

PAW 1814

Chapter 1814

A little after 7 PM.

Dong Xuebing found the building in Su Yan's neighborhood, following Meng Hanmei's address. He double-checked the door number and pressed the doorbell.

Ding-dong.

Ding-dong.

"Coming, coming."

It was Su Yan's mother who opened the door.

Dong Xuebing smiled and greeted, "Hello, Auntie."

Su's mother squinted suspiciously at him, "Who are you looking for?"

"I'm looking for Su Yan. We work together," Dong Xuebing explained with a friendly smile.

"You're one of Xiao Yan's colleagues?" Su's mother blinked. "I've never seen you before."

Seeing her cautious reaction, Dong Xuebing understood and said, "I'm new here, too. I was just passing by your neighborhood and thought I'd stop in to say hello to you and Uncle. I had little time to grab anything, so I picked up some seasonal fruits downstairs." He lifted the plastic bag he was holding.

With the visitor already standing at her door with a bag of fruit, Su's mother couldn't very well turn him away. She hesitated momentarily and then said, "Come on in."

Dong Xuebing smiled, "Thank you. Should I change shoes?"

"Yes, go ahead. The slippers are in the shoe cabinet. Pick any pair."

Dong Xuebing put on the slippers, placed the fruits by the entrance, and asked, "Is Su Yan home?"

"He's in the shower. He should be out soon. Make yourself comfortable. I won't fuss over you," Su's mother replied coolly.

Su's father turned around from the living room, gave Dong Xuebing a quick nod, and then looked at his wife with a questioning glance.

As Su's mother approached her husband, she lowered her voice and said, "He says he's Xiao Yan's colleague. I reckon he's here to build connections and even brought some fruit. I couldn't just refuse to let him in." Since learning her son would be the county party secretary's secretary, she had become suspicious of anyone dropping by. Seeing Dong Xuebing show up with gifts only confirmed her suspicions. She had never seen or heard of him before, and in her eyes, he was now one of those opportunists trying to cozy up to their family. "When our Xiao Yan wasn't doing well, you didn't come around. But now that he's going to be the secretary to the county party secretary, here you are," she thought. Su's mother found Dong Xuebing too opportunistic and wasn't overly warm towards him.

Dong Xuebing, of course, had no idea what Su's mother was thinking. His visit was just a coincidence, with no ulterior motive.

Su's father, being polite, asked, "Would you like something to drink?"

Dong Xuebing smiled, "No need to trouble yourself. Just some plain water would be fine."

Su's mother, still unimpressed, thought to herself, "How casual of you!" But she had no choice and went to pour him a glass of water.

"Thank you, Auntie." Dong Xuebing took a few sips and asked, "How have you and Uncle been? Are you in good health?"

It was just a polite question to him, but Su's mother found him overly familiar and responded coldly, "We're fine, nothing to worry about."

Su's father asked, "Have you eaten?"

"I ate at home, thank you," Dong Xuebing smiled.

Su's father nodded, "We've already got food here. If you haven't eaten, you can join us for a bite."

Dong Xuebing took a pack of cigarettes and offered, "That's very kind of you, but I'm full. Do you smoke, Uncle?"

Before Su's father could answer, Su's mother immediately interjected, "I'm allergic to smoke. We don't allow smoking in the house."

Seeing how his wife had already taken on the demeanor of the mother of the "first secretary," Su's father couldn't help but feel a bit exasperated. Still, he understood her feelings. After so many years of their son being in a stagnant position, even struggling to find a partner, this sudden rise in status was exhilarating for her. He knew that, as a mother, her emotions were running high, and it was hard for her to contain her excitement. Women tend to be more emotional in these matters, and it was something he knew couldn't be avoided.

Dong Xuebing blinked, "Sorry about that, Auntie." Upon hearing about her smoking allergy, he quickly put away his cigarettes, not showing any sign of annoyance.

Su's father offered again, "Would you like some fruit?"

Dong Xuebing shook his head politely, "No, thank you."

Dong Xuebing's demeanor was not particularly striking—his appearance and attitude were as ordinary as anyone else's, the type to easily blend into a crowd. However, having served as a leader for many years, he had developed quiet confidence and composure. Though understated, there was a sure steadiness about him. His calm presence could be interpreted as a hint of pride. It was how he always carried himself, no matter where he was.

Unfortunately, this demeanor rubbed Su's mother the wrong way. In her eyes, he was here to seek favors from her son. And yet, he sat there so casually, not showing the least bit of deference. He acts like he belongs here, she thought. How brazen.

Su's father, on the other hand, was more amiable. He believed that since Dong Xuebing was here to see his son, he was their guest, and treating him kindly was only right. So, he continued making small talk. Dong Xuebing responded naturally, keeping up a light conversation without much effort.

But Su's mother had no interest in speaking with Dong Xuebing. Not only was she unimpressed with him, but she also didn't know what his intentions were. What if he's here to ask something of my son that puts him in a difficult position? she worried.

Just then, the shower turning off could be heard from the bathroom.

"Mom," Su Yan called out.

"Finished with your shower?" Su's mother stepped closer to the bathroom door.

"Almost. I heard voices—who's here?" Su Yan asked, his voice slightly muffled.

"It's one of your colleagues dropping by to visit," Su's mother replied, glancing at Dong Xuebing.

"A colleague?" Su Yan didn't think much of it and simply said, "Oh, can you grab me some clean clothes?" With just his parents at home, Su Yan wouldn't have cared what he wore, but he couldn't just stroll out in his undershirt and long johns with a guest in the house.

"Sure." Su's mother fetched some clean clothes and handed them into the bathroom. "Here you go."

Su Yan took the clothes and started getting dressed, asking quietly, "Who is it?"

"I don't know him. It's his first time here," Su's mother replied, pursing her lips. "He brought some fruit, so I'm sure he knows about your promotion and came by to ask you for a favor."

"Ah, I see." Su Yan was starting to piece things together.

His mother warned, "Don't feel pressured to say yes to anything. If it's something you can't or shouldn't do, turn him down. That young man seems quite full of himself, acting like he owns the place. I don't like him."

"I'll check it out first, don't worry. I know what I'm doing." Su Yan reassured her.

Su's mother sighed, somewhere between relieved and frustrated. "People never cared much for you before, but now that you're moving up, suddenly they're all over you. It's so opportunistic."

"Keep your voice down. I'm going out to look." Fully dressed, Su Yan opened the bathroom door and stepped out, still wondering which of his colleagues might be asking him for a favor. However, as soon as he saw who it was, he nearly tripped over his feet in shock.

"D-Dong... Dong Shuji!" Su Yan was utterly dumbfounded.

Dong Xuebing chuckled, "Finished with your shower?"