

## PAW 1808

Chapter 1808

Afternoon

County Committee

In the Secretary's Office

The room was not large, but it had an inner chamber that was reasonably adequate. Overall, it felt a bit shabby. The walls were peeling in many places, and there were some water stains around the windows, possibly from rain leaks. Dong Xuebing did not doubt that the county didn't intentionally give him a particularly poor office; they wouldn't do that. So, this was still a relatively decent office. In other words, if even the county secretary's office were in this condition, the offices of other officials and departments would likely be in even worse shape.

"Secretary, the environment here is somewhat lacking. Please make do with it," Meng Hanmei said, perhaps noticing Dong Xuebing observing the room.

Dong Xuebing took out a cigarette and politely waved it at Meng Hanmei, not to offer her one but to check if it was acceptable to smoke in her presence. As Meng Hanmei quickly nodded, saying it was fine, Dong Xuebing lit a cigarette, took a few puffs, and said, "It's alright. I don't feel it's too bad. It's fine as long as it's functional. I'm not too particular. You'll get used to it eventually, haha."

The main points had been discussed, and the necessary introductions had been made.

Meng Hanmei paused, glanced at her watch, and said, "I'm not sure about your plans for the afternoon, so I'll make it quick and not delay your work."

Dong Xuebing waved his hand, "I don't have any plans. Go ahead, take your time."

Meng Hanmei said, "There's just one last thing—about your driver and secretary."

Dong Xuebing hesitantly replied, "You arrange the driver for me. I won't worry about it."

The driver, especially for a county committee secretary, was a significant and often coveted position. Sometimes, the trust in a driver could be higher than that in a secretary, as leaders often rely on their drivers for personal matters, even if they don't use their secretary as much. It was important to trust the person, and their character had to be carefully considered. Dong Xuebing didn't even think twice before handing the selection to Meng Hanmei. This already indicated his trust in her.

Meng Hanmei also appeared serious and formal, "Alright, since you trust me so much, I will carefully select someone for you. Once I've found suitable candidates, I will bring them to you for review."

Dong Xuebing responded casually, "No need to review; just choose someone and let it be."

Meng Hanmei had already shown her intent to align with Dong Xuebing. Naturally, he needed to reciprocate to some extent.

Meng Hanmei nodded slightly and, without further discussing the driver, turned to the next topic, "As for the secretary..."

Dong Xuebing was not entirely clear about the situation. "What happened to the old secretary? Is he still with the county committee office, or has he been reassigned?"

Meng Hanmei said, "The old secretary went to work in a neighboring county with the former secretary."

Dong Xuebing nodded, "Then recommend a few candidates for me to consider."

Meng Hanmei was well-prepared. She removed her coat and retrieved a manila envelope from the inner pocket. She opened it and pulled out a small document stack, handing it to Dong Xuebing. "I took the liberty of pre-selecting some candidates for you. These are individuals I believe are capable and suitable for the role. Most importantly, they are reliable and have clean backgrounds. You can trust them," she said, implying that these candidates were not affiliated with other factions and had clean connections, ensuring no problems would arise.

Dong Xuebing, appreciating her thoughtfulness, felt an increased sense of trust in Meng Hanmei. He knew she wouldn't take such matters lightly, and if she said these candidates were trustworthy, they likely were. He flipped through the stack of files, reviewing each one. The top candidates had impressive resumes and seemed very capable. However, Dong Xuebing kept his guard up, not

picking someone randomly from the top. Since these files were influenced by Meng Hanmei, who might have placed those with whom she had closer ties at the top, Dong Xuebing preferred to find someone who was familiar with neighboring county work and suited his preferences. He wasn't overly concerned about work capability and was prepared to handle issues himself if needed. A secretary was meant to assist, and Dong Xuebing preferred to be hands-on. He trusted only himself, aside from his parents and wife.

Experience often leads to greater caution. Even Dong Xuebing was no exception despite being new and somewhat headstrong. Having seen many dark sides of things, he preferred to avoid potential issues beforehand if possible.

He flipped through the documents:

One page,

Three pages,

Five pages.

Dong Xuebing reviewed the files thoroughly.

He directly eliminated two female candidates. Last time, he faced pressure but insisted on choosing Yao Cui as his secretary due to their deep trust and long-standing acquaintance. This time, he felt choosing a female candidate was unsuitable for several reasons: it could impact the perception, and having a female secretary could introduce limitations in certain aspects of work. Dong Xuebing decided to exclude female candidates, and fortunately, only two were in the stack. Additionally, he disregarded older candidates. Age gaps could create communication issues, and Dong Xuebing, being relatively young, found it awkward to manage someone much older, which could be uncomfortable for both parties. Thus, he also ruled them out.

A few candidates remained.

Dong Xuebing reviewed the remaining files again, discarding those he found unsatisfactory. These candidates had good qualifications—young, high education, and solid work experience—but Dong Xuebing knew from years of leadership that resumes often present a polished view. Evaluations from supervisors generally highlight positives and avoid criticism. Thus, Dong Xuebing relied more on his judgment than taking the documents at face value.

Dong Xuebing examined the candidates' files critically, and his process was methodical yet deeply personal. He dismissed the first few candidates with a decisive air:

"Not imposing enough—excluded."

"No official demeanor—excluded."

"Eyes and nose too sharp—excluded."

To an outside observer, Dong Xuebing's criteria might have seemed overly arbitrary, perhaps even a touch superficial. But Dong Xuebing himself didn't see it that way. He believed that a photograph could reveal much about a person's character. This wasn't about superstition or astrology; instead, it was about the subtle hints of one's true nature that could be discerned from their appearance. Unlike the mystical beliefs surrounding facial features or star signs, Dong Xuebing held that true demeanor reflected a person's experiences, environment, and values—a more reliable indicator of character.

Of course, he acknowledged that mistakes were possible. Nothing in life is absolute, and sometimes, a person lacking appearance or demeanor might rise to heights. Dong Xuebing knew that even with the best intentions, outcomes could be unpredictable. But that was the nature of life. He believed in making decisions based on his judgment and standing by them, even if they were wrong. This confidence in his decisions was a cornerstone of his robust and fearless nature. Dong Xuebing didn't seek to be infallible; he trusted his choices.

After thoroughly reviewing the files, he set them aside with a sense of finality. "I'm done."

Meng Hanmei, observing his reaction, asked, "Do you find any of them suitable? If not, I can introduce them to you. They're all under my supervision, so I'm quite familiar with them."

Dong Xuebing inquired, "Are there other candidates?"

Meng Hanmei shook her head. "The others either have problematic backgrounds or deficiencies in work abilities. I didn't choose them. Do you find these candidates unsatisfactory?"

Dong Xuebing wanted to maintain her enthusiasm and not belittle her efforts. “It’s not that I’m dissatisfied. I know you’ve put in a lot of hard work on this. I appreciate it. However, I had someone in mind for a while now.”

Meng Hanmei looked puzzled. “From the County Office?”

Dong Xuebing nodded. “Yes, from the County Office. Specifically, Su Yan was a deputy section chief in the Secretary’s Office. I’ve met him once and heard about his involvement in the black car incident. He seems promising, though I’m unsure about his exact capabilities. He feels right for me.”

Meng Hanmei’s expression grew complex. “You mean Xiao Su?”

Dong Xuebing smiled. “Yes, that’s him. Arrange for him to come over. I want to meet him.”