

PAW 1886

Chapter 1886

In the afternoon.

Just before 2:00.

Without any warning, several cars from the city arrived at the temporary county party headquarters. The vehicles parked in the yard, and when the doors opened, a person stepped out. After getting out of the car, he glanced around at the row houses in the area. He furrowed his brows slightly, and some people even covered their noses, looking displeased. This place was newly built, but before it could even be rented out and signed with a plaque, Dong Xuebing had already taken it over. The yard and many surrounding areas were still dirt slopes and land. When the wind picked up, dust and dirt would inevitably be blown around.

“Who’s this?”

“Director Zhang.”

“City Disciplinary Committee people.”

“What are they doing here?”

“Director Zhang from the Second Supervision Office of the City Disciplinary Committee.”

“Uh, don’t tell me they’re here to investigate the foreigners from yesterday.”

Some people recognized the leading man and immediately started whispering to each other. A few of the quicker ones sneaked off to inform the leaders.

Inside the office.

A person from the Propaganda Department quickly knocked on the door and entered Dong Xuebing’s temporary office. He wasn’t supposed to be the one to deliver the message, but it

couldn't be helped—the people from the Disciplinary Committee had already arrived, and it was too late. Everyone knew the seriousness of the situation, and they could tell the visit was aimed directly at Secretary Dong. The fact that so many cars had come from the City Disciplinary Committee clearly showed the city's stance. It would have been one thing if they had just called him or summoned Dong Xuebing to the City Disciplinary Committee. Still, now, the committee had come in person without even notifying him, launching a surprise inspection. This was a full-on investigative procedure.

“Secretary,” the staff member said urgently.

“Hm? What's going on?” Dong Xuebing looked up.

The staff member pointed outside, lowering his voice, “The City Disciplinary Committee's people are here. They just entered the yard, and we're unsure what they're here for. Secretary Wei is out there talking to them.”

Dong Xuebing nodded, “Okay, I know.”

The staff member was puzzled as to why Dong Xuebing wasn't even a bit surprised, but he'd said what he needed to say, so he excused himself and closed the door behind him.

Sitting back in his office, Dong Xuebing lit a cigarette and took a few puffs. His earlier conversation with Fang Wenping had been rather casual and reckless. He still hadn't figured out how to handle this situation or didn't know how to resolve it. His earlier bravado was mainly because Fang Wenping had scolded him so aggressively. Dong Xuebing didn't like being yelled at, so naturally, he had fought back. But now, with his mind calmer, he was thinking about how to avoid this disaster. He'd joked about a punishment, but he didn't want one. A demotion could end his career. If he were reassigned to another area after being demoted, he'd lose his chance to be promoted to the top position in the county. Even a Party warning would be problematic because it would prevent him from being promoted for a year. And if he had such a warning when the county was upgraded to a county-level city, it would be a huge setback for his career.

What to do?

How to resolve this?

Dong Xuebing really couldn't come up with a solution. The city was clearly against him, and the province also hated him. He was alone, with no help or support. From how the City Disciplinary

Committee arrived, it seemed they were determined to get rid of him. It was likely that the city leaders had already set the tone before sending them, which made it even harder for him to maneuver. Dong Xuebing's mood sank further.

Damn it.

So they're going after me now?

Once, twice, three times—so now they want to go head-to-head with me, huh?

The county party headquarters was buzzing.

Within minutes, the news that people from the City Disciplinary Committee had arrived spread throughout the building.

Everyone knew precisely why they were there. It was just as they had feared—the province had placed so much importance on this foreign delegation exchange, but their neighboring county had messed it up. Not only did they offend the delegation, but they also insulted the accompanying officials from the higher-ups. This situation was bound to have consequences. No matter how justified they might be, insulting and kicking people out would always cause problems.

In Zhang Dongfang's office.

He had only learned about it after the visitors had arrived. Surprised, Zhang Dongfang hadn't expected the city to act so decisively; even more so, they hadn't notified him beforehand. After thinking for a moment, Zhang Dongfang immediately called the secretary of the city party secretary, Qian Litao, with whom he had a good relationship.

The secretary answered, "Hello, Mayor Zhang."

Zhang Dongfang replied, "The City Disciplinary Committee is here in our county. What's going on?"

The secretary responded, "They're here to investigate the situation with the foreigners from yesterday. Mayor Zhang, Secretary Qian instructed me to tell you that this matter has nothing to do with you, so there's no need to worry."

Upon hearing this, Zhang Dongfang didn't ask any more questions. He knew he shouldn't probe further. Although the secretary said the investigation had nothing to do with him, it was clear from the tone that Secretary Qian had intended to express his stance. It seemed the city wasn't happy with Zhang Dongfang's actions during the foreign delegation's visit, especially since he and other county leaders had ignored the foreigners and the city officials at the time. Zhang Dongfang understood the secretary's message—this was a subtle warning. He couldn't say anything more.

Outside.

The county deputy secretary, Wei Zhixuan, was also involved in this matter. He had previously met Director Zhang of the City Disciplinary Committee, so it was only natural for him to greet him.

"Director Zhang," Wei Zhixuan approached.

Director Zhang, a man in his thirties, glanced at him and replied, "Secretary Wei."

"This is..." Wei Zhixuan tentatively asked, though he already knew what was happening.

Director Zhang replied indifferently, "We're here to investigate a few matters. You arrived just in time. Please let the others know. We'll have separate talks in the afternoon with some cadres and staff."

Separate talks?

How serious is this?

Wei Zhixuan said, "I'll inform Secretary Dong and Mayor Zhang."

But Director Zhang waved him off, "Don't bother informing Comrade Dong Xuebing. We'll speak with others first. Comrade Dong's situation will be addressed last." This indicated to the people in Jiaolin County that their main target was Dong Xuebing.

Wei Zhixuan nodded, "Understood."

Director Zhang asked, "Is Comrade Meng Hanmei here?"

"She should be," Wei Zhixuan said, calling over a staff member to escort the City Disciplinary Committee officials to Director Meng's office.

At the office door, Director Zhang instructed two people to stay behind while the others, each holding a list of names, went off to speak with other people. Clearly, they had come prepared, knowing exactly who they needed to talk to.

In a room.

Director Zhang entered, "Comrade Meng Hanmei?"

Meng Hanmei, who had seen the commotion outside, greeted him, "Director Zhang, hello."

As the county office director, she knew about the stir outside.

"We've come to talk to you today to get some information," Director Zhang said as he sat down. He gestured for her to sit as well: "Don't be nervous. Please tell us in detail what happened this afternoon with Comrade Dong Xuebing and the foreign delegation. We also need to understand what happened during the foreign guests' visit."

The scene was very formal.

The two City Disciplinary Committee officials sitting behind took out their notebooks and began to take notes.

Meng Hanmei didn't hesitate and quickly answered, "I wasn't focused on that then. I don't know much about Comrade Dong Xuebing scolding anyone, but I know about the issue of foreign delegation. They arrived late and didn't inform us, which caused many of our old comrades to wait outside in the cold for a long time. So, we were a bit upset about it. I admit that."

Director Zhang's face darkened, "You didn't hear Comrade Dong Xuebing scolding anyone?"

"I truly don't know about that," Meng Hanmei feigned ignorance.

Director Zhang changed the subject, "What about the hotel issue? Why didn't your county arrange accommodations for the foreign guests and the city government officials? Did Comrade Dong Xuebing instruct you to cancel the hotel reservations?"

Meng Hanmei replied, "It was Comrade Dong's instructions, but the foreign guests' schedule changed, and they didn't notify us until late. Our plans were disrupted, so Comrade Dong decided to cancel the reservations. We thought the foreign guests wouldn't come, but in the end, they did."

Director Zhang's expression hardened, "Let me tell you, Director Meng, we have already looked into the matter. Otherwise, we wouldn't have come here. I expect you to answer honestly."

Meng Hanmei looked at him, "I am answering honestly. What do you want me to say?"

"What do you mean by 'what do you want me to say'?" Director Zhang was getting a bit angry.

Meng Hanmei was also frustrated. After all, this whole issue stemmed from the mistakes of the foreign guests and the city government office, particularly a Deputy Director, Mr. Niu, who had been causing trouble behind the scenes. These were the real reasons for the situation that followed. Yet here they were, investigating her county without questioning the foreign guests or the city officials. Everything wrong was pinned on her county.

Why was that?

Why did they have to take all the blame?

Meng Hanmei was angry. She was highly dissatisfied with how the City Disciplinary Committee came to investigate Dong Xuebing. It felt like bullying.

Director Zhang suppressed his anger, "And then Comrade Dong Xuebing personally booked all the high-end hotels in the county. You know about this, right? Do you understand what that means? He was trying to force the foreign guests out."

Meng Hanmei said, "I don't know anything about that."

Director Zhang snapped, "How could you not know?"

Meng Hanmei retorted, "Why should I know? The foreign guests and Deputy Director Niu from the city government office left our county's entrepreneurs waiting several hours. We still can't explain or make things right with the entrepreneurs, and the relationship is very tense."

The City Disciplinary Committee had preconceived notions, never questioning the root causes, only focusing on finding fault with Dong Xuebing. Meng Hanmei's tone became sharper.