until a few days ago when I got back in touch. I took a few Chinese Academy of Sciences colleagues to inspect Qing Shui Township secretly. That's when things started falling into place. We're just waiting for confirmation from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. I didn't inform you earlier because things aren't finalized yet and there's still some uncertainty. I thought I'd secure the science and technology department first before telling you. Um, please don't be mad at me. I didn't intentionally keep it from you."

Jiang Fangfang said lightly, "It's not that serious."

Dong Xuebing glanced at her, "Ahem, you seem angry judging by your expression."

"I'm not. Why would I be angry?" Jiang Fangfang glanced into his eyes. "I'm just feeling a bit emotional. Although you've only been in Zhen Shui County for a little over four months, the achievements you've made in such a short time surpass what I, as the county mayor, have achieved in four years. I feel a bit ashamed. All county leaders, including Secretary Meng, should also feel ashamed. Thank you, Xuebing. Suppose Zhen Shui County can remove the title of a national-level impoverished county in the future. In that case, I think the people should not thank Secretary Meng or me but rather you, the deputy county mayor in charge of daily affairs."

Dong Xuebing felt embarrassed, "Look at what you're saying. Without your guidance and overall planning, I wouldn't have been able to carry out my work. It's everyone's effort, not just mine."

Jiang Fangfang smiled, "Very modest."

"Hehe, I'm just modest and steady," Dong Xuebing boasted.

Jiang Fangfang said, "Alright, you've been busy these days. Go on."

"Okay, if there are any updates, I'll call you," Dong Xuebing said.

After leaving the county mayor's office, Dong Xuebing called Yao Cui, "Hey, Chief Yao, why so formal? You've taken office, so I should address you this way. Have you heard about the matter concerning the experimental base? Yeah, the Chinese Academy of Sciences people will arrive this afternoon. The initial communication is crucial. Please pay attention to it. After I meet with them this afternoon, I'll take them to your Qing Shui Township. You'll still be in charge of the work there. As for the future project development, I'll mainly entrust it to you, Qing Shui Township. The county has set up a special team; I'm the team leader. You should also join." Where the benefits are plentiful, Dong Xuebing naturally prioritizes his people.

He made a few more calls to assign tasks.

After finishing these tasks, Dong Xuebing, feeling confident, finally went downstairs to the canteen for a meal. The canteen was about to close, and the food was already cold, but Dong Xuebing didn't mind. He didn't ask the canteen staff to reheat the food. He just took his meal box and found a corner to eat.

He was the only one in the canteen.

Looking around, Dong Xuebing took out his phone and eagerly called his mother-in-law.

Ring, ring, ring.

The phone connected.

"Hello, um, Mom."

"What's up on your end?"

"Oh, um, I'm having my meal."

"Then finish your meal before calling. What's the rush? Is there an urgent matter?"

"Yes, Mom, you promised me last time, right? I'd be confirmed in my position if I can secure another decent political achievement. Well, our county has just secured the construction project of a new experimental base from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. I'm in charge of the science and technology department and currently negotiating. The project has been confirmed, and it will have a long-term driving effect on the scientific and technological development of Zhen Shui County. Not to mention the various chain effects. These are all achievements. As the coordinator of this project and the government's representative, my contribution is undeniable, don't you agree?" Dong Xuebing, without any reserve, launched into a lengthy self-praise.

Han Jing found him amusing and criticized, "You little rascal, you call this urgent? You haven't even finished your meal, and you're already boasting to me. Not at all mature."

"Hey, what's the need for maturity between you and me? I'm just feeling homesick and missing you, that's all. I'm eager to come back."

"You're so sweet-talking. Haha, I heard about the experimental base from Lizhen yesterday. You are something. You even managed to convince Lizhen. Originally, I wanted you to achieve something solid by working honestly. But you've gone and resorted to underhanded methods."

"How is this underhanded, Mom? I did this for the sake of the hundreds of thousands of people in our county, using my connections to bring in projects."

Han Jing chuckled, "You always have an answer for everything."

"Mom, how about my transfer?"

"Alright, focus on getting your work done diligently first. I will ask around for you."

"Haha, thanks, Mom."

Chapter 1502: The transfer order is out

One day.

Another day.

In the blink of an eye, a month passed.

This morning, inside a simple guesthouse in Qing Shui Township, Dong Xuebing lifted the somewhat yellowed thin blanket off the bed, fetched a pot of hot water, and then returned to quickly brush his teeth and tidy up. After that, he grabbed his bag and headed downstairs, ready to leave.

Downstairs, a female attendant from the guesthouse approached him.

"Oh, Mayor Dong."

"Ah, Xiao Huang, you're up early."

"How come you're up, and I haven't brought you water yet?"

"Hehe, I just stayed overnight yesterday and didn't want to trouble you."

"No trouble at all. Chief Yao specifically instructed us. Let me get you some breakfast. It's all ready. I was worried you hadn't woken up, so I didn't dare to call you just now."

"Thank you, but I won't be eating."

"You can't refuse. Otherwise, the leaders might criticize me."

"If they do, just give me a call, and I'll criticize them instead, hehe."

"You work so hard. Skipping breakfast is not an option. I'll get it, and I'll be back in two minutes. Just two minutes."

"Alright, thank you."

"Don't mention it. It's my duty."

Xiao Huang hurried off to fetch breakfast. Soon, Dong Xuebing picked up the breakfast and quickly walked out, hailing a taxi. After closing the car door, he stuffed a hot steamed bun into his mouth, chewed while stepping on the gas, and headed straight for the Experimental Base of the Chinese Academy of Sciences site selection.

At nine o'clock.

At the foot of Qing Shui Mountain.

This area had already been fenced off, and construction materials and trucks filled the site, indicating that construction had been underway for many days.

On-site, Yao Cui, other township leaders, and comrades from the Chinese Academy of Sciences were present.

Dong Xuebing got out of the car and greeted them. "Everyone's here."

The township secretary hurriedly greeted him with a smile. "Mayor Dong, we're waiting for you to assign tasks."

Dong Xuebing smiled and waved his hand. "What tasks do I need to assign? Let's listen to the opinions of the Chinese Academy of Sciences comrades."

One of the heads of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Experimental Base said, "Mayor Dong, you're too polite. We only handle technical issues, while other command work is up to the local government. Before we came here, Academician Zhong instructed us to respect the opinions of the local government when there are differences. The plan has been roughly finalized, and now we're here to cooperate."

Dong Xuebing smiled. "You're being too courteous. We local officials are not familiar with sophisticated technology. It would be chaotic if we were to take the lead. The main responsibility lies with you. If there are any specific needs, such as soundproofing layers or special materials for the outer walls of the experiment, inform the specialized team, and they will handle the communication and implementation. Every detail of this important project must be meticulous. If any issues arise in the execution, you can hold me accountable."

Both sides exchanged pleasantries.

This cooperation between the local government and the Chinese Academy of Sciences was harmonious.

After the discussion, a military truck carrying unique materials slowly approached, escorted by soldiers. Although they weren't armed, their military uniforms still exerted some pressure on those present. Seeing this, the person in charge of the Chinese Academy of Sciences quickly bid farewell to Dong Xuebing and went up to sign for the materials. After confirming everything was in order, the soldiers began unloading the truck.

Most of the materials were likely classified. Even though Dong Xuebing was the head of the specialized team, he couldn't access them. He wasn't particularly curious either, so he walked to another area and inspected the construction progress. He noticed many aspects of the construction progress differed from ordinary building procedures. For example, the foundation was much deeper than that of the dormitory project nearby, and there seemed to be several layers of unnamed fillers inside, some white and some pink, possibly radiation-resistant materials.

"Dong Mayor."

"Chief Yao."

"Hehe, come over for a moment."

Dong Xuebing called Yao Cui over alone and said, "I've been supervising this area for a month now, and the planning has been finalized. There shouldn't be any issues moving forward. However, I still have a lot of work to do in our county, so I can't be here every day. Therefore, you will be the main person in charge of this project. You're closer and can dedicate more time to it. If there are any problems, report them to the specialized team or the county. Also, let the Chinese Academy of Sciences comrades handle the materials and construction methods on their own. We don't need to ask or know about them. As for security, you need to ensure it's done properly. The area has already been fenced off to prevent unauthorized access. This is crucial and must be taken seriously."

As a secretary, Yao Cui took out a small notebook and diligently wrote down Dong Xuebing's instructions. "Alright, I understand."

She was dressed formally today, wearing a dark-colored women's suit, giving off a stable and mature vibe. She was starting to look more and more like a deputy mayor.

Dong Xuebing was pleased for her.

Ring, ring, ring, the phone rang.

Checking the caller ID, Dong Xuebing's expression changed slightly, showing a hint of nervousness. Before answering the call, he walked away from the crowd to a more secluded area.

"Hello, Dad," Dong Xuebing said, swallowing nervously.

His father-in-law's voice was as stern as ever. "Is it convenient to talk?"

Dong Xuebing glanced around. "Yes, it is. Go ahead."

Xie Guobang hummed. "How's the work going?"

"It's all going well. The investment projects have been finalized, and the dormitory and experimental base projects are underway without any issues. Everything is on track."

Xie Guobang said, "Good. Start preparing for the handover of your work and pack your bags."

"Um, are you saying..."

"You've been on grassroots training for five months now. It's time to come back."

Although Dong Xuebing had already received assurance from Han Jing, he couldn't help but feel excited when he heard Xie Guobang say this. "Thank you, Dad."

"No need to thank me. It's what you deserve. A cadre who has only been in office for a few months has single-handedly turned around the situation in the entire county, almost removing the county's national-level poverty designation. What kind of cadre should be promoted if not someone like you?" Xie Guobang praised Dong Xuebing's capability, then chuckled, "And if we don't bring you back soon, my eardrums will be burst by Huilan's nagging." He paused for a moment. "Get ready to come back. Your family misses you."

"Ah."

Dong Xuebing felt a warm glow in his heart. His in-laws were genuinely good to him, making him feel the warmth of family again. Who said that marriages across social classes would inevitably lead to conflicts within the family? Often, such families would be more tolerant and understanding in their dealings with others, especially those of higher social status.

After hanging up the phone, Dong Xuebing didn't continue inspecting the site. Instead, he bid farewell to the township cadres and the Chinese Academy of Sciences comrades before heading towards his car.

Yao Cui followed him to see him off.

Dong Xuebing glanced at her and whispered, "In the future, take care of yourself. If there's anything you need, you can talk to Mayor Jiang. And if that doesn't work, call me."

Yao Cui was taken aback. "Xuebing, what do you mean?" Then, she realized, "Are you suddenly getting promoted? Where are you going?"

"To Beijing," Dong Xuebing replied.

Yao Cui smiled. "Returning in triumph. Congratulations."

"Oh, come on. I'm still reluctant to leave this place, especially you, my old classmate. I'll miss you a lot," Dong Xuebing joked.

Yao Cui chuckled. "Stop teasing me. You're probably overjoyed to leave. I don't know when you plan to have a farewell dinner."

"Why does it sound so gloomy?"

"If you want it to sound better, call it a 'success and retirement dinner.'"

"Hehe, it should be in the next few days. I'll contact everyone then."

"Okay, I'll be waiting. Oh, I'm happy for you."

Morning.

At the office.

Dong Xuebing returned to the county party committee compound.

As soon as he got out of the car, many cadres and staff members came up to greet him.

"Mayor Dong."

"Congratulations."

"I heard you're getting promoted. Congratulations."

It seemed that news had spread after receiving notification from higher-ups. Such matters couldn't be kept secret for long. The news would inevitably leak out after the procedures with the City organization department. Dong Xuebing's promotion surprised everyone, but it wasn't entirely unexpected. With such significant achievements during his tenure in Zhen Shui County, his promotion as mayor was well-deserved.

Dong Xuebing responded calmly, "It's not confirmed yet. I'm unsure about the details, but thank you all."

Upstairs.

Dong Xuebing went to the county mayor's office, where Jiang Fangfang made tea for herself. The aroma of the tea reminded Dong Xuebing of the Da Hong Pao he had given her before.

"Sister Jiang," Dong Xuebing sat down.

Jiang Fangfang smiled and pushed a teacup towards him. "You're leaving?"

Dong Xuebing took the cup, drank it in one gulp, and then nodded. "Possibly going back to Beijing."

"Has your unit been decided?" Jiang Fangfang asked.

Dong Xuebing shook his head. "Not yet. It should be a nominal position."

Jiang Fangfang sighed softly, then took a sip of tea and looked at him. "I thought you would stay for at least a year or two. I didn't expect you to leave before even six months."

"Sorry."

"What's there to be sorry about?"

"I might not be able to come by your mother's place as often."

"It's okay. Just come back when you can." Jiang Fangfang said earnestly, "Zhen Shui County will always be your home, and the people here will always remember your kindness."

"You're being too kind. I'm just reluctant to leave you," Dong Xuebing said emotionally. "If it weren't for my wife about to give birth and need me to go back to watch over her, I'd want to stay and do more for the people here. Anyway, let's not talk about these empty words. If you ever need me in the future, call me. Although Beijing is far away, I don't want to lose contact with you. Besides, it's only a few hours' flight away. Whenever I have time, I'll come back."

Jiang Fangfang smiled and nodded, "Alright."

Chapter 1503: One smile erases all enmity

The next day.

The transfer order had come down.

In the morning, Dong Xuebing arrived at the office early. After entering his own office, he began to leisurely pack his things, put them into a small cardboard box, organize documents, and label them with the departments they needed to be handed over to.

A few months.

Not too long, not too short.

Dong Xuebing had developed quite an attachment to this place. Although he had eagerly awaited a promotion and transfer back, he felt reluctant to leave now that the moment had arrived. He evaluated his work achievements and various aspects during his tenure in Zhen Shui County. After some contemplation, he scored eighty out of a hundred, considering himself entirely satisfactory. His work achievements were undeniable; he had always performed exceptionally well, seldom making mistakes. Dong Xuebing was most satisfied with his personal growth over the past half year. After experiencing many things, he became more composed and no longer impulsive. Well, at least he had toned down a lot. Dong Xuebing considered this progress. He taught him a lot during his six months here, laying a solid foundation for his future development. So, Dong Xuebing was thankful for this place, grateful to the people of Zhen Shui County, whether they loved him or not, whether they hated him or liked him. In short, it was a myriad of emotions.

Knock, knock, knock.

The sound of knocking on the door.

Secretary Zhang Feng entered, "Mayor Dong, oh, packing up?"

Dong Xuebing smiled, "Secretary Zhang, you're here so early. I thought I was the only one in the office."

"No, Secretary Meng is here too. When he saw your car, he asked me to come and fetch you," Zhang Feng said.

"Okay, let's go then," Dong Xuebing didn't dawdle anymore, putting down his things and following Zhang Feng out of the office and into the Party secretary's office.

Inside.

Secretary Zhang closed the door and left.

Only Secretary Meng Rui and Dong Xuebing remained behind the desk.

"Xuebing, please have a seat. Let's chat," Secretary Meng Rui said with a smile.

"Sure," Dong Xuebing sat down and noticed that Secretary Meng Rui had changed how he addressed him.

Meng Rui looked at him, somewhat regretfully, and said, "Actually, when I received the notice from above, and the leaders from the Organization Department asked for my opinion, I hesitated for a long time. Do you know what I wanted to say at that time? I wanted to tell the City Organization Department and the county Party committee not to transfer you. But in the end, I nodded. Xuebing, I'm about twenty years older than you. After this transfer, we'll be at the same level. But let's not talk about rank or position, just age. I should be considered your elder."

Dong Xuebing nodded, "Of course."



Meng Rui continued, "You're about to leave. There are some things that I may not have the chance to say anymore. Before you go, I want to criticize you a bit. You, kid, have a powerful personality. You're ambitious, emotional, and straightforward. These qualities are good. They're strengths. But when placed within the system, especially in your case, in certain specific situations, these may not necessarily be strengths. They often become your weaknesses."

Dong Xuebing sighed, "I admit that it's true."

Meng Rui pointed at him, "If you continue like this, you'll suffer sooner or later. Take when you first took office, for example. How many troubles did you cause? You dared to challenge even the city leaders and would turn hostile at the drop of a hat. Look at how many people you've offended in our county. Sometimes, you've exasperated me. Your mouth can be infuriating. Several times, you almost gave me hypertension."

Dong Xuebing coughed, "Well, I'm young and hot-headed. You shouldn't compare yourself to me."

Meng Rui chuckled, "But it's strange. Your foul temper and stubbornness make you unparalleled in terms of work capability. I've been in politics for nearly twenty years, and I've never seen a young person as capable as you, not among our peers nor us old folks. Look at how Zhen Shui County was before and after you arrived six months ago. It's like night and day. Yesterday, I talked to County Mayor Jiang, and I think what she said was spot on. We old folks who've been running Zhen Shui County for so many years, what achievements have we made for the people? We should all feel ashamed. So, you're someone I both love and hate. That's my evaluation of you. I feel like kicking you out when I'm angry, but now that you're really leaving, I suddenly feel reluctant."

Honestly, Dong Xuebing hadn't expected Meng Rui to speak to him suddenly in such a manner. For a moment, he was moved. "It's my fault. I tend to get fixated on things and am unwilling to back down. Many things aren't simply choosing between option A or option B. I tend to argue my point and rarely consider things from others' perspectives. I'll pay more attention to this in the future. Secretary Meng, if I've offended you in the past, please don't hold it against me."

Meng Rui waved his hand, "In fact, there are many issues in how we've handled things and communicated with each other."

"It's mostly my fault."

"Hehe, it takes two to tango."

Over the past six months, Dong Xuebing and Meng Rui have experienced many conflicts, differences, and even conflicts more than once. But now, as they spoke, they both smiled slightly and with one smile, they erased all enmity. The various grievances of the past seemed to vanish.

"When's your flight?"

"I drove here, so naturally, I'll drive back. My car is quite expensive; I can't just leave it here. But there's no rush. I'm planning to leave next week. I specifically requested some time off. I'll be reporting to my new position a month later. These days, I'll treat everyone to a meal individually. Thank you all for your help over the past six months."

"Is the handover of work going well?"

"It's almost done."

"Okay, let's meet tonight. I'll book a hotel, and we'll have a meal. Consider it a farewell party for you."

"No need for you to spend money. Haha, I'll book the hotel."

"I said I'll treat you, so don't argue with me. You don't need to worry about it. Just show up. This meal must be on me. First, it's to bid you farewell, and second, to thank you for your contributions to Zhen Shui County," Meng Rui said.

Dong Xuebing was pleasantly surprised, "That's too kind of you."

Meng Rui stood up, smiling, and patted Dong Xuebing on the shoulder, "You, a cadre at the Division level, not yet twenty-six years old. I don't know how many people will be shocked if this gets reported. I'm increasingly curious to see how far you, kid, can go."

#### Chapter 1504: Count down to departure

In the evening, Dong Xuebing had dinner with Secretary Meng at the hotel. His wife and children accompanied Secretary Meng. Eventually, several of Meng's allies, such as the Minister of Organization, Liao Haiwei, and the Director of the County Committee Office, Jiang Hai, also arrived to bid farewell to Dong Xuebing. Since Dong Xuebing and Secretary Meng had reconciled earlier in the day, Dong Xuebing no longer harbored such strong opinions against Secretary Meng and his allies. With his transfer imminent, Dong Xuebing felt unusually calm and even found some appreciation for his former political adversaries. Secretary Meng was still Secretary Meng, and Jiang Hai was still Jiang Hai, but Dong Xuebing's perspective on them had changed, leading to a shift in his feelings towards them.

"Here, Mayor Dong, let's have a drink."

"Sure, Secretary Meng, I'll toast to you first."

"Hehe, I heard you can hold your liquor well. Drink a bit more tonight."

"Alright, Minister Liao, Director Jiang, let's drink together."

"Mayor Dong, you have a bright future ahead. I wish you smooth sailing and continuous advancement."

"I'll take Minister Liao's good words. By the way, I won't be staying much longer. I still have quite a bit of tea at home. Since you're especially fond of tea, I'll send some over to you later."

"Great, I won't be polite then."

"Mayor Dong, Old Liao, we've been toasting for a while now. Let's finish our drinks."

"Alright, let's drink first. Cheers, cheers."

"Sister-in-law, I have not drunk with you yet. You can stick to tea; I'll drink."

"Why do I need to drink tea? Have a drink with me. Here, cheers."

"Alright, you are straightforward. I'll down it in one go, too."

After dinner, Dong Xuebing politely declined Secretary Meng's offer to arrange transportation for him and instead drove directly to Jiang Fangfang's mother's house.

Knock, knock, knock.

The door opened, and Jiang Fangfang came out.

Dong Xuebing was surprised. "Oh, you're here too."

Jiang Fangfang said, "I came to see my mom. What brings you here?"

"I also came to see our mom. Since I'm leaving soon, I wanted to bid her farewell." Although Dong Xuebing and Jiang Fangfang had been in cahoots to deceive the old lady, Jiang Fangfang's mother was an interesting old lady. Dong Xuebing couldn't leave without saying goodbye.

"Come in."

"Ah, mom is asleep?"

"Not yet. She just finished taking her medicine."

Inside, the nanny was also in the living room.

Jiang Fangfang told her, "Xiao Zhang, you can go home now since there's nothing to do today."

The nanny looked at Dong Xuebing strangely, said, "Oh," picked up her things, and left.

Jiang Fangfang then led Dong Xuebing to the bedroom. When the door opened, Jiang Fangfang's mother sat on the bed. Evidently, Jiang Fangfang had informed her about Dong Xuebing's impending departure. Jiang Fangfang's mother didn't look too pleased and didn't speak or acknowledge him.

Dong Xuebing forced a smile. "Mom."

Jiang Fangfang's mother was a little angry. "How come you're leaving after just returning a few months ago?"

Dong Xuebing chuckled, "It's the arrangement from the organization. I can't do anything about it."

"Xiao Tao has been promoted," Jiang Fangfang said, sitting down and patting her mother's hand. "It's a good thing."

Jiang Fangfang's mother snorted, "Always working, what about the family? What about your wife?"

"Mom," Dong Xuebing hurriedly said, "I promise to return whenever I have time. It won't take long to fly, and I'll return to see you and Fangfang."

Jiang Fangfang glanced at him. "How often will you come back?"

Dong Xuebing hesitated, "Once I've settled down, once I've settled down, I'll come back."

Jiang Fangfang said, "Mom, don't act like a child."

Jiang Fangfang's mother was annoyed. "I am a child; I don't want Xiao Tao to leave; it's not okay."

After talking for a while, Jiang Fangfang's mother's anger gradually subsided. She waved for Dong Xuebing to sit beside her. The old lady took his hand and said, "You're getting promoted so I won't say anything. You don't need to worry about me. You don't need to take care of anything here. The main thing is Fangfang. You two have been living apart for so long, and it's not ideal. When you go

over there, work hard and don't think about returning often. See if you can arrange for Fangfang to come over with you. That way, I'll feel relieved."

Dong Xuebing said, "Mom, that's not a problem. I know some people in Beijing. We'll work on it as long as things are settled here."

Jiang Fangfang looked at her daughter. "It's settled."

"I'm leaving, so who will take care of you?" Jiang Fangfang said.

Dong Xuebing interjected, "We can have Mom come to live in Beijing. Plus, the medical facilities in Beijing are good, and she can receive better medical care there."

Jiang Fangfang's mother said, "You don't need to worry about me."

Dong Xuebing said, "That's not okay. If you don't come, Fangfang won't leave you alone in Zhen Shui County. We won't be at ease either."

Jiang Fangfang looked at her daughter. "What do you think?"

Jiang Fangfang thought for a moment and said, "Okay."

Jiang Fangfang held their hands separately. "That's settled then. Mom can be at ease now. Xiao Tao, you can leave with peace of mind. We'll talk about it when your work is stable."

"Okay, then you should rest," Dong Xuebing said.

"Hehe, yes, Mom should sleep too." With Dong Xuebing and Jiang Fangfang's support, Jiang Fangfang lay down in bed, and then the two of them left.

In the living room.

The two sat down and had tea.

Dong Xuebing blinked and said, "Your mother is right. After you finish your work here, when the road construction and experimental base projects are implemented, and you have achieved some political accomplishments, you should come to Beijing."

Jiang Fangfang replied calmly, "We'll see."

Dong Xuebing nodded, "Anyway, the projects won't be completed anytime soon. We'll talk about it when the time comes."

"Have you been drinking?"

"A little bit. I just had dinner with Secretary Meng and the others."

"From now on, don't drive after drinking."

"Hehe, I know, no worries."

"Are you going back today?"

"Ahem, I don't have anything to do today. I'm about to leave anyway. Besides dinner appointments, I won't have any other work this week."

"I see."

"I'm not leaving anymore."

"Whatever, then I'll take a shower."

"Okay, I'll sleep on the floor. You don't have to worry about it."

"Alright, the bedding is in the cabinet, freshly washed. You can take it."

Jiang Fangfang, wearing pajamas and slippers, walked into the bathroom. Soon, the sound of running water came from inside.

With a smile, Dong Xuebing went to make the bed.

Ring, ring, ring, his phone rang. It was his wife calling.

Looking around, Dong Xuebing quickly removed his clothes, crawled under the covers, and then covered his head with the blanket before answering the phone in a low voice.

"Huilan."

"When are you coming back?"

"I'll be driving back next week. It should only take a few days."

"Hehe, alright, I am waiting for you."

"How's your stomach, my dear son?"

"Your little troublemaker keeps kicking me, making me angry, so I give him a little tap."

"Hey, don't mess around. What are you hitting for? He hasn't even been born yet. If you mess with him, he might get problems. Don't do that."

"I'm just teasing your little troublemaker. Hehe."

"You scared me for a moment. Anyway, take care of yourself. I'll be back to see you and our son in a few days. Although I won't stay long, I must report to Beijing next month."

"As long as you return, I'm not counting on you. Your mother has moved in with me now, and nothing will happen. Hehe, I have to go now. I have to drink milk now."

"Okay, go ahead."

After hanging up the phone, Dong Xuebing called Qiu Yunxuan, Yu Meixia, Geng Yuehua, and others to share the good news of his promotion and inform them that he would be returning soon. He also arranged a time to meet. The nearly month-long holiday before reporting was for reunions with his mother, Huilan, Yunxuan, and Sister Yu. It had been a long time since he returned, and Dong Xuebing missed them. He needed to spend time with them before going to Beijing for work with peace of mind.

After finishing the calls, the bathroom door opened.

A wave of water vapor and a faint shower gel scent rushed out, and then Jiang Fangfang emerged from the bathroom.

What surprised Dong Xuebing, however, was how casual Jiang Fangfang was. She had left her pajamas in the bathroom and only wore her underwear. She turned off the light and walked confidently to the floor mattress, took off her shoes, stepped onto it, bent down to crawl into the blanket, and then reached under the blanket, tossing a flesh-colored bra onto the sofa without

hesitation. Then, she moved her legs and hands a bit and threw out a pair of flesh-colored panties as well.

"Let's sleep," Jiang Fangfang tied her hair into a ponytail.

Dong Xuebing nodded and reached out to embrace her smooth and delicate body. The water vapor hadn't completely dispersed yet, and her plump body was still emitting tiny droplets of water, making her skin feel slippery. There was also the refreshing scent of shower gel. Jiang Fangfang's whole body was warm, like a freshly steamed meat bun. Dong Xuebing couldn't help but want to take a bite and devour her whole.

After a while, Dong Xuebing was about to climb on top of her.

But at that moment, Jiang Fangfang pushed him away with her hand. Just as Dong Xuebing was puzzled, Jiang Fangfang shook her long hair, tied the ponytail behind her, and then leaned forward to sit up from the mattress. She raised her chin slightly and looked down at Dong Xuebing. Then, she sat on top of him, facing him directly.

"Um, Fangfang."

"Tonight, whatever you want."

"Um, really?"

"Yes."

Dong Xuebing was pleasantly surprised. He couldn't believe that Jiang Fangfang, who had always been indifferent to such matters in the past, would take the initiative to change positions and say that anything was fine. It made Dong Xuebing feel honored to have such a privilege and treatment, probably because he was about to leave. Dong Xuebing stopped being polite with Jiang Fangfang, grabbed her waist, and began to indulge in the moment without hesitation.

The night was passionate, and Dong Xuebing thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The feeling was beyond words.

Chapter 1505: The Last Dinner Engagement

One day.

Two days.

Three days.

In the following days, Dong Xuebing began a series of social engagements from morning till night.

Discipline Inspection Secretary Pu An, United Front Work Department Minister Jian Xiangrong, and Political and Legal Affairs Committee Secretary Chu Peng needed to be visited individually, and Dong Xuebing went to their homes to enjoy homemade dishes. As for some leading cadres of county government departments and some cadres from townships who actively contacted him, Dong Xuebing couldn't brush off their faces and welcomed them all, sharing meals and bidding farewell. Some investors and comrades from the Chinese Academy of Sciences were not forgotten either; Dong Xuebing invited those with whom he had good relationships to dinner gatherings. Finally, some of his closest associates, such as Chang Juan, Yao Cui, and Chen Xiaomei, were left until the end.

That day.

At noon.

In the county committee's family courtyard, Dong's residence.

In the kitchen, Dong Xuebing, who had bought groceries in the morning, had been busy preparing. Washing and chopping vegetables, the cutting board and table were cluttered with food.

Ding dong, ding dong.

The doorbell rang.

Dong Xuebing wiped his hands and went to open the door. "Coming, coming."

The door opened, and Yao Cui and her younger brother Yao Li walked in. "Xuebing."

Dong Xuebing smiled, "Why didn't your parents come? I specifically told you."

Yao Cui chuckled, "They were afraid your house couldn't accommodate so many people, so they said forget it and let us bring you congratulations instead."

"Alright, then, please thank them for me."

"Dong, Brother Dong, congratulations to you."

"Thank you, Xiao Li. Come on in."

"Oh, you're busy. Let me help you."

"No need, please have a seat. I'll cook today."

As the door remained open, footsteps gradually approached. It was Chen Xiaomei and Chang Juan.

"Mayor Dong."

"Xuebing, we're here."

"Haha. Chang Jie, Sister Chen, please come in."

Dong Xuebing let them in, and as the women gathered together, they looked very attractive. Dong Xuebing couldn't help but squint his eyes.

After a while of polite conversation, Yao Cui and Chen Xiaomei took the initiative to go to the kitchen.

Chang Juan didn't move and pulled Dong Xuebing aside to chat. "Xuebing, you're leaving as soon as I arrive. What about me on this side?"

Dong Xuebing smiled, "I've arranged everything. If you need anything, find Mayor Jiang."

Chang Juan sounded resentful, "I can't stay in this remote and impoverished place forever. My child is still in Beijing. You mustn't neglect me, Brother."

"How could that be," Dong Xuebing assured, "You've just been promoted, Sister Chang. There's no rush. You need to stabilize your experience first, and with the commercial development going so smoothly and the achievements being so substantial, it's only natural to capitalize on them. Once you've gained enough experience, you can talk to me again, and I'll help you find a way to transfer back."

Chang Juan was delighted upon hearing this. "You said that!"

"I did," Dong Xuebing chuckled.

"Alright, that's very considerate of you," Chang Juan exclaimed happily, seizing the opportunity to discreetly touch Dong Xuebing's hand while no one was paying attention, leaving Dong Xuebing blushing.

Knock, knock, knock.

Someone else arrived.

This time, it was Yan Yizhi and Zheng Dayou, followed by Chen Yunsong, Cheng Yujie, Gong Na, and others, probably all coming together after meeting downstairs.

"Old Yan, Old Zheng, Xiao Chen, and Xiao Gong are here too; come on in."

"Mayor Dong, we brought you something. Local specialties."

"Take a look. I've repeatedly told them not to bring anything, but they just wouldn't listen."

"Hehe, it's just a token of appreciation. When you return to Beijing, you should also bring some local specialties from our place. It saves you the trouble of buying them."

"Thank you very much."

"Don't be polite. You've always taken care of us, so it's only right to buy you something."

"Let's not talk outside. Come on in, everyone, have a seat. Most people are here now. I'll cook."

But in the end, Dong Xuebing's efforts were in vain as Chang Juan, Chen Xiaomei, Yao Cui, and Gong Na crowded the kitchen and prepared the dishes. Meanwhile, Zheng Dayou, Yan Yizhi, and the others pulled Dong Xuebing to the sofa for conversation with a few cups of tea and some cigarettes, making the room lively.

At exactly noon, the dishes were brought out by the women.

"Dinner's served," Chen Xiaomei smiled, "We women cooked it. Give it a try. We're not sure if it suits your taste. If not, we'll redo it."

"Please, have a seat, Old Chen."

"Director Chen, Director Chang, Chief Yao, you've worked hard."

"Oh, just looking at these dishes makes them seem delicious. Oh, I forgot to buy alcohol."

"It's alright. I have some here. We have Maotai and Wuliangye."

"It's always a pleasure to dine with Mayor Dong. There's always good liquor."

"Hehe, I'll be leaving tomorrow. I won't take the alcohol or cigarettes with me. Remember to take them when you go home this afternoon. Consider it helping me out. Come on, let's eat."

"I propose we first toast Mayor Dong."

"Yes, let's toast Mayor Dong. Congratulations on your promotion."

"Mayor Dong, would you like to say a few words?"

At the table, everyone raised their glasses and stood facing Dong Xuebing.



Dong Xuebing also raised his glass and stood up, looking at everyone. "The dinner parties that needed to be attended have all been attended, and today is the last one. I kept everyone until the end because everyone here is a colleague who has supported and helped me and a friend of mine. That's why I didn't book a hotel or a private room but invited everyone to my home." He paused, "I'm leaving tomorrow. I've been in Zhen Shui County for five months now, and I've had many experiences and gained much. Of course, what I'll miss the most is all of you. I feel lucky and honored to have worked with you all. Thank you for your continuous support and trust. I won't say much more. Let's drink to that."

"And we'll drink too."

"Cheers."

"Cheers to you, Mayor Dong."

"After you, may you continue to rise with each step, and may your path be smooth."

After a toast, everyone sat down and started eating with their chopsticks.

Dong Xuebing smiled and said, "Let me taste Director Chen's cooking first, as I haven't had the chance to try yours." After taking a bite, he couldn't help but give a thumbs up. "Delicious, delicious."

Chen Xiaomei smiled and said, "Please help yourself to more."

"Of course, and why wait? If you don't eat, I'll finish everything," Dong Xuebing said. Given his leadership position, he had always been mindful of his demeanor, especially with others. However, Dong Xuebing seemed to have let go of all restraints today. Rolling up his sleeves, he ate like a hungry wolf, showing unattractive table manners. Evidently, he no longer saw everyone as mere acquaintances but felt close to them. "Oh, Director Chang, your cooking is excellent too. And Cui'er, this dish of yours has always been your specialty. Delicious."

"Hehe."

"Dong Mayor, please eat slowly."

"Haha, let's dig in, or else I fear nothing won't be left," Dong Xuebing chuckled.

As they ate, drank, and chatted, the atmosphere at the dining table was extremely pleasant.

Chapter 1506: Chance Encounter

Next day.

The sky was starting to brighten.

In the morning, downstairs of the residential building.

Dong Xuebing pulled two large and small suitcases out of the building's hallway and walked out. He squinted to avoid the sunlight hitting his face, found his Land Rover parked in the courtyard, opened the trunk, and placed the luggage inside. Then, he called the director of the county government office, Ma Bin, and asked him to come downstairs. He handed over the keys to his dormitory and office to him, signed his name on the documents, and thus wholly severed ties with Zhen Shui County. With the handover completed and social obligations fulfilled, it was time to leave.

Dong Xuebing had initially planned to leave quietly. He had bid farewell to everyone he needed to, and he didn't want to make a big scene. That's why he had gotten up so early. However, perhaps he had spent too much time downstairs, or perhaps his conversation with Ma Bin was too loud, but someone heard him.

After a moment, many people came downstairs.

There was Pu An, Chang Juan, and Li Xiaona, among others.

"Mayor Dong."

"Why are you all coming down?"

"We have to see you off. We thought you'd leave in the morning."

"Thank you all, but there's no need to see me off. You can all go back."

"Wait a moment. We haven't given you the local specialties yet."

"Hey, I was trying to leave quietly and not cause you all trouble."

"Mayor Dong, no, it should be Director Dong now. Be careful when you go back. Here's a mask for you. I heard there's been another influenza flu outbreak in Beijing recently. You need to be extra cautious."

"Alright, I'll take it. Thank you."

"Drive safely and have a smooth journey. Come back when you have time."

"Sure, I will. Take care, everyone. See you when I have the chance."

Many people came out, and Dong Xuebing even saw Jiang Fangfang's face through a window on the upper floor. He nodded to her without making a sound. After bidding farewell to everyone, he finally got into the car, waved goodbye, and drove away. He always found such scenes challenging to handle, leaving him slightly sour. So, he turned on the music, played a lively song by Wang Feng, and let the upbeat melody dispel the sadness and melancholy in his heart. Opening the side window, letting the wind rush against his face, Dong Xuebing unconsciously hummed along with the music while steering with one hand.

Half an hour later, the car drove out of the county suburbs.

Dong Xuebing didn't look back; his gaze was fixed straight ahead. He silently said to himself, "Goodbye, Zhen Shui."

One hour.

Two hours.

Three hours.

In the morning, Dong Xuebing crossed three cities, heading east.

At noon, Dong Xuebing stopped at a small town restaurant to grab a bite. Then, he continued driving, listening to music leisurely. It was no longer just a journey but a leisurely stroll in the mountains and waters. Sometimes, when he arrived at a lovely lakeside, Dong Xuebing would stop the car, squint his eyes, and smoke a cigarette. Sometimes, he would even stroll around the lake before continuing.

Walking and stopping.

He was enjoying himself thoroughly.

He had let go of all his burdens. He thoroughly enjoyed this rare leisure without an official position, work, or worries.

"I want a life that blooms in a fury."

"Like flying in the vast sky."

Dong Xuebing sang loudly, off-key because the windows were open. The sunroof was also open. As other vehicles passed Dong Xuebing's slow-moving Land Rover on the highway, they would glance at him speechlessly. His singing voice wasn't charming, but Dong Xuebing didn't care in this environment; he sang when he wanted to and shouted when he wanted to, and it felt incredibly satisfying.

Ahead.

Another highway service area.

Dong Xuebing stopped the car and went to use the restroom.

After coming out, because he didn't feel like going to a restaurant for dinner, he went to a supermarket and grabbed some snacks and hamburgers before checking out.

"Need a ride?"

"Yeah, is it convenient?"

"Where are you headed?"

"I'm unfamiliar with this area but heading towards Beijing."

"Oh, that's not on my way. I'm getting off at the next exit on the highway."

"Hehe, it's okay. Thank you anyway."

Outside the supermarket, Dong Xuebing heard someone speaking. It was the back view of a middle-aged woman who seemed to be asking a young couple driving a Jetta if she could hitch a ride. Dong Xuebing was no stranger to "hitchhiking," but he had never tried it. When he heard that she was heading to Beijing, he couldn't help but take another look. Although he couldn't see her face, the woman's back suggested that she was not young, as evidenced by her black shoes and black stockings, which were old-fashioned. Young women rarely wore such attire. Her slightly plump figure and husky voice indicated that she was probably in her forties. Hmm, why did she look somewhat familiar?

Over there.

The woman turned her head and asked another young person.

"Can I catch a ride with you to Beijing?"

"I'm not going to Beijing either."

"Can you drop me off somewhere along the way?"

"I'm in a hurry. Sorry, sister. Maybe ask someone else."

"It's okay. Thank you anyway, young man."

The woman had tried a few times but failed to hitch a ride. Seeing the scorching sun overhead, it was already past two in the afternoon, the hottest time of the day in summer. Sweat stains could be seen on the back of her shirt, and her bra straps were partially visible through the semi-transparent fabric. She wiped the sweat from her forehead and walked to a shady spot under the supermarket, awning to escape the sun.

Dong Xuebing got back into his car after reversing, and after some thought, he drove over to where the woman was. He rolled down the window and shouted, "Sister, are you going to Beijing?"

The woman shielded her eyes from the sun with one hand and looked over. "Yes."

Dong Xuebing could only see half of her face below her hand. "I'm also heading back to Beijing, and it's on my way. However, I might not be able to reach Beijing directly as I need to stop in Fenzhou City first."

"That's okay. A part of the way is fine."

"Alright, then, please get in."

"Okay, thank you, young man."

The woman walked out of the shade and stepped onto the scorching ground.

As she let go of the door handle, Dong Xuebing could finally see her face. She had her hair tied up and was wearing glasses with a gold wire frame and a gold wire glasses chain hung behind her ears. She was a classy middle-aged woman with an air of elegance. Usually, Dong Xuebing would instinctively glance at a woman's chest or legs after looking at her face, but not this time. This woman's face stunned him.

The woman got into the car, her eyes still dazzled by the sun.

Dong Xuebing was pleasantly surprised. "Teacher Jiang! Ha, it's you!"

Jiang Min was taken aback momentarily, then smiled and looked at the young man carefully. After a moment, she laughed and pointed at him, hesitating, "Dong Dong Xuebing?"

Dong Xuebing was pleasantly surprised. "Wow, you still remember me?"

Jiang Min was also surprised and laughed, "You only graduated three years ago. How could I forget you?"

The elegant lady was Teacher Jiang Min from Beijing United University. When Dong Xuebing was in college, Teacher Jiang was not only the head teacher of his class in the Computer Science Department but also taught them advanced mathematics. It could be said that Dong Xuebing was under Teacher Jiang's guidance for four years. Moreover, when Dong Xuebing's father passed away, and the family was in dire financial straits, Teacher Jiang knew about it. She had taken Dong Xuebing to her faculty dormitory more than once to cook for him. When Dong Xuebing was about to graduate and had failed a subject, Teacher Jiang also helped him plead his case, eventually allowing him to pass. Therefore, Teacher Jiang was the most respected teacher of Dong Xuebing during his university years. He never expected to encounter her here.

Dong Xuebing was thrilled. "I didn't expect to run into you here. It's so far away. Why are you here and not teaching?"

"It's summer vacation now."

"Oh, I forgot about that."

"Hehe, I'm here on vacation. My health isn't as good as I get older, so I wanted to move around a bit. That's why I came out with my colleagues."

"Why hitchhike?"

"You young people are into this, so I wanted to experience it too."

"Hey, it's dangerous for you to be alone, especially in such a remote place."

"Originally, several colleagues drove here together. You know Mr. Zhang Hai, right? You may not know him. He's a new teacher who joined after you graduated. Mr. Zhang got sick suddenly, and despite going to the hospital, he didn't get better. So they all went back in the car, and Mr. Zhang needed to lie down, and there wasn't enough space in the car. I said I would walk around alone and didn't return with them. Now, here I am, looking to hitchhike slowly." Jiang Min pushed her glasses with gold frames. "I planned to reach Weiyang City this afternoon, look around, and find a hotel. However, the driver who gave me a ride this morning had something to do here, so he left me at the service area. I asked around for a while, but no one was heading towards Weiyang, or they didn't want to give me a ride. Look, I'm sweating all over, and there's nowhere to catch a taxi. Luckily, I ran into you."

"What a coincidence, haha."

"Are you heading back to Beijing too?"

"Yes, and I'm not in a hurry. If you don't mind, please tell me where you want to go, and I'll take you there. Whether it's a scenic spot or something else."

"And you're offering to be my driver?"

"Hehe, it's the least I can do. I'm honored."

"You've become quite talkative in just a few years. Back in our class, you were quiet and introverted. This society does indeed help to develop people."

"I still don't like to talk much now. It's just that I'm happy to see you, my mentor, so I'm talking more."

"That sounds nice. But you haven't come to visit your teacher since graduation."

"Well, um, I've been working out of town all this time, so I haven't had the chance. It's my fault. So, this time, consider it a punishment, and I'll be your full-time driver for a few days."

"Hehe, alright. If it's on your way, then let's go together. As a single woman, I feel a bit nervous, to be honest."

"Don't worry, with me here, I'll make sure you're safe. Let's go, your driver-cum-bodyguard is ready. Let's hit the road."

On the highway, as the car left the service area, Dong Xuebing changed the music to a gentle campus song, which suited his mood perfectly, evoking memories of his school days.

"Teacher Jiang, it's nice to meet you," Dong Xuebing said.

Teacher Jiang glanced at him. "It's nice to meet you too. It reminds me of you little ones from your graduation year."

Dong Xuebing smiled. "We were mischievous back then and caused you a lot of trouble."

Teacher Jiang sighed. "Yes, hehe. But you were one of the more honest ones."

"That's because I was afraid of you, so whenever I caused trouble, I did it quietly," Dong Xuebing admitted.

"Come on, am I really that scary? I don't feel that way," Teacher Jiang chuckled.

"When you started teaching us advanced math, your face would stiffen, and I would tremble just looking at you. You were not only scary, but I didn't even dare to speak," Dong Xuebing said with an exaggerated expression. Although it was exaggerated, it was true. During his college years, Dong Xuebing was afraid of Teacher Jiang. Although Teacher Jiang's personality was generally motherly and gentle, when she got angry and her face turned dark, she was scary. In the four years of college, Dong Xuebing never dared to misbehave in front of Teacher Jiang.

"You naughty boy, learning to flatter," Teacher Jiang affectionately rubbed Dong Xuebing's head.

"Your face hasn't changed, and you're still so thin. But your personality has changed a lot. I might not have recognized you if you hadn't called me Teacher Jiang just now. Well done, you've grown up."

Dong Xuebing looked at her. "You haven't changed either; you're still beautiful."

Teacher Jiang smiled and took off her glasses. "My eyesight has worsened with age, yet you still call me beautiful."

"Come on, I'll argue with anyone who says you're not beautiful," Dong Xuebing sincerely praised.

"When I saw your back just now, I wondered who this beautiful lady was, feeling familiar. Heh. But when I looked closer, I realized it was Teacher Jiang."

"Hehe, just drive your car."

Teacher Jiang's attire was very attractive, and her chest, which was squeezed into two halves by the seatbelt, was even larger than Yu Meixia's. Among the women Dong Xuebing had seen, hardly any had such large chests. But Dong Xuebing didn't have any improper thoughts because deep down, he had the utmost respect for Teacher Jiang. He just glanced with an admiring eye.

The car drove on.

The music played.

The atmosphere inside the car was very warm.

At this moment, Teacher Jiang took an advanced mathematics textbook from her backpack and began preparing for her class. "You didn't forget your advanced math, did you?"

"Oops, I forgot a long time ago."

"I guessed as much."

"The new semester is starting soon, right?"

"Yes, not many days left."

"Which class are you teaching now?"

"I'm teaching the first computer science class in the third year, but this group of students is less grounded than yours. They are even more lively than you were, hehe. I can hardly control them. By the way, I haven't asked you why you're here and what job you're doing now."

"I'm a civil servant now."

Teacher Jiang was surprised. "Hmm, not bad."

Dong Xuebing chuckled. "Just so-so."

"This car, isn't it a Land Rover? It's quite expensive. How can you, a civil servant, afford such an expensive car?" Teacher Jiang put down her textbook and looked at him. "You, as a civil servant, can afford such an expensive car?"

Dong Xuebing felt embarrassed. "I got lucky. I won the first prize in the lottery."

Jiang Min laughed, "Quite legendary. Whether you're a clerk or a staff member now, your car is rarely driven. Having a better car than your leader's is taboo in the system. That could cause problems. Understand?"

"I understand."

"You're transferred back to Beijing now?"

"Yeah. Got someone to arrange it. This place is really remote."

Teacher Jiang thought he was just an ordinary clerk. It's understandable. Dong Xuebing had only been in the system for about three years, and most people wouldn't be promoted so early. But Dong Xuebing didn't explain anything further. If there was a misunderstanding, so be it. There was no need to boast.

Teacher Jiang sighed slightly, "You're doing well now. Driving a car and being a civil servant is quite stable. I'm happy for you."

"It's all thanks to your good education."

"Come on, I didn't help you much," Teacher Jiang chuckled. "What about the other kids? Do you still keep in touch with everyone? I don't know how everyone's doing. You guys are a bunch of ingrates. Except for a few kids, the others don't even come to see me on Teacher's Day." Teacher Jiang glanced at him.

Dong Xuebing chuckled awkwardly, "Ahem, I just apologized to you. I promise I'll come back every year from now on. By the way, I only know about Yao Cui from our class. You remember Yao Cui, right? She's also a civil servant now. I saw her yesterday. We worked in the same place for a while. I don't know much about the others. Yao Cui said some became civil servants, and some entered state-owned enterprises."

"Of course, I remember Yao Cui. I liked her from your batch of students. She was diligent, hardworking, and willing to endure hardships. Now, she has a stable job, which is well-deserved. She worked hard, and now she's reaping the rewards. As for you, Dong Xuebing, I'm surprised you became a civil servant. Your academic performance wasn't great back then, not that you didn't try, but you were just a bit duller than others. Take my advanced math class, for example. You listened more attentively than anyone else in every class, but in the end, you performed worse than everyone else."

Dong Xuebing sighed, "I don't like hearing you say that. I admit I'm not very smart, but I'm not stupid either."

Teacher Jiang smiled, "Well, you're not exactly bright either, hehe."

Dong Xuebing shrugged, "Fine, whatever you say. I won't argue with you."

"You rascal," seeing her former students growing up, Teacher Jiang showed a relieved smile. "Ah, they've all grown up."

"Yeah, back then, we were still kids in front of you. You criticized and scolded us every day. Now I'm already a dad."

"Oh, you're married?"

"Yeah, my wife is about to give birth to a boy."

"Oh, do you have a photo? Let me see, and I want to see what kind of wife you found." Teacher Jiang was very curious.

Dong Xuebing felt proud immediately and quickly took out his wallet and handed Teacher Jiang a photo of himself and Huilan.

Teacher Jiang took a look and was stunned, "Wow, she's such a beautiful girl."

"Haha, yes, she is," Dong Xuebing loved to hear people compliment his wife's beauty.

Teacher Jiang patted Dong Xuebing on the back of his head, "You're a lucky guy. Did you charm her with sweet words?"

Dong Xuebing boasted, "I didn't need to charm her. She was the one chasing after me."

"Keep boasting," Teacher Jiang chuckled, amused by him.

## Chapter 1508: Rain

Afternoon.

On the highway.

The sun is a bit smaller, and the weather changes quickly. Gradually, it is covered by a dark cloud, making the air slightly fresher and not so hot.

"Teacher Jiang, are you hungry?"

"I'm fine. How about you?"

"Look at you, I'm tough, no problem at all."



"Let's get ready to eat at the next service area."

"What good food can there be at the service area?"

"Just eat whatever is available. It doesn't matter if it's good or not."

"When are you planning to return to the city?"

"I was thinking of playing around more, looking along the way. But since you're with me, I feel embarrassed to let you drive me. Let's head in that direction."

"Hey, we agreed on this. I'm not in a hurry. I'm feeling physically and mentally exhausted after being busy for half a year. I was thinking of having some fun and relaxation. It's good to have you as a company. If you don't want to travel with me, we can discuss it separately. If not, I'll leave the car for you. Can you drive?"

"What are you saying? You're accompanying me. I'm happy to have your company. As a woman, it's a bit inconvenient for me to hitchhike like this."

"Then it's settled."

"Alright, then, let's not rush back now. Let's go eat."

"That county ahead seems to be famous for roast lamb."

"Let's get off the highway ahead and buckle up."

"Drive a bit slower, don't be so fast, it could be dangerous."

"Alright, I'll obey your orders, hehe."

"You, as you grow older, your mouth becomes more talkative. I don't know what that beautiful young wife of yours sees in you. Willingly marrying you."

"Haha, I'm lucky to have such a beautiful wife."

"Indeed, throughout all the years of the University, I've never seen anyone as beautiful as her. You're living in good fortune but don't know it."

"I do know it."

"Bring her to show me next time."

"Okay, we'll bring our son to see you when she gives birth."

"I will be looking forward to it."

In the small town.

With the mountain as the backdrop, the lush atmosphere makes one feel very good.

Many tourists seem to have come here out of curiosity in a farmhouse courtyard. It seems that the roast lamb here is indeed very famous. There are quite a few luxury cars parked outside the farmhouse.

Dong Xuebing and Teacher Jiang walked in together and sat at a rustic table. The menu was brought over, and Dong Xuebing ordered four or five cold dishes and a roast lamb leg. Teacher Jiang insisted she couldn't finish everything, but Dong Xuebing didn't listen. He was very excited to see

his teacher and wanted to show off a bit. Finally, unable to persuade him, Teacher Jiang also showed a helpless look.

"Let's eat quickly."

"What's wrong, Teacher?"

"It's going to rain. Maybe we should find a hotel and stay in the town."

"Okay, that's fine. The environment here is good, and we can stroll around later."

"Alright, then, let's not leave today. Let's eat slowly. Hey, the lamb leg is here. Don't worry about it, Teacher. Don't move. I'll serve you."

"I can do it yourself."

"Don't be like that. You can't deprive me of the opportunity to show off."

Dong Xuebing was enthusiastic, serving several pieces of lamb to Teacher Jiang's plate, pouring her a glass of excellent fruit juice, and handing her a napkin.

Teacher Jiang smiled, "I can handle it myself."

"I'm just showing my appreciation," Dong Xuebing said, then raised his glass and stood up solemnly, rattling it with Teacher Jiang. "Teacher, I can't drink while driving, so I'll toast you with tea instead. Thank you for your help during our university years and for your guidance all along. Without your criticism and guidance, there wouldn't be the Dong Xuebing of today. Cheers."

"It's all your effort. Cheers."

"The roast lamb here is pretty good. Let me get you a few more slices."

Dong Xuebing skillfully picked up the meat-cutting tools and started cutting again. Ring, ring, his phone rang. Seeing it was from his mom, Luan Xiaoping, he answered, "Mom."

Teacher Jiang smiled. "Go ahead."

Dong Xuebing answered the phone, "Hello, Mom."

Luan Xiaoping asked with concern, "Are you on the road? Where are you?"

"Hehe, I don't know where this is. We're having a meal," Dong Xuebing replied.

"Don't wander around on the road. Hurry back. Mom misses you," Luan Xiaoping said.

"I miss you too. By the way, guess who I bumped into on the road? You'll never guess. Haha, I ran into Teacher Jiang, my college teacher, and we're having a meal together," Dong Xuebing said.

Luan Xiaoping exclaimed, "Your college teacher?"

"Yes, she happens to be heading back to Beijing. It's just a trip," Dong Xuebing glanced at Teacher Jiang, and she smiled back at him.

Luan Xiaoping immediately said, "Oh, then let Teacher Jiang chat with me on the phone. It's been a long time since I've seen her."

"Okay," Dong Xuebing handed the phone over. "My mom wants to talk to you."

"Sure," Teacher Jiang smiled and put the phone to her ear. "Hello, Mrs. Dong. Hello, of course, I remember you. I met Xuebing, and it's a coincidence. I'm still teaching at the university with a new group of students. I'm fine, how about you? That's good. Thank you for preparing to trouble Xuebing and sending me back. He's a sensible kid. I'm embarrassed to trouble him. He's worried about me, afraid that something might happen to me if I hitchhike back alone. They grow up so fast, unlike when they were in school and didn't like to talk." Teacher Jiang had met Luan Xiaoping a few times, but having met so many parents, she probably didn't remember Luan Xiaoping, but she still politely chatted for a while, with the conversation revolving around Dong Xuebing.

A few minutes later.

Teacher Jiang smiled and handed the phone back to him. "Not hung up yet."

Dong Xuebing took it. "Mom, anything else?"

"You have what you have today, thanks to Teacher Jiang's help in the past. Don't rush back. Take Teacher Jiang out for fun."

"Definitely."

"Be safe on the road."

"Are you kidding me? Do I need to worry about safety? Even the thugs would run away if they saw me. Once I give my name, they'll probably be scared off."

"This isn't Fenzhou City. Who knows you here."

"Okay, Mom, we're having a meal now. We'll talk later."

"Don't forget to buy something for Teacher Jiang again."

"Oh, I understand. I've already taken care of that. Alright, I'll let you go." Dong Xuebing hung up and smiled wryly. "My mom keeps telling me to take care of you."

Teacher Jiang said, "Your mother is too polite."

"It's necessary. When my family was struggling, I and a few poor students often ate at your dorm. My mom remembers that, too."

"It's a small matter, no need to mention it."

"It's a small matter to you but not to us. Here, let me toast you again."

After dinner.

It was past seven o'clock.

As the dusk hadn't wholly fallen yet, Dong Xuebing didn't drive and instead accompanied Teacher Jiang for a stroll around this picturesque town. From start to finish, he was busy, holding her bag in one hand and shading her with an umbrella in the other. Whenever he saw something for sale, he would buy it, be it prayer beads, little bells, fruit juice, or ice cream, serving her attentively.

Later, at a street stall, the owner smiled and said, "Young man, you're filial to your mother."

Dong Xuebing and Teacher Jiang both chuckled, and Teacher Jiang patted Dong Xuebing on the back of his head. "Look, you've misunderstood him. You don't need to be so polite."

"That won't do. Let's go, Teacher Jiang, let's take a look ahead. There seems to be a lake."

"Ah, the scenery here is nice. I want to live here for a while after retiring."

"Yes, the air and environment are good, with mountains and water. I like this kind of place too. Let's stay here for a few more days before moving on."

"No need for that. Let's go to the next place tomorrow. There are still many good places to see. We can't pick sesame and lose watermelon. Let's check them all out."

"Alright."

"Feeling tired? Let me carry it for a while."

"No problem, I've got it. What's a little weight to me?"

As they chatted, they walked to the lakeside. The lake wasn't large but very clear.

The sun had set, and the sky darkened, but there were plenty of lights around the lake, and some tourists were sitting in pavilions enjoying the breeze, casting a beautiful reflection on the smooth moonlit lake.

"Want to sit down?"

"Let's sit for a while."

"Ah, the breeze feels quite cool."

"Yes, it's autumn."

As they were about to move, there was a loud rumble, and it started raining.

Then, the rain started pattering down, but not heavily.

"Well, it starts as soon as you mention it. Didn't even give us time to prepare," Dong Xuebing quickly took out the umbrella he had just put away and opened it over Teacher Jiang's head. "How about this? Let's find some shelter."

Teacher Jiang quickly said, "Let's go to the pavilion for cover."

"Okay, it probably won't rain for long." Dong Xuebing hurriedly ran with her to the pavilion.

However, there was no one else left in the pavilion. The locals had hurried home with umbrellas, and the tourists had left in their cars.

It was quiet.

Just the two of them.

As they put away the umbrella and sat down, the rainy night by the lake had charm, and the scenery was fantastic.

Dong Xuebing wiped the rain off his forehead and glanced at Teacher Jiang. Although the umbrella sheltered her, she still got a bit wet on the run to the pavilion. Her white shirt was slightly translucent, and her generous bosom was partially visible, but it wasn't too apparent at night. Teacher Jiang wiped the rain off her clothes and hair with a napkin, paying little attention. The only one who noticed was Dong Xuebing, who couldn't help but steal a few more glances.

Rainy night.

Lake.

Pavilion.

Beautiful scenery.

What a beautiful picture.

Dong Xuebing leaned back in his chair, squinting his eyes. Seeing no sign of the rain stopping, he relaxed and started chatting with Teacher Jiang somewhat absentmindedly.

Chapter 1509: A bed

Half an hour passed.

An hour passed.

It was well past eight in the evening.

The rain outside the pavilion continued to patter down, the raindrops hitting the surface of the lake and the small puddles on the stone steps of the pavilion, creating ripples.

"Teacher Jiang, are you cold?"

"I'm okay. Why hasn't it stopped yet?"

"Yeah, it's getting heavier."

"Our car is still at the entrance of the farmhouse."

"Yeah, it's a bit far. It would take us half an hour to get there. This heavy rain won't do."

"I think we should leave. Isn't there a hotel not far ahead?"

"But it's not close either. It'll take us three or four minutes to run there. I'm okay but worried about you catching a cold."

"It's okay. We have to go. I'm afraid we'll be late, and there won't be any rooms left. There are quite a few tourists today. If they're all booked up, where will we rest?"

"True. Okay, then. You carry the bag, and I'll hold the umbrella for you."

"No need. Forget about me. Take care of yourself. You're a small guy; don't get soaked."

"Alright, then. Ready? On the count of three, let's run."

"Okay, ready. One, two, three, let's go."

Dong Xuebing followed Teacher Jiang and rushed out. With a flick of his hand, he naturally held the umbrella over Jiang Min's head, while he didn't mind getting wet himself. Watching the raindrops gradually soak through his clothes, Dong Xuebing found it quite comfortable. Occasionally, getting caught in the rain wasn't bad at all. Feeling uplifted, he started singing Zhang Yu's "The Rain Keeps Falling," "The rain keeps falling, the atmosphere isn't exactly harmonious."

Jiang Min chuckled as she ran. "You seem quite cheerful."

"Of course, it's all about having a good attitude," Dong Xuebing said.

"Your attitude is good, but your singing is a bit off," Jiang Min joked.

With laughter and banter, they arrived at the three-story hotel with lights on outside. They rushed inside, panting heavily.

Jiang Min turned to wipe the rain off Dong Xuebing's face. "You've been taking care of me so much, and look at how you've been soaked."

"It's okay," Dong Xuebing smiled. Then he turned to the receptionist and said, "Miss, please give us two rooms."

The receptionist replied, "I'm sorry, sir. Not to mention two rooms. We don't even have a single room available."

Dong Xuebing was stunned. "Really? Please check for us. We can't go anywhere in this heavy rain. We don't mind paying extra. Please see what you can do."

The receptionist smiled wryly. "We don't have any left. A tourist group just arrived and got caught in the rain in town. They've booked all the rooms. Many people still haven't found accommodation and have gone elsewhere."

Jiang Min exclaimed, "Then, are other hotels nearby?"

The receptionist pointed and said, "There's no need to go to the east. I just called, and they're full too. I'm not sure about the one to the west. We don't have any contact with them. You can go and check. It's not far, about a five-minute walk. Three or four minutes if you run."

Dong Xuebing sighed, "What should we do?"

The receptionist suggested, "I suggest you go quickly, or there won't be any rooms left."

Jiang Min helplessly said, "Let's go, Xuebing, check it out."

"If only we had driven," Dong Xuebing shrugged. "Now it's getting worse. The farther we run, the harder it will be. There are no taxis in town either. We'll be in trouble if there are no rooms available."

Outside.

Dong Xuebing opened the umbrella again. After counting to three, the two continued running westward. Many people were rushing along the road with them. One person even slipped and fell by the roadside. The ground was slippery, and Dong Xuebing was afraid Jiang Min might slip, so he instinctively put his hand around her waist.

So soft.

Dong Xuebing's hand was greasy and sticky.

He didn't have any inappropriate thoughts; he just continued running with the umbrella.

Finally, they arrived at a quaint little inn ahead. It looked more like a small resort than an inn, with a large area of their yard surrounded by wooden fences. Inside were wooden houses instead of high-rises, giving off a stylish and elegant vibe. It was much better than the previous inn, and the prices should be several times higher.

They reached it.

Pushing open the door and entering the courtyard, they walked through the door adorned with two red lanterns.

Dong Xuebing's clothes were already soaked, and his shoes were filled with water. Jiang Min was slightly better off, as Dong Xuebing had shielded her from most of the rain with the umbrella. But she was still not spared; at least the front of her shirt was thoroughly soaked through. Now, even the patterns and lines on her flesh-colored bra were visible. As for Jiang Min's khaki-colored casual pants, they were also somewhat disheveled. The side of her buttocks was soaked, and the outline of her underwear could be seen imprinted on the pants despite both being yellowish. However, there was still a slight color difference. The now damp casual pants clearly showed a different color from the underwear. Almost half of Jiang Min's plump buttocks were exposed, and both the landlady and a female staff member noticed.

Jiang Min also noticed, but seeing they were both women inside, she said nothing.

However, Dong Xuebing was a man, so he quickly took off his coat and draped it over Jiang Min's body, coughing lightly.

"Thank you," Jiang Min tightened Dong Xuebing's coat around herself, covering her chest. Then she rubbed her slightly cold hands together and asked, "Do you still have any rooms available?"

The landlady nodded. "Yes, we do."

Dong Xuebing exclaimed happily, "Great, give us two."

"There are no two rooms left, only the last one," the landlady flipped through her notebook. "Only a single wooden room is left, but it comes with a bathroom."

Dong Xuebing was taken aback. "Only one room?"

Jiang Min asked, "What do you mean by single?"

"It's just one bed," the landlady explained. "You came just in time. If you were any later, I'm afraid even this room would have been taken. The rain came suddenly, and many tourists decided to stay."

Dong Xuebing quickly said, "Miss, we have nowhere else to go. Our car is quite far away, and we can't even take it. And there's no guarantee we'll find a place elsewhere. Can't you think of something? Can we add another bed? We don't mind paying extra."

"We don't have spare beds here, but we can provide extra blankets," the landlady replied.

At that moment, the sound of the door being pushed open was heard from outside. "Do you have any rooms available?"

The landlady hesitated, glancing at Dong Xuebing and Jiang Min.

Jiang Min spoke quickly, "Okay, we'll take it."

The landlady told the person outside that no more rooms were available and then began to register Dong Xuebing and Jiang Min.

Dong Xuebing smiled wryly. "Teacher Jiang, maybe I should go look for another place. You can stay here."

"It's quite late, and it's raining heavily," Jiang Min said, wiping her forehead and saying, "It's okay. Let them add a blanket for us, and we'll squeeze together."

"Alright, if not, I can sleep on the floor."

"Let's see the room first. Oh, I need to shower; I'm freezing," Jiang Min sighed.

## Chapter 1510: Two drenched chickens

It was already nine o'clock.

The thunder continued, and the rain kept pouring down.

In the quaint little courtyard, the landlady, holding an umbrella, led Dong Xuebing and Jiang Min out of the house. They walked on the damp ground, braving the breeze, heading towards the backyard. Rows of small wooden houses filled the space, some larger, presumably double rooms. They headed towards the row of wooden houses at the far end. Several red lanterns were lit at the doors. Some people were asleep, while others were still leaning against the windows, enjoying the rain.

Only the lantern in the middle house was not lit.

The landlady went in first, taking out the keys to open the door. The lights inside and outside the house were turned on with a click.

"This is it," she said.

"Great, thank you," Dong Xuebing replied.

"The bathroom has hot water for showering," the landlady added.

"Okay, got it," Dong Xuebing nodded.

"Any other requests, let me know in advance," the landlady said.

"Could you add an extra blanket? Also, do you have any clean clothes available?" Dong Xuebing asked.

"We have blankets but no clothes. You can hang them up to dry if you didn't bring any. If the rain stops tomorrow and the sun comes out, they'll dry by noon," the landlady replied.

"That'll do, thank you," Dong Xuebing said.

"I'll have someone bring them to you shortly," the landlady said before leaving with her umbrella.

Seeing Jiang Min shiver, Dong Xuebing quickly ushered her into the house. He closed the door behind them, shutting out the slightly chilly wind and rain outside. The wind creaked the door while the raindrops pattered against the wooden windows, creating a crisp sound. It had a somewhat poetic feeling.

The room was very small, barely seven or eight square meters.

Underneath the window in the center was a small bed, pressed against the wooden wall. There was a small wooden table and chair next to it, and on the right-hand side of the door was another door,



presumably leading to the bathroom. Other than that, the room was bare, simple, and elegant, with pitifully little space.

Dong Xuebing sighed, "It's so small."

Jiang Min pushed her wet hair back and said, "Having a place to stay is already good. Otherwise, we'd have to spend the night in the rain."

Dong Xuebing apologized, "I'm sorry for inconveniencing you. It's all my fault."

Jiang Min smiled, "What's there to blame you for? I think the environment here is quite nice."

"It is. The atmosphere of these small wooden houses is quite charming and relaxing. I like this style," Dong Xuebing agreed.

Jiang Min took Dong Xuebing's coat off and said, "We're both soaking wet. Let's get things done first. You go take a shower, and I'll change after you."

Dong Xuebing insisted, "You go first. I'm not in a hurry."

Jiang Min said, "You've been in the rain more than I have. You've been holding the umbrella for me all the way. Go quickly."

"Come on, I can't go before you. Ladies first. Hurry up, stop arguing," Dong Xuebing hung his wet clothes on the rack and sat on the stool.

Jiang Min glanced at him and said, "You're something else. Alright then, I'll go first."

Jiang Min took the damp shirt and turned to open the door to the bathroom. Dong Xuebing stole a glance. Indeed, the toilet was also very small, barely two square meters. However, after glancing, Dong Xuebing's gaze uncontrollably fell on Jiang Min's back. He watched as the khaki pants and white shirt clung tightly to her body, revealing the faint outline of her flesh-colored underwear and panties. Dong Xuebing felt his cheeks redden, realizing that such thoughts were disrespectful to Jiang Min. He quickly averted his gaze.

Dong, the door closed.

Clatter, whoosh, the sound of clothes being removed came from inside.

Immediately after, the sound of the showerhead spraying water gushed out, and the frosted glass on the bathroom door was quickly covered with warm steam. Being a wooden room, it had many advantages, but its biggest flaw was its poor sound insulation. Sitting inside the room, Dong Xuebing could even hear the sound of Jiang Min shampooing and lathering up in the bathroom. It sounded like the shower room door was left open, and Dong Xuebing couldn't shake off the thought.

Pat, pat. Another sound emerged. This time, it seemed like the sound of Jiang Min patting herself with the showerhead, probably because she was too cold and wanted to warm her body directly.

After listening for a while, Dong Xuebing realized there was nothing for him to do. He couldn't just sit there waiting. Besides, it was quite cold. So, he removed his shoes, poured out the accumulated water in them with a splash, shook them off, and tossed them near the door. Then, he took off his wet socks and threw them over. Instantly, he felt much fresher. As for his pants, there was no choice but to leave them on. Dong Xuebing couldn't just walk around naked. Their spare clothes were in the car's trunk, and there was no way to change them now.

The sound of water stopped.

After a while, the bathroom door opened.

The air was filled with steam, giving the impression of a fairyland as Jiang Min stepped out.

Dong Xuebing was taken aback. "How come you're so quick?"

Jiang Min was wearing a long bathrobe; though it was wide, it couldn't completely cover her ample bosom. The deep neckline accentuated her cleavage, which seemed bottomless. She tied the bathrobe belt while her hair was dripping with water. "I was afraid you'd catch a cold while waiting, so I hurried. Alright, your turn, Xuebing. After you're done changing, just toss your clothes to me, and I'll wash and dry them for you later," she said, putting on her golden-rimmed glasses from the wooden table.

"Don't worry, I'll wash them myself," Dong Xuebing insisted.

"Don't bother. Hurry up," Jiang Min urged.

"Um, alright," Dong Xuebing agreed reluctantly.

"Oh, please bring out the hairdryer for me," Jiang Min added.

After handing her the hairdryer, Dong Xuebing entered the bathroom and closed the door.

The bathroom was filled with hot steam, making it warm and comfortable. There was still a lingering scent of Jiang Min's body. Looking at the sink, Dong Xuebing noticed there were still a lot of bubbles from the shower gel and shampoo. He started to undress, wringing out his heavy pants before tossing them onto the sink. Then he noticed a pile of Jiang Min's clothes lying there. The shirt was crumpled, and the pants were wrinkled, sticking together. As for the bra and panties, they were underneath everything else, just inadvertently exposing a corner. Dong Xuebing could see the faint floral pattern on the flesh-colored bra. The two short black stockings were neatly placed on the edge of the sink, half on the marble countertop and half hanging in the air, dripping water.

Now that he had undressed, there was no turning back. Dong Xuebing's mind involuntarily conjured up the image of Jiang Min in the bathrobe. Then he stepped on the foam from the shower gel that had just been washed off Jiang Min and turned on the showerhead, letting the warm water wash over him. A wave of warmth surged from his heart, feeling extremely comfortable.

Shampooing his hair, washing his face, lathering up with shower gel Jiang Min had finished her shower, so Dong Xuebing didn't feel rushed. He leisurely massaged the foam on his body.

One minute.

Five minutes.

Ten minutes.

Done.

Dong Xuebing dried himself off and realized no bathrobe was left in the bathroom. Since it was a single room, there was only one bathrobe, which Jiang Min had used. Dong Xuebing hesitated momentarily, thinking of saying something, but then decided against it. He wrapped a long towel around his waist, barely covering himself. Then he glanced at their clothes on the sink. He didn't dare to touch Jiang Min's underwear, so he didn't wash anything. He pushed open the door and saw

Jiang Min sitting on a stool, wiping her shoes with a napkin. Next to her were Dong Xuebing's leather shoes, which had already been wiped clean. Tomorrow, they could air them out. Jiang Min was now wiping her shoes, and she turned her head when she heard Dong Xuebing.

"Jiang Min, I'm done showering."

"Hmm, why aren't you wearing clothes?"

"Oh, right. I forgot. I'll make do without," Dong Xuebing replied.

"Alright, Xuebing. Get into bed quickly so you don't catch a cold. When the staff comes later, I'll ask them for another bathrobe for you."

"Okay."

"Did you put the clothes there?"

"Yes, I left them on the table."

"Alright, don't worry about anything else."

Dong Xuebing didn't hesitate and walked to the bed in his slippers, climbing under the covers. Not because he was cold but because being bare-chested and bare-legged made him feel embarrassed. "I'll just lie down for a bit. I'll sleep on the floor later tonight," he coughed.

"We'll see," Jiang Min replied, finishing drying her shoes. She struggled to stand up, probably because of her back, and washed her clothes at the bathroom.

A few minutes later, the clothes were all taken care of. There wasn't much to wash, so it was a quick task. Dong Xuebing on the bed, caught sight of their clothes hanging in the bathroom. From his angle, he could see Jiang Min's underwear hanging on the hanger, emitting a tempting light.

At that moment, there was a knock at the door. Two female staff members entered, one carrying a set of blankets for them and the other holding a tray with steaming milk and some bread snacks. Seeing the food made Dong Xuebing's mouth water, especially on a rainy day.

"Here are your things."

"Great, just leave them here."

"Is there anything else you need?"

"Oh, right. Bring a bathrobe for my student, please."

"Okay, coming right up."

After delivering the bathrobe, the staff members closed the door and left. Jiang Min handed the bathrobe to Dong Xuebing. "You don't need to get up. Eat in bed," she said, pulling the table closer and sitting down to drink her hot milk.

Dong Xuebing took the cup of milk. "Ah, feels good."

Jiang Min smiled. "Drink more. If you need another cup, just ask. It'll warm you up."

"You too, eat more," Dong Xuebing said, handing her a piece of bread.

"Thanks," Jiang Min replied, slightly leaning forward to take it, inadvertently revealing a bit too much cleavage. Dong Xuebing's eyes widened at the sight.

It was a bit startling.

Once again, Dong Xuebing found himself momentarily dazzled.