

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 32.

Last time, Song Jiang had fled after killing his mistress for trying to blackmail him over his connections to the Liangshan bandits. The county magistrate was trying to let him off the hook by just kind of BS-ing his way through the case, but the dead girl's adulterous lover just so happened to be Zhang Wenyuan, the assistant clerk of the court, so he and the victim's mother kept pressing the magistrate to, you know, actually try to arrest the suspect.

Left with no wiggle room, the magistrate sent his two constables, Zhu Tong and Lei Heng, to look for Song Jiang at his father's home. So the two of them took about 40 men and headed out. When Song Jiang's father, Old Squire Song, came out to greet them, they told him, "Sir, please pardon us. We're acting on orders from above; it's not up to us. Where is your son Song Jiang?"

"Constables, I've severed ties with that unfilial Song Jiang for years. I went to the previous magistrate and disinherited Song Jiang. The documentation is here. He's been stricken from my household registry for more than three years. He doesn't live with me, and hasn't come back here in that time."

"That may be," Zhu Tong said, "but we have orders. We can't just take your word for it. Wait here while we search the place, so we can give our boss an answer."

So Zhu Tong told his men to surround the manor, and he told his fellow constable Lei Heng, "I'll watch the front door; you go in and search first."

So Lei Heng went into the manor and searched all around the estate. He came out and told Zhu Tong that there was no sign of Song Jiang.

"I still don't feel comfortable with that," Zhu Tong said. "Constable Lei, you and the men watch the door. I'll go search myself."

Old Squire Song chimed in and said, "I am a law-abiding man; how would I dare to hide him here?"

"I'm acting on orders, and this is official business," Zhu Tong said. "Don't blame me."

“Constable, you may help yourself,” Old Squire Song relented.

“Constable Lei,” Zhu Tong said to his comrade, “Stay here and watch the old squire. Don’t let him move.”

Zhu Tong then went into the estate alone. He leaned his broadsword against the wall, shut the doors, and then headed into the family chapel. There, he pulled the altar table aside and lifted up a floor plank. Under that plank was a rope. He gave the rope a tug, and a bell rang. Moments later, Song Jiang appeared from under the floorboards.

When he saw Zhu Tong, Song Jiang was shocked and alarmed, but Zhu Tong said, “Brother, don’t fault me for coming to arrest you. You and I have always been on great terms, and you never kept anything from me. One day while we were drinking, you told me, ‘Under my family altar, there is a secret cellar. The cellar is hidden by a floor plank under the altar table. If you ever have an emergency, you can go hide there.’ I made a note of that. Today, the magistrate sent me and Lei Heng here. We had no choice; we have to put on a show for others. The magistrate also wants to let you slide, but that Zhang Wenyuan and that Mrs. Yan filed a petition and threatened to take the case to the prefectural court if the magistrate didn’t give them justice. That’s why the magistrate sent the two of us here to search the place. I was afraid Lei Heng would be too stubborn and won’t know how to let you slide if he saw you. So I tricked him into staying outside while I came in here to talk to you. Even though this is a good hiding spot, it’s no place to stay long-term. If anyone catches wind of it and comes to search for this cellar, then what?”

“That’s what I was thinking too,” Song Jiang said. “If not for your accommodation, I would be done for.”

“Say no such thing, brother. Do you have a refuge somewhere?”

“I’ve been thinking about three possible places. One is in Cangzhou (1,1) Prefecture, at the estate of Chai (2) Jin (4), the Little Whirlwind. Second is in Qingzhou (1,1) Prefecture, at Fort Clear Winds, which is overseen by my friend Hua (1) Rong (2). The third place is at White Tiger Mountain, at the estate of Old Squire Kong (3). He has two sons. The elder is named Kong Ming (2), with the nickname the Hairy Star. The younger is named Kong Liang (4), with the nickname the Lonely Fiery Star. They have often come to call on me. I haven’t decided among those three places yet.”

“Brother, decide quickly,” Zhu Tong said. “Leave right away. Leave tonight. Don’t delay and doom yourself.”

“I will have to entrust you to take care of the ins and outs of the case,” Song Jiang said. “If you need to spend money, just come here to get it.”

“Don’t worry; I’ll take care of it. You just worry about arranging your travels.”

Song Jiang thanked Zhu Tong and ducked back into his cellar. Zhu Tong then put everything back where it was, walked outside, and said, “Well, he really isn’t here. Constable Lei, how about we arrest Old Squire Song?”

When he heard that, Lei Heng thought to himself, “Zhu Tong is Song Jiang’s buddy. Why is he suggesting that we arrest Old Squire Song? This must be a trick. If he mentions it again, it’ll be a chance for me to do them a favor.”

The two now gathered up their soldiers and walked into the thatched parlor. Old Squire Song told his men to arrange wine and food for everyone, but Zhu Tong said, “No need for that. But we do need you, sir, and your younger son to come back to the county seat with us.”

“Where is your younger son?” Lei Heng asked.

“I sent Song Qing (1) to a nearby village to have some farming tools made, so he’s not here,” Old Squire Song said. “As for that bastard Song Jiang, I had him stricken from my household registry three years ago. I have the documentation to prove it.”

“That won’t do,” Zhu Tong said. “We came on the magistrate’s orders to bring you and Song Qing back for questioning.”

And here was Lei Heng’s opportunity. He said to Zhu Tong, “Listen to me. There must be more to Mr. Jiang’s crime, so it probably won’t end up being a capital offense. Since the old squire has the paperwork and it carries the official seal of the magistrate, it’s not fake. On account of our past ties with Mr. Song, let’s cut his father some slack. Just make a copy of the paperwork and report back.”

Zhu Tong suspected that Lei Heng had figured out what he was doing and was playing along, so he played along, too. “Well, brother, since that’s what you think, I have no reason to play the villain here.”

Old Squire Song thanked them profusely, treated everyone to wine and food, and offered the two constables 20 taels of silver. Zhu Tong and Lei Heng refused to accept the money, and instead gave it to their men. They then made a copy of the document proving Song Jiang had been disinherited, took their leave of the old squire, and returned to the county seat.

Back at the county courthouse, the magistrate saw his constables return without any prisoners and asked them what happened. They told him, “We searched all around the estate and the nearby village, twice. Song Jiang really wasn’t there. Old Squire Song was laid up in bed sick and couldn’t move. Looks like he’s not long for this world. His younger son Song Qing went on a trip last month and hasn’t come back yet. So we just made a copy of their document proving their disassociation with Song Jiang.”

Oh, ok. Well, how convenient, I mean, shucks, that’s too bad. The magistrate now issued an APB for Song Jiang and left it at that. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, people went to work on the plaintiffs. Various folks from the magistrate’s office went to talk to Zhang Wenyan, the assistant clerk who had been pressing for a real investigation since he had been carrying on an adulterous affair with the murder victims. In the end, he succumbed to their entreaties, in part because he, too, had received many benefits from Song Jiang in the past. So he let the matter drop. As for Mrs. Yan, the mother of the

murder victim, Zhu Tong gathered up some money and bought her silence, convincing her to not take the case up to the prefectural court. Sensing that the justice system was not particularly eager to work for her, she had no choice but to content herself with the hush money. Zhu Tong then shoved some silver into the right hands at the prefecture level to make sure that no orders came down from there regarding this case. And so it was all left in the hands of the county magistrate, who was more than happy to put out a bounty of 1,000 strings for Song Jiang's arrest and leave it at that. Oh, and one last loose end: Tang the Ox, the pickle peddler who had been implicated because his intervention had allowed Song Jiang to escape. The magistrate convicted him of aiding a suspect's escape, sentenced him to a caning of 20 strokes, and had him exiled to a couple hundred miles away. As for all the other neighbors and such who had been pulled into this mess, they were all cleared and allowed to go home. Ah, justice.

Meanwhile back at Old Squire Song's estate, after Zhu Tong and Lei Heng left, Song Jiang emerged from hiding and discussed what to do next with his father and younger brother.

"If not for Zhu Tong, I would be in jail right now," Song Jiang said to his father. "We must not forget that kindness. Right now, my brother and I must flee. If heaven takes pity on us and grants us amnesty, then we'll return and reunite with you. In the meantime, you should secretly send some money to Zhu Tong so he can use it for bribes and to hush up Mrs. Yan so she won't press this case any further."

"No need for you to worry about that," Old Squire Song said. "You and your brother just take care of yourselves on the road. When you have landed somewhere, have someone bring me a letter."

So that night, Song Jiang and his younger brother Song Qing packed their bags and got up at 1 a.m., washed up, ate breakfast, and hit the road. Song Jiang wore a white, broad-brimmed felt hat, a white silk robe, a plum-pin sash, leggings, and hemp sandals. Song Qing was dressed as a servant and carried

their bags. In the thatched parlor, they kneeled and took leave of their father. As the three wept, Old Squire Song told his sons, "You two have a bright future ahead of you, so don't worry."

Song Jiang and Song Qing then gave instructions to all the workhands, telling them to tend to the estate and the old squire carefully. Each brother then wore a short broadsword around his waist and grabbed a long broadsword, and they hit the road.

It was late autumn. The leaves were falling, the grass was turning brown, and the weather was getting wet and cold. As they walked, the two brothers discussed where to seek refuge. Song Qing said, "I've heard people from the jianghu scene sing the praises of Cangzhou Prefecture's Lord Chai Jin, the Little Whirlwind. They say he's a descendant of the last emperor of the previous dynasty. We haven't had a chance to meet him yet, so why don't we go there? Everyone says he's generous and honorable and loves meeting men of valor. When it comes to hospitality and helping those in need, they say he's the second coming of Lord Mengchang (4,2). Let's go stay with him."

So a quick note here. Song Qing just compared Chai Jin to a Lord Mengchang (4,2). This Lord Mengchang was a statesman from the Warring States period, and he lived in the third century BC, so some 1300 years before the time of our story. He was famous for extending his hospitality to many men of talent. It's said that he had as many as 3,000 retainers, some with just a single, useful skill. So to have your hospitality compared to him was high praise indeed. No wonder Song Qing wanted to go stay with Chai Jin.

Song Jiang replied, "That's what I'm thinking, too. Even though Chai Jin and I have traded many letters, I haven't been fortunate enough to meet him yet."

So the two brothers headed toward Cangzhou Prefecture. Their journey was uneventful, and one day they arrived in Cangzhou. They asked for directions to Chai Jin's estate and soon found it. There, they told a workhand that they wanted to see Chai Jin.

The workhand replied that Chai Jin was out collecting grain rent at his east manor. When Song Jiang started asking for directions to the east manor, the workhand asked who he was.

“I am Song Jiang of Yuncheng County,” he replied.

“Are you the clerk they call Timely Rain?” the workhand asked.

“Indeed I am.”

“Our lord sings your praises all the time and laments not having the opportunity to meet you. Since you’re here, I’ll take you to see him.”

So the workhand led the two brothers toward the east manor. After a six-hour journey, they arrived at a very neat and tidy estate. The workhand asked the Song brothers to wait in a pavilion while he went to announce them. Moments later, the main gates to the estate flung open, and out rushed Chai Jin, accompanied by a few men. He ran to the pavilion and fell to his knees at the sight of Song Jiang, saying, “If only you knew how I’ve been thinking about you! What heavenly wind brought you here today? My lifelong wish has been fulfilled. What good fortune!”

Song Jiang returned the courtesy and kneeled as well, saying, “I am but a lowly clerk and have come especially to see you.”

Chai Jin helped him up and said, “Last night, the lamp wick flowered, and this morning a magpie called. I didn’t realize those were portents of your visit, brother.”

Seeing the big smile on Chai Jin’s face and the warmth of his reception, Song Jiang was delighted. He then introduced his brother, and Chai Jin told his men to take care of the luggage. He took Song Jiang by the hand and they sat down in the main parlor as host and guest.

“If I may be so bold to ask, brother,” Chai Jin said, “I’ve heard that you are working in Yuncheng County. How come you have time to visit our insignificant village?”

“I have long heard of your great name, my lord,” Song Jiang replied. “Even though I have received many letters from you, unfortunately my humble office keeps me too busy to pay my respects in person.

I'm here today because I've done a foolish thing. My brother and I had nowhere to go, and then we remembered your generosity, so we have come to seek refuge."

When he heard this, Chai Jin smiled and said, "Brother, rest easy. Even those who have committed capital crimes have no need to worry once they arrive at my estate. I don't mean to brag, but even the authorities would not dare to think about coming into my humble manor."

Song Jiang now recounted his crime. Chai Jin laughed and said, "Brother, worry not. I am not afraid to take in even those who have killed government officials or stolen government property."

He now arranged for the two brothers to bathe and change into new clothes. He then invited them to a feast in his private quarters, where he put Song Jiang in the seat of honor. A dozen or so workhands, along with a few stewards, took turns pouring wine, and Chai Jin urged the brothers to drink heartily. By the time they had drunken half their fill, the three men were singing each other's praises and expressing their deep mutual admiration.

By now, it was starting to get dark, and lanterns were lit. Song Jiang tried to cut himself off, but Chai Jin would not hear of it and kept him drinking until around 7 p.m. Song Jiang then got up to use the bathroom, and Chai Jin sent a workman with a lantern to show him the way.

"I'll have to miss the next round," Song Jiang said as he got up and headed toward the bathroom. By now, he was buzzing pretty good and stumbled a bit. As he staggered toward the bathroom, he cut across the courtyard and mounted the veranda running along the eastern wing of the estate.

As he was walking, he stumbled past a tall man. This guy was recovering from a bout of malaria and was getting the chills, so he was huddled over some burning embers on a shovel. Song Jiang, in his inebriated state, accidentally stepped on the handle of the shovel, sending the embers flying toward the man's face. The man was so startled that he broke into a sweat.



The next thing you know, this guy had Song Jiang by the collar and was shouting, “Bastard! Who the hell are you?! How dare you play tricks on me?!”

Song Jiang was caught off guard by this and did not know what to say. The workman who was lighting his way now rushed over and shouted to the big guy, “Don’t be rude! This is his lordship’s most revered favored guest!”

“[Scoff] Guest? Guest?” the big guy scoffed. “When I first got here, I was a ‘guest’ too, and he also treated me well. But then he listened to the workmen’s lies and started to neglect me! As the saying goes, ‘No one remains in favor forever, and no flower remains in bloom for eternity.’ ”

As he raged, the man raised his fist and was about to pummel Song Jiang. The workhand tried to intervene, but could not separate the two. Just then, a few more lanterns flashed onto the scene, as Chai Jin himself showed up to make peace.

“I couldn’t find you,” he said to Song Jiang. “What’s all this fuss?”

The workhand recounted what happened, and Chai Jin laughed and said to the big guy, “Do you know who this illustrious clerk is?”

“Illustrious my butt! Compared to Mr. Song of Yuncheng County, he’s nothing!” the man shot back.

Chai Jin laughed even harder and said, “Do you recognize Mr. Song?”

“Even though I haven’t met him, I have long heard on the jianghu scene that he’s nicknamed Timely Rain. He’s honorable and generous, and always helping those in need. He’s a famous hero.”

“Why is he a famous hero?” Chai Jin asked.

“It would take too long to tell it all, but he’s a real hero. What he starts, he finishes! As soon as I recover, I’m going to join him.”

“You want to meet him?”

“Of course I want to meet him!”

“Well then, he’s right in front of you,” Chai Jin said as he pointed to Song Jiang. “That’s him, the Timely Rain.”

“Are you for real?”

Song Jiang now said, “I am indeed Song Jiang.”

The big man took a close look at Song Jiang, and then fell to his knees and kowtowed.

“Am I dreaming? Are we really meeting?!”

“I don’t deserve such adoration,” Song Jiang said.

“I was very rude just now,” the man said as he remained kneeling and refused to get up. “I didn’t recognize greatness!”

“What is your name?” Song Jiang asked as he tried to get the guy to stand up.

Chai Jin pointed at the guy and said, “His name is Wu (3) Song (1). He’s the second oldest son in his family. He’s from Qinghe (1,2) County and has been staying here for a year.”

“I have heard of his name many times on the jianghu scene,” Song Jiang said. “Who knew we would meet here today? What good fortune!”

“It’s truly a happy circumstance when men of valor meet,” Chai Jin said. “Let’s all sit down inside and talk.”

A delighted Song Jiang took Wu Song by the hand and they all went back to Chai Jin’s private quarters. There, Song Jiang introduced his little brother to Wu Song, and Chai Jin asked Wu Song to sit down, and Song Jiang asked Wu Song to sit with him at the head of the table. Wu Song steadfastly refused, and after much back and forth, Wu Song contented himself with taking the third seat. Chai Jin now called for more wine and urged his guests to keep drinking to their hearts’ content.

As they drank, Song Jiang sized up Wu Song and was quite impressed by his appearance. He was tall, strong, and handsome, with a pair of eyes that shot out cold light like the stars. He displayed a vigor surpassing that of 10,000 men and spoke with the conviction and strength of a hero.

“How did you come to be here?” Song Jiang asked Wu Song.

“When I was in Qinghe County, I got drunk and got into a brawl with the keeper of confidential documents in the local government office,” Wu Song said. “In a fit of anger, I knocked him out with one punch. I thought he was dead, so I fled here and have sought refuge here for more than a year. But later I found out that the guy didn’t die, so I was planning to go home to find my older brother. But then I caught a bout of malaria and couldn’t travel. I was feeling the chills just now and was huddling around the fire for warmth. When you kicked over the shovel, that startled me and made me sweat, which actually made me feel better.”

Song Jiang was delighted and they drank until midnight. Afterward, Song Jiang kept Wu Song in his quarters, and they hung out. The next day, Chai Jin again threw another feast. A few days later, Song Jiang gave Wu Song some money to make some new clothes. But when Chai Jin found out, there was no way he was going to let Song Jiang spend his own money, so he offered up a bolt of fine brocade and had his own tailor make some clothes for all three of his special guests.

Oh, and by the way, in case you were wondering why Wu Song said Chai Jin had come to neglect him, here’s what happened: When Wu Song first got to Chai Jin’s estate, he was shown the same hospitality as everyone else. But, after a while, Wu Song got on the bad side of Chai Jin’s workmen. Every time he got drunk, his bad temper would flare, and if any of the workhands offended him in the slightest, they would get a taste of his fist. So everyone at Chai Jin’s estate detested him and they all started telling Chai Jin how horrible he was. Now, Chai Jin didn’t kick him out, but the hospitality started getting less and less enthusiastic by the day. But now, since Wu Song was best buds with Chai Jin’s most revered guest, he got to ride Song Jiang’s coattail to daily feasts, and he soon recovered from his illness.

After hanging out with Song Jiang for about a dozen days, Wu Song started to really miss home and wanted to return to Qinghe (1,2) County to see his older brother. Chai Jin and Song Jiang both tried to

keep him, but Wu Song said, "I have not heard from my brother in a long time, so I want to check on him."

"If you really want to go, then I dare not keep you," Song Jiang said. "When you have time, please come hang out again."

Chai Jin then gave Wu Song some money. Wu Song packed his bags, grabbed a wooden staff, and prepared to leave. Chai Jin threw him a going-away party. Wu Song wore his new red robe, put on a white broad-brimmed felt hat, strapped on his bundle, and took his leave. But Song Jiang told him to wait for a second and then went and got out some money of his own and rushed back to the front door.

"I'm going to see you off for a bit," he told Wu Song. So Song Jiang and his brother Song Qing accompanied Wu Song as he left Chai Jin's estate.

After a couple miles, Wu Song tried to get Song Jiang to turn back, but Song Jiang refused. So they walked for another mile or so, chitchatting along the way. Finally, Wu Song stopped Song Jiang and said, "Brother, no need to see me any farther. As the old saying goes, 'Even if you see a friend off for a thousand miles, you must part eventually.' "

"Let me accompany you for just a few more steps," Song Jiang said. "There's a small tavern on the main road ahead. We can say our goodbyes over three cups of wine there."

So they made their way to the tavern and ordered wine and food. They drank a few cups, and the sun was now in the western sky.

"It's getting late, brother," Wu Song said. "If you do not scorn me, then please accept four bows from me and have me as your sworn brother."

Song Jiang was delighted, and Wu Song promptly offered his bows. Song Jiang then told Song Qing to take out a 10-tael piece of silver for Wu Song. Wu Song tried to refuse, but Song Jiang was like, no real brother of mine would refuse my silver, so Wu Song had to accept.

After settling the bill, they finally parted ways outside the tavern. With tears rolling down his cheeks, Wu Song bowed and bid Song Jiang goodbye. Song Jiang and Song Qing stood outside the tavern and watched until Wu Song had disappeared. When they turned to go back, they had not gone but a mile before they were met by Chai Jin, who was coming with a couple spare horses to offer them a ride back to the estate, where they were treated to another feast.

So for now, we'll leave Song Jiang being wined and dined daily at Chai Jin's estate and catch up to Wu Song. To see what adventures he will get into, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, something that will make conservationists everywhere cringe. So join us next time. Thanks for listening!