

## PAW 1734

Chapter 1734

A week later.

It was New Year's Eve.

Dong Xuebing arrived at the office early. There were hardly any people left in the compound, even fewer than before. Only about twenty-something scattered individuals remained on duty for the last shift. Although it was practically a holiday today, there were still some final tasks. After finishing these, everyone could go home for the New Year's meal. Thus, those who came to work wore absent-minded expressions, their minds drifting home. Dong Xuebing was the exception; he didn't mind.

"Director Dong."

"Happy New Year."

"Happy New Year, Director Dong."

Greeting each other, Dong Xuebing returned their New Year's wishes, "Happy New Year."

Dong Xuebing was likely the highest-ranking official present among those who came to work today. Along the way, a few employees from other departments asked him about work matters and when they could leave. Dong Xuebing gave them direct instructions to tidy up their offices and leave once they were done. That was his plan, too; he had to return home for lunch.

Second Division.

Office.

One person entered, sorting through documents alone.

Dong Xuebing quickly finished up. Glancing at the clock, it was ten o'clock.

At that moment, Xie Huilan's call rang aloud on his phone.

"Hello, Huilan, when are you coming back? We're all waiting for you," Dong Xuebing answered.

"Hehe, it might not be possible today," Xie Huilan chuckled. "Things aren't settled here, and there's a social engagement I can't postpone. I also have some matters on the first and second day of the year. Please tell my dad, mom, and grandpa that I won't be able to return today. I'll try to find time around the 4th or 5th to return. As for the child, let him stay with me for now. I'll call ahead when I'm heading back."

Dong Xuebing clicked his tongue. "It's just down to you."

"You think it's easy being a City Party Committee Secretary? Everyone else is on holiday, but there's no one else to make decisions. Every little thing needs my handling," Xie Huilan retorted.

Dong Xuebing said, "But you must go home for the New Year. I'm waiting to see our son."

"Alright, in a few days. I'll bring our son back in a few days," Xie Huilan smiled.

"If our parents get upset, I won't cover for you. You'll have to explain yourself," Dong Xuebing half-joked.

"They'll understand. Just focus on preparing gifts—something for grandpa, something for my parents, consider it from both of us," Xie Huilan advised.

"Alright, got it," Dong Xuebing replied.

"Okay then, I'll leave it to you over there," Xie Huilan concluded.

After hanging up, Dong Xuebing shook his head and saw he still had time to spare. He picked up his phone and made several calls to the leaders of the Discipline Inspection Commission and a few necessary officials, such as Han Fei's father, Han Zhenghe. He greeted them for the New Year, some with messages where necessary. Dong Xuebing also sent a group message to several subordinates from the Second Division and some former colleagues, expressing his regards. He didn't have to do this as a leader, but Dong Xuebing liked to show his care and concern. It wasn't a bad thing; it only took a little time.

Dong Xuebing also received numerous calls and messages for New Year's greetings, which took over an hour. By eleven o'clock, it was done.

Alright.

It was time to go home.

Dong Xuebing packed up and left the Second Division, locking the door behind him. As the highest-ranking official remaining in the Ninth Office, Dong Xuebing felt a sense of responsibility, especially since Fang Ping had instructed him to do so. Therefore, Dong Xuebing checked on several other departments, ensuring everything was in order before heading downstairs to his car and driving towards Senior Xie's villa in West Mountain.

Before noon, around eleven o'clock, Dong Xuebing arrived at Senior Xie's house. The security guards recognized him and didn't stop him. After exchanging greetings and New Year wishes with them and their families, Dong Xuebing finally walked towards the villa. Soon, he was greeted by Han Jing, Xie Guobang, Xia Yanzhen, Ci LiFen, and others.

"Xiao Dong is here."

"Uncle, Happy New Year. Aunts and uncles, Happy New Year."

"Hehe, Happy New Year to you too. Huilan can't come back."

"Yeah, she just called me. She can't make it back; a lot is happening over there."

Inside, Dong Xuebing joined the elders in conversation. He also saw Xie Jing, Xie Ran, and Xie Hao, greeting them with a smile.

Xie Hao was straightforward, saying, "Brother-in-law, red packet."

Dong Xuebing chuckled, "You're too old for a red packet."

"In that case, I don't care. There better be mine," Xie Hao insisted, "I'm planning to buy a computer; I don't have enough money."

Dong Xuebing sighed and took out three thick red envelopes from his bag. Each contained ten thousand yuan, totaling thirty thousand yuan. "Here, take it. Look at your manners."

Xie Hao laughed and grabbed the envelopes, opening them eagerly. Sure enough, each contained a stack of hundred RMB bills, totaling thirty thousand yuan. Xie Hao couldn't help but kiss the red envelopes. "Brother-in-law, you're my idol."

Dong Xuebing patted his head, "You rascal."

Xie Jing looked expectantly at Dong Xuebing, "Brother-in-law, I want a gift too."

Xie Ran chuckled, "How old are you? You still want the red packet."

"I didn't ask for a red packet; I want a gift," Xie Jing grinned.

Dong Xuebing rummaged through his bag, "I've got something for you." He had prepared in advance and took out several small jewelry boxes, giving one each to Xie Ran and Xie Jing. Just then, Xie Jing's girlfriend, Sun Kai, also arrived. Dong Xuebing handed her a watch. Dong Xuebing's gifts were not cheap, costing tens of thousands of yuan. He had always been generous.

"Thanks, brother-in-law."

"Thank you, brother-in-law."

Xie Jing and Xie Ran thanked him.

Dong Xuebing then proceeded to greet Xie Guobang, Han Jing, Xie Guoliang, Xia Yanzhen, Xie Guojian, and other elders, presenting each with gifts. He mentioned that these were gifts from him and Huilan. Dong Xuebing had bought these items over the past few days, working overtime and using his spare time wisely to shop around.

For his mother-in-law, he bought a ruby necklace.

For his father-in-law, he bought a set of valuable ancient books suitable for collection.

After finishing the gift exchanges, the door opened again, and Xie Guoyue from the Xie family arrived with her husband, Hou Xing'an, and their son, Hou Ming. They exchanged pleasantries with everyone, and Dong Xuebing presented his gifts: an LV handbag for Xie Guoyue, a leather briefcase for Hou Xing'an, and a wallet with lucky money for Hou Ming. Despite most of these younger relatives being slightly older than Dong Xuebing, since Dong Xuebing's wife was Xie Huilan, the eldest sister in the Xie family, he naturally held the status of eldest brother-in-law. Giving lucky money was appropriate, especially since Dong Xuebing had more money than he could spend. During the New Year, it was customary to show generosity.

Han Jing felt a bit sorry for her son-in-law, "Next time, don't buy something so expensive."

Dong Xuebing chuckled, "It's just a token of appreciation, Mom. It's nothing."

Xia Yanzhen also wore Dong Xuebing's diamond necklace, saying, "Since we're family, a small gesture is enough. This is too precious, hehe. But I like it; it's so beautiful."

Xie Jing laughed, "Yeah, brother-in-law's gifts are so nice. Sun Kai and I feel like we can't measure up. We don't earn much compared to my brother-in-law. Everyone, please understand." Xie Jing, Xie Ran, and others also presented their gifts to the elders, each worth over a thousand RMB. They couldn't compete with Dong Xuebing's generosity but didn't compare themselves to him. Dong Xuebing was wealthy and the eldest brother-in-law of the Xie family's younger generation, so comparisons were unnecessary.

Only Xie Hao was gleefully reaching out for lucky money from everyone, taking five thousand from one person and two thousand from another. He was so happy he couldn't stop smiling. "I love Chinese New Year!"

Xie Guoyue smiled, "Where's Grandpa? I haven't seen him."

Dong Xuebing blinked, "Yeah, I still have a gift for Grandpa."

Han Jing paused upon hearing this, sighed, and said, "Guoyue, you're in Dongshan Province. I haven't told you, but I feared you'd worry about traveling back and forth."

Xie Guobang, Xie Guoliang, and Xie Guojian's expressions also darkened.

Surprised, Xie Guoyue and Hou Xing'an asked, "What's wrong?"

Dong Xuebing hadn't heard any news about this. "Mom, what happened?"

"Grandpa is ill." Han Jing pointed upstairs. "He's lying in bed, still on IV. He won't get out of bed today, and it's uncertain for the next few days."

Dong Xuebing widened his eyes, "What illness?"

"Heart disease, hypertension, all these old-age illnesses," Han Jing explained.

Dong Xuebing snorted, "Then why didn't you tell me?"

"You're too worried," Han Jing looked at him. "Everyone knows you'd rush over if I told you. If you tell Huilan, she'll have to rush back, too. She's busy with work and taking care of the kids. It's too much. So, I didn't tell you two."

Xie Jing didn't know either, "How long has Grandpa been ill?"

"For about a month," Han Jing said. "His health has been poor all this time, taking a lot of medication and seeing many doctors, but there's been no improvement."

With this topic, a layer of gloom settled over the villa's living room atmosphere.

For one, Grandpa Xie was their elder and deeply beloved. Secondly, Grandpa Xie was a cornerstone of the Xie family's reputation. Although the Xie family wouldn't decline if something happened to him, its influence would undoubtedly diminish. Thus, nobody wished for anything to happen to Grandpa Xie.