

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 76.

Last time, the nobleman Chai Jin the Little Whirlwind was called to Gaotang (1,2) Prefecture to tend to his uncle, who was clinging to life after being beaten and humiliated by the brother-in-law of the local prefect. When we left off, the uncle had just died. While Chai Jin and his relatives made funeral arrangements, Li Kui the Black Whirlwind, who had accompanied Chai Jin on this trip, was working on a serious rage as he listened to the family cry inside the house. No one in Chai Jin's entourage dared to tell him that the uncle had died, but he could pretty much guess.

On the third day after the uncle died, the funeral services were still going on when suddenly, the little punk responsible for all this trouble showed up. The prefect's brother-in-law, Yin (1) Tianxi (1,1), rolled up to the residence with about 30 hangers-on, all carrying slingshots, flutes, and other merry-making essentials. They had been riding around outside the city having fun and getting drunk. And now, while they were tipsy, they decided to come stir up more trouble.

Sitting on his horse, Yin Tianxi told the doorman to tell whoever was in charge inside to come out and talk. Chai Jin hurried outside in his mourning clothes.

"Who the hell are you?" Yin Tianxi asked from his saddle.

"I am Chai Jin, the nephew of the master of the house."

"Ah. Well, I told your uncle that he needs to move out. Why hasn't he done so?"

"My uncle was sick, so we did not dare to move him. He passed away a couple days ago. We will move after the funeral services are over."

Now, funeral services at this time lasted 49 days, and Yin Tianxi was in no mood to show any respect for the dead.

"Bullcrap!" he scowled. "I'll give you three days to move out. If you are not out by then, I'll have you arrested and given a caning of a 100 strokes!"

“Counsellor Yin, don’t you try to bully me,” Chai Jin shot back. “My family is also nobility. We have an imperial decree of immunity. Who dares to not show us respect?”

But Yin Tianxi wasn’t backing down. “Show me your decree!”

“It’s at my home in Cangzhou Prefecture. I’ve already sent someone to go fetch it.”

Umm ... sure, man.

“You’re BS-ing!” Yin Tianxi barked. “And even if you really do have an imperial decree, I am not afraid of you! Men, beat him!”

His entourage was just about to do so when suddenly, the front gates burst open and out shot a big man who let out a thunderous roar as he dashed over to Yin Tianxi’s horse. Before anyone could react, Yin Tianxi had been pulled off his saddle, thrown to the ground, and punched in the face.

This, of course, was Li Kui. He had been watching through the crease in the gates, and brooding all the while. When he heard Yin Tianxi order his men to beat Chai Jin, he couldn’t take it anymore. And now, he was going to town on this no good little punk. Yin Tianxi’s men tried to stop him, but before they knew it, five or six of them were sent flying this way and that, and the rest scurried off, leaving their master at the mercy of Li Kui. And there was no mercy coming. Li Kui landed one punch after another, and not even Chai Jin could stop him. By the time Li Kui was done hulking out, Yin Tianxi was nothing more than a lifeless pile of bludgeoned flesh.

Ah crap.

“All his men saw you; you can’t stay here!” Chai Jin said to Li Kui after dragging him into a private room. “I’ll handle the legal fallout. You just hurry back to Liangshan.”

“But if I leave, you’ll be in trouble.”

“I have my imperial decree to protect me. You just go, now!”

So Li Kui grabbed his axes and some travel money, and rushed out the back door. Not long thereafter, a couple hundred armed men showed up and surrounded the house. Chai Jin came out and told them, "I'll go with you to the courthouse to sort this out."

The men immediately tied him up and then went in the house to search for the big guy who killed Yin Tianxi. When they couldn't find him, they dragged Chai Jin to the prefectural courthouse and made him kneel in front of the prefect. This prefect, as we mentioned last time, was named Gao Lian (2), and he was a cousin of the wicked Marshal Gao Qiu. He was also the brother-in-law of the man Li Kui just killed, so you can guess how this was gonna go.

"How dare you kill my brother-in-law?!" Gao Lian barked at Chai Jin.

"Sir, I am a descendant of the last emperor of the previous dynasty, and my family has an imperial decree of immunity granted to us by the founding Song emperor. I currently reside in Cangzhou Prefecture. Because my uncle fell ill, I came to see him. Unfortunately he passed away and we were conducting funeral services when Counsellor Yin and about 30 men came to our house and tried to kick us out. He refused to listen to reason and ordered his men to beat me. One of my workhands named Li Da (4) came to my rescue and accidentally killed the counsellor."

"And where is this Li Da (4) now?" Gao Lian asked.

"He panicked and ran away."

"He is your workhand. Without your instruction, how would he dare to commit murder? And you allowed him to escape, and then came here to try to pull one over on me. A knave like you is not going to confess without some pain. Men, beat him, hard!"

"My workhand accidentally killed someone while trying to protect me; what does it have to do with me?!" Chai Jin shouted indignantly. "I have an imperial decree from the founding emperor. You can't torture me."

"Where is this decree?"

“I’ve already sent someone back to Cangzhou to fetch it.”

Uh ... sure buddy. As far as Gao Lian was concerned, imperial decrees of immunity were like pizza coupons. You have to present them at the time of purchase or it doesn’t count.

“You are resisting the authorities.” Gao Lian barked. “Men, beat him really hard!”

So the guards threw Chai Jin on the ground and went to town on him with their rods. Soon, Chai Jin’s skin was split, and he was covered in blood. After sufficient caning, he had no choice but to plead guilty to ordering his workhand Li Da (4) to kill Yin Tianxi. Gao Lian then put him in a cangue that weighed 25 catties and threw him in prison.

As for Yin Tianxi, Gao Lian had his body examined and then buried. But Yin Tianxi’s sister, aka Gao Lian’s wife, wasn’t satisfied with just that. At her behest, Gao Lian arrested Chai Jin’s uncle’s entire family and confiscated their home.

Meanwhile, back on Liangshan, the chieftains were sitting around one day when suddenly, Li Kui showed up. As soon as he walked in, though, the new chieftain Zhu Tong flew into a rage. Remember that he was still holding a grudge against Li Kui because the latter killed the 4-year-old boy that Zhu Tong was babysitting so as to force him to turn brigand. Zhu Tong initially refused to join the gang unless they killed Li Kui, and only relented when they told him they would keep Li Kui at Chai Jin’s home. And yet, here was Li Kui, under the same roof as he. So Zhu Tong grabbed a broadsword and charged toward Li Kui. Li Kui quickly pulled out his axes and the two traded a few blows before all the chieftains rushed over and separated them.

Song Jiang now apologized to Zhu Tong, saying, “When Li Kui killed the boy, it wasn’t his fault. Professor Wu came up with that idea when he saw that you refused to join us. Since you are here, please don’t hold a grudge. We must be of one mind for the sake of honor, or outsiders would laugh at us.”

Song Jiang then told Li Kui to apologize, but Li Kui just glowered and yelled, "He's not worthy! How much have I done for us? He hasn't done squat! Me apologize to him?!"

But Song Jiang told Li Kui, "Brother, you DID kill the boy, even though you were following the professor's strict orders. And Zhu Tong is older than you, after all. On my account, just give him an apology, and then I'll bow to you."

After Song Jiang leaned on Li Kui sufficiently, the latter caved and said to Zhu Tong, "I'm not afraid of you, but Brother Song is making me apologize, so I have no choice. Here's my apology."

As he spoke, he tossed aside his axes and bowed twice to Zhu Tong.

So, as far as apologies go, that was pretty piss poor. But apparently it was enough to get Zhu Tong to swallow his anger. And then Chao Gai threw a feast to help them kiss and make up.

In the middle of the feast, Li Kui said, "Lord Chai went to Gaotang Prefecture to see his dying uncle. Turns out, the prefect's brother-in-law wanted to take his uncle's garden and cursed Chai Jin, so I killed him."

Wait, you did WHAT?!

"But if you are here, that surely means Lord Chai is being saddled with the trouble you caused," Song Jiang said with alarm.

"Don't worry yet, brother," the strategist Wu Yong said. "When Dai Zong the Magic Traveler gets back, we'll know what happened."

"Where did Brother Dai go?" Li Kui asked.

Wu Yong told him, "I was afraid that you would cause trouble at Lord Chai's estate, so I sent him to go fetch you. When he gets there and doesn't see you, he would no doubt go to Gaotang Prefecture."

Just then, word came that Dai Zong had returned. Song Jiang called him in and asked what's the word on the Chai Jin.

“I went to Lord Chai’s estate and heard that he and Li Kui had gone off to Gaotang Prefecture,” Dai Zong replied. “So I rushed there. Everyone in town was talking about how the prefect’s brother-in-law tried to commandeer Chai Jin’s uncle’s house and ended up getting killed by a big, dark man. And now because of that, Lord Chai is in prison, along with his uncle’s entire family. Lord Chai’s life is in imminent danger.”

When he heard this, Chao Gai said to Li Kui, “Look at what you’ve done again! You dark knave, you cause trouble wherever you go.”

“But that bastard beat up Lord Chai’s uncle and drove him to his grave,” Li Kui said. “And then he tried to take the house and told his men to beat up Lord Chai. Even a living Buddha could not tolerate that!”

“Lord Chai has bestowed great kindness on us,” Chao Gai said. “Now that he’s in danger, how can we not save him? I must go personally.”

But Song Jiang interjected, “Brother, you are the leader. You cannot leave the stronghold lightly. I have past connections with Lord Chai. Let me go in your stead.”

Wu Yong cautioned, “Gaotang Prefecture may be small, but it has a lot of people and grain. We must not underestimate them.”

He then called up 12 chieftains, led by Lin Chong the Panther Head, Hua Rong the archer, and Qin Ming the Fiery Thunderbolt. This group was the vanguard, leading 5,000 cavalry and infantry. Song Jiang and Wu Yong, along with another 10 chieftains, led 3,000 more troops as reinforcement. They then set out toward Gaotang Prefecture.

By the time they arrived at the borders of the prefecture, the prefect Gao Lian had already gotten word. Far from worried, he just chuckled and said, “You two-bit bandits have been hiding in your lair on Liangshan. I’ve been meaning to go capture you, but today you have come to turn yourselves in. Heaven

must be helping me. Men, send out word. Tell the army to get ready to face the enemy, and have the civilians go up to the city wall to help with the defense.”

Now, Gao Lian, unlike many other prefects, controlled both civilian and military matters, so one word from him, and everyone in the city snapped to. The officers and soldiers lined up and marched out of the city to await the enemy. Gao Lian had a personal guard of 300 men, which he called his Flying Miracles. They were stout men who wore their hair down. Each one of them wore a gourd and carried numerous firestarters. They were clad in armor, leopard skin, and copper masks, and they wielded sharp blades.

Flanked by these 300 Flying Miracles, Gao Lian rode out, dressed in a suit of armor and carrying a sword on his back. He lined up his troops in battle formation, with his personal guard in the center. As they waited, they beat war drums and gongs, waved their flags and shouted battle cries.

Soon, the Liangshan vanguard appeared over the horizon, led by the chieftains Lin Chong, Hua Rong, and Qin Ming. The two sides lined up, and the 10 Liangshan chieftains rode out to the front line. Lin Chong the Panther Head waved his spear and galloped out, shouting, “Whoever wants to die, c’mon out!”

Gao Lian rode out with 30-some officers to under his main banner. He pointed at Lin Chong and cursed, “You bandit! How dare you disturb my city?!”

Now Gao Lian was a cousin of Marshal Gao Qiu, Lin Chong’s old nemesis, so Lin Chong had no shortage of motivation for this fight. He shot back, “You scum! All you do is harm the people! One of these days I’ll fight my way to the capital and kill that treasonous scoundrel Gao Qiu and cut him to pieces. Only then will I be satisfied!”

Gao Lian flew into a rage and asked his officers who would go out to shut Lin Chong up. One guy rode out to answer the call, but within just five bouts, Lin Chong ran him through with the spear.

Shocked, Gao Lian asked for another volunteer. Another idiot galloped out with spear in hand. Seeing this, Qin Ming the Fiery Thunderbolt shouted to Lin Chong, "Brother, take a rest. Watch me kill this knave!"

So Lin Chong reined in his horse and watched as Qin Ming rode forth. After 10 bouts, Qin Ming pretended to leave an opening for his foe, and as the enemy officer tried to stab him, Qin Ming dodged the spear while bringing his wolf-toothed mace down on the poor guy's head. The next thing you know, his opponent's horse was galloping back toward its own lines, with its rider missing half of his skull.

Having lost two officers in a row, Gao Lian decided to change his tack. He pulled out his sword, muttered an incantation, and shouted, "Speed!"

Immediately a swirl of black smoke rose up from his ranks. As it climbed into the air, it swept up sand and pebbles while an eerie gale swept toward the bandits. The chieftains couldn't even see each other, and their horses were startled. Everyone now turned and retreated. Gao Lian pointed with his sword, and his 300 Flying Miracles charged out, followed by the rest of the army. They scattered the bandits, killing 1,000 or so lackeys while sending the rest scurrying. The bandits fell back 15 to 20 miles before Gao Lian called off the pursuit and returned to the city.

Later that day, Song Jiang and the reinforcements arrived, and the defeated vanguard told them what happened. Song Jiang and Wu Yong were stunned and started discussing what to do.

"This must be dark magic," Wu Yong said. "If we can turn back the wind and fire, we can defeat them."

Song Jiang went, "I've got it!" He immediately consulted the divine scrolls that he picked up a while back, and sure enough, the third scroll contained a spell to do just that. Song Jiang was delighted and set



to learning the spell. He then organized his army, fed the men breakfast at 5 a.m., and marched on the city again.

Gao Lian rode out with his army, and the two sides lined up. Song Jiang rode out with a sword by his side and saw a swarm of black banners within Gao Lian's army.

"Those black banners must be the men he uses for his magic," Wu Yong said. "How should we counter if he uses that magic again?"

"Don't worry," Song Jiang said. "I have a way to defeat them. Tell the men not to panic. Just keep charging forward."

Meanwhile, Gao Lian was telling his troops, "Don't fight them head on. When you hear me strike my shield, charge ahead and capture Song Jiang. I will reward you handsomely."

As the two sides clamored, Gao Lian rode out holding his sword and a copper shield. Song Jiang pointed at him and cursed, "Last night I wasn't here yet, so my brothers suffered a defeat. Today, I will wipe you all out."

"You rebels!" Gao Lian shouted back. "Hurry up and surrender so I don't have to dirty my hands!"

As he finished talking, he waved his sword and muttered an incantation, followed by a loud cry of "Speed!" And once again, here came the black smoke and the strange gale. Before the wind could reach his men, Song Jiang quickly muttered an incantation of his own, pulled out his sword, and shouted, "Speed!"

And just like that, the wind changed directions and headed straight for Gao Lian's army instead. Song Jiang now ordered his troops to charge. Seeing this, Gao Lian quickly grabbed his shield and banged it with his sword. As the shield clanged, a swirl of yellow sand blew out from amid his Flying Miracles, followed by a swarm of wild, strange beasts.

As the shield continued to clang, these beasts dashed toward Song Jiang's men. The bandits were stunned. Song Jiang was the first to turn and run, ditching his sword. So much for not panicking. The rest

of the chieftains followed, and soon everybody was running for their lives. Gao Lian now gave a wave of his sword, and his troops gave chase. Once again, the bandits suffered another defeat. Gao Lian chased them for six or seven miles before calling it a day.

Song Jiang reorganized his army and set up camp. He lost some troops, but fortunately all the chieftains were ok. Once the army was settled, he once again discussed the situation with Wu Yong.

Wu Yong told him, "Since that knave knows how to use magic, he will no doubt try to raid our camp tonight. We must be prepared. Let's leave just a small contingent here, while the rest move to our old camp site."

So Song Jiang left only the chieftains Yang Lin the Multicolored Leopard and Bai Sheng the Daylight Rat to watch over the camp, while the rest of the army relocated.

Around 7 p.m. that night, the sky suddenly opened up and a torrential downpour began. While the chieftains Yang Lin and Bai Sheng and their men lay in wait in the grass near their camp, they saw Gao Lian and his 300 Flying Miracles charging into the camp. But surprise! Nobody's home.

Before Gao Lian could retreat, loud battle cries rose up from outside the camp. Gao Lian knew he had fallen for a trap, so he and his 300 men scattered, all trying to run away. The troops under Yang Lin and Bai Sheng showered them with arrows. One of those arrows found Gao Lian's left shoulder, adding injury to insult. Gao Lian and his men dashed through the arrows and the rain and scampered away. Yang Lin and Bai Sheng did not dare to give chase since they didn't have that many troops, so they called it a night.

Soon, the rain stopped and the night sky was once again lit up by the moon and the stars. Under the moonlight, the bandits assessed their victory. They had captured about 20 of the Flying Miracles, and they took these prisoners to Song Jiang's camp.

When Song Jiang and Wu Yong heard about the downpour, they were stunned, because they were just a mile or so up the road and they had no rain at all. The other chieftains said, "This must be localized magic. The rain was coming down from not that high up in the sky, and it smelled like water from the nearby marsh."

Yang Lin the Multicolored Leopard then told them how Gao Lian took an arrow to the shoulder and escaped. Song Jiang rewarded his men, executed the prisoners, and then had his chieftains build seven or eight auxiliary camps around the main camp to guard against another raid. He also sent messengers back to Liangshan to ask for reinforcements.

Meanwhile, Gao Lian returned to his city and tended to his injury while reinforcing his defenses. He told his men, "Don't go out and fight them. Wait until my wound heals, and then we can capture Song Jiang."

Outside the city, despite his victory last night, Song Jiang was feeling very glum about having lost two battles. He said to Wu Yong, "We can't defeat Gao Lian quickly. What should we do if he gets reinforcements from elsewhere?"

"If you want to defeat his magic, you must send someone to Jizhou (4,1) Prefecture to find Gongsun Sheng," Wu Yong said.

So remember that Gongsun Sheng was the bandit's resident wizard, but he had taken some leave a while back to go check on his mother and master and had not returned. Song Jiang had sent Dai Zong the Magic Traveler to go look for him once, but came up empty.

"Where would we go look for him?" Song Jiang asked Wu Yong.

"You would never find him in the towns and villages," Wu Yong said. "Gongsun Sheng is a high-minded Daoist, so he must be living in some famous mountain with Daoist caves and retreats. We

can tell Dai Zong to go search all the famous Daoist mountains in Jizhou. He would surely find Gongsun Sheng.”

So Song Jiang summoned Dai Zong and filled him in. Dai Zong said, “I am willing to go, but I need a traveling companion.”

“But who can keep up with you when you are using your magic?” Wu Yong said.

“My traveling companion can also wear charms on their legs and walk just as fast as me,” Dai Zong explained.

Hearing this, Li Kui the Black Whirlwind volunteered, but Dai Zong told him, “If you want to go with me, then you must eat vegetarian meals the whole way and you must obey me in all things.”

“That’s not hard; I’ll do everything you say,” Li Kui promised.

Song Jiang and Wu Yong told Li Kui, “Be careful on the road, and don’t cause trouble. If you find Gongsun Sheng, then hurry back.”

“Well, I killed that Yin Tianxi and got Lord Chai in trouble, so I have to save him,” Li Kui said. “This time, I won’t dare to cause any trouble.”

So he and Dai Zong each stashed an inconspicuous weapon and packed a bundle. They took their leave and headed for Jizhou Prefecture.

After about seven or eight miles, Li Kui stopped and said to Dai Zong, “Brother, let’s get a bowl of wine first.”

“If you want to travel with me by magic, you have to drink weak wine,” Dai Zong said.

“And it’s ok if I have some meat, too, right?”

“Here you go again! It’s getting late. Let’s find an inn for the night and resume our journey tomorrow.”

So they traveled for another 10 miles or so and found an inn as darkness was descending. They cooked some rice and ordered one horn of weak wine. Li Kui brought Dai Zong a bowl of plain rice and a bowl of vegetable broth.

“Why aren’t you eating?” Dai Zong asked.

“Uh, I’m not hungry yet,” Li Kui replied.

Now, Dai Zong was no dummy. He thought to himself, “That fool must be eating meat behind my back.”

But he didn’t say anything. Instead, he just ate his food and then snuck to the back to take a peek. Sure enough, he saw Li Kui treating himself to two horns of wine and a plate of beef.

“I knew it!” Dai Zong thought to himself. “I won’t call him out on it right now. I’ll deal with him tomorrow.”

So he went back to his room to sleep. Much later, Li Kui snuck into the room and also went to bed.

The next morning, around 5 a.m., Dai Zong got up and told Li Kui to make breakfast. After they ate, they packed up, paid their tab, and hit the road. After less than a mile, Dai Zong said, “We didn’t use magic yesterday, but today we have a long way to go, so hang on tight to your bundle. I’ll use my spell. We will travel 250 miles and then stop.”

Dai Zong then strapped four charms to Li Kui’s legs and told him, “Wait for me at a tavern up ahead.” He then muttered an incantation and blew on Li Kui’s legs. Just like that, Li Kui started zooming down the road as if he were riding a cloud.

As he watched Li Kui disappear over the horizon, Dai Zong chuckled and said to himself, “He’s gonna starve today.” He then strapped charms onto his own legs and followed.

Up ahead, Li Kui was flying down the road. He had thought this was gonna be like normal walking, but he could hear the wind whipping past his ear, and he saw houses and trees zoom past. He was going so fast that he was starting to get scared. He tried a few times to stop, but his feet had a mind of their own and refused to stop. He saw taverns zoom by, but he couldn't stop to buy food. As the patrons at the taverns ate their meals, all they saw was a cloud of dust, accompanied by a fading cry of "Stooopppp! Pleeeease!"

To see when Li Kui would actually get to stop, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, Li Kui gets into more trouble with magic. So join us next time. Thanks for listening!