

PAW 1841

Chapter 1841

It was dark.

It was 8:00 PM.

The county party compound was nearly empty, with everyone who was supposed to leave already gone, but Dong Xuebing was still sitting alone in his office. He hadn't moved for several minutes. The cigarette in his hand had long since burned out, but Dong Xuebing maintained the posture of holding it, staring out of the window, deep in thought.

The situation was on the verge of exploding.

There were only a few hours left before tomorrow morning.

If Dong Xuebing had done nothing, he could have already imagined how things would unfold. The newspapers the day after tomorrow would likely report on the large-scale investigation of officials from the neighboring county, and Dong Xuebing would be suspended, eventually facing disciplinary action. The specifics of the punishment were not yet clear in the reports. Still, it was certain that, even if it weren't a dismissal, it would be deadly, especially for a newly appointed county party secretary like him. If he could avoid this, he certainly would. The ancient tomb had not yet been found, and the county had not yet been promoted. He absolutely could not afford to be in trouble.

This was troublesome. Right after taking office, he had to deal with such a mess. Was someone doing this on purpose to make things hard for him?

He had to avoid it.

He had to find a way out.

Dong Xuebing stopped being angry. His expression focused as his mind began to race. The more urgent the situation, the calmer he needed to be. Although things had already deteriorated, Dong Xuebing still had an advantage: he had gotten a half-days head start on the matter. Others didn't

know yet, so he could use this time gap to try and fix things. He couldn't let this issue drag him or the county into it. Neither he nor his subordinates could afford such a blow.

Suddenly, someone came in from outside.

“Hm? The door’s not closed?”

“What’s wrong?”

“Ah, Secretary, you’re still here?”

“No.”

“Sorry, sorry, I didn’t know you were here. I saw the door open and was about to close it.” The person who came in was a young female clerk from the county party office, probably a new staff member. She didn’t look very old. “I’ll, uh, I’ll let you continue your work.”

Dong Xuebing waved his hand, signaling for her to leave.

The young clerk stuck her tongue out and was about to close the door.

But just before the door shut, Dong Xuebing suddenly called out to her as if he had thought of something. “What’s your surname?”

“Ah?” The female clerk blinked and replied, “My surname is Sun.”

“Good, Xiao Sun.” Dong Xuebing said, “Help me look up the phone number of our county’s Urban Management Bureau chief. Right now, I need it.”

The clerk was surprised. “Uh, I... I’ll look it up for you.”

Dong Xuebing nodded. “Yes, once you find it, let me know. Don’t tell anyone that I asked for it.”

Dong Xuebing had the phone numbers of the county’s top officials, but he didn’t know the contact details of the other officials beneath them. His secretary, Su Yan, would have it, and Meng Hanmei

would have it, but Dong Xuebing hadn't planned to ask them. He didn't want any rumors to leak out, fearing any complications. That was why he was being so cautious. Dong Xuebing was likely about to do something that no one would expect.

"The phone numbers are on our computer. I'll get it right now," the clerk replied nervously. After receiving her orders, she hurried back to the county party office. When her last colleague to leave saw her rushing, he asked what was happening, but the clerk didn't dare say anything. She just gave a few vague answers and quickly found the phone number.

Inside, Dong Xuebing had already put on his coat and burned the newspapers for tomorrow.

The female clerk rushed in, panting. "Secretary, here you go."

Dong Xuebing took the paper, glanced at it, and patted her on the shoulder. "Thanks. You should head home now. Be careful on the road." After saying that, he quickly walked downstairs.

Downstairs.

Driver Xiao Wang had already left, as Dong Xuebing had told him to go earlier, so Dong Xuebing walked alone towards the compound's entrance, pulling out his phone to dial the number of the county Urban Management Bureau Director, Huo Yibang. The phone rang once and then connected.

A middle-aged man's respectful voice came through. "Secretary Dong."

Huo Yibang seemed to recognize Dong Xuebing's phone number, as it wasn't a secret at the administrative level. At Huo Yibang's rank, he would certainly have access to it, so Dong Xuebing wasn't surprised. There was no need for introductions—this made the conversation easier. "Director Huo, are you already resting?"

Huo Yibang immediately responded, "Not yet. It's still early. Is there something you need me for?"

Dong Xuebing replied seriously, "I do need to speak with you. Let's meet in person. You know the new county party compound, right? I'll meet you at the gate in 20 minutes." After briefly pausing, he added, "Don't tell anyone about our meeting. Come alone."

Huo Yibang was momentarily stunned but quickly replied, "Understood, Secretary."

"Alright, see you soon." Dong Xuebing hung up the phone.

At that moment, a taxi drove by. Dong Xuebing immediately waved it down, got in, and closed his eyes, growing increasingly resolute. There was no time to waste. The investigation team would arrive soon, and hesitation would only worsen things. Dong Xuebing had to make quick decisions. Aside from matters of emotion, Dong Xuebing was never indecisive.

There was no other choice.

The taxi gradually moved from the town center towards a newly developed area. When he came during the day, there were still some people around, but now it was nearly 9 PM, and no residential areas were nearby. Many streetlights were incomplete, giving the area an eerie, desolate atmosphere. The county party compound, located in what was supposed to be the county's central, bustling area, was quite far from the center. The county couldn't afford the high land prices in the center, which were reserved for developers and for generating fiscal income, so the land for the new compound had been chosen in this less developed, more affordable area.

The taxi stopped.

The driver, puzzled, said, "You live around here? There aren't any residential complexes yet. There's a new commercial street, but most shops are empty."

Dong Xuebing paid the fare and got out. "Just came to take a look."

The driver, trying to be helpful, added, "Be careful, it's dark, and our county's security isn't the best. But in such a remote area, I doubt there'll be any robberies."

The taxi drove away, its tail lights fading into the street.

Dong Xuebing quickly walked on, turning a corner, until he arrived at a large, palace-like gate. It was the new county party compound, but the gate was locked with a heavy chain, and the red walls surrounding it obstructed the view of the buildings inside. Dong Xuebing leaned against the gate and pulled out a cigarette.

A car's headlights appeared in the distance, and a Chevrolet Cruze sped toward them.

As the car approached and saw Dong Xuebing, it quickly stopped, and the driver hastily applied the handbrake before getting out of the car. A tall, middle-aged man with sharp facial features stepped out, looking quite energetic.

"Secretary, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm late," Huo Yibang said, a bit embarrassed. Although he wasn't late, arriving within the 20-minute window, seeing that Dong Xuebing had already arrived and was waiting for him, he felt the need to apologize. When a leader arrives first, and you arrive later, no matter the circumstances, you're still considered late. After all, they are the leader.

Dong Xuebing waved his hand. "I arrived early," he said, tossing a cigarette to Huo Yibang, and lighting one himself.

Huo Yibang offered to light Dong Xuebing's cigarette for him.

Dong Xuebing didn't allow it, lighting his cigarette instead.

Huo Yibang didn't say anything more and lit his cigarette, reluctantly joining his leader. However, he was feeling quite uneasy. He had no idea why Secretary Dong had called him or what he wanted. He certainly didn't expect the secretary to ask for secrecy or a private meeting. The area was dark and deserted, and Huo Yibang's mind raced. Was he in trouble? But even if he had done something wrong, why would the secretary personally contact him? After all, there were a few levels of hierarchy between them. Huo Yibang didn't think he had the qualifications for something like this. The more he thought, the more uneasy he became. Adding to his discomfort were the exaggerated rumors circulating in the county about Dong Xuebing, such as kicking over cars and shouting until dozens of people fainted. Huo Yibang even wondered if the secretary might be planning something drastic or eliminating him. His mind had been running wild ever since he got the call.

The atmosphere grew tense and silent.

The deserted street was empty except for the two, quietly smoking.

Dong Xuebing rolled up his sleeve to check his watch, then glanced at Huo Yibang, a man whose background and past he didn't even know. At this point, there was no other option. "Director Huo."

Huo Yibang straightened up immediately. "Secretary, if you need anything, just tell me."

Dong Xuebing replied, "I'm here because I have a matter to discuss with you. Some people may think it's a big deal, so I asked you not to share it with anyone. But I think for you and your Urban Management Bureau, it should be a small matter."

Small matter?

Huo Yibang immediately felt relieved. What was there to fear if it was just a small matter?
"Alright, what do you need us to do?"

Dong Xuebing flicked the cigarette butt to the ground, stepped on it, then turned and pointed towards the new county party compound. "Do you see that?"

Huo Yibang blinked. "I see it. It's the new county party compound."

Dong Xuebing nodded. "Your task is simple. From the walls to the gates to the buildings inside, I want everything leveled by tomorrow morning."

Huo Yibang's expression froze, and he nearly spat out his drink in shock.