

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 66.

Last time, we met two new heroes: Yang Xiong and Shi Xiu. They had just become sworn brothers and Yang Xiong invited Shi Xiu to live with him, his wife, and his father-in-law. Yang Xiong's father-in-law, Mr. Pan, then partnered with Shi Xiu to open a butcher shop behind the house. Things seemed to be going well, but when Shi Xiu came home from buying pigs one day, he found the shop closed and all the equipment stored away. He thought that somebody, like oh say his brother's lascivious wife, must have been talking bad about him behind his back and that the family had decided to close the shop as a sign for him to move on. He figured he would leave voluntarily before being asked to leave, so he told Mr. Pan that he was going home.

But Mr. Pan figured out what was bothering Shi Xiu, and he laughed and said, "Please hold on. I understand your meaning. You were gone for two nights and then you came home today to find all the butcher shop equipment put away. You must think that we've decided to close the shop and that's why you want to leave. Look, even if we weren't doing good business and had to close the shop, we would still keep you here. To tell you the truth, my daughter was previously married to a magisterial clerk Wang, but unfortunately he passed away. Today is the second anniversary of his death, so we want to have some prayers said for him. That's why we've closed the shop for a couple days. Tomorrow, monks from the Grateful Retribution Monastery will be here to perform the service, and we'll have to ask you to manage things. I'm too old to stay up through the night. I thought I'd talk to you about it first."

Hearing this, Shi Xiu said, "Since you put it that way, I'll stay a while longer."

"Don't let your imagination run away with you in the future," Mr. Pan reassured him. "Just do what you should do according to your station."

And with that, they shared a few more cups of wine and some vegetarian dishes before calling it a day.

The next day, some lay brothers from the monastery arrived with scriptures to set up the service, which was going to last through the night. They installed idols, sacrificial implements, drums, gongs, bells, chimes, incense, flowers, lamps, and candles, while the kitchen prepared vegetarian dishes.

Yang Xiong came home late in the afternoon and told Shi Xiu, "Brother, I'm on duty tonight at the prison and cannot be here. So you'll have to manage things here."

"Brother, don't worry," Shi Xiu said. "I'll handle things here for you."

After Yang Xiong left, Shi Xiu busied himself supervising things out front. Before long, a young, handsome, neatly dressed monk came in and offered a deep bow. Shi Xiu returned his greeting and offered him a seat. Behind him came a lay brother carrying two boxes.

"Mr. Pan, there's a monk here to see you," Shi Xiu called out to the back of the house. Soon, Mr. Pan came out, and that monk greeted him, saying, "Godfather, why haven't we seen you in our monastery?"

"Oh, I've been too busy since we opened this shop," Mr. Pan said.

"I have no treasures to offer you for this occasion," the monk said. "I just brought some noodles and a few packs of winter dates."

"Oh my! What is this?!" Mr. Pan said. "How can we let you spend money?"

After the usual courtesies, Mr. Pan asked Shi Xiu to store the presents, and then they treated the monk to tea in the courtyard outside the house.

Meanwhile, Yang Xiong's wife, Pan Qiaoyun (3,2), came down from upstairs. Because she had remarried, she was wearing only light mourning attire and makeup. Don't want to overdo it in the name of your former husband when you have a current husband, you know. She asked Shi Xiu who had brought them presents, and he told her that it was a monk who called Mr. Pan godfather.

"Oh, that must be Pei (2) Ruhai (2,3)," she said with a smile. "He's a very honest monk. He was the son of a tailor before he became a monk at the Grateful Retribution Monastery. His superior at the monastery was my father's apprentice, so Pei Ruhai came to call my dad godfather. He's two years older

than me, so I call him my reverend brother. His monastic name is Master of the Sea. Listen to him recite scripture tonight. He's got a sweet voice."

"Ah, I see," Shi Xiu said, and in his mind, a seed of suspicion took hold.

As Pan Qiaoyun hurried downstairs to greet the monk, Shi Xiu followed with his hands behind his back, and he peeked out from behind the door curtain. He saw Pei Ruhai rise to his feet when Pan Qiaoyun approached, put his hands together, and made a deep bow.

"What is all this stuff? How could we ask you to spend money for us?" she said.

"Good sister, it's just some meager presents, nothing valuable," he replied.

"How can you say that, reverend brother? We can't accept gifts from a monk."

"We have built a new hall for the spirits of the departed," Pei Ruhai said. "We wish you would honor us with a visit to see it, but the warden might object."

"Oh my husband won't mind. And when my mother passed away, I did promise to have prayers said for women who died in childbirth. I've been meaning to go to your monastery and trouble you to do that."

"Such prayers are my duty, so it's no trouble at all. Whatever you need, just tell me, and I'll do it."

"Then reverend brother, please read a few more scriptures for my mother."

Just then, the maid brought out tea. Pan Qiaoyun picked up a cup, wiped its rim with her handkerchief, and offered the cup to the monk with both hands. As he received the cup, that monk's eyes were fixed on her, and she responded with a smile.

Uh huh.

Watching this from behind the door curtain, Shi Xiu thought to himself, "As the saying goes, 'Believe not that in straight forwardness there is only honesty. Rather, beware that evil lurks behind the guise of virtue.' That woman has teased me on a few occasions, but I just kept treating her like my own

sister-in-law. Turns out she's not a good person. Well, you better hope I don't catch you. You think I won't act on Yang Xiong's behalf?"

Shi Xiu now lifted up the curtain and walked outside. Seeing him, the monk Pei Ruhai put down his tea cup and invited him to sit down. Pan Qiaoyun chimed in and said, "This is my husband's new sworn brother."

That made the monk wary, and he asked Shi Xiu for his name. Shi Xiu introduced himself, adding, "Because I love to meddle and intervene on behalf of others, people call me Daredevil. I am an oaf and do not know proper courtesies. I hope you don't mind."

"Oh not at all, not at all," Pei Ruhai replied. "I'll go bring the other monks here for the service now."

As Pei Ruhai headed for the door, Pan Qiaoyun said, "Reverend brother, come back soon."

"I'll be back momentarily," he replied.

After she saw the monk off, Pan Qiaoyun went back inside. Shi Xiu, meanwhile, just stood by the front door, looking at the ground, thinking.

While Shi Xiu was thinking, the author of the novel decided to take a timeout and dedicate a couple paragraphs to enlighten his readers on an important matter -- the reason why monks are the horniest toads in the world. Why? Well, as the author explains it, it's because monks don't have to worry about their three meals a day and they have nothing to do or to occupy their thoughts in between those meals, except for one thing. Let me just quote the author here:

"Let's take a rich man, for instance. Even though he lacks for nothing, think about how many matters require his attention during the day. And at night he's always thinking about money and won't be going to bed until midnight. Even if he shares his bed with a cute wife or a beautiful concubine, how could he be in the mood? And as for the commoner, he's laboring all day. He gets up at 5 a.m. and goes to bed at midnight. And before he goes to bed, he must first reach into his rice jar to see if there's any rice left,

and he has to worry about money for the next day. So even if his wife is a bit of a looker, he's not going to be in the mood. But monks. They have nothing to occupy their thoughts except this matter. That's why the ancients say that when it comes to this, nobody can stack up to monks. That's why the famous scholar Su (1) Dongpo (1,1) said, 'If you aren't bald, you aren't malicious. If you aren't malicious, you aren't bald. If you become bald, you become malicious. And if you become malicious, you become bald.' And the monks themselves have a four-line saying, too. It goes like this: 'By one character, call me monk. By two characters, call me religious man. By three characters, call me the Master of Pleasure. By four characters, call me a sex-starved love machine.'

Ok, so I had to take a little liberty with some of the translation there, but you get the idea. Anyway, back to our story. After thinking for a while out front, Shi Xiu got back to overseeing the setup. Soon, lay brothers came to light incense, followed momentarily by Pei Ruhai and a gaggle of other monks. Mr. Pan and Shi Xiu greeted them and offered them tea. After that, drums and gongs were beaten, and songs were sung. Pei Ruhai and another young monk started chanting scripture while they rang a bell, burned papers with prayers written on them, and offered sacrificial food to the Defenders of Heaven and the Chief Watcher of the Celestial Altar, asking that the spirit of the departed clerk Wang be allowed to enter heaven soon.

Then, Yang Xiong's wife, Pan Qiaoyun, appeared, holding a small incense burner and presenting incense to the idol of the Buddha. Seeing her energized Pei Ruhai, who kept ringing his bell and chanting scripture. Meanwhile, the whole gaggle of monks couldn't help but notice this luscious woman piously undulating, a sight that sent them all reeling and staggering.

Seeing this behavior while standing off to the side, Shi Xiu couldn't help but chuckle and think to himself, "What kind of karma are they building?"

Soon, the first round of services was concluded, and all the monks were invited to the back for food. Trailing behind the rest of the monks, Pei Ruhai turned and looked back and smiled at Pan Qiaoyun, and she flashed him a smile as well even as she covered her mouth. And the two exchanged many a suggestive glance. None of this escaped Shi Xiu's notice, and he was 50 percent annoyed by now.

After the monks finished their meal and drank a few cups of weak wine, Mr. Pan gave them each some money for their work. The monks then went to take a quick stroll to help with digestion before they returned to continue the service. By now, Shi Xiu was in a real mood, so he just said he had a stomachache and went to bed in a back room.

While he was gone, Pan Qiaoyun started getting bolder. Now, she personally went to bring tea and fruits and such to the monks, which was considered bad form for a proper woman, but she didn't care who saw her. Meanwhile, Pei Ruhai was leading the monks in their prayers. By the time midnight rolled around, all the other monks were starting to fade, but Pei Ruhai alone was getting more energetic by the minute and his chants were even louder than before.

Watching him from behind a curtain, Pan Qiaoyun instructed her maid to invite him over for a word. Pei Ruhai, of course, rushed over right away, and Pan Qiaoyun took him by the sleeve and said, "Reverend brother, when you come back tomorrow to collect payment, don't forget to talk to my father about me going to your monastery for prayers."

"Of course. I will just say that it's best to fulfill the promise you had made promptly," Pei Ruhai said. He then added, "That brother-in-law of yours looks really fearsome."

"Never you mind him. He's not blood relations anyway."

"Ah, then I feel better. I thought he was your husband's blood brother."

The two of them traded a few more words and giggles, and then Pei Ruhai went back to the service. Unbeknownst to them, though, Shi Xiu was lying in bed in the next room, and he heard everything.

When 5 a.m. rolled around, the service finally concluded, the monks took their leave, and Pan Qiaoyun went upstairs to sleep. Back downstairs, lying in his bed, Shi Xiu was still wide awake, with a frown on his face.

“My brother is such a hero. How did he end up with such a lascivious harlot?!” he thought to himself. After tossing and turning some more, he finally got up and went back to the butcher shop behind the house to get some sleep.

Later that day, Yang Xiong returned from his night shift at the jail. Shi Xiu didn't say anything to him. After he ate, Yang Xiong headed out again, and Pei Ruhai came back, again tidily dressed. When Pan Qiaoyun heard him, she rushed downstairs to welcome him and invited him to come in and sit down for tea.

“Reverend brother, thank you so much for your hard work last night,” she said. “We haven't even given you the money for your service yet.”

“No it's no big deal,” he replied. “I came by to talk to you about the prayers we discussed last night. If you want to fulfill your promise to have prayers said for women who died in childbirth, then just write out what you want me to say, and I'll include it when I am chanting scripture at the monastery.”

Pan Qiaoyun said that sounds great, and had her maid invite her father out to discuss the matter.

“I want to have prayers said for women who died in childbirth so as to fulfill the promise I made on behalf of my mother,” she told Mr. Pan. “Reverend brother said that he can take care of it tomorrow while performing services at the monastery. How about we have him go back first, and then you and I can go to the monastery after breakfast tomorrow. As long as we attend the service, we would have done our duty and fulfilled my promise.”

“That sounds ok, but we might be very busy in the butcher shop tomorrow,” Mr. Pan said. “How can I leave?”

“Brother Shi Xiu can take care of it,” she said.

Mr. Pan consented, so Pan Qiaoyun gave the monk some money for the service last night and told him, “Reverend brother, please don’t mind how meager this sum is. I hope you will treat us to some vegetarian noodles tomorrow.”

“I shall await you with incense,” Pei Ruhai said, and then he took his leave, and Pan Qiaoyun went all the way to outside the front door to see him off. Shi Xiu, meanwhile, missed this little exchange because he was asleep. He got up later and busied himself with butchering the pigs he had bought the day before.

That evening, Yang Xiong came home. Pan Qiaoyun served him dinner and helped him wash up. And then she had her dad talk to Yang Xiong about the trip they had planned for the next day.

“When my wife died, my daughter made a promise to have prayers said for women who died in childbirth at the Grateful Retribution Monastery,” Mr. Pan said. “So tomorrow she and I will go there and attend service before coming home. I just wanted you to know.”

“Wife, you could’ve told me that yourself,” Yang Xiong said.

“I was afraid you won’t like it, so I didn’t dare to bring it up with you,” Pan Qiaoyun answered.

But Yang Xiong didn’t mind, so the trip was on, and the rest of the night passed uneventfully.

The next morning, Yang Xiong got up at 5 a.m. and went off to work again. Shi Xiu then got up and busied himself with the butcher shop. Then, Pan Qiaoyun got up and got herself all dolled up. She then packed an incense box, bought some candles and sacrificial paper, and hired a sedan chair. Shi Xiu was too busy to pay any attention to what she was doing.

After breakfast, around 9 a.m., both Mr. Pan and the maid also got dressed up, and Mr. Pan went to tell Shi Xiu, "I have to trouble you to watch over the business today. My daughter and I are going to attend a prayer service."

"I've got it covered," Shi Xiu said with a smile. "Sir, you just take care of sister-in-law, burn plenty of good incense, and come home soon."

But even as he said that, Shi Xiu was now 80 percent sure what was going on, though he didn't say anything about that. Pan Qiaoyun then got into the sedan chair, and Mr. Pan and the maid accompanied her to the monastery, where a certain monk was eagerly awaiting their arrival.

As it turns out, that Pei Ruhai had been craving this woman for a couple years. In fact, she was the reason he ingratiated himself to Mr. Pan. But there was just one little problem: She had been remarried to Yang Xiong, so Pei Ruhai had no opportunity to make his move. He had been trading flirty glances with Pan Qiaoyun for a while now, but it wasn't until two nights ago that he realized she was into him as much as he was into her. So all day today, he had been sharpening his spear and preparing his sword, as the novel put it. And when the appointed hour came, he was waiting for them by the front gate in high spirits. When he saw their sedan chair approach, he was ecstatic.

"We are imposing on you," Mr. Pan said as he greeted the monk.

"Thank you for all your trouble, reverend brother," Pan Qiaoyun chimed in as she stepped out of her sedan chair.

"Oh not at all. Not at all!" Pei Ruhai replied. "The other monks and I have been reciting scripture in our Hall of Departed Spirits since 5 a.m. and haven't stopped. We've just been waiting for you, good sister. We've sure built a lot of good karma."

As he spoke, Pei Ruhai led his guests into the hall, where he had already laid out flowers, fruits, incense, and candles. There were about a dozen monks there reading scripture. Pan Qiaoyun greeted them and paid homage to what was called the Three Treasures, namely the Buddha, his teachings, and

their propagators, or in other words, the monks. Pei Ruhai then led her to the front of the shrine to the Bodhisattva, where she offered her prayers and burned some sacrificial money. Then, he sent the monks off to have their meal, which was paid for by Pan Qiaoyun.

Next, Pei Ruhai invited Mr. Pan and his daughter to his quarters for tea. He brought them deep into the monks' quarters, where he had already prepared everything.

"Brothers, please bring the tea," he called out. And two lay brothers immediately came out with a red platter holding white jade tea vessels and some premium-grade tea.

After they drank the tea, he invited them to a smaller inner chamber that contained a gleaming black lacquer table, with several paintings by famous artists hanging on the walls. On a small stand sat a pot of fragrant incense. Mr. Pan and his daughter sat on one end of the table, Pei Ruhai sat down at the other end, and Pan Qiaoyun's maid stood to one side.

"What an ideal place for a man who has renounced the world," Pan Qiaoyun said. "So tranquil."

"Sister, stop making fun of me," Pei Ruhai replied. "How can it compare to your home?"

Mr. Pan now suggested it was time to go home, but Pei Ruhai quickly stopped them. "It's so rare to have you here, godfather," he said. "And you're not outsiders. Good sister is paying for the vegetarian meal today, so why not stay for some noodles? Brothers, hurry up and bring the food."

At that summon, the lay brothers were already coming in with two platters of exotic fruits and vegetables, along with a variety of vegetarian dishes that covered the table."

"Reverend brother, you didn't have to go to all this trouble," Pan Qiaoyun said.

"Oh it's nothing," Pei Ruhai replied with a smile. "Just a meager token of my respect."

The attendants now poured out some wine, and Pei Ruhai encouraged Mr. Pan to try some. The old man took a sip and said, "What great wine! It's really strong!"

"I got the recipe from a benefactor a while back and made a big batch," Pei Ruhai told him.

"Tomorrow I'll send along a few bottles for you."

“Oh that’s too much,” the old man said.

Pei Ruhai now turned to Pan Qiaoyun and told her, “I don’t have anything nice to give you, sister, so please just have a cup or two.”

The attendants now took turns pouring wine for everyone, and even the maid had a few cups. Pan Qiaoyun said she’s had enough, but Pei Ruhai would not hear of it and kept encouraging her to drink another cup.

Mr. Pan then called in the two sedan chair carriers and gave them each a cup.

“Godfather, don’t worry about them,” Pei Ruhai now told him. “I’ve already taken care of everything. My attendants have set up a place for them outside with wine and food. You just rest easy and enjoy a few cups.”

A few more cups later, Mr. Pan was starting to get tipsy, and Pei Ruhai quickly told his attendants to help the old man to a quiet room so he could sleep off the wine.

So yeah, this was no coincidence. Pei Ruhai had prepared this extra strong wine just for this occasion, and everything was going according to plan. Now, it was just him, Pan Qiaoyun, and the maid. He encouraged Pan Qiaoyun to keep drinking, and she did not refuse, egged on by her own lust and the buzz that she was working on. After three more cups, the wine was starting to go to her head.

“Reverend brother, why do you keep encouraging me to drink?” she slurred.

“To show my esteem for you,” he replied with a big smile on his face.

“But I can’t drink anymore.”

“In that case, would you like to come to my room to see a Buddha tooth?”

And this Buddha tooth he’s referring to is some fossilized bones that people at the time thought were teeth of the Buddha, so kind of like holy relics.

“Yes, that’s exactly what I want to see,” Pan Qiaoyun told him.

So Pei Ruhai led her upstairs to his bedroom, and she was delighted at how neatly arranged it was.

“What a nice bedroom, so neat and clean,” she said.

“All it’s missing is a wife,” he said with a laugh.

“Well, why don’t you get one then,” she said, also with a laugh.

“Where could I find such a patroness?”

“Hey, you promised to show me your Buddha tooth.”

“Send your maid downstairs, and I’ll show it to you.”

So Pan Qiaoyun told her maid to go downstairs and check on Mr. Pan. Once the maid left, Pei Ruhai locked the door to his bedroom.

“Hey, why are you locking me in?” she asked knowingly.

Pei Ruhai now pulled her into his arms and said, “I love and admire you! I’ve been yearning for you for two years. Today you are here. Please oblige me on this rare occasion!”

Pan Qiaoyun, though, was playing hard to get. “My husband is not a man to be trifled with,” she said. “If he finds out you’re trying to get fresh with me, he’s not going to show you mercy.”

Falling to his knees, Pei Ruhai pleaded, “Please take pity on me!”

She raised her hand as if threatening to smack him and said, “Stop pestering me, or I’ll hit you.”

But Pei Ruhai was grinning from ear to ear and said, “You can hit me to your heart’s content, just don’t hurt your hand.”

“I’m not actually going to hit you,” she said as she helped him to his feet.

And the next thing you know, clothes were flying off and the two of them were rolling around in his bed.

After the clouds had exhausted their rain, the two were lying in bed, making pillow talk.

“Since you have given your heart to me, I can die without regret,” he said while holding her in his arms. “But even though you obliged me today, it’s only a momentary pleasure, and we cannot be together in the long run. That’s gonna kill me for sure!”

“Oh don’t worry,” she said. “I’ve already thought of a plan.”

To see what her plan is, tune into the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, we find out what else would kill Pei Ruhai for sure. So join us next time. Thanks for listening.