

## PAW 1825

### Chapter 1825

There was a brief silence.

The meeting room was eerily quiet.

Dong Xuebing glanced at everyone. "Six to five, so it's settled."

At this point, the outcome could no longer be changed. They didn't have Dong Xuebing's ability to turn back time and could only watch as he achieved success. If Dong Xuebing had been a local official in Jiaolin County or had worked as the county Party Secretary for over a year and could barely outvote the county mayor during the Party Committee meeting, he would be considered unfit. But now, Dong Xuebing had neither a foundation nor connections, and this was his very first official day at work. Yet he had managed to force everyone to take sides in the Party Committee meeting and even outmaneuvered Zhang Dongfang's faction, consisting of the older generation of Jiaolin County officials. This outcome was indeed a happy one for Dong Xuebing's faction.

He glanced at the clock.

The meeting had been going on for quite some time, and it was already close to noon.

The people on Zhang Dongfang's side looked unhappy, and no one spoke.

Dong Xuebing didn't gloat nor let the joy or emotion show on his face as if what he had just done was routine. But the more he acted like this, the more it crushed Zhang's faction. They really couldn't understand where Dong Xuebing got his confidence. How could he be so sure that the former subordinates of the older secretaries would join his side? It seemed impossible, and they believed that even Dong Xuebing wasn't entirely certain about it.

This was the first time they had encountered such a county Party Secretary!

He was the top leader, but this was far too unconventional.

Zhang Dongfang analyzed the situation and sighed silently. There was no choice but to accept reality. When he thought back to the start of the Party Committee meeting, Dong Xuebing had

held the initiative from the beginning. Despite the disadvantages, Dong Xuebing had dared to bring up the issues himself, forcefully seizing control. Zhang and his team had been caught off guard and unprepared, which allowed Dong Xuebing to take advantage of their mistake!

A miscalculation!

Zhang Dongfang was very frustrated. He had placed great importance on this alignment battle, but the outcome wasn't what he had anticipated. Still, with his faction present, Zhang Dongfang quickly regained his composure, acting as if he didn't care much. To everyone else, it seemed like Zhang, the county mayor, still had confidence and cards up his sleeve. He projected an attitude of "there's always tomorrow." Zhang did have confidence in himself. Lost this time? No problem. There will be a next time and a time after that. Zhang Dongfang believed he could outmaneuver a young upstart almost half his age. Deep down, he hadn't taken this new county Party Secretary seriously, but he wouldn't underestimate him again after this incident. Next time, Zhang would give it his all for a proper showdown with Dong Xuebing.

"Alright, it's time for a lunch break," Dong Xuebing said, seeing that everything that needed to be discussed had been addressed and all tasks completed. He tapped the table and continued, "Meeting adjourned."

Everyone began gathering their things.

Dong Xuebing stood up and was the first to leave the meeting room.

Several Party Committee members instinctively glanced at his back. Some whispered a few words, while others left the room in small groups.

Outside.

When Dong Xuebing stepped out, he heard the continuous sound of heavy rain. Startled, he glanced out the window, and sure enough, the rain had become a downpour. There were puddles all over the courtyard, and when he looked up, he saw water leaking into the hallways of the office building. The building was old and in disrepair, and since the new county committee office complex was nearing completion, no one had bothered to fix the current one, leading to more severe issues. Watching the water dripping through the cracks in the walls, Dong Xuebing shook his head slightly.

A female staff member suddenly walked upstairs and stood face-to-face with Dong Xuebing.

Dong Xuebing asked, "When did it start raining? The weather forecast didn't mention rain today, did it?"

The female staff member exclaimed softly, recognizing Dong Xuebing, and quickly replied respectfully, "Secretary Dong, it's like this: we have a lot of mountains here, and sometimes the weather changes quickly. So, the weather forecast often isn't accurate. This rain started around ten o'clock. At first, it was sleet and not very heavy. But ten minutes later, it started pouring, and we don't know when it will stop. Judging by its looks, it might last until the afternoon or evening."

The first rain of the spring was coming in full force.

A thunderclap rumbled through the sky, and the rain seemed to intensify.

Secretary's Office.

Now, Dong Xuebing was beginning to understand just how busy the role of a Party Secretary could be. When he returned to his office, he hadn't even had time to savor his victory at the Party Committee meeting when the phones in the secretary's room outside started ringing incessantly.

Su Yan, who had just finished filing the meeting documents, also returned and began answering calls individually. Before long, Su Yan knocked on the door and pushed it open. "Secretary, there have been several reports of frequent traffic accidents. Eight or nine incidents have already occurred. The road in Nanshui has collapsed and is temporarily closed, and traffic at the East Gate is severely congested. Many cars have been stuck in the rain for over an hour."

Though it was noon, the sky outside was almost as dark as night.

Another clap of thunder boomed, and the lights in the office flickered for a moment, nearly going out.

Dong Xuebing immediately said, "Notify the relevant departments to implement the emergency response plan immediately." He didn't give specific instructions, as that was the county government's responsibility and the lower departments' task. Now that Dong Xuebing was the county Party Secretary, he didn't need to handle everything personally. Doing so might even hinder efficiency. Besides, he wasn't yet familiar with the work here. If he set the right direction,

the relevant departments would naturally act. Still, he wasn't just going to wash his hands of it entirely and made a few phone calls to keep an eye on this unexpected downpour.

Let's hope nothing serious happens.

Dong Xuebing certainly didn't want something to go wrong in the county on his first day in office.

However, sometimes, the more you hope something won't happen, the more likely it is to occur!

Even the meal delivery truck for the government offices was stuck outside. It was already past twelve, and no one had eaten yet. Dong Xuebing was still in his office, reminding Su Yan to speed up getting the meals delivered so everyone wouldn't go hungry when the Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee, Chang Lin, suddenly rushed in and knocked on the door.

"Secretary! Something has happened!" Chang Lin was slightly wet from the rain, with water droplets on his hair, as if he had just returned from outside.

Dong Xuebing's eyes sharpened. "What happened? Speak slowly."

Chang Lin quickly said, "The Fire and Rescue Command Center just received a report that several tour buses from the city went to Qing'e Mountain in our county. They arrived this morning but got caught in the heavy rain. The report came from one of the bus drivers, who said they lost contact with the people on the mountain for almost three hours. There are about a hundred people on board, mostly teachers and students. It's a spring outing organized by the City's First High School."

Dong Xuebing's expression changed slightly, "That many people?"

"Yes, I've already contacted the rescue team to head over," Chang-Lin replied.

Dong Xuebing stood up and asked, "How did they lose contact?"

Chang Lin explained, "Qing'e Mountain has poor terrain, and the communication equipment faces significant interference. There's no mobile signal on the mountain. Also, the mountain hasn't been properly developed for tourism—there are only simple paths for visitors to hike. But with the heavy fog and complex terrain, losing your sense of direction is easy. People unfamiliar with the

area can easily get lost or fall off a cliff. Several tourists have accidents on Qing'e Mountain every year, so the fire department set up a dedicated search and rescue team for that area. With this heavy rain and the fact that we've lost contact with the students and teachers for so long, I fear something serious might happen!"

Dong Xuebing took a moment to process this, then nodded firmly and said loudly, "The rescue team alone won't be enough. Immediately deploy additional police forces. Use every resource, and contact the local townships to send more people. We must ensure that every teacher and student from City First High School is rescued safely!"

Chang Lin responded, "Understood!"

Dong Xuebing asked, "Is your car upstairs?"

"Yes, it's here. Are you...?" Chang Lin looked at him.

Dong Xuebing grabbed his jacket and threw it over his shoulders, saying, "I'll take your car. I'm going to the scene myself. I won't feel at ease unless I oversee this in person." He headed out with Chang Lin, and Su Yan quickly followed. Dong Xuebing turned to Su Yan and said, "Contact County Mayor Zhang and let him know."

Su Yan made the call swiftly, and after a brief exchange, the group left the hallway. Su Yan reported, "County Mayor Zhang is already at the scene." He paused and added, "I heard some people from the TV station went there too."

Dong Xuebing frowned slightly. "I got it." He thought to himself, "That Zhang Dongfang sure moves quickly."

Chang Lin seemed to understand the situation as well. Zhang Dongfang had just lost to Dong Xuebing at the Party Committee meeting and wanted to turn things around by personally participating in the rescue operation, likely as a political show. After losing the vote, Zhang Dongfang naturally needed to regain some ground through other means.

Dong Xuebing didn't care much about Zhang's moves. Whether Zhang Dongfang got there first didn't matter to him—he was more concerned about the safety of the students and teachers.

Ring, ring, ring.

Dong Xuebing's phone rang.

He didn't recognize the number but answered anyway. As Su Yan held the umbrella over him, Dong Xuebing entered a police car.

"Hello, this is Dong Xuebing."

"I'm Qian Litao, the City Party Secretary of Baohong City!"

The voice on the other end was full of authority. Dong Xuebing was slightly taken aback. "... Secretary Qian, hello."

Su Yan and Chang Lin, who were also in the car, instantly tensed up. They knew who was calling, and both instinctively held their breath in deference to a City Party Secretary.

Secretary Qian said only one sentence: "I'm aware of the situation. The entire city is paying close attention. The students and teachers from City First High School must be rescued as quickly as possible. Listen carefully: I said must. Conduct the search and rescue with full force—no one can be harmed!"

What could Dong Xuebing say? He could only reply, "Rest assured, we'll do our utmost."

Beep, beep, beep—the line went dead. It seemed Secretary Qian had a strong dislike for Dong Xuebing.