

## PAW 1843

### Chapter 1843

It was past 9 o'clock.

The new County Committee compound looked especially eerie at night.

Huo Yibang had been convinced, though not by anything Dong Xuebing said, because Secretary Dong hadn't explained or justified anything to him at all. What persuaded Huo Yibang was the calm and steady look in Dong Xuebing's eyes. Although Huo Yibang wasn't at a particularly high rank, he had been navigating the bureaucracy for nearly twenty years. He had learned to read people. Secretary Dong's task was certainly irregular—one could even say it was outrageous. However, he couldn't detect a trace of hesitation in Dong Xuebing's eyes. The decision could impact Dong Xuebing's entire political career, yet the Secretary's expression was unwavering.

Is he out of his mind?

Huo Yibang didn't think so. If someone could rise to the position of County Committee Secretary at just 26 or 27 years old, they weren't lacking in wits. He believed Secretary Dong had his plan. He would not make such a reckless decision without a reason.

Thus, Huo Yibang decided to take a gamble.

In essence, this was about picking a side.

Tearing down the new County Committee compound? That's insane!

But he thought, Screw it, I'll go crazy with him this time!

Huo Yibang had made up his mind. Once he decided, his resolve was firm. After all, this was the County Party Secretary's order. If the sky fell, it would be someone taller who'd have to hold it up. Besides, if this action earned Secretary Dong's trust, it could be a pivotal moment in his political career. Of course, that was only if he bet correctly. If he got it wrong—demolishing a government office site without proper authorization—there was no question that he'd lose his position. That was a certainty.

Doesn't matter anymore.

Huo Yibang pulled out his phone and called one of the bureau's department heads. After a couple of rings, the call connected. "Hello, Old Zhou. It's me."

The person on the other end said, "Director Huo, are you at a dinner meeting?"

"Dinner meeting my ass," Huo Yibang snapped. "This time, I'm not asking you to help with drinks. There's a task—an urgent one. You're not asleep yet. Get back to the office immediately."

The man on the other end sounded puzzled. "Okay, I'll get dressed. Is it that urgent?"

"Extremely urgent, and it needs to be kept confidential," Huo Yibang emphasized. "Listen to every word I say carefully. We can't afford any mistakes. Head back to the office right now, and on your way, call Old Zhang, Old Sun, and Old Yan. Tell them to bring trustworthy enforcement officers—only those we can rely on. Trust is the top priority. Don't call Old Xu; he's just been transferred, and we don't know him well. I don't trust him yet. As for the exact task, I can't explain it over the phone. Once you gather the team, bring all the tools and equipment for demolishing illegal structures and come straight to my location. Do you understand?"

The person hesitated, "Director Huo, what's going on? Why are we tearing down illegal structures in the middle of the night? Most people are probably already off work and resting by this time." Their work hours were usually from 9 to 5, and they rarely had tasks outside those hours unless it was a special enforcement operation.

"Wake them up even if they're resting!" Huo Yibang ordered.

Hearing the tone in Huo Yibang's voice, Old Zhou realized that something serious was happening. He didn't ask any more questions. "Alright, I understand. I'll contact only the most trustworthy people right away."

Huo Yibang reminded him, "Make sure it's done properly. And keep this under wraps. Don't let any information leak out."

"Don't worry, Director Huo," Old Zhou assured him. "I'll get it done without a hitch. When have I ever let you down?"

Huo Yibang felt reassured. After working together for many years, he and Old Zhou developed a deep mutual understanding and a close personal relationship. Otherwise, Huo wouldn't have made his first call to Old Zhou; this was a sign of absolute trust. After hanging up, Huo Yibang made two more calls to give a heads-up to the equipment department, arranging for bulldozers and dump trucks. Such mobilizations would be troublesome without his direct orders, so he coordinated them in advance to save time. Naturally, he first emphasized strict confidentiality—they were to report directly to him and not contact anyone else.

After a while, Huo Yibang put down his phone. "Secretary Dong, everything's arranged. We are gathering people and equipment now; they should arrive within an hour."

Dong Xuebing nodded. "Alright, let's go inside and sit while we wait."

Huo Yibang glanced at the small "palace-like" buildings in the compound. "Uh, the doors are locked, so we..." He trailed off as he noticed something.

In the next moment, Dong Xuebing kicked out hard, and with a loud bang, he smashed open the door of one of the small buildings. "We're demolishing it anyway. Let's go in."

Huo Yibang couldn't help but laugh bitterly as he followed inside. While stepping over the fallen door, he looked closer at the deep shoe print left on it. He was once again surprised. What kind of background does this new County Committee Secretary have? The door was sturdy, yet Dong Xuebing left a visible mark with a single kick. If that kick landed on a person, they might be sent flying several meters!

The two sat down on a few vintage-style chairs inside and lit cigarettes.

Dong Xuebing was genuinely pleased with Huo Yibang's cooperation and felt grateful. For someone to trust him unconditionally and join him in this risky venture made Dong Xuebing's attitude soften. Dropping his earlier stern demeanor, he chatted casually with Huo Yibang. "Old Huo, how's your wife doing?" He called her "sister-in-law," which was a bit presumptuous, but given his rank, it wouldn't be appropriate to call her "auntie."

Huo Yibang chuckled. "She's doing well, even healthier than I am." He paused and sighed. "But my kid's health isn't good—very frail. He gets a fever almost every week. We've been to the city hospital countless times, but they still haven't figured out what's wrong."

Dong Xuebing asked, "How old is he?"

"Twenty already," Huo Yibang replied, shaking his head. "Because of this, he hasn't found a partner yet. Our family worries about it every day."

"Have you tried taking him to the provincial hospital?" asked Dong Xuebing.

"There aren't any top-tier hospitals in our province," Huo Yibang explained. "We've been considering taking him to Beijing for treatment, but I've heard it's tough to get an appointment there, even a regular one, let alone with a specialist. It's so troublesome that we've kept putting it off, thinking we'd only go if his condition worsens."

Dong Xuebing waved his hand dismissively. "Not being able to diagnose the illness is the most concerning part. Please don't take it lightly; it's no small matter. But since he's young, it's unlikely to be anything serious—maybe the medication hasn't been accurate. Here's what we'll do: I have some connections in Beijing. Let me give you a contact number. Take it down." He then pulled out his phone and showed Huo Yibang a number.

Huo Yibang immediately noted it down. "Whose number is this?"

"Liú Xuěméi's," Dong Xuebing answered.

"302 PLA General Hospital?" Huo Yibang was stunned. This hospital was well-known to anyone with some knowledge. It was where even top government leaders sought treatment—arguably the best hospital in the entire country, with no close competitors in terms of overall reputation.

Dong Xuebing said, "If you take your child there, just give her a call and say that Dong Xuebing referred you. They'll help you arrange everything."

Huo Yibang swallowed hard. "This Comrade Liu, who is she?"

Dong Xuebing replied, "She used to hold the rank of Major General and was the hospital's Deputy Director. I'm unsure what her position is now—maybe she's been promoted. I haven't been in touch with Aunt Liu for a while."

Major General. A general?

This connection was incredibly powerful.

Huo Yibang immediately said, "Wow, I need to thank you, Secretary Dong. We were worrying about finding a place to get treatment for my kid. You've helped my family a lot."

Dong Xuebing waved it off. "It's no big deal, just a small favor. Nothing to thank me for. We might be working through the night today, so once you've rested in a few days, take your child to get checked out as soon as possible. The earlier you see a doctor, the sooner you'll have peace of mind, and it won't weigh on your thoughts."

"Absolutely," Huo Yibang nodded. "In a few days, I'll have my wife take our child to Beijing for a full examination from top to bottom."

At this point, Huo Yibang realized that Dong Xuebing's background might be far from ordinary. It wasn't just because Dong Xuebing knew the Deputy Director of the 302 PLA General Hospital, a Major General. Given that Dong Xuebing had worked in Beijing and even at the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), it wouldn't be surprising if he knew a few high-ranking people. It would be strange if he didn't, given his years of experience. What caught Huo's attention was that Dong Xuebing didn't suggest Huo call him once he got to the hospital so that he could arrange things. Instead, he gave him General Liu's direct number. This meant that once Huo mentioned Dong Xuebing's name, there wouldn't be any need for further calls or explanations—his name alone would suffice.

There were two scenarios:

Dong Xuebing would need to call and make personal arrangements.

Or, just mentioning Dong Xuebing's name would be enough without him needing to be directly involved.

The latter was the case here, which told Huo a lot about Dong Xuebing's influence. He wouldn't dare make such an offer if he didn't have that kind of sway in Beijing. Dong Xuebing might have said this casually, perhaps without thinking, but Huo Yibang read between the lines. This County Committee Secretary from Beijing likely had a very significant background—at least in the capital, he seemed to have considerable pull.

At that moment, Huo Yibang felt his instincts were right. He believed that if he hadn't agreed so readily to the risky task of demolishing the buildings, Secretary Dong probably wouldn't have offered to help with his child's medical issue so willingly. For this alone, Huo thought it was worth it. In traditional Chinese thinking, the well-being of one's children is paramount.

If the child is healthy, everything else falls into place.

This is the greatness of being a parent.