

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 64.

Last time, Li Kui the Black Whirlwind had gone to bring his mother to Liangshan so she could live the good life. Tragically, while they were making their way through the mountains, she was carried away and devoured by a family of tigers. In a fit of anger, Li Kui slaughtered all four tigers, a deed that made him the toast of the nearby villages. He was escorted to the home of a local rich man named Old Squire Cao (2), where he was hailed as a hero while people from near and far packed into the house to have a look at the slayer of tigers.

Li Kui didn't tell anyone his real identity, only saying that his name was Zhang the Bold. But among this throng of onlookers, there was a woman who recognized him. She was none other than the wife of Li (2) Gui (3), the highwayman who was pretending to be Li Kui and robbing people in his name. In the last episode, this imposter had the misfortune of running into the real Li Kui, but Li Kui spared his life. But that didn't stop the imposter from scheming with his wife later on to kill Li Kui. When he caught them plotting, Li Kui quickly dispatched the imposter, but the wife got away. Turns out, she ran all the way to her parents' house in a nearby hamlet.

That day, she came with the crowd to see the tiger slayer. When she realized who it was, she hurried home and told her parents, who then rushed to tell the leader of the hamlet, who then sent someone to invite Li Kui's host, Old Squire Cao, to come have a word. Excusing himself from his guest, Old Squire Cao hurried to the hamlet leader's home, where they filled him in on who was crashing on his couch.

"You have to be absolutely sure about this," Old Squire Cao said. "If you're wrong, then it's gonna cause trouble. But if you're right, then that's ok. It's easy enough to capture him, if he is the real deal."

The hamlet leader said, "We have the wife of Li Gui (3), who recognizes him. He went to their home to ask for food, but then killed her husband."

"In that case," Old Squire Cao said, "let's treat him to wine and ask him whether he wants to take the tigers to the county seat to claim his reward, or if he just wants some reward money from the

village. If he doesn't want to go to the county seat, then he must be Black Whirlwind. If so, we will take turns toasting him until he's dead drunk. Then we'll tie him up and go report to the county authorities and ask them to send a constable here to get him. That's a foolproof plan."

Everyone thought that was a great idea, so Squire Cao went home and laid out a banquet to honor Li Kui.

"Forgive me for having to leave you," Squire Cao said. "Hero, please set down your bundles and broadsword and rest easy for a bit."

"Sounds good," Li Kui said. "Actually my short broadsword is lodged inside the female tiger. I just have the scabbard here. If you guys cut her open, please return the broadsword to me."

"No worries, hero. We've got plenty of good broadswords here. I will give you one as a gift."

So Li Kui handed all his stuff to the squire's workhands and leaned his long-handle broadsword against the wall. Meanwhile, Squire Cao had his men bring out big platters of meat and big bottles of wine. All the leading men of the area, plus the hunters and such, took turns offering toasts to Li Kui.

While Li Kui was chugging one bowl after another, Old Squire Cao asked him, "Hero, do you want to take the tigers to the authorities to claim your reward, or just take some money from us?"

"I'm just a passing traveler. I'm too busy. I just killed these tigers by chance; there's no need to go to the county seat to collect the reward. If your village can give me a little something, that's fine. Even if you can't, I'll be leaving anyway."

"We would never shortchange you. Give us a moment, and we will collect money from the village for you, and take the tigers to the authorities ourselves."

"And please let me have a change of clothes first," Li Kui asked.

The old squire immediately took out a black robe so Li Kui could change out of his blood-stained garments. As drums and flutes played outside, the wine flowed freely inside. As one cup after another

was pushed in his face, Li Kui drank it all, fully unaware of the trap and having completely forgotten his promise to Song Jiang that he wouldn't drink on this trip.

After two or three hours, Li Kui was totally wasted. He couldn't even stand up straight. A group of men then helped him to the back, where they laid him down on a bench. While he was passed out, they bound him to the bench with two ropes. The hamlet leader then rushed off to the county seat, along with Li Gui's wife and some hunters.

The magistrate of Yishui (2,3) County was shocked when he heard the villagers' report.

"Where is Black Whirlwind now?" he asked them. "He's a rebel. We can't let him get away."

"He's presently tied up at the home of Squire Cao, a rich man in our village," they told him. "Because no one can handle him, we were worried that he might escape if we tried to bring him here."

Hearing this, the magistrate summoned the county's constable, who stepped forth immediately. This man had a wide face, heavy eyebrows, red whiskers, and green eyes. His name was Li (3) Yun (2), and because of his eye color and martial prowess, people dubbed him the Green-Eyed Tiger. The magistrate ordered Li Yun (2) to take a bunch of men and quietly bring Li Kui to the county seat without drawing attention from the surrounding villages. So Li Yun went and called up 30 veteran militiamen and headed to the village.

But despite their efforts, there was basically no way to keep such big news under wraps in a small place like this county. Word soon got around that the Black Whirlwind who had made a ruckus in Jiangzhou was in custody, and that the constable Li Yun was on his way to get the prisoner. This gossip quickly reached the ears of the Liangshan chieftain Zhu Gui, the Dryland Crocodile, who had been sent here to keep tabs on Li Kui. Zhu Gui was staying with his younger brother Zhu Fu (4), and they quickly huddled to discuss what to do.

“That dark knave has done it again!” an exasperated Zhu Gui said. “How do we rescue him? Brother Song Jiang sent me here specifically to keep him out of trouble. And now he’s been arrested. If I can’t save him, how can I go back to see Brother Song? What should we do?”

“Brother, don’t panic,” Zhu Fu said. “That Constable Li Yun is a great fighter. Even 50 people can’t take him on, so even if you and I combine forces, we would still not be a match for him. We can only use trickery, not force. Li Yun likes me a lot and often teaches me how to handle weapons. I have an idea to trick him, but after we do this, I won’t be able to stay here anymore.”

“Brother, selling wine here is no way to make a living,” Zhu Gui said. “Why don’t you bring your family and follow me to Liangshan and share in our wealth. Won’t be that better?”

Thus agreed, the brothers quickly got to work setting their plan in motion.

Around 3 a.m., the constable Li Yun and his 30 militiamen were on their way back to the county seat with Li Kui in tow, still passed out drunk and bound even tighter now. Li Yun was leading the way on his horse, while his men followed on foot with Li Kui tied to a cart.

Suddenly, they saw a few men approach. At their head was none other than Li Yun’s disciple, Zhu Fu.

“Master, congratulations! I have come to honor you!” Zhu Fu shouted. As he spoke, he took out a jug of wine from a bucket, filled a big goblet, and presented it to Li Yun. Meanwhile, Zhu Gui held up a platter of pork, while an assistant brought out some fruits.

Seeing this, Li Yun quickly dismounted, walked over, and said to Zhu Fu, “Brother, you shouldn’t have.”

“It’s a token of your student’s filial heart,” Zhu Fu replied.

Thus honored, Li Yun accepted the goblet, brought it to his lips, but then stopped. As it turns out, Li Yun did not imbibe alcohol.

Seeing this, Zhu Fu kneeled and said, "Master, I know that you don't drink. But this is a happy occasion. Please drink just half a cup."

Peer pressure worked. Li Yun felt he could not beg off, so he took a couple sips.

"Master, since you don't drink, please have some meat," Zhu Fu now offered.

"I ate my fill last night. I'm too full," Li Yun said.

"Master, you've traveled quite a ways. You must be hungry. I know it's not anything fancy, but please just have a couple bites so I won't look bad."

Again, peer pressure worked, and when Zhu Fu picked out two good pieces of pork and shoved them in Li Yun's face, the latter could not refuse and proceeded to eat the meat. Zhu Fu then poured wine for the other people in Li Yun's entourage, giving three cups each to all the leading men of the village, the hamlet leader, the hunters and such. Meanwhile, Zhu Gui busied himself with treating the militiamen and the workhands from Old Squire Cao's estate to wine and meat.

"Hey you. Let me have some, too!" a loud voice cried out just then. Hey, look who finally sobered up.

"You are a criminal! There's no wine or meat for you!" Zhu Gui admonished him. "Shut your mouth!"

A few moments later, Li Yun ordered his men to get back on the road, and that was when he noticed a problem. All his men had gone limp and collapsed to the ground with mouth agape.

"We've been had!" Li Yun cried out. He was just about to make a move when he felt himself going down as well, collapsing into a pile on the ground.

That was the cue. Zhu Gui and Zhu Fu each grabbed a broadsword from the helpless militiamen and shouted, "Nobody is going anywhere!" as they made straight for the workhands who had not yet eaten

the meat or drunken the wine, plus all the nosy villagers who had tagged along to gawk. The ones who were quick managed to slip away, but the slow ones were treated to a broadsword in the chest.

Seeing this, Li Kui let out a thunderous roar and burst out of his restraints. He then picked up a broadsword and made straight for the constable Li Yun. But Zhu Fu quickly stopped him.

“Don’t hurt him! He’s my master and a very good man. Just go!”

“If I don’t kill that old donkey Squire Cao, how can my anger be appeased?!” Li Kui said. As he spoke, he ran after the old squire, caught up to him, and finished him off with one thrust of the broadsword. Next to go was Li Gui’s wife, who was not fast enough to get away twice. But Li Kui didn’t stop there. His blood was up now, and he started hacking and thrusting away at the hunters and militiamen, killing them all. As for the onlookers and the workhands, they all scattered, wishing the whole time that they had two extra legs so they could run faster.

As the spectators ran, Li Kui chased after them, looking to run up the body count again. But Zhu Gui stopped him. “It has nothing to do with the spectators! Stop hurting people!”

Only now did Li Kui stop. He took some clothes from a poor militiaman who had no more use for such things, got dressed, and headed down a backroad with the Zhu brothers. They had not gone far, however, when Zhu Fu said, “Crap, I’ve ruined my master. When he comes to, how can he go back to see the magistrate? He would surely come after us. You two go on ahead. I’ll wait here a bit for him. He saved me once and is an honest, loyal man. When he catches up, I’ll convince him to join us on Liangshan. That would be my kindness to him, so that he won’t have to suffer punishment by the magistrate.”

“You’re right, brother,” Zhu Gui said. “I’ll go on first with your family. I’ll leave Li Kui here to wait with you. That Li Yun didn’t ingest a lot of the drug, so he should be awake within two hours. If he doesn’t come soon, don’t sit around too long waiting for him.”

So Zhu Gui headed off, while Li Kui and Zhu Fu waited by the side of the road. And sure enough, within two hours, they saw Li Yun running toward them with broadsword in hand, shouting, “Bandits! Stop!”

Seeing him charging with a full head of steam, Li Kui raised his own broadsword and went forth to fight Li Yun. After just a few bouts though, Zhu Fu separated them with his own broadsword, shouting, “Stop fighting! Listen to what I have to say!”

As the two fighters broke up, Zhu Fu said to Li Yun, “Master, please hear me. You bestowed undeserved affection on me and taught me how to fight. It’s not that I am ungrateful. It’s just that my brother Zhu Gui is now a chieftain on Liangshan, and Song Jiang ordered him to come look after Brother Li. If you arrested Brother Li, how can my brother go back to see Song Jiang? That’s why we had to resort to such deceit. Earlier, Brother Li wanted to kill you, but I won’t let him, and he only killed the militiamen. We were going to flee far away, but then I figured that you had no recourse and would no doubt come after us. Because of your kindness to me, I decided to wait here for you. Master, you’re a smart guy. How can you not understand the situation? You’ve lost so many men, and Li Kui got away. How can you go back to the magistrate? If you do, you would surely be punished, and you would have no one to save you. Why don’t you come with us to Liangshan and join up with Song Jiang. What do you think?”

Li Yun thought about it for a good while and then mumbled, “Brother, I just worry that they won’t accept me on Liangshan.”

But Zhu Fu laughed and said, “Master, have you not heard of the Timely Rain’s great name? How he welcomes talented men and loves to meet the heroes of the land?”

When he heard that, Li Yun let out a long sigh and said, “Right now, I have nowhere to turn. Good thing I don’t have any family, so I don’t have to worry about them being arrested. Fine, I’ll go with you guys.”

“Brother, why didn’t you say so earlier?!” Li Kui rejoiced. So he and Li Yun bowed to each other, letting bygones be bygones. The three men then caught up to Zhu Gui and their families, and headed back to Liangshan together.

Along the way, they ran into a couple other chieftains who had been sent out to check on them, and those two chieftains then turned back and went on ahead to inform the bandit stronghold of what had transpired. The next day, the whole group arrived at Liangshan. Zhu Gui introduced Li Yun and Zhu Fu to everyone.

Li Kui then bowed to Song Jiang, who gave him back his two axes. Li Kui now recounted how his mother had been devoured by tigers, how he killed said tigers, and also how he encountered a doppelganger. And everyone’s reaction to all this was to ... laugh raucously. I guess the whole doppelganger thing was just so hilarious that it made everyone forget that oh yeah, Li Kui just lost his mother to a most gruesome fate.

“You killed four ferocious tigers, and now our stronghold has added two more live tigers,” Chao Gai and Song Jiang said to Li Kui as they ... laughed. They then threw a giant party and everyone celebrated the arrival of two new chieftains, who were given spots just ahead of Bai (2) Sheng (4), the Daylight Rat, who just keeps getting bumped farther and farther to the back of the hall.

While everyone drank and ... laughed and Li Kui coped with what should probably be crippling mental scars of having seen his mom turned into tiger chow, the strategist Wu Yong laid out some expansion plans.

While Zhu Gui went back to run his tavern, Wu Yong suggested that they build three more taverns around the marsh so as to expand their reconnaissance and recruitment operation. He also suggested building three additional large passes in front of the mountain that were to be patrolled day and night. There were also plans for building new waterways and roads. He put various chieftains in charge of things like storehouses, building quarters, constructing warships, and such. They even made military

seals for all the chieftains -- see this is why they needed to abduct, I mean recruit, an engraver. Oh, and at the very bottom of the new duty roster was Song Jiang's little brother Song Qing, who was put in charge of ... preparing banquets, which I think is the Water Margin equivalent of the coach's award -- a pity assignment given to the guy who was made a chieftain for no reason other than the fact that he's the little brother of one of our top leaders. With all those plans put in motion, the Liangshan bandits proceeded to spend their days training and preparing in case the government decided to attack.

Then, one day, Song Jiang, Chao Gai, and Wu Yong were chatting with some other chieftains, and they started wondering about Gongsun Sheng, the Daoist priest who went home to check on his mom and visit his master. He said he was going to be back after about three months, but it's well past that and he still had not returned or sent any messages. They were worried that he might've had a change of heart and decided to not come back, so they asked Dai Zong, the Magic Traveler, to go drop in on him and see what's up.

Dai Zong agreed to go. The next morning, he disguised himself as a low-level army officer, strapped four charms to his legs, and took off for Jizhou (4,1) Prefecture. By the way, this is a different Jizhou than the one that Song Jiang was from. This one is located around the area of present-day Tianjin (1,1), which lies well to the northeast of the other Jizhou.

Anyway, after about three days, Dai Zong was passing through Yishui (2,3) County, where Li Kui had just made a mess of things. There, he overheard the townsfolk chattering, saying, "A few days ago that Black Whirlwind got away and killed a bunch of people. Even Constable Li Yun (2) has disappeared, with no word of his whereabouts." To this, Dai Zong just chuckled.

Later that day, as Dai Zong was traveling, he saw a man approach from a distance. This guy was carrying a hollow iron spear. As he watched how fast Dai Zong was walking, this guy stopped and called out, "Magic Traveler!"

Hearing his nickname invoked, Dai Zong paused, turned, and took a closer look. This guy was tall, with a round head, big ears, straight nose, square jaw, thin eyebrows, and slender eyes.

“Hero,” Dai Zong said to the man. “We have never met. Why did you call my unworthy name?”

“So you really are the Magic Traveler!” the man said as he quickly dropped to his knees to pay respect to Dai Zong. Dai Zong hurriedly helped him up and asked for his name.

“My name is Yang (2) Lin (2). I’ve spent much of my time among outlaws, and on the jianghu scene they call me the Multi-colored Leopard. A few months ago, I met the priest Gongsun Sheng in a tavern, and we chatted over a bowl of wine. He mentioned that Chieftains Chao and Chieftain Song on Liangshan are recruiting men of talent and how honorable they were. He wrote a letter and told me to take it and go to Liangshan to join up. But I did not dare to be so bold as to go introduce myself, so Priest Gongsun said, ‘The chieftain Zhu Gui is running a tavern at Li Family Lane to recruit people into the gang. There’s also a chieftain in charge of reconnaissance. His name is Dai Zong and he can travel more than 250 miles a day.’ Just now, I saw how uncommonly fast you were walking, so I called out just to see if it’s you. Turns out it really is you. This chance meeting is a gift from heaven!”

Dai Zong then explained to Yang Lin that he was on his way to look for Gongsun Sheng, and Yang Lin enthusiastically volunteered to tag along, since he was familiar with the area. Dai Zong agreed, and he and Yang Lin took an oath of brotherhood on the spot. Dai Zong then put away his charms and the two walked at a leisurely pace until evening, when they found lodging at a village inn. They had a vegetarian dinner, since Dai Zong needed to abstain from meat and wine for his magic to work.

The next morning, they prepared to hit the road again, and Yang Lin asked, “Brother, if you use your magic, then how can I keep up with you?”

Dai Zong smiled and said, “I can take someone with me when I’m traveling with magic. I’ll tie two charms to your legs, and when I use my spell, you would be able to walk as fast as me, and you can go or stop at will. Otherwise, how can you keep up with me?”

“I’m but a mere mortal. How can I keep up with you?” Yang Lin said.

“It’s no problem. My magic can work on anyone. When I cast my spell, we will travel at the same pace. As long as I stick to a vegetarian diet, it’ll be fine.”

Well, that sure sounds ... convenient. Maybe even too convenient. It’s almost like somebody was trying to set up something later. But we’ll see.

Anyway, Dai Zong now tied two charms to Yang Lin’s legs and strapped two charms on his own legs. He then muttered an incantation and blew on the charms, and sure enough, the two men took off, light as a feather, with Dai Zong controlling the pace. As they walked, they chatted about gossip from the jianghu scene. Even though it felt like they were walking leisurely, in reality, they were covering an amazing distance.

Around noon, they approached a location surrounded by tall peaks with only one narrow road through them. Yang Lin recognized this place and told Dai Zong, “Brother, this is called Horse Water Valley because of its beautiful scenery. There’s usually a big group of bandits in that tall mountain up ahead. I don’t know if they’re still there.”

As the two of them walked closer to the foot of the mountain, they suddenly heard the banging of gongs and drums, followed by the appearance of about 200 bandits, blocking their way. At their head were two men, each wielding a long-handle broadsword and shouting, “Travelers, stop! Who the hell are you?! Where the hell are you going?! If you’re smart, then hurry up and make with the toll money, and we’ll spare your lives!”

Yang Lin chuckled and told Dai Zong, “Brother, watch me dispatch those idiots.”

He then hoisted his spear and charged forward. The two men noticed how fiercely he was coming at them. But when he got close, they recognized him.

“Hey, stop! Isn’t that brother Yang Lin?!” one of the bandit chieftains shouted.

By now, Yang Lin also recognized the man and they exchanged greetings. The bandit chieftain then introduced his comrade, while Yang Lin called Dai Zong over.

“The man who recognized me is named Deng (4) Fei (1),” Yang Lin said to Dai Zong. “Because he has red eyes, people call him the Fiery-Eyed Suan (1) Ni (2).” And by the way, a suan (1) ni (2) is a Chinese mythical creature that looks like a lion and was supposedly birthed by a dragon. For convenience, we’ll just call Deng Fei the Fiery-Eyed Lion from now on.

“This Deng Fei wields an iron chain and no one can get near him,” Yang Lin continued. “We used to collaborate a lot. But I haven’t seen him in 5 years. Who knew I would run into him here?!”

Deng Fei now asked Yang Lin, “Brother, who is this gentleman here? He must not be an ordinary man either.”

“This brother is one of the Liangshan heroes, Dai Zong the Magic Traveler.”

“Are you the Superintendent Dai who can travel 250 miles a day?” Deng Fei asked.

Dai Zong said yes, and Deng Fei and his comrade quickly greeted him and said, “We have long heard of your great name, but never expected to get to meet you here today!”

Dai Zong then asked about the other bandit chieftain, and Deng Fei said, “His name is Meng (4) Kang (1). He is adept at building ships large and small. When the authorities needed to transport flowers and rocks to the capital, they needed big ships. But the overseer scolded him too much, so he killed him, abandoned his family, and fled to seek refuge among outlaws. That happened a long time ago. Because he’s tall and has a fair complexion, not to mention a muscular physique, people gave him the nickname the Jade Flagpole.

Hmm. Let’s see: Uncommon appearance, cool nicknames, and no compunction about killing. Check, check, and check. It sounds like Dai Zong was about to recruit a couple more guys into the gang. But he wasn’t done meeting new heroes just yet. To see who else he’d meet, tune into the next episode of the

Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, we'll see if Dai Zong can actually find Gongsun Sheng.

So join us next time. Thanks for listening!