

Power and Wealth

Chapter 138 – Lunar New Year!

Lunar New Year.

It's Lunar New Year's Eve today, and people in Beijing calls this day, the 30th.

Sounds of firecrackers can be heard everywhere. Everyone can feel the celebration vibes along the streets. Dong Xuebing's mood was also excellent. He had received the official confirmation of his promotion to Deputy Section Chief from the higher-ups yesterday and was overjoyed. After pasting a pair of couplets and a "Fu" word on his front door, he returned to his apartment to start wrapping the chives and pork dumplings.

But Dong Xuebing's only regret for this New Year was it was as quiet as before in his house.

Aunt Xuan is not married and had to return to her parents' and grandparents' house to celebrate. This was because she has a big family. She had left for her parents' place yesterday morning and should return after the New Year holidays. Dong Xuebing's mother was currently on the way back to Beijing, and Dong Xuebing could only knead the dough himself.

Ring, ring, ring. Dong Xuebing's phone rang. It was an unknown number.

"Chief Xiao Dong, I'm Old Yan. Hahaha, I am calling you to wish you a happy new year."

Dong Xuebing was surprised and replied: "Happy New Year to you too."

Old Yan chatted with him for a while. Dong Xuebing remembered that he is different from before. Not only people will be calling him to wish him Happy New Year, he also has to send his greetings to his leaders. He cannot visit the State Security's quarters to visit His leaders personally. His promotion was an exceptional case and if he visits the leaders, there will bound to have gossips and rumors. It would be worse if

he brought New Year gifts for the leaders. State Security is different from other government agencies. So, after pondering for a while, Dong Xuebing start to call Zhen Anguo, Xu Yan, and other leaders to send his greetings.

“Chief Xu, I am calling you to wish you a Happy Lunar New Year. Thank you for taking care of me all this time. This coming year, I will continue to work hard and follow your footsteps.....”

“Chief Zhen, Happy Lunar New Year. I wish for you to have a prosperous year.....”

Dong Xuebing even called Xie Huilan to wish her. No surprises, her number was the hardest to get through. Dong Xuebing had only called Chief Xu twice and Chief Zhen four times before the line got through. But he had to try dialing Xie Huilan’s number 18 times before he could reach her on the 19th call. He wonders how many people were calling her to send her Lunar New Year’s wishes. This is the peak period for people to call their leaders.

After calling all the leaders, Dong Xuebing continued to knead the dumplings’ dough.

Ring, ring, ring. Dong Xuebing’s phone rang again.

It was Tan Limei who called. “Hehe, Happy Lunar New Year, Chief Dong. I hope this coming year will be a good year for you.”

Dong Xuebing laughed. “Thank you. I also wish the best for you and Sun Zhuang.” She was one of his closest subordinates, and he could be more casual with him.

“Thank you. Eh? Why is your place so quiet? Are you alone?”

Dong Xuebing laughed. “Xiao Tan, stop adding salt to my wounds. Hahaha. My mother is on her way back. This year will still be both of us. If not, why would I be kneading the dough for dumplings myself.”

“Ahh..... This should not be happening. I will go over with Zhuang Zhi to help you.”

“It’s fine. Thank you.”

“My family has our reunion dinner at night, and I am quite free now. If it is convenient, I can go over now. Errr..... Actually, Zhuang Zhi and I have a small request. We had planned to go over to your place on the first day of New Year to speak to you.

Dong Xuebing heard what she said and did not stop her. “Ok, then. Come over for

lunch.”

The doorbell rang when Dong Xuebing hangs up the call.

Dong Xuebing thought his mother had reached and went over to open the door.

But it was Guo Panwei. He had two big bags with him. “Chief Dong, Happy New Year. These are some gifts for you. Here. I will not bother you anymore.” The unspoken rule was to visit the leaders on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd day of the Lunar New Year. But Guo Panwei knows about Chief Xiao Dong’s family background. He does not have many relatives, and Guo Panwei came over to see if he could help with anything.

Dong Xuebing laughed. “Come in, come in. There is no need for gifts.”

Guo Panwei looked into Dong Xuebing’s apartment: “Errr..... is it convenient?”

“Of course. I am alone at home. My mother will be back later. Come in for a sit.”

“Thank you. Hope I had not bothered you.”

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Outside of the apartment building.

Dong Xuebing’s mother, Luan Xiaoping, walked towards the building. She saw all households had hanged red lanterns outside of their windows and kids playing with firecrackers. Luan Xiaoping smiles to herself. Since her son had entered the Civil Service, she had not returned home. Now, she could finally see her son and was overjoyed. But she was also worried about her son. Luan Xiaoping knew she had a weak character and would cry easily. Dong Xuebing was matured and kept a lot of things from her to prevent her from getting worried. She wondered how Dong Xuebing was doing in the government agency. He kept telling her that everything was fine with his work and she wonders if he was telling her the truth.

“Eh, Sister Luan?” An old neighbor saw Luan Xiaoping and went over to greet her. “Happy New Year.”

Luan Xiaoping smiled: “Happy New year to you too. How is your kid? Has he graduated from University?”

That neighbor replied: “He had graduated and got a job. But his salary is just enough, unlike your son, Xiao Bing.”

Luan Xiaoping was feeling good in her heart, but she did not show her happiness on her face. “Xuebing’s salary is also not very high. How much can a staff member earn? At most, he is getting 3,000 RMB a month and getting some gifts from the government during festivals.”

That neighbor was surprised: “That’s not right. I thought Xiao Bing had been promoted?”

Luan Xiaoping paused for a while and laughed. “He is promoted? His probation is not over yet.”

That neighbor replied: “But everyone here is talking about this. Oh, maybe I had misheard. Hahaha, but your Xiao Bing is still very capable. Even that arrogant Section Chief Xu was driven away by him. His unit is now rented out to a couple who sells clothing at North Heping road.” Luan Xiaoping was stunned again. Section Chief Xu? That government officer staying upstairs? Xiao Bing had driven him away? What does this mean? How did Xiao Bing drive them away? But before she could ask any more details, that neighbor said: “Oh, my relatives are here. I need to fetch them at the entrance. Come over to my place for tea when you are free.”

The confused Luan Xiaoping continued her way back home. Along the way, she was scared by the loud firecrackers.

Clink, clank, clink, clank..... Luan Xiaoping opened the door with her keys. “Xuebing, I’m back.”

“Mum? Why are you so late? Traffic jams?”

“The bus got delayed.”

“You must be Aunty. Happy New Year.”

Luan Xiaoping was surprised to see there were two men in the apartment. Other than her son, there was another man in his early 30s. From one look, she knew this man must also be working with the government. Luan Xiaoping, hanged her coat and entered the unit. “You must be Xuebing’s colleague. Happy New Year to you too.” She was puzzled why would her son’s colleague come over to his apartment on New Year’s Eve. She saw there was not even a glass of water on the coffee table, and she stared at her son. “You don’t know how to prepare tea for your colleagues?”

Dong Xuebing laughed: “He had just arrived too.”

Guo Panwei quickly stood up: “Aunty, I can pour myself. Let me do it.”

Guo Panwei took the hot water flask and poured a glass of water for Luan Xiaoping and Dong Xuebing, followed by himself.

Luan Xiaoping was stunned. She thought to herself. You all are staff members in the same office, why are you pouring water for my son? You are also much older than my son. After thanking Guo Panwei, Luan Xiaoping looked at him: “..... Errr..... How do I address you?”

Guo Panwei was sitting upright, with 1/3 of his butt touching the sofa. He replied politely: “Guo Panwei. Aunty, you can call me Xiao Guo.”

“Oh, you are also from the General Affairs Office?”

“Yes.”

Luan Xiaoping was speechless when she saw Guo Panwei being so uptight. She thought to herself. Am I that scary? All my students said I look gentle. Why was this man so nervous when he sees me? Luan Xiaoping sat down on the sofa. “Don’t stand on ceremony. Just treat this place as your own place. How is work? Are you all busy?” Luan Xiaoping was trying to strike a conversation.

Guo Panwei replied with his back straighten. “It’s festive seasons, and we are slightly busier than usual.”

Luan Xiaoping nodded. “How is our Xuebing’s performance at work? Did he get scolded by the leaders? This son of mine..... he always keeps everything to himself and did not tell me anything.”

Guo Panwei was stunned: “..... got scolded? Aunty, who dares to scold Chief Dong?” Guo Panwei said to himself. Someone did scold Chief Dong. Zhou Guoan and Guo Shunjie had scolded him before. But both of them were invited to have tea with the Commission for Discipline Inspection, and no one had seen them afterward. Since that incident, everyone will think twice if they want to scold Chief Dong.

It was Luan Xiaoping’s turn to be shocked. “Chief Dong? What Chief Dong?”

Guo Panwei was surprised. “You do not know?”

“What should I know?”

Dong Xuebing laughed and patted the back of his mother’s hand. “Mum, you have been working in the village and have not returned. That’s why I have not told you. I wanted to tell you about this when I see you. I am now the Deputy Chief of the General Affairs Office and joined the Party. Oh, my promotion to Deputy Section

Chief was confirmed yesterday. I am now considered a government cadre.” He had not told his mother about his work was because he wanted to give her a surprise. He was overjoyed when he sees his mother’s facial expression now.

“Huh?” Luan Xiaoping was shocked. “You are promoted?”

Guo Panwei added: “Aunty, since the day Chief Dong joined the bureau, his performance cannot be compared. No one can achieve his results. He had completed impossible tasks and assignments. Even if Chief Dong is promoted to Section Chief..... no, even if he is promoted to Deputy Director, no one will say anything. It’s normal for him to be promoted.”

Luan Xiaoping was trying to digest what she heard. Results? She knows her son well. Since young, her son had been clumsy and not very smart. What results can he have? It would be a blessing if he did not get into trouble.

Dong Xuebing laughed: “Mum, there will be some more people coming over in a while. Let’s wrap dumplings. The dumplings I wrapped are too ugly.”

“Let me do it. Let me do it.” Guo Panwei volunteered and ran to the bathroom to wash his hands. After he washed his hands, he carried the dumpling dough and fillings to the kitchen. “Chief Dong, Aunty has not been back for a while. I’m sure you two have lots of things to say. I will not disturb you two. I will wrap the dumplings in the kitchen.”

Dong Xuebing stopped him. “Panwei, don’t need to do this. Sit down.”

“It’s fine. I am free today and had dropped by to see if there is anything I can help you with. But the dumplings I wrapped might not be as nice as yours or aunty.”

Dong Xuebing laughed. “Look at you. You came all over to my place and still have to do work for me.”

“It’s my duty.”

Luan Xiaoping grabbed her son’s hand and asked: “Xuebing, you are really promoted?”

“Of course.”

“Did you get his colleague to trick me?”

“Huh? What should I trick you?”

Luan Xiaoping still does not believe this. How is this possible? Her son should not be

so capable. Just when she was able to ask Dong Xuebing for his identification pass, the doorbell rang. Luan Xiaoping was closer to the door, and she walked over to open it. There was a couple standing outside. The guy was tall and fat, and the girl was small in size.

“You all are?”

Tan Limei smiled: “Aunty, you must be Chief Dong’s mother. Hello. Happy New Year.”

Sun Zhuang also greeted: “Happy Lunar New Year, Aunty.”

Hearing this couple calling her son Chief Dong, Luan Xiaoping believed her son was not lying to her. She opened the door and invited them in.

After entering, Tan Limei and Sun Zhuang placed the gifts they bought by the side of the door. There were some red Chinese knots and fruits. There seem to be two cartons of Zhonghua cigarettes. Luan Xiaoping got a shock. Although she does not know much about cigarettes, she knew the prices of Zhonghua brand of cigarettes. This was an expensive brand. Tan Limei faced Dong Xuebing and smiled: “Chief Dong, I am here to help you wrap dumplings.”

Dong Xuebing laughed: “Panwei is wrapping the dumplings in the kitchen.”

Tan Limei gasped: “Brother Guo is here too? Then I will not have the chance to impress you. No. I must find something to do too.” She looked around and then held Luan Xiaoping’s hand. “Aunty, I have learned some massage from my mother. Let me massage your shoulders.”

Luan Xiaoping quickly waved her hands. “No need. No need.”

“Hehe, I am really good with my skills. I guarantee you will be impressed. Give me a chance to perform, please.” Sun Zhuang was not good with words, but Tan Limei have a sweet tongue. After a while, she made Luan Xiaoping sit down on the sofa and start massaging her shoulders like a daughter giving her mother massage. She continued: “Aunty, your complexion is perfect. Even youngsters like us cannot be compared to your complexion.”

Luan Xiaoping laughed. “Haha, I am almost 50. How can I be compared to you all?”

“Ah..... you are almost 50? You don’t look like your age. I still thought you are 40 years old.”

Luan Xiaoping had never experienced this type of treatment before. She smiled: “Girl,

you must be tired. Sit down and have some water. I will brew some tea.”

Tan Limei replied: “I’m not tired. I still have to massage your legs.”

Sun Zhuang was also not idling. He took the broom and dustpan and start cleaning up the house.

Dong Xuebing wondered why these two were so trying so hard to please him today. Also, why did they get so many gifts? He remembered Tan Limei had mentioned she needed his help over the phone and decided to let them be. Anyway, his mother had worked hard for most of her life, and he could finally let her enjoy life.

Luan Xiaoping was feeling good by Tan Limei’s massage. Not only her shoulders felt good, but she also felt good inside. She finally believes her son had become a government officer. People are bringing him gifts and pouring water and tea. Someone is helping him wrap dumplings, massaging her shoulders and one of them is sweeping the floor. Their family had never experienced this type of treatment before. My son is capable now.

Half an hour later.

Guo Panwei walked out of the kitchen, smiling. “Chief Dong, Aunty, I have wrapped all the dumplings.”

Luan Xiaoping felt apologetic. “Thank you. Come over and have some fruits.” She looked at Tan Limei, who was still massaging her legs. “Girl, you must be tired. You can stop the massaging now. Come over and take a break. I will prepare lunch for all of you.”

Guo Panwei quickly replied: “No need. If there is nothing else for me to help, I will be going. Thank you for your offer.”

Tan Limei looked at Guo Panwei and said: “We will be going back soon.”

Luan Xiaoping was overjoyed to know her son was promoted and does not want to let them go back. “It is lunchtime soon. All of you stay here for lunch. I will just prepare a few dishes.”

Guo Panwei, Tan Limei, and Sun Zhuang looked at Dong Xuebing. All of them also wanted to stay longer. It was not about lunch. It was about attitude. Only the trusted aides of the leader can be invited to have meals with the leader’s family members. Furthermore, today was Lunar New Year Eve. If they could dine with their leader and his family today, that means they are his trusted subordinates.

Dong Xuebing waved his hand. "If you all have matters to attend at home, go ahead. It's Lunar New Year, and family is more important. If you all do not have anything important, stay for lunch. We are all one family after all." After saying this, Dong Xuebing felt great. He feels like he was becoming more and more like a leader.

Luan Xiaoping was feeling proud of her son when she saw her son behaving like some top leader.

Guo Panwei was ecstatic when he heard Dong Xuebing saying they are one family. He knew that Chief Xiao Dong no longer has grudges with him. "Then..... Let me help Aunty wash the vegetables."

Tan Limei also said: "I will help with the cooking."

Sun Zhuang added: "I..... I will help too."

The dumplings were for dinner, and they prepared some simple dishes for lunch.

After lunch, Guo Panwei helped Luan Xiaoping wash the dishes before he leaves. This time, Luan Xiaoping did not stop him from going. She knew that everyone should be busy during this period. But Tan Limei and Sun Zhuang did not leave. After Guo Panwei stepped out of the apartment, Sun Zhuang and Tan Limei seem to be holding back something. Tan Limei did not know how to say it, and she just continues her massage on Luan Xiaoping's legs.

Luan Xiaoping could also tell they had something to say to Dong Xuebing. "Girl, both of you want to ask Xuebing something?"

Tan Limei cleared her throat embarrassedly: "Yes.... We..... We need a favor from Chief Dong, but it's embarrassing to ask. We should not be talking about this during Lunar New Year." During Lunar New Year, people will be exchanging gifts, and seldom will they ask for favors, unless it was very urgent.

Dong Xuebing laughed. "What is it?"

Tan Limei gave Sun Zhuang a look, and he blushed. He waited for a while but did not say anything. He signaled to Tan Limei with his eyes. Tan Limei stared at him angrily and told Dong Xuebing. "Chief Dong. Sun Zhuang and I are dating, and we are not allowed to work in the same department. But due to manpower shortage some time ago, we are not separated. But Director Li Qing had looked for Sun Zhuang yesterday. He wants to transfer Sun Zhuang to the Commission for Discipline Inspection Department."

Dong Xuebing heard this. Commission for Discipline Inspection? It's good. At least

it's better than the Archive department.

Tan Limei looked at Dong Xuebing and said: "You should also know about the work at Commission for Discipline Inspection..... I am afraid....."

Dong Xuebing laughed. "Ok. I know. Just say what department you want him to go."

Luan Xiaoping was shocked. What does this mean? Her son can pick the department to transfer his subordinate? He has this authority?

Sun Zhuang finally opened his mouth. "I think the Political Section's work..... Errr..... If possible....." The Political Section is a popular department in the branch. Their job was to observe and monitor the performance of the staff in the branch. Everyone wants to be transferred there. But it's tough to enter.

Dong Xuebing thought for a while and replied: "Ok. I will help you ask around after Lunar New Year. This should not be a problem." He was quite close to the leaders now, and this was only a small issue.

Tan Limei and Sun Zhuang were elated. They quickly thanked Dong Xuebing.

Before they leave, Dong Xuebing looks through the gifts they bought and said: "I will keep the fruits and Chinese knots. Take the cigarettes back."

Tan Limei quickly said: "Chief Dong, you have helped Sun Zhuang a lot. We....."

Dong Xuebing waved his hand. "This is only a small matter. I also do not smoke. Bring these cigarettes back for the elders in your families. Oh, wait a while." Dong Xuebing opened a cabinet and took out a bottle of Maotai. He smiled and gave it to Sun Zhuang. "This is a gift from others. I am also a non-drinker. Take this back with you all." When Dong Xuebing was not a leader, he looked forward to being receiving gifts. But after he had become a leader, he started to wonder what to do with all the gifts he received.

Tan Limei replied: "Chief Dong....."

"Just take it. Go back and enjoy the holiday."

Luan Xiaoping looked at that bottle of Maotai. Although she could not bear to give that bottle of Maotai away, she added: "Just take it. Xuebing does not drink."

"Errr..... Thank you, Chief Dong." Both of them took the bottle from Dong Xuebing and left.

After leaving Dong Xuebing's apartment building, Tan Limei looked at the bottle of Maotai and said: "We are here to ask Chief Xiao Dong for favors. But he did not accept our gifts. Instead, we are the ones going back with his gift....."

Sun Zhuang said: "Bing Zhi is a good man."

Tan Limei sighed. "Yes. I have never met such a good leader. I don't know how he treats others, but he really takes care of his subordinates. Remember that time when Guo Shunjie framed Chief Xiao Dong, Chang Juan, and I? If Chief Xiao Dong did not accept the full responsibility for that incident, Chang Juan and I would be in trouble. Where else can we find such a good leader?"