

Power and Wealth

Chapter 224 – Stepping forward

Morning.

Dong Xuebing, who had not slept last night, took a short nap in his car. After he woke up, he ate a takeaway given to him by Chu Feng. After that, he continued to oversee the roadblock and the inspections of all vehicles passing them. But after one night of checks, they still have not spotted the escapees. The rest of the main roads also have not discovered the criminals, and they should still be hiding in the County. So, Dong Xuebing ordered his officers from the villages to help the armed officers to search for the criminals in the County town.

The Police started to comb the county town, and no one should be able to escape.

At about 1.40 pm, Dong Xuebing was discussing something with Liu Dahai and Chen Fa, when they received an announcement over their radio sets.

“The escapees are located! The escapees are located!”

“Northern District South road 7! Nan Liu Junior School!”

The escapees had entered the school! They might be holding some hostages!”

Dong Xuebing, Liu Dahai, and the rest of the officers looked at each other. “Let’s go!”

Dong Xuebing, Liu Dahai, and the rest of the officers boarded the Mercedes MPV and rushed towards the Northern District. Dong Xuebing and all the officers were worried. That’s a junior school, and it’s not the school holidays. If those children were taken hostage, the consequences would be dire. Dong Xuebing noticed the officer sitting beside Chu Feng had turned pale and was anxious. Someone from his family must be in that school.

Nan Liu Junior School.

When Dong Xuebing arrived, the Armed Police had surrounded a two-story school building. Everyone was holding their guns. In an area further away, Dong Xuebing could see the County’s Party Secretary Xiang Daofa, Xie Huilan, and other County

Government leaders. They seem to be having a meeting beside the playground. Liang Chengpeng, Hu Yiguo, and an Armed Police Officer were there too. It was tense.

After alighting, Dong Xuebing called Deputy Team Leader Feng. “Old Feng, how’s the situation?”

Deputy Team Leader Feng turned and quickly walked over. “Chief Dong, when we arrived, the escapees had entered the school building. Luckily there are no lessons in the afternoon, and only a few students and teachers are in there doing the graduation ceremony preparations. From the shouts and noises, they are being held hostage by the criminals. No one dares to rush in, as we are afraid the criminals might harm the hostages. Party Secretary Xiang, Mayor Xia, and the rest are discussing the next course of action.”

Dong Xuebing clenched his fist. “These bastards. How many of them are there?”

Deputy Team Leader Feng replied. “There should be 9 of them. Out of the ten escapees from the neighboring County, most of them had escaped to Yan Tai.”

Dong Xuebing asked. “What are the chances of us storming the building? Where are the snipers?”

Deputy Team Leader shook his head. “If there are only one or two criminals, we can still enter the building. Nine criminals are too many for us to storm the building. Some of them even got guns. The guns should be taken from the prison wardens while they escape. Two officers were injured during their pursuit.” He points to the second floor of the building. “The criminals are very cunning. They had covered up all the windows, and we don’t know which classroom they are in. Also, our snipers can’t shoot all 9 of them at once. If we missed one of them, the hostages would be in danger.”

Suddenly, cries were heard from the school building.

“Sob... Help!!! Sob...”

One of the windows opened, showing a little girl’s frightened face. This girl must be a student of Nan Liu Junior. A big hand is holding the girl by her neck, and a middle-aged man slowly sticks his head out of the windows. That man is bald and had a long scar on his head. Almost all the officers at the scene had seen the photograph of this man before. He is one of the escapees, an armed robber.

“Everyone out there listens up! Whoever that dares to enter this building, or open fire, I will kill this girl!”

Liang Chengpeng looked at that criminal and shouted through the loud hailer. “Don’t

harm the hostage!”

That escapee smiled and shouted. “I can don’t harm her. Get your County’s leader to speak to me!”

Liang Chengpeng hesitated and passed the loudhailer to a fat man beside him. This person is Cao Xupeng, County’s Deputy Party Secretary, Yan Tai County’s Number Three.

The Armed Robber shouted. “You are the County’s leader? Good. We don’t have other requests. We only want a medium-sized bus. Before the bus arrive, you all must guarantee our safety. If anyone of you dares to open fire, don’t blame me. We will release the hostages after we leave the County.”

Cao Xupeng looked at Xiang Daofa and Xie Huilan. Both of them nodded, and he said. “We agree to your demand!”

Liang Chengpeng interrupted. “Let us look at the rest of the hostages! We want to make sure all the hostages are safe!”

The Armed Robber said. “Don’t try other tricks! We will not let you look at the hostages! Go and get the vehicle now!”

From the murder of the woman and boy last night, these criminals are ruthless and very cunning. Liang Chengpeng must calm them down first. He turned to an officer and told them to prepare a bus for the criminals, before using another loudhailer. “I had asked my men to bring the vehicle over.”

The Armed Robber nodded. “Good! I will give you all 10 minutes!”

Liang Chengpeng frowned. “10 minutes is not enough. We need to return to our garage to get the vehicle. To and fro...”

The Armed Robber interrupted him. “I don’t care what method you use. 10 minutes! If we don’t see the vehicle in 10 minutes, this girl will die! Think carefully!”

Suddenly, someone shouted from outside the school. “Honghong! Honghong!”

The little girl at the classroom window heard someone calling her and started waving her arms. She cried: “Mum! Dad! Save me!”

A woman at the school gates was trying to push herself through a few police officers. “Honghong!”

“Honghong! Dad will be coming to save you! Don’t be scare!”

A man with red eyes pushed an officer aside. “Go away! Let me enter!”

News of the escapees entering Nan Liu Junior and holding the students’ hostage had spread. Many worried parents had rushed to the school to look for their children. Those that couldn’t find their children were crowding at the school’s main gate. Some of the teachers’ relatives were also there. It was chaotic, and everyone was shouting for their children or relatives. The hostages in the school building heard their parents calling for them and shouted.

“It’s my son’s voice! My son is inside!”

“Leilei! Mum is here!”

“Niuniu! Are you there?”

Liang Chengpeng was afraid the parents and relatives outside would agitate the criminals. “Chief Dong!”

Dong Xuebing immediately lead his officers to block the school’s entrance and stop everyone from entering. “Please calm down! I understand how you all feel, but this is an emergency. Please stop shouting, and the Police will try our best to save your children!”

A woman suddenly kneeled and cried. “Please... Please save my son!”

“Sob... My son is only ten years old!”

More than a dozen parents and family members were crying outside the school. Even old grandpas were weeping. Dong Xuebing could feel his heart aching.

The Armed Robber had moved away from the window and seemed to be discussing with someone behind him. After a while, he stuck his head out of the window again and shouted. “My brother says you Police cannot be trusted. You all must send a leader to be our hostage!” The Armed Robber looked at the crowd downstairs and suddenly shouted. “You! That fatty who spoke to me earlier. Come in!”

That Armed Robber was referring to the County’s Deputy Party Secretary, Cao Xupeng!

Cao Xupeng’s face changed. He did not expect the criminals to have this request!

Liang Chengpeng pulled Cao Xupeng. “Secretary Cao! You must not go!”

Cao Xupeng also did not want to go. He knew his chances of survival is low if he enters the school building. The criminals will hold him hostage until the last minute. Even if they managed to escape, they would also kill him. Liang Chengpeng pulling him back had saved him from embarrassment, and he was grateful. If he chickens out in front of everybody, the County Party Committee would be disgraced by him.

Xiang Daofa was angry. “Where is the vehicle? Give them a vehicle to calm them first!”

The Armed Robber upstairs was getting impatient, and tighten his grip on the little girl’s neck. “Hey, Fatty! Hurry up and get upstairs! I give you 3 minutes, or we will start killing the hostages!”

The woman at the school gates cried. “Honghong! Don’t kill my daughter! Please... I beg you!”

Honghong’s father looked at the County’s leaders and shouted. “Save my daughter!”

Cao Xupeng turned pale. At this time, he had to say something. “Let me go!”

Xie Huilan looked at the window upstairs coldly and narrowed her eyes.

Liang Chengpeng’s heart sank. These criminals were more cunning than he expected. If he knew they would make this demand, he will move the temporary command center behind the police vehicles and will never let the County leaders speak to the criminals. He was afraid matters will get worse and knew he had to protect Party Secretary Xiang, Deputy Party Secretary Cao, and Mayor Xie. “Chief Hu! Send Party Secretary Xiang and Mayor Xie out! Set up the command center outside!”

Hu Yiguo stepped forward. “Secretary Xiang, Mayor Xie.”

Xiang Daofa turned and gave Liang Chengpeng a stare. “The hostages are not saved yet! I am not leaving!”

Liang Chengpeng is not sure if Secretary Xiang is saying this from the bottom of his heart, or is he pretending. He only knows that if the criminals changed their minds and wanted the County’s Party Secretary to be the hostage and he refused, the hostages might be harmed. It will not be good for the County’s reputation. This must not happen. That’s why Secretary Xiang and Mayor Xie must leave the scene. “Chief Hu! Hurry up!”

Hu Yiguo opened the car door and wanted to invite Secretary Xiang to board. But Xiang Daofa pushed him away!

Hu Yiguo thought to himself. Stop pretending and leave. But because of Xiang Daofa's rank, he dare not use force to make him leave.

Xiang Daofa was in a dilemma. Xie Huilan was still standing there firmly and had no intention to leave the scene.

Liang Chengpeng was furious. "Chief Dong! Bring them away!"

Dong Xuebing, who was maintaining crowd control, heard Liang Chengpeng and looked at Sister Xie. He then turned to Xiang Daofa and said. "Secretary Xiang! It is too dangerous here! You must leave immediately!"

Xiang Daofa replied with a stern look. "The hostages are still..."

Dong Xuebing ignored him and opened the car door. He grabbed Xiang Daofa by the back of his collar and pushed him into the rear passenger seat, ignoring Xiang Daofa's scolds and closed the door. He then opened the front passenger seat's door and said. "Mayor Xie!"

Xie Huilan looked at Dong Xuebing and narrowed her eyes. "Send Secretary Xiang away! I will remain here to oversee!"

Dong Xuebing grabbed Xie Huilan by her arm, without saying a word.

Xie Huilan's face changed. "Didn't you hear what I said?"

Dong Xuebing paused for a second, but he doesn't have time to think anymore. He tried to pull Xie Huilan, but she dodged and pulled her arm away. Dong Xuebing gritted his teeth and held Xie Huilan's waist and carried her up. He kicked the door to open it wider and threw Xie Huilan into the front passenger seat. Everyone was shocked by his actions, and Dong Xuebing closed the door. "Go!"

The police car drove out of the school gates!

Liang Chengpeng nodded. During critical times like this, Chief Dong is still decisive. He had called Dong Xuebing because he is the only one who is not afraid of offending the leaders. Someone must forcibly bring the leaders away in case they got into any trouble.

"1 minute left!" Armed Robber laughed. "Fatty! Are you not coming up?"

"Honghong! Honghong!"

“Mum! I’m scared!”

The little girl, Honghong, was almost carried out of the window and could fall anytime.

Cao Xupeng gritted his teeth for a few seconds and said. “I will come over now! Don’t harm the hostage!”

“Secretary Cao!” Liang Chengpeng grabbed onto Secretary Cao’s arm.

Cao Xupeng sighed and shook his head. “Let me go. Their lives are the top priority.” He looked at the window and sighed. “She is just a kid. My granddaughter is around her age.” Cao Xupeng was forced to make this decision and had no other choices.

Cao Xupeng looked at the sky and knew he might not return after he enters the school building.

Cao Xupeng walked forward slowly with heavy footsteps.

Suddenly, a hand grabbed him by his arm. It was Dong Xuebing. “Secretary Cao, if you go, you will be killed, and it is meaningless.”

Cao Xupeng was agitated. “But what about that child? What about the rest of the students in the classroom?”

Dong Xuebing hesitated for a while and said. “I will go.”

Cao Xupeng was stunned. Liang Chengpeng and the rest of the officers there were shocked by Dong Xuebing’s decision.

Dong Xuebing did not look at them and walked forward. He grabbed the loudhailer from Cao Xupeng and said. “Listen up. You all should have seen Secretary Cao’s size. If you bring him along as you all escape, he might struggle and dragged you all down. Let me go with you all instead.”

The Armed Robber looked at Dong Xuebing and asked. “What rank are you?”

Dong Xuebing replied without thinking. “I am the Head of the Country’s Ministry of Education!”

Dong Xuebing doesn’t like to wear his uniform, and he is in civilian clothes now. No one would think of him as an officer from the Public Security with his skinny figure. The criminals had heard the others calling him Chief Dong earlier and knew he is also a government officer. Dong Xuebing’s size is safer than the fatty, and even if Dong Xuebing retaliates, he will be too weak to do anything. The Armed Robber thought for

a while and said. “Get a police officer to handcuff you before coming up!”

Dong Xuebing calmly replied. “I can leave with you all, but you all must release the kids first!”

The Armed Robber frowned. “Why do you have so many demands? Do you believe that I will throw this girl out of the window?”

Dong Xuebing is good with words. “I am thinking for all of you. Think about this. You all are holding so many children as hostages, and do you think the Police will let you all off? Impossible! The public will not let you all off! The Police will get snipers to shoot you all! But if you all release the children, this will not be as serious. With hostages, the Police will not do anything to you unless they have no choice. Furthermore, those children do not know anything and will cry and shout. With the teachers and me, you all will have enough hostages.”

This was the truth. The few escapees were irritated by the children’s crying.

But the Armed Robber did not fall for it. “Fat hope! Don’t need to say anymore. If we have not reached a safe place, none of these children can leave!”

Dong Xuebing thought for a while and said. “At least release that little girl in your hand. We need to see your sincerity.”

The Armed Robber was furious. “Stop wasting time! Are you entering the building or not?!”

Dong Xuebing replied. “You all don’t even have the sincerity of releasing one hostage. How do we know if you all will release the rest after you all escape? If that’s the case, we will never give you the mini-bus!”

The Armed Robber was about to scold something when someone behind him pulled him inside.

A few seconds later, the Armed Robber carried Honghong down from the window. “Fine! We will let you all see our sincerity!”

After a while, the main door of the school building opened, and Honghong ran out. “Mum! Dad!”

The couple broke through the Police barrier and hugged their daughter. “Honghong!”

Honghong’s father looked at Dong Xuebing. “Chief Dong! Thank you! Thank you very much!”

Dong Xuebing waved his hand. “Bring the kid to somewhere safer.”

The Armed Robber upstairs shouted. “Chief Dong! Hurry up and put on a pair of handcuffs!”

Dong Xuebing’s eyes turned cold and walked towards Liang Chengpeng and Cao Xupeng. He put out both hands. “Handcuff me!”

Liang Chengpeng stared at Dong Xuebing. “Xiao Dong! What are you doing?!”

Cao Xupeng was moved. “Let me go instead! You... you... Sighed...”

The Secretary of the Political and Legal Committee, Huang Li, had just arrived at the scene after deploying the snipers outside and saw what was happening. Huang Li and Cao Xupeng were formerly Chang Lei’s subordinates. Chang Lei’s downfall was caused by Dong Xuebing, and both of them dislike him. But at this critical moment, Dong Xuebing had offered to replace Cao Xupeng as the hostage for the escapees. They were shocked by his actions.

Dong Xuebing smiled. “Secretary Cao, don’t say anything else. I still know some martial arts, at least.”

Everyone knows that no matter how good Dong Xuebing is good at fighting, it will be impossible for him to get out alive. There are nine escapees inside, and they are armed with guns and still have hostages. Dong Xuebing is also handcuffed. At this moment, everyone there, including the officers, family members of the hostages, Hu Yiguo and Zhao Jingsong, who had grudges with him, were all full of respect for him.

Not anyone dares to step forward with it comes to a situation of life and death like this.

But Dong Xuebing was not prepared to die like this. Although he does not have lots of BACK left, he still has around 5 minutes. He could still do something with his powers. But the criminals have guns, and it is very dangerous. Dong Xuebing was not confident that he could get out alive. But when he thought about the two lives lost last night and the teachers and students in the school, Dong Xuebing felt he must give it a try.

“Handcuffs! Quick!” Dong Xuebing shouted.

None of the Police officers stepped forward. They clenched their fist, and some female officers were weeping.

Dong Xuebing shouted. “Team Leader Feng!”

Deputy Team Leader Feng looked at Dong Xuebing and walked up to him slowly. “Chief Dong, I...”

Dong Xuebing interrupted him. “Hurry up! Don’t agitate those criminals!”

Deputy Team Leader Feng took out his handcuffs and cuffed Dong Xuebing. He secretly took a glance at the window upstairs and wanted to stuff the keys into Dong Xuebing’s pocket. But the Armed Robber upstairs shouted at him to throw the handcuff keys on the floor. Deputy Team Leader Feng had no choice but to follow what he said. His last hope was gone.

Dong Xuebing forced a smile. “Don’t give me this expression. I am not dead yet. I will try to rescue the hostages.”

Liang Chengpeng sighed and patted Dong Xuebing’s shoulder. “Be careful. You must be careful.”

Dong Xuebing nodded. “Chief Liang, if anything happens to me... Hmm... If... If I am killed, please help to take care of my mother. Thank you.”

Liang Chengpeng stared at him. “Don’t say such things!”

Deputy Team Leader Feng forced a smile, but it was an ugly smile. “You will be fine! Nothing will happen to you!”

Dong Xuebing replied. “I hope so. Thank you.”

Cao Xupeng’s eyes were tearing up. He held Dong Xuebing’s hands and said. “You must return in one piece! I will have a drink with you after your return!”

Dong Xuebing nodded and joked. “I am not good at drinking. Secretary Cao, you must give in a little to me. Haha.”

Cao Xupeng couldn’t find the words to express his gratitude, and only held Dong Xuebing’s hands tightly. Dong Xuebing is replacing him as the hostage. If Dong Xuebing had not stepped forward, he would have become one of the hostages now. Cao Xupeng had owed Dong Xuebing a great favor.

Dong Xuebing turned towards the entrance of the school, hoping to see Xie Huilan one last time. But the Police car carrying Sister Xie and Secretary Xiang had left the school’s compound. Dong Xuebing could not see her, and he calms himself down. He took a deep breath and walked towards the school building. In his mind, he was thinking of how he can rescue the teachers and students.

Dong Xuebing is no longer alone. If he failed, not only will he be killed. The other hostages might also be killed.

Dong Xuebing must succeed! The mini-bus should be arriving soon, and he got less than 5 minutes left!

Dong Xuebing's eyes slowly turned cold!