

Chapter 61: Waiting for His Call

Jiang Yao had been profusely finding a chance to interject the conversation among the adults to ask if Lu Xingzhi had called home. Unfortunately, her attempts came to no avail.

Finally, when Lu Xiaoxiao and Lu Haixing had decided to call it a day and went home, Jiang Yao quickly went up to her father-in-law and asked, "Dad, did Xingzhi call home these few days?"

Should she admit that she'd been waiting for his call for several days?

For the past few days in the county, she had seen Zhao Zhuangzong and the pregnant woman walking together like a regular couple several times. Once, she had even seen them coming out of the hospital together. From the looks of it, it seemed that they were there for a maternity checkup. Zhao Zhuangzong didn't see her because she was standing in a secluded area. She had to stop Lu Xiaoxiao from going forward to greet them.

That slow-witted girl still failed to notice the strangeness of it.

Besides wanting to talk about this with Lu Xingzhi, Jiang Yao missed him badly. She was also worried about him as he hadn't called for so many days already despite his promise to call as soon as he arrived at the base.

"No, I think he must be too busy with work that he has forgotten to call," Mr. Lu said. "Don't worry, he's an adult, he knows how to look after himself. Besides, it's been a few days already. If something had really happened, the base would have called us."

"Oh," Jiang Yao responded with her downcast eyes. Then, she excused herself and went upstairs to her room.

Deep under her indifference and inexpressive expression when talking to Mr. Lu, her blood was boiling in rage and agitation.

That a**hole! Didn't he say that he loved her to the moon and back? He went missing in action as soon as he returned to the base, like a kite which disappeared into the sky after its line broke.

Busy! Busy! Busy!

How busy could he be? Even if he was busy, it wouldn't be that much of a bother to make a simple phone call, would it?

In her previous life, when she wasn't fond of him, he would call home whenever he was free just to talk to her.

Ironically, in this current rebirth, she missed him and yet he didn't call!

She pulled the drawer and saw Lu Xingzhi's bankbook. She vented her anger through her ghastly glare at the innocent bankbook, as if she was glaring at its owner.

"I'll give you two more days. If you don't call, I will...ignore you!" Jiang Yao cursed indignantly.

"B*stard!"

She crashed into the large king-sized bed, sighing dejectedly.

She never knew that it could be that frustrating and depressing waiting for a person's news or updates.

It was hard to imagine what it had been like to be in this situation for eleven years. Lu Xingzhi said that he was waiting for her reply and response and he waited for eleven years, yet he didn't even get a glance back from her. How did he feel back then?

As this thought flashed across Jiang Yao's mind, she couldn't help but calm down into a mellow mode. Never mind, she owed him so much in her previous life. Regardless of whether he would call her in two days' time or in twenty days, how could she possibly ignore him again when he really did call?

For several days in a row, whenever the phone rang, Jiang Yao was the first to rush over to pick it up that even Mr. and Mrs. Lu found her anxious look amusing, but they didn't poke at it.

The 12th of August was an auspicious day. Endless firecrackers noises echoed across the town since morning. Standing on the balcony of the second floor, Jiang Yao could see the family which was having a wedding not far from their house.

Mr. and Mrs. Lu were walking in from the yard, smiling and carrying wedding candy in their hands. When they saw Jiang Yao on the balcony, they said, "Your dad and I will go to the county tonight for a wedding dinner, so you'll be alone at home. Just cook whatever you want to eat tonight, okay?"

"Okay!" Jiang Yao nodded.

Mr. and Mrs. Lu went out after lunch. Jiang Yao stayed in her room for the entire evening. It was only when the day went dark that she slowly went downstairs to heat up leftovers from lunch and called it a meal.

When she was in the kitchen heating up the food, the phone in the living room suddenly rang. Jiang Yao sighed, turned off the fire on the stove, and hopelessly picked up the phone. She spoke before the person on the other end of the line could. "Hello, I'm Jiang Yao. My in-laws are not at home now, please leave a message and I'll convey it to them later."

Chapter 62: It's Me

Jiang Yao was so indifferent while answering the phone and was ready to hang up after getting the message, but the familiar voice from the other end stunned her.

It was from Lu Xingzhi.

"Jiang Yao, it's me." Lu Xingzhi's usual monotonous and straightforward tone echoed into her ear through the phone line.

It was an astonishing moment for someone who didn't hold any hope.

However, after regaining her attention, Jiang Yao shouted right into the phone. "Lu Xingzhi! You've finally remembered to call, haven't you! Do you remember what you promised me before you returned to the base? You promised that you were going to call home once you arrived at the base, remember? Well? Did you know that I was worried sick about you? These days, I'm like a crazy person rushing to the phone as soon as it rings, thinking it's you! Ten days! I was worried for ten whole days! You, on the other hand, didn't even remember to call home! Argh!"

The more Jiang Yao said, the more agitated she got. After a series of continuous scolding, she immediately slammed the phone receiver down and hung up. Then, she glared at the phone, huffing and puffing in irritation.

At the moment, in Longteng Restaurant in Jindo City, Lu Xingzhi was a little astonished as he listened to the beeping sound on the phone. He was surprised that Jiang Yao had hung up instantly after scolding him.

She must be in so much rage to hang up without giving him a chance to say a word.

Lu Xingzhi wasn't upset about it though, as he thought about what she said. She had been worried about him for ten days and was waiting for his call every day. He understood the anxiety and misery of missing someone.

"Why? Has our sister-in-law hung up on you again?" Zhou Weiqi, the owner of the mobile phone Lu Xingzhi was using, glanced in amusement at the man who hadn't even managed to go out of the room to talk on the phone. He teased, "She is the best."

Zhou Weiqi used the word 'again' on purpose. The buddies who sat around the table knew a thing or two about Lu Xingzhi and his wife.

"Weiqi, can you stop taking pleasure in other people's misery? It's disgusting." Chen Xuyao kicked Zhou Weiqi, who was smiling a bright and teasing smile, under the table. It was not funny at all, at least not to Cheng Xuyao.

Zhou Weiqi squinted at Chen Xuyao from the corner of his eyes and snorted, "What I want to say is that there are so many women in this world, who do you have to...godd*mnit! Xuyao! Kick me one more time and you'll see!"

Before he could finish, Chen Xuyao kicked him again, and this time, the kick was stronger than the previous kicks. Zhou Weiqi even guessed that his feet must be swollen from all the kicks.

In an instant, Zhou Weiqi stood up in dismay and got into a fighting posture as if he was ready to jump on Chen Xuyao.

"How can you still talk with food in your mouth? Just eat." Chen Xuyao was certain that if Zhou Weiqi had finished his sentence just now, Lu Xingzhi would have been the one to pounce on him.

Lu Xingzhi loved his wife like she was his Thumbelina. Everyone knew that he adored her and cherished her gingerly. The suggestion that he find another sensible woman to spare his time for instead of pleasing a woman with great effort would only agitate Lu Xingzhi.

Zhou Weiqi also realized the mistake he was about to commit after being chided by Chen Xuyao. He sat back timidly and said while extending his hand to Lu Xingzhi, "Brother, can I have my phone back, please?"

"Is it urgent?" Standing a few steps away from Zhou Weiqi, Lu Xingzhi questioned without even lifting his gaze while holding Zhou Weiqi's phone in his hand without any intention to return it.

"No, it's not urgent," Zhou Weiqi said sheepishly. "If you want to call her back, go ahead and make the call. After you finish talking, you can come back to eat."

Author's note:

A lot of readers have questioned if Jiang Yao's feelings for Lu Xingzhi are merely reciprocal love and have found the progression of the story a bit strange as it unfolded. Here, I would like to provide some explanation.

As mentioned earlier, before Jiang Yao's rebirth, the main reason Jiang Yao and Lu Xingzhi were separated for eleven years of their married life was because she was opposed to the concept of their arranged marriage by their parents and the lack of freedom to make her own decisions. It was not because her groom was Lu Xingzhi.

Jiang Yao is the youngest and only daughter of the Jiang family. She had always been adored by her parents and her elder brothers, and had never been through hardship growing up. She excelled academically, but she had always been an independent girl with her own sets of thoughts. When her parents abruptly announced that she was to marry Lu Xingzhi, an out-of-nowhere stranger, her first reaction was to find her parents' behavior ridiculous and unbelievable.

The Jiang couple loved their daughter Jiang Yao very much. If Jiang Yao had insisted, they wouldn't have forced her to marry Lu Xingzhi. Her compromise later on was nothing more than a rebellious action that was evoked against the arrangement. She had wanted to use her own method to show her parents the consequences of an arrangement that they thought was good and suitable for her.

This kind of thinking is quite risky for a girl like Jiang Yao, who had never been in love before. She didn't understand what love was and she was still ignorant about affection and passion. By marrying Lu Xingzhi with such a state of mind, Jiang Yao had gotten lost in a maze.

Nevertheless, she was not entirely devoid of passion towards Lu Xingzhi, or she wouldn't have run away from him otherwise. She could've divorced him after she graduated from college with the ability to survive on her own, cutting all ties with the man.

However, she didn't do so. Instead, she chose to run away and avoid him, which represents exactly the vague feelings she had for Lu Xingzhi that she didn't know how to face.

Jiang Yao's feelings for Lu Xingzhi were illustrated in the first two chapters of this novel, which might be a little too subtle for you to notice.

For example, after all those years of zero communication whatsoever, Jiang Yao immediately recognized Lu Xingzhi's voice though he spoke only one sentence. It shows that Lu Xingzhi's voice was carved deep in her mind, but she was in self-denial and didn't know how to confront her feelings.

Moreover, although she hadn't seen him for such a long time, she recognized Lu Xingzhi at first glance the moment he was buried in the landslide.

When Lu Xingzhi was swallowed by the muddy landslide, Jiang Yao's involuntary actions and responses prove she wasn't entirely dispassionate towards Lu Xingzhi. However, she was simply too used to suppressing her feelings, and was in such deep self-denial just so she could contradict her parents someday by showing them how unhappy she was and what misfortune she faced in this marriage.

This is the final outcome of a rebellious thought of an adolescent girl.

Lu Xingzhi's testament, his sacrifice, and his intense love for her were enough to free her from her invisible shackles and helped her realize her genuine feelings for Lu Xingzhi.

Therefore, after rebirth, Jiang Yao liked Lu Xingzhi, though in a fuzzy state. As she has more contact with Lu Xingzhi, the passion would become more intense, more affectionate, and deeper. It is a process that would make their interactions more natural and harmonious.

Chapter 63: Speculation

"I'll wait while eating." Lu Xingzhi pulled his chair and sat back down.

He had wanted to call back, but changed his mind on second thought.

He was anticipating what she would do. Would she get antsy and call him back first? How long would she wait before she called him back? Would she even call him back after hanging up on him?

"Seriously, are you really waiting for Jiang Yao to call you back?" Zhou Weiqi glanced at Lu Xingzhi as he guessed his underlying intention correctly. He burst into a laugh and blurted out, "Haha! Okay, just wait until the end of time. Brother, just tell me frankly if you want my phone. I'm a very generous person, so if you like the phone so much, I can give it to you."

Lu Xingzhi simply glared at Zhou Weiqi silently and started eating.

"Big Brother, look at Xingzhi!" Zhou Weiqi was genuinely concerned about Lu Xingzhi, but he couldn't persuade him. Luckily, they had someone respectable and honorable with them tonight.

The big brother whom Zhou Weiqi was referring to was Liang Yueze, who was sitting next to Lu Xingzhi. When the boys were talking, Liang Yueze was peeling shrimps for Luo Lauren beside him quietly. When Zhou Weiqi called his name, he casually peeled the shell off the shrimp, putting it into Luo Lauren's bowl, and then glanced at Zhou Weiqi.

"It's such a pleasure to be Brother Liang's wife." Zhou Weiqi drooled like a puppy as he stared at the shrimps in Luo Lauren's bowl. His gluttony was printed right on his face.

"Zhou Weiqi, if you dare grab my food, I swear I'll chop your hand off!" Luo Lauren was very protective of her food. She could immediately tell Zhou Weiqi's vicious scheme from his expression.

Zhou Weiqi dispelled his thought of grabbing the shrimps after a sharp glare from his big brother, but still stubbornly relented. "Luo Lauren, you stingy girl!"

After that, Luo Lauren's laughter echoed across the silent room. Liang Yueze turned to speak to Lu Xingzhi. "I remember you saying that your wife applied for the medical school in Jindo. Did she receive the admission letter?"

"She was accepted to Nanjiang Medical School, which is closer to our home." Lu Xingzhi glued his gaze at Zhou Weiqi's phone as he was speaking.

"Did she fail or...?" Liang Yueze froze for a while. "Do you need someone to arrange for her to be transferred to Jindo Medical School?"

“For the time being, no. Let’s see how things go.” Lu Xingzhi’s lips twitched. “If she wants to go to Nanjiang, then let her be.”

“Brother, if Jiang Yao goes to Nanjiang, you guys will remain in a long-distance relationship. I was happy for you when I heard you saying she’ll apply for the university in Jindo,” Chen Xuyao said in bewilderment. “We have a way to get her accepted to Jindo Medical School, so why don’t you just transfer her here already? By then, she has to come here whether she likes it or not, or she wouldn’t be admitted into any other colleges otherwise. She’ll definitely come here then.”

“Are you stupid? Use your brain before you ask any questions. Didn’t you hear him say that Jiang Yao wants to go to Nanjiang Medical School? With her results, I’m positively sure that she’d be accepted to Jindo University. From what I can see, she doesn’t want to come to Jindo.” Zhou Weiqi blurted out what he had in mind without a second thought.

“Zhou Weiqi, just eat,” Liang Yueze groaned with an obvious hint of frustration. It wasn’t just Chen Xuyao—Zhou Weiqi was a dim-wit too.

Liang Yueze could sense some temptations in Lu Xingzhi’s tone. Although he had said no, it was probably just for the time being. He had added ‘let’s see how things go’, so it meant that there was a possibility he would get her to Jindo in the future.

Chapter 64: Speaks With a Forked Tongue

Moreover, Liang Yueze noticed that despite having his call cut off abruptly, Lu Xingzhi didn’t show the slightest distress or frustration. In fact, he literally saw the smiley curls of the man’s lips. Unlike his previous attempts where he didn’t care for the phone after unsuccessful calls, he now kept his eyes on the phone at all times.

He presumed that perhaps Jiang Yao would take the initiative to call back this time.

Liang Yueze found the analysis and deduction a little surprising, but he didn’t barge in upon seeing Lu Xingzhi’s happy expression.

On second thought, Liang Yueze asked with a hint of probing, “My wedding with Lauren will be on National Day. Save the date.”

Lu Xingzhi looked up at Liang Yueze and nodded. “Okay, I’ll attend with Jiang Yao.”

Liang Yueze smiled at his answer. Then, he turned to continue eating with Luo Lauren, ignoring Lu Xingzhi’s minute gestures.

Chen Xuyao was not much of a dimwit, after all. He comprehended Liang Yueze’s intention as soon as he heard the simple conversation between the two guys. He was impressed by Liang Yueze’s smartness in probing into Lu Xingzhi’s relationship with his wife with just a simple question. It seemed that their relationship had improved by leaps and bounds after his visit.

On the other hand, Zhou Weiqi, who was as clueless as always, stared at the men who were donning mysterious grin on their faces. What happened? Why couldn’t he keep up with their pace? Why did he feel as if he’d just missed some important information? Did he need to recharge his IQ?

When the phone rang again, Lu Xingzhi picked up the phone like greased lightning. He was so quick that Zhou Weiqi stretched his hand out to grasp on the air, annoying that he missed the chance to answer the phone.

Jiang Yao was just throwing a tantrum when she hung up earlier. She regretted the decision after hanging up, though.

She waited by the phone to see if Lu Xingzhi would call her back, but to no avail. Five minutes later, she got antsy as the phone remained silent. She picked up the phone and dialed the incoming number earlier.

“Hello,” Jiang Yao said awkwardly. She felt a little timid for calling back after hanging up on him, so she spoke in a deep and restrained tone. After the greeting, she stopped talking and waited for Lu Xingzhi to speak.

Lu Xingzhi took the phone and exited the room. He stood at the corridor and looked out of the window to view the scenery outside, smiling delightedly and joyfully.

“Why did the call disconnect so abruptly just now?” Lu Xingzhi asked, amused.

Jiang Yao chuckled at his question and replied, “Oh yes, I don’t know what’s going on.” Thankful for Lu Xingzhi’s quick-witted response, she quickly changed the topic and said, “Have you been busy lately? Why are you only calling me now?”

“Well, yes. After disembarking the flight, I was sent on a mission before I could even return to the base. I’ve just complete the mission today and I’m having dinner with my friends outside,” Lu Xingzhi explained. “Were you worried?”

“No!” Jiang Yao denied frantically. “Uhm, just a little. Mom and Dad said that you’re a grown-up and there’s nothing to worry about, right? So, I’m not so worried.”

Lu Xingzhi grinned at the other end of the line. Jiang Yao was such an adorable little lady who spoke with a forked tongue. Didn’t she just hang up on him earlier because she was too worried to the point she got agitated? Right now, however, she was too embarrassed to even admit it.

“Yes, they’re right.” Then, Lu Xingzhi reminded her again, “Sometimes, I can’t be reached due to missions that would emerge out of nowhere. Don’t worry, I’m fine.”

“I know, but you must look after yourself.” Jiang Yao felt her heart beating frantically again when she thought about him being buried under the muddy landslide before rebirth.

Chapter 65: Stone Face

Lu Xingzhi mumbled an ‘okay’ and fell silent. The corridor of the restaurant was empty and the night was quite windy. When they were both not speaking, Jiang Yao could hear the faint sound of the wind blowing over the phone.

“Where are you now? I hear the wind blowing, is it windy over there?” Jiang Yao asked.

"I'm at a restaurant called Longteng in Jindo. I'm now standing in the open-air corridor talking to you. It's very nice here, I'll bring you here on the National Day holiday. The food is really delicious, I bet you'll like it very much."

He wanted to mention Liang Yueze and Luo Lauren's wedding, but he clamped his mouth shut before he could blurt it out. After some quick consideration, he decided he would only tell her when she came to visit him on the National Day in case she ran away.

Jiang Yao was astonished by the remarks that she nodded involuntarily. It was a few seconds later when she realized that the man was calling her instead of standing in front of her, so he wouldn't be able to see her reaction. She frantically replied, "Okay."

Thinking of the fact that Lu Xingzhi hadn't had his dinner yet and that he'd just completed his tiresome mission, Jiang Yao urged him to go back to his dinner and hung up again without waiting for Lu Xingzhi's response.

After the call, Jiang Yao subconsciously hummed and trotted joyfully towards the kitchen, while in Jindo, Lu Xingzhi stood in the corridor in a trance for a while. Then, he chuckled and returned to the room.

"Oh my god! Xuyao, look quickly! Xingzhi is smiling, isn't he?"

After Lu Xingzhi went out, Zhou Weiqi hoped so badly that he could glue his ear on the wall and eavesdrop on their conversation. He was waiting anxiously and excitedly for Lu Xingzhi's return. Unexpectedly, the man who was always on the phone for no longer than a minute suddenly talked for about twenty minutes. He didn't even manage to wipe the smile off his face before returning to the room.

Chen Xuyao nodded solemnly. "Yes, I see that."

Lu Xingzhi sat back at his seat and returned the phone to Zhou Weiqi. When he saw the astonished looks on Chen Xuyao's and Zhou Weiqi's faces, he tapped the table lightly, signalling to them to get rid of the looks on their face and said in dismay, "I don't have a stone face, is it so weird to know that I can smile?"

"Yes! Of course it's weird!" Chen Xuyao nodded like a woodpecker. "You're not just a stone face, you're beyond that!"

"Yes, yes! You and Yueze are the champions of the stone face category!" Zhou Weiqi looked at Liang Yueze and said, "Brother, you have a stone face too. You and Xingzhi are the most alike among us brothers!"

"Weiqi, do you want me to feed you personally?" Liang Yueze stared daggers at Zhou Weiqi that sent him shrinking fearfully in his seat.

"No thanks, I don't deserve such pleasure," Zhou Weiqi mumbled gingerly.

"Weiqi," Lu Xingzhi shouted as he looked frigidly at Zhou Weiqi, who was looking back at him like a cute little bunny. "Or, would you like me to feed you?"

"NO!" Zhou Weiqi rejected it immediately. "Please, spare me! Xingzhi, why are you calling me? Come on, I'm all ears!"

Lu Xingzhi and Liang Yueze were best known for their vicious temperaments. If any of these two were to feed him, indigestion was the best he could pray for. He might even have to go to the hospital.

Chen Xuyao had a hard time suppressing his laughter upon the hilarious scene. He was smart enough to know that Lu Xingzhi and Liang Yueze were not people he could offend.

'Sigh, I miss that dude who is always overseas all year round,' Chen Xuyao thought to himself.