

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 75.

Last time, the constable Lei Heng got into legal trouble when he killed his boss's lover in a fit of anger because she was roughing up his mother. Lei Heng was on his way to the prefectural office to receive his death sentence, but his escort, who just so happened to be his best bud Zhu Tong, let him go. I mean, who made that assignment, right? While Lei Heng ran off to Liangshan to seek refuge with the bandits, Zhu Tong went back to the magistrate and said, oops, my bad.

The magistrate was very fond of Zhu Tong and wanted to go easy on him, but the dead woman's father insisted that Zhu Tong had intentionally let Lei Heng escape -- which was, you know, true -- and that he must be punished. So the magistrate had no choice but to send Zhu Tong to the prefectural office for sentencing. Zhu Tong was a man of some means, so his family purchased the customary lubricant for the wheels of justice, and when he got to the prefectural office, he was given a caning of 20 strokes and exiled to the penal colony in Cangzhou (1,1). And by the way, that would be the same Cangzhou penal colony that Lin Chong the Panther Head was exiled to, so we're heading back to familiar territory.

So Zhu Tong put on his cangue and followed his two escorts to Cangzhou. His family gave him clothing and money and tipped the guards. The journey was uneventful, and soon Zhu Tong was standing in front of the prefect of Cangzhou.

The prefect took one look at Zhu Tong and immediately liked him for his uncommon appearance, what with the date-like red face and a beautiful beard that hung down past his chest. The prefect told his men that this prisoner would stay here at the prefectural office instead of being sent to the penal colony. He then finished the paperwork and sent the escorts back.

So Zhu Tong settled into his new life as an attendant for the prefect. Each day, he stood outside the main hall and waited for the prefect's orders. No stranger to the way these things worked, he also made

sure that all the officials and jailers in the building got a little silver from him. That, combined with his naturally friendly disposition, quickly endeared him to everyone at the prefectural office.

One day, the prefect called Zhu Tong into the hall and asked him, "Why did you release Lei Heng and how did you end up here?"

"Your servant would never dare to release Lei Heng on purpose," Zhu Tong replied. "I just got careless for a moment and allowed him to escape."

"But why did you receive such a harsh sentence?"

"The plaintiff was very insistent that I released the prisoner on purpose, so I got a harsh sentence."

The prefect then asked about the backstory of why Lei Heng had killed the girl, and Zhu Tong recounted what happened.

"Ah, you must have released him out of honor because he was so filial, right?" the prefect said.

"I would never dare to deceive the authorities," Zhu Tong answered.

While they were talking, a little boy of about 4 ran out from behind a screen. This cute lad was the prefect's son, and the prefect absolutely adored him. When the boy saw Zhu Tong, he ran over to him and held out his arms, asking Zhu Tong to pick him up. Zhu Tong obliged him, and the boy then grabbed his long beard and said, "I want this Beardo to carry me."

"My child, let go of him at once and stop your horseplay," the prefect said.

"No! I want Beardo to carry me and take me outside to play!"

Zhu Tong offered to take the boy for a quick stroll, and the prefect consented. So Zhu Tong carried the little boy outside the prefectural compound, bought him some sweets and such, took a spin around the block, and brought him back inside.

"So where did you go, my child?" the prefect asked his son.

"Beardo took me out on the streets for some sightseeing, and he bought me some sweets."

"Where did you get money to buy stuff for my son?" the prefect asked Zhu Tong.

“Oh it’s nothing. Just a small token of my esteem,” Zhu Tong said.

The prefect now instructed his maid to bring some wine for Zhu Tong as a reward. The serving girl brought over a silver pitcher and platter and poured him three large goblets in a row.

“From now on, if my son wants you to play with him, you may take him out,” the prefect said.

“I would never dare to disobey your command, benefactor,” Zhu Tong replied. So from that day forth, Zhu Tong accompanied the prefect’s son out on the streets every day. Zhu Tong had plenty of money, and since his new boss liked it, he spared no expenses on the young boy.

In this way, half a month soon passed, and it was the 15th day of the seventh month, which was a holiday -- the Festival for Driving Out Devils. To celebrate, people placed floating lanterns on the river and performed good deeds.

That night, the nursemaid told Zhu Tong, “Constable, the young master wants to go see the river lanterns tonight. Our lady said you can take him to go have a look.”

Zhu Tong snapped to. The prefect’s son came out, dressed in a green silk robe and wearing short strings of beads in his hair, which was tied up in two tufts like horns. Zhu Tong put the boy on his shoulders, left the prefectural compound, and headed to the river. It was about 7 p.m., and there were a lot of people out and about, seeing the sights, burning incense, and having a good ol’ time.

Zhu Tong carried the prefect’s son over to the grounds of the temple, where people were accruing some good karma by releasing live fish into a special pool. The boy got down, climbed onto a railing overlooking the river, and laughed as he watched the lanterns float by.

Just then, Zhu Tong felt a tug on his sleeve and heard someone say, “Brother, can we step aside for a word?”

He turned and was stunned. Standing before him was none other than his friend Lei Heng.

Regaining his composure, Zhu Tong called out to the prefect's son, "Young master, c'mon down and have a seat right here. I'm going to go buy some sweets for you. Don't go anywhere."

"Ok, come back quick. I want to go on the bridge to look at lanterns," the boy said.

"I'll be right back," Zhu Tong told him, and then he turned around and asked Lei Heng what he was doing there.

Lei Heng led him to a quiet corner, bowed, and said, "After you saved my life, my mother and I had nowhere to go except Liangshan, so we joined up with brother Song Jiang. I told him what you did for me, and Brother Song still thinks about how you had once helped him escape. Brother Chao Gai and the other chieftains all feel a debt of gratitude as well. So they sent me and Professor Wu Yong here to see how you're doing."

"Where is Professor Wu?" Zhu Tong asked.

Right on cue, Wu Yong flashed out from behind him, bowed, and said, "Here I am."

Zhu Tong quickly returned the greeting, and Wu Yong said, "Our chieftains really admire you, so they sent me and Constable Lei to come invite you to join us in the name of honor. We've been here for many days but did not dare to meet with you until tonight. Please come with us to our stronghold, so that we may fulfill Brother Chao and Brother Song's wish."

Zhu Tong remained silent for a stretch, and then he said, "Professor, you're mistaken. Please don't mention this again. It would not be good if someone else heard it. Brother Lei Heng committed a capital offense, and I let him go out of honor. He had no choice but to go to Liangshan, and because of him, I have been exiled here. If heaven should take pity on me, then in a year or two I might get to go home. Then, I'll return to being a law-abiding citizen. How could I be willing to turn brigand? Please go back. Don't endanger yourselves here."

But Lei Heng said, "Brother, here you are nothing but someone else's servant. It's not fit for a real man. Why don't you come with me. Brother Chao and Brother Song are waiting for you. Don't delay and ruin yourself."

"Brother, what kind of suggestion is that?" Zhu Tong disagreed. "I let you go for the sake of your mother, and yet now you have come back to lure me into dishonor!"

Seeing Zhu Tong's reluctance, Wu Yong interceded and said, "Since Constable Zhu doesn't want to go, then we shall take our leave."

"Please relay my respects to the chieftains," Zhu Tong said as he walked back over to the bridge.

Having put an end to that recruitment pitch, Zhu Tong now returned to his duty, but there was just one problem. The prefect's son was nowhere in sight.

Ah crap. I guess it was kind of grossly negligent to tell a 4-year-old to handle himself in a crowd while you went off to chat with your bandit buddies.

Zhu Tong started looking high and low, but where the heck would you even start looking for a little boy in this sea of people?

"Brother, stop," Lei Heng said as he grabbed hold of Zhu Tong. "I'm guessing it must be our companion. When he heard that you refused to come with us, he must have taken the prefect's son. Let's go look for them together."

"Brother, don't play!" Zhu Tong said. "That boy is dearer to the prefect than life itself, and the prefect has entrusted his son to me!"

"Brother, just come with me," Lei Heng said.

So Zhu Tong followed Lei Heng and Wu Yong as they left the temple grounds and walked out of the city. Zhu Tong was getting worried now.

"Where did your companion take the boy?" he asked.

“Brother, just keep walking,” Lei Heng said. “When we get to our lodging, we’ll return the boy to you.”

“If we’re late, the prefect will not be pleased,” Zhu Tong fretted.

Wu Yong chimed in, “That companion of ours doesn’t have any good sense. I bet he took the boy back to our lodging.”

“What is your companion’s name?” Zhu Tong asked.

Lei Heng replied, “I don’t know him either. I just heard that his name is Li Kui the Black Whirlwind.”

WAIT! WHAT?!!!

“The Li Kui who massacred people in Jiangzhou Prefecture?!” Zhu Tong asked in a panic.

“Yeah, that’s the one,” Wu Yong answered.

Zhu Tong stamped his foot and let out a long string of laments as he hurried forward. When they were about six or seven miles outside the city, they suddenly spotted a figure up ahead.

“Here I am,” Li Kui the Black Whirlwind shouted.

Zhu Tong stomped over to him and asked where the boy was. Li Kui, though, just bowed and said, “Greetings, Brother Zhu. I have the prefect’s son.”

“Then bring him out and return him to me!”

“Look, I have his hair beads right here on my head,” Li Kui said as he pointed to his own hair.

“Where is he?”

“I drugged him and carried him out of the city. He’s sleeping in the woods over there. You can go see for yourself.”

Zhu Tong rushed into the woods and saw the boy lying on the ground. He ran over to pick up the lad, but in the pale moonlight, he saw a shocking sight. The poor boy’s head had been split in two.

Zhu Tong was furious and stomped out of the woods, but the other three men had vanished. He looked all around and spotted Li Kui some distance away, clanging his twin battle axes and shouting, "C'mon, let's fight for 30 bouts."

Zhu Tong was irate. He tucked in his robe and stomped toward Li Kui. Li Kui, however, turned and ran. Zhu Tong gave chase, but Li Kui was used to traversing mountains and hills, so Zhu Tong was having a hard time keeping up. Before long, he was huffing and puffing. Meanwhile, Li Kui kept shouting, "C'mon, c'mon. Let's fight it out." Zhu Tong wished he could swallow Li Kui in one gulp, but he just couldn't catch the guy. In fact, Li Kui was just toying with him, slowing down when Zhu Tong was slowing down, and then picking up the pace when Zhu Tong ran faster, but always keeping the same distance between them.

By now, night was starting to give way to day, and Li Kui suddenly ran into a large manor.

"That rogue is in there. I'm going to have it out with him!" Zhu Tong thought to himself. He ran into the parlor of the manor and saw that it was lined with racks of weapons.

"Hmm. This must be the home of some high official," Zhu Tong thought. So he stopped and called out, "Is anyone here?!"

A second later, a man appeared from behind the screen. He was handsome and carried himself with a graceful air.

"Who are you?" the man asked.

Zhu Tong gestured in greeting and said, "I am Zhu Tong, the former warden of Yuncheng County. I committed an offense and was exiled here. Last night, I went out with the prefect's son to see the river lanterns, but Li Kui the Black Whirlwind killed the boy and is hiding in your residence. Please help me arrest him."

"Ah, you must be the Lord of the Beautiful Beard. Please, have a seat," the man said.

"May I be so bold as to ask for your honorable name?" Zhu Tong inquired.

“I am Chai (2) Jin (4), the Little Whirlwind,” the man replied.

“I have long heard of your name! I never expected to meet you today!” Zhu Tong exclaimed as he bowed.

So in case you forgot, Chai Jin was a nobleman who was widely known on the jianghu scene. He has sheltered more than a few characters who were on the run from the law, and was a friend to many on Liangshan.

“And I have long heard of the Lord of the Beautiful Beard,” Chai Jin said to Zhu Tong. “Please come talk in my private quarters.”

So Zhu Tong followed Chai Jin to the back and asked, “How could that Black Whirlwind dare to hide in your residence?”

“Please allow me to explain,” Chai Jin said. “I love meeting heroes from the jianghu scene. Because my ancestor abdicated the throne to the founding emperor of the Song Dynasty, my family was granted an Iron Pledge, a decree of immunity. So anyone who’s hiding from the law can take shelter here, and the authorities would not dare to come search my place. I have a close friend, and he’s also an old acquaintance of yours and is now a chieftain on Liangshan, Song Jiang the Timely Rain. Recently, he sent me a secret letter and ordered Professor Wu, Lei Heng, and Black Whirlwind to stay at my manor. They are to invite you to Liangshan so you may join them in the name of honor. Because you refused their invitation, they told Li Kui to kill the boy so that you would have no choice but to go with them.”

At that, Chai Jin turned toward a side room and called out, “Professor, Brother Lei, why don’t you come out and apologize?”

Wu Yong and Lei Heng came out of the room and bowed to Zhu Tong, saying, “Brother, please forgive us. We were acting on Brother Song Jiang’s orders. He will explain when you get to Liangshan.”

“I appreciate your sincerity, but this was a bit too cruel,” Zhu Tong said, in a massive understatement.



Chai Jin now joined in the chorus of recruitment pitches, and eventually, Zhu Tong relented.

“Fine, I’ll go, but first let me see Black Whirlwind.”

At that, Li Kui appeared and made a deep bow. But as soon as Zhu Tong saw Li Kui, he could feel a fire raging in his heart, and he sprang to his feet and was about to have it out with Li Kui.

The other three men did their best to separate them, but Zhu Tong shouted, “If you want me to go to Liangshan, then you must agree to one condition.”

“Even if it’s 10 conditions, we would agree, much less one,” Wu Yong said. “What is it?”

“If you want me to go, then kill Black Whirlwind and appease the anger in my heart. Then I’ll go!”

“Screw you!” Li Kui cursed. “This has nothing to do with me! I was carrying out Brother Chao and Brother Song’s orders!”

They were about to go at it again, but the other men held them back.

“As long as Black Whirlwind is on Liangshan, I would rather die than go there!” Zhu Tong declared.

“Well, that’s easy enough,” Chai Jin said. “How about Brother Li stays here with me, and you three go to Liangshan to fulfill Brother Chao and Brother Song’s wish?”

“But with things as they are, the prefect will no doubt order the arrest of my family in Yuncheng County. What then?” Zhu Tong said.

“Don’t worry,” Wu Yong said. “Brother Song has probably already moved them to Liangshan by now.”

Ah, the good ol’ forced family relocation welcome wagon trick. Well, that did set Zhu Tong’s mind at ease a little bit. Chai Jin now treated him to some wine and that evening, Zhu Tong, Wu Yong, and Lei Heng rode off for Liangshan.

Before they left, Wu Yong told Li Kui, “You must be careful while you’re staying here. Do not stir up trouble. In 3 to 6 months, once Zhu Tong has settled down, we will come fetch you. And we’ll probably invite Lord Chai to join us as well.”

And so Zhu Tong went to Liangshan. When he arrived, he was greeted with much fanfare on Golden Sand Beach by Chao Gai, Song Jiang, and all the other chieftains. They then went up to the Hall of Honor and started chatting.

Zhu Tong said, "I have come as you summoned. But the prefect of Cangzhou will no doubt send word to Yuncheng County to arrest my family. What should we do?"

Song Jiang laughed and told him, "Brother, don't worry. Your wife and son have already been here for days."

"Where are they?"

"They're staying with my father. You may go see them."

Zhu Tong was delighted, and Song Jiang had someone take him to go see his family. His wife said, "Recently someone came to us with a message saying you've joined up with Liangshan, so we packed up and came here right away."

Zhu Tong now went back to the hall to thank the chieftains the Liangshan for saving his family from the mess created by ... umm ... the chieftains of Liangshan. And then the customary multi-day feast followed.

Meanwhile, back in Cangzhou, the prefect was sitting up all night wondering where his son was. And then he sent men out to search everywhere, but no luck. The next day, someone outside the city saw the poor boy's body in the woods and reported it to the prefect. The prefect was enraged and personally went to the woods to see his son. He wept nonstop as he ordered the boy's remains cremated. The next day, he issued an order for Zhu Tong's arrest. Meanwhile, word had already arrived from Yuncheng County that Zhu Tong's family had fled to god knows where. So bounties were offered and wanted posters were distributed, all to no avail.

Now then, let's go back to the manor of Chai Jin the Little Whirlwind, where Li Kui the Black Whirlwind was currently crashing on his couch. After about a month, a messenger suddenly showed up. Chai Jin took one look at the message and said with alarm, "In that case, I have no choice but to go."

"My lord, what's going on?" Li Kui asked.

"I have an uncle who's living in Gaotang (1,2) Prefecture. Recently the prefect's brother-in-law wanted to commandeer his garden. My uncle suffered quite a humiliation and fell ill. Looks like he's not long for this world. He must have final instructions for me. That's why he summoned me. He has no children, so I have to go see him."

"My lord, if you are going, then how about I go with you?" Li Kui offered.

Chai Jin agreed, so the two of them, plus some workhands, set out early the next morning and rode toward Gaotang Prefecture. They arrived within a day and went straight to Chai Jin's uncle's residence. While Li Kui and the workhands stayed outside the family quarters, Chai Jin went into his uncle's bed chamber, where he found his uncle in bad shape. His face was ashen and his body frail. He was barely drawing breath.

Seeing the condition of his uncle, Chai Jin sat in front of the bed and wept. His uncle's step wife now came out to console him. After he greeted her, he asked her what happened, and she recounted the story.

So the prefect of Gaotang was named Gao (1) Lian (2), and he was a cousin of none other than the corrupt Marshal Gao Qiu, and he took after his no-good cousin in character as well. Gao Lian (2) oversaw both civilian and military affairs in this prefecture, and with his cousin's backing, he did whatever the hell he pleased. When he came here to assume office, he brought his brother-in-law, a no good little punk named Yin (1) Tianxi (1,1), and everyone called him Counsellor Yin. He was just a young man, but with connections to the most powerful man in the prefecture, he, too, did whatever the hell he pleased.

One day, one of Counsellor Yin's hangers-on told him that Chai Jin's uncle had a very nice garden, so Counsellor Yin stomped into the residence with an entourage of 20-some people to see it for himself. And once he saw it, he decided that he wanted it. Now, this wasn't like a nice vase or some pretty girl that he could just have his toadies carry back to his house. Instead, Counsellor Yin demanded that Chai Jin's uncle move out of the house.

Chai Jin's uncle told him, "My family is nobility. We have a decree of immunity from the founding emperor. No one dares to bully us. So how dare you try to take my home?! Where would you have us go?"

Unfortunately, Counsellor Yin figured that some piece of paper from a long dead emperor was no match for his living connection to the prefect. So he insisted that Chai Jin's uncle move out. The uncle tried to kick him out, but ended up taking a beating from the counsellor and his thugs. After that incident, Chai Jin's uncle fell ill from anger and humiliation, and soon, he was knocking on death's door.

After he heard this story, Chai Jin said, "Auntie, don't worry. Just focus on finding a good doctor for my uncle. If there are any more disputes, I will send someone back to my home to fetch the decree of immunity, and then we'll sort it out with them. Even if we have to take them to court, I am not afraid of them!"

"You're so good at handling things," his aunt said. "My husband couldn't get anything done."

After tending to his uncle a bit more, Chai Jin went back out and told his entourage the backstory. As soon as he heard this, Li Kui jumped to his feet and shouted, "That knave is so rude! Well, I have my axes with me. Let me go introduce him to them, and then worry about it!"

"Brother, calm down," Chai Jin said. "How can we just go rough him up without provocation? He may be acting like a bully because of his connections, but our family also has an imperial decree. If we

can't reason with them here, there are people in the capital who are just as influential as them. And the law is clear. We'll fight him in court."

"The law?! The law?!" Li Kui scoffed. "If the law was still worth a damn, then the whole country won't be such a mess now. Let me beat him first, and then talk. If that bastard still wants to take you to court, then I'll go kill the damn magistrate, too!"

Chai Jin just chuckled. "No wonder Zhu Tong wanted to fight you as soon as he saw you. We are in the city. How can you act as recklessly as if you were in your little bandit lair?"

"So what if we are in a city?! I killed plenty of people back in Jiangzhou."

"Just let me see how things go," Chai Jin said. "If I need you, then I'll call for you. Otherwise, just stay inside the house, ok?"

Just then, a maid rushed out and said that Chai Jin needed to go see his uncle right away. So Chai Jin went back inside, and his uncle looked at him with tears in his eyes and said, "My nephew, you are a man of high aspirations, a credit to our ancestors. That Yin (1) Tianxi (1,1) caused my death. On account of our familial ties, please go to the capital and file a petition against him so as to avenge me. I will be grateful from the underworld. Take care! Take care! You don't need any more instructions from me."

And with that, Chai Jin's uncle breathed his last.

To see what Chai Jin will do to avenge his uncle, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, Li Kui does the worst thing he could possibly do. ... He decides to help Chai Jin. So join us next time. Thanks for listening!