

PAW 1738

Chapter 1738

Afternoon.

Finished eating.

Dong Xuebing had a bit too much to drink, and coupled with having stayed steadfast at his work post all morning, he was pretty tired and hadn't rested much. Seeing this, Han Jing had Xie Jing help her husband upstairs to find a room and take a nap, not letting Dong Xuebing stay downstairs. Dong Xuebing didn't refuse, swaying upstairs and lying under the covers. After all, the real celebration would be in the evening; it was still early.

One hour.

Two hours.

Three hours.

Not sure how much time has passed.

Dong Xuebing was startled awake by bursts of firecrackers, crackling sounds ringing in his ears. Startled, he jumped out of bed, looked around, and realized it was already dark. He sighed, rubbed his still, slightly throbbing head, got out of bed, went to the bathroom, and splashed his face with cold water, instantly feeling more awake and comfortable.

Exhale.

Downstairs.

It was already past eight, and the Spring Festival Gala had started.

Dong Xuebing picked up his phone and glanced at missed calls and a dozen text messages. He started calling back as he went downstairs, greeting everyone for the New Year one by one, then sent some text messages, swiftly handling the New Year's greetings. Some of the calls were from former subordinates whom Dong Xuebing didn't recognize, maybe even forgot, but he still

pretended to be familiar, nodding along and managing to get through the calls, wishing them well. It wasn't that Dong Xuebing was showing off; it was just how things were done here. What could he say if someone reported their name and Dong Xuebing didn't recognize it? He couldn't exactly say he didn't know them, especially on such a big occasion. So, this was the only way to handle it.

Dong Xuebing suspected that some of these were indeed misdialled. That's why he didn't recognize them. However, this system wasn't necessarily about how much you achieved or how good your work abilities were. Sometimes, not making mistakes was what mattered most. If a call came from an influential leader and Dong Xuebing forgot their name, pretending to know them and offering New Year's greetings was the safest bet. Politeness never hurt, and Dong Xuebing was already considering aiming for the deputy bureau director level.

Downstairs.

Dong Xuebing descended to the first floor of the villa.

Xie Guobang, Xie Guoliang, Xie Guojian, and others were all holding phones scattered throughout various parts of the rooms: the sofa, chairs, window corners—all on their phones. Even Xia Yanzhen and Ci Lifan were the same. Their ranks were much higher than Dong Xuebing's, and they knew more people, naturally making them busier than him.

After returning missed calls, Dong Xuebing quickly drank a glass of water, gulping it down, "Xiao Jing, Grandpa isn't sick anymore, right?"

Xie Jing was idle and smiled, "He's fine. He's outside watching Xiao Hao set off firecrackers."

Dong Xuebing laughed, "There are firecrackers? Then I'll set off a couple too. Why didn't you go, Xiao Jing?"

"I just got back," Xie Jing said helplessly, "The noise was too loud. It hurt my ears, hehe. But if you're going, I'll take a look too."

"Are Xie Ran and the others outside, too?" Dong Xuebing asked.

"Yeah, Hou Ming and youngest Aunt are out there too," Xie Jing said.

"Alright, let's go then. Let's go look," Dong Xuebing said, taking the lead out.

Bang, bang, bang.

Crackle, crackle.

Outside, the noise was deafening.

Dong Xuebing opened the door and went out. He saw Xie Hao laughing heartily while lighting firecrackers, with Hou Ming joining in. Some other elders were gathered around Senior Xie in the backyard, watching.

"Wow."

"Haha."

"So beautiful!"

Everyone cheered loudly, creating a festive atmosphere.

"Hey!"

Xie Hao saw Dong Xuebing and said, "Brother-in-law is here!"

Xie Guoyue smiled and squinted, "Awake now, Xiao Bing? You should light a few, too."

"Sure, Aunt," Dong Xuebing replied, lighting a couple with a bang. It was a gesture, as Dong Xuebing wasn't into setting off fireworks.

"Brother-in-law, light one more! There are plenty left," Xie Hao urged.

Dong Xuebing chuckled, "That's enough for you guys."

Grandpa Xie has recovered well and is in high spirits today. He chuckled and, with the support of Xie Guoyue and Han Jing, also lit a firecracker. At his age, he hadn't been like this for a long time. During the last few New Year's, he mostly stayed in bed. His current good health indicated that Dong Xuebing's so-called traditional Chinese massage was very effective. Xie Guoyue and the others were pleased. Although Xie Guoyue and her husband, Hou Xing'an, mostly worked in Dongshan Province, she didn't interact much with Dong Xuebing and didn't say much. However, this incident made Xie Guoyue appreciate Dong Xuebing more. It seemed she was no longer questioning her favorite younger sister, Xiao Huilan, for marrying such a young husband.

Ambition is not measured by height.

Maturity is not determined by age.

Xie Guoyue immediately called Dong Xuebing over, "It's almost time for the New Year's Eve dinner. Have a drink with me. We haven't had a drink together yet. But I heard you can hold your liquor well. How come you couldn't handle it after drinking so little at noon and ended up taking a nap?"

Han Jing chuckled, "He's been working overtime, that's why."

"Why work overtime on New Year's?" Xie Guoyue turned her head, "And isn't Xiao Bing a Division Chief leader now? Who needs to work overtime?"

Han Jing explained, "Some of Xiao Bing's subordinates had things to attend to, some needed to return to their hometowns, and some were preparing for the New Year. He saw it and took care of it all. Since last Sunday, he's been working overtime until today. He even went to the office this morning to handle something and came directly from there. Just got off work."

Xie Guoyue nodded approvingly, "Well done, young man."

Dong Xuebing smiled modestly, "It's my duty. I had to work overtime since no one else could do it."

Grandpa Xie nodded slightly, saying, "That's how it should be. Xiao Bing is good. You elders aren't as good as Xiao Bing."

Xie Guoyue snorted, "You're playing favorites."

There's no need to say this—everyone knew that Grandpa Xie played favorites. At home, although he often criticized Xie Hailan and disapproved of this and that, everyone knew he favored Xie Hailan the most. Now, it seemed he was fond of Dong Xuebing, too. Whether it was because of his love for Xie Huilan or something else, even though Dong Xuebing had confronted Grandpa Xie in the past and said some nonsense after drinking, even calling him "Old Xie," which should have caused some issues, Grandpa Xie seemed to like him. Some things were hard to explain.

Xie Guoyue felt that Xie Hailan and Dong Xuebing's temperaments suited Grandpa Xie well. Perhaps it was because they were similar to Grandpa Xie in some ways. Grandpa Xie's stubbornness was well-known, and so was Xie Hailan's disregard for family ties. As for Dong Xuebing, although not many people had heard of him, his temperament was just as foul, something known to the family.

Bang, bang, bang.

Xie Hao and the others were still setting off firecrackers.

At this moment, Xie Guobang and Xie Guoliang, the three brothers, also came out one after another. They accompanied Grandpa Xie and chatted, watching the younger generation set off firecrackers.

Han Jing sighed, "It's rare for our whole family to gather like this."

Xia Yanzhen smiled, "Yes, but Huilan didn't return."

Suddenly, Xie Hailan's phone rang on Dong Xuebing's phone. Seeing the number, he answered with a smile, "Hey, Huilan, we were just talking about you. You're the only one not here this year." After a few words, Dong Xuebing handed the phone to Grandpa Xie, "Grandpa, Huilan wants to wish you a Happy New Year."

Grandpa Xie grunted, "She doesn't know to come back and see me."

"She's busy over there and can't leave," Dong Xuebing passed the phone.

Grandpa Xie took it and grumbled a few times, but despite his tone, his expression was still very gentle.

Dong Xuebing knew his grandpa was one to talk tough but have a soft heart.

Before long, the phone was passed to Xie Guobang, Han Jing, and the others.

Xie Huilan wished each of the elders a Happy New Year. Since she couldn't come back, she had to make several calls.

But just then, as Xie Huilan's call was being hung up by Han Jing and passed back to Dong Xuebing, an accident occurred. Over where Xie Hao and Hou Ming were setting off fireworks, Xie Hao accidentally bumped into something, causing one of the fireworks to fall. It had already been lit, and as it fell, it was aimed directly towards Grandpa Xie, Xie Guoyue, and the others.

"Hey, be careful!"

"Damn, get out of the way!"

Xie Hao and Hou Ming shouted in alarm.

This was too dangerous. Although called firecrackers, they were no different from firearms in essence. If one exploded on someone, there would definitely be serious consequences. Every year, countless people were blinded, disabled, or killed by such accidents. Everyone tensed up immediately.

"Oh no."

"Grandpa!"

"Guoyue, get out of the way!"

Upon hearing the commotion and seeing what happened, the security guards over there were also scared out of their wits and rushed over here, but it was really too late.

Everyone gasped.

Only Dong Xuebing remained calm. Upon the first shout from Xie Hao, he glanced over and then at the direction the fireworks aimed.

In the next moment,

With a thud, the fireworks launched from the ground.

"Danger!"

"Be careful!"

Someone shouted.

But just as Xie Guoyue and the others were unable to move away in time and covered their faces to protect themselves, as other security guards rushed over here, in the blink of an eye, Dong Xuebing's figure appeared unexpectedly in front of Grandpa Xie, Xie Guoyue, and the others. It was as if he had flashed over in an instant. Expressionless, he lightly raised his hand and flicked it. With a snap, the flying firework was slapped away by the back of Dong Xuebing's hand and burst open in the sky with a whoosh.