

PAW 1873

Chapter 1873

Monday.

At the new office location.

The weather is great, and the warmth of spring seems to have arrived a bit late.

Dong Xuebing came to work at around eight in the morning. He got up early, so he came a little earlier. Last night, Dong Xuebing left Fang Wenping's house after dinner. It took more than two hours to get home by long-distance bus. It was past nine when he got home. The fatigue of the journey and the whole day with Fang Wenping made Dong Xuebing mentally tired, so he went to bed early. When he opened his eyes in the morning, he felt refreshed, all thanks to Fang Wenping. Many of Dong Xuebing's negative emotions were vented on Fang.

Entering the office compound, Dong Xuebing's expression indicated he was in a good mood today. As he walked through, people greeted him.

"Secretary."

"Dong Secretary."

"Good morning."

Dong Xuebing smiled and responded, "Good morning."

Before Dong Xuebing took office, many events had already occurred in the county, and things had not been calm. For most of the time, Dong had been handling issues with a stern face, scolding people and dealing with problems. He rarely showed such a relaxed expression. Seeing this, everyone around was a little unsettled. They had already witnessed Dong Xuebing's toughness in dealing with various situations, so even though he was now showing a more pleasant demeanor, many still felt uneasy.

The office space was still shabby, with rows of linked houses, making it all feel a bit dizzying. Dong Xuebing had to think briefly before recalling where his temporary office was, then walked

over slowly. However, despite the same environment, after a few days of adjustment, most civil servants had adjusted their emotions and gradually adapted to the conditions there. Today, the floor and the cluttered surroundings were much cleaner than when they had just moved in. Though the departments couldn't yet be said to be orderly, at least the basic functions of the departments were being fulfilled. After the adjustments, Dong Xuebing felt they were sufficient and somewhat satisfied.

His office.

The door was open, and the scent of air freshener wafted inside. As soon as Dong Xuebing entered, he saw Su Yan, who had arrived early. He was organizing documents, stacking them neatly on Dong Xuebing's desk. The important ones were placed on top, and the less urgent ones were below, making it easier for the leader to read upon arrival. This was the secretary's responsibility.

"Here," Dong Xuebing said as he walked in.

Su Yan turned around and immediately greeted him respectfully, "Good morning, Secretary."

Dong Xuebing asked, "Has anything come up in the past few days? Nothing too important, I hope?"

"No, the only thing is the British delegation's visit," Su Yan replied, bringing up the matter. "I heard they might arrive in our county today."

Dong Xuebing nodded. "I already know about that. Anything else?" He sat down at his desk, casually flipping through the documents and beginning to sign them.

Su Yan thought momentarily and said, "Also, the provincial investigation team is almost finished, and our county has cleared up. We only lost one deputy county chief, but other counties are not so lucky. Some county leaders have been put under investigation, and several county officials were dismissed or reassigned, including around seven or eight from the department level and a few deputy section chiefs. It's almost a complete turnover." Pausing momentarily, Su Yan sincerely added, "Secretary, people below are discussing how visionary you are. If you hadn't acted decisively, our county would've been in trouble, and who knows how many people would've been dismissed."

Dong Xuebing smiled and waved his hand. "Alright, stop with the compliments."

Su Yan chuckled. “Anyway, now everyone talks about you with great respect. While you were away, the county government was very low-key. They were going to meet about handling the British delegation, but since you said you’d be back on Monday and couldn’t make it yesterday, they didn’t push the matter further.”

Dong Xuebing nodded. He understood it wasn’t respect but a temporary concession because they couldn’t go against him. Since taking office, Dong Xuebing had already firmly suppressed Zhang Dongfang’s faction through his handling of several matters.

At that moment, someone knocked on the door.

Since the door wasn’t closed, Dong Xuebing saw it was Meng Hanmei and smiled. “Director Meng, come in. No need to be so polite. From now on, you don’t need to knock before entering my office.” Dong Xuebing said this to show a friendly attitude, though he knew Meng Hanmei would still knock even if she were bold.

Su Yan greeted Meng Hanmei and said to Dong Xuebing, “Secretary, I’ll go downstairs and check things out.” He left after speaking, closing the door behind him.

Dong Xuebing asked, “What’s up, Old Meng?”

Meng Hanmei sat and said, “It’s about renovating the old county committee compound. I want to consult with you on some issues regarding the budget, and there are a few other things as well.”

Dong Xuebing interrupted, “No need. I’ve already said the county committee office is fully responsible. You can make the decisions. Once you’ve decided, bring it to me for signature. If there’s a shortage of funds, go to the finance bureau and have them adjust it. Just tell them it’s what I said.” Dong Xuebing delegated full authority to Meng Hanmei on this matter. On one hand, he couldn’t handle everything himself—though the county party secretary oversees the whole county, it’s impossible to manage every detail personally. On the other hand, Dong Xuebing was also expressing his absolute trust in Meng Hanmei, not only to her but also as a message to the rest of the county.

Meng Hanmei looked at him and nodded, her words firm. “Don’t worry, Secretary. I’ll handle this well and won’t let you down.”

Knock knock.

Another knock at the door.

Dong Xuebing said, "Come in."

The door opened, and in walked County Mayor Zhang Dongfang. He was pretty overweight, and the door to the small office almost couldn't accommodate his body. He had to turn slightly to squeeze through. "Secretary Xuebing, oh, Director Meng is also here. That's good. Director Meng, you know about the exchange delegation's visit, right?"

Meng Hanmei replied, "I've heard about it."

Dong Xuebing greeted him warmly, "Have a seat, Mayor Zhang."

Zhang Dongfang sat down in the chair, which creaked under his weight. He then said casually, "I just received a notice. It's been confirmed that the British exchange delegation will arrive in our county today and stay with us overnight. The city has already instructed us to provide the highest level of reception. After all, this is quite an important matter. It seems they want us, as political figures, to take charge of it."

Dong Xuebing furrowed his brow. "A political task?"

"That's how I understand it," Zhang Dongfang replied. "Originally, we were going to discuss it today. It wasn't urgent, but the delegation arrived a day early and will be here tonight, so we're on a tight schedule. There's a lot to prepare, such as where they'll stay. Our county committee's guest house is a bit shabby. It's all old buildings, so it's not suitable for hosting foreign guests. Also, they've requested to meet with our local business groups and entrepreneurs interested in British investments. This is their primary purpose for the exchange, so we'll need to arrange that. The city has suggested gathering everyone for a meeting, perhaps a forum or something similar."

Dong Xuebing sighed. "Old Zhang, do you think this is necessary?"

Zhang Dongfang responded helplessly, "I don't think it is either. If foreign investors were coming, that'd be one thing—we could at least discuss investment, maybe even attract some capital. However, these people are officials from various cities in the UK responsible for attracting foreign investment, and there are even some private organizations. They're not here to invest at all. The

exchange hardly seems meaningful. It's purely one-sided, with them trying to recruit our investors. It's all so complicated, and we're expected to give them the highest reception level—it feels like an overblown affair. However, the province takes this matter seriously, and the city is even more concerned. This exchange is being given top priority.”

Dong Xuebing said, “They didn’t even give us time to prepare. They told us they’re coming today—how are we supposed to find investment groups for them?”

Zhang Dongfang replied, “We’ll just have to try. We’ll gather as many people as we can. I’ll handle it. Over the years, the county government has built solid relationships with many investors. I can’t guarantee dozens of people, but gathering ten or so entrepreneurs should be no problem.”

Dong Xuebing thought momentarily, saying, “Alright, then this part will be on you, Mayor Zhang.”

“It’s no trouble. It’s all for the work,” Zhang Dongfang said. “As for the accommodations...”

Dong Xuebing was genuinely uninterested in these people. From Zhang Dongfang’s attitude, it was clear he felt similarly. But there was no choice—it was an order from above, and as the head of the neighboring county, Dong Xuebing had to ensure everything was done well. Even though he didn’t like it, he had to make the necessary arrangements. He turned to Meng Hanmei and said, “Lao Meng, get in touch with the best hotel in our neighboring county. Reserve a few of the best rooms. As for meals, I don’t know what’s suitable yet, but find a good place, one that caters to their British tastes. Don’t let them struggle with the food. You can handle the details. Do it now, and make sure the reservations are in place so there’s no rush later.”

Meng Hanmei immediately responded, “Understood, Secretary. I’ll contact them right away.”

Zhang Dongfang added, “I heard the mayor and the city party secretary will personally greet the delegation when they arrive. Do you think we should go together and greet them here?”

Dong Xuebing’s instinct was to say that neither he nor Zhang Dongfang should go—have Meng Hanmei show some courtesy. But since the city party secretary and mayor were showing such respect and paying so much attention, Dong Xuebing couldn’t afford to ignore it. That would be too disrespectful to the province and city. “Alright,” he said, “Once they’re getting close, we’ll go together. The relevant county leaders should go, too. Lao Meng, get ready the banners and make sure you include English. Try to prepare several cars, too.”

“Got it,” Meng Hanmei replied.