

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 77.

Last time, Song Jiang's attempt to rescue Chai Jin from prison ran into a snag when he couldn't defeat the dark magic of Gao Lian (2), the guy in charge of Gaotang (1,2) Prefecture, where Chai Jin was being held. Then Song Jiang remembered that he had a wizard of his own in Gongsun Sheng, but he had to find Gongsun Sheng first. So he sent the chieftains Dai Zong the Magic Traveler and Li Kui the Black Whirlwind to go to Gongsun Sheng's home prefecture to search for him.

Dai Zong told Li Kui that they could only eat vegetarian meals on the trip, and Li Kui agreed. But on their first night on the road, Dai Zong discovered that Li Kui was secretly helping himself to a big plate of beef. So the next day, Dai Zong had a little fun with Li Kui, casting a spell that made it impossible for him to stop walking at supersonic speed.

As the sun was sinking toward the western horizon, Li Kui's legs were still churning, and he had not rested or eaten all day. He was covered in sweat and huffing and puffing.

Just then, Dai Zong appeared from behind and shouted, "Hey brother! Why aren't you stopping for food?"

"Brother, save me!!" Li Kui shouted. "I'm starving!!"

Dai Zong pulled out a few steamed buns from his pocket and started munching one of them. Seeing this, Li Kui said, "I can't stop to eat! Give me a couple!"

"Ok, come over here and I'll give you one."

So Li Kui reached out. He was just a few feet away from Dai Zong, but no matter what he did, he couldn't close the gap.

"Good brother, wait for me!"

"Hmm. This is odd," Dai Zong said. "I can't seem to stop either."

"Ah crap!" Li Kui lamented. "My legs have a mind of their own. I'll have to cut them off with my axe."

“That’s a good idea,” Dai Zong said. “Otherwise, we won’t be able to stop until next year.”

“Good brother, stop teasing me! I’m about to cut off my legs, and you are laughing at me.”

“You must have disobeyed my instructions last night,” Dai Zong said, “so now even I can’t stop. You just keep going.”

“Oh my lord and master, please let me stop!!”

“To use my magic, one must not eat meat, especially beef,” Dai Zong explained. “If you eat one piece of beef, you will go more than 30,000 miles before you can stop.”

“Ah crap!!” Li Kui moaned. “I went behind your back last night and ate a few catties of beef. What should we do?!”

“No wonder even I can’t stop today,” Dai Zong said. “Well, I guess we’ll just have to walk to the ends of the earth. It might be four or five years before we make it back.”

Hearing that, Li Kui launched into a long stream of laments. Only now did Dai Zong crack up and tell him, “If you agree to obey me in one thing from now on, then I can stop the magic.”

“I’ll do whatever you say. Just make it stop!”

“Will you dare to eat meat behind my back again?”

“If I eat any meat from now on, may my tongue grow a giant ulcer! I will never dare to lie to you again!”

“In that case, I’ll spare you this time,” Dai Zong said as he took one step backward, waved his sleeve over Li Kui’s legs, and shouted, “Stop!”

And just like that, Li Kui stopped as if he were nailed to the ground.

“I’ll go on ahead, you catch up at your own pace,” Dai Zong told him.

Li Kui tried to move, but now, he couldn't even budge his feet.

"Ah crap! Now what?! Brother, save me!"

Dai Zong turned around and smiled. "Are you going to do as I say?"

"Yes, yes! You're like my daddy! I'll never disobey your instructions again!"

"Alright then. But make sure you do what I tell you," Dai Zong said as he took hold of Li Kui and shouted, "Up!"

And just like that, the two of them were moving again.

"Brother, have pity on me. Let's call it a day," Li Kui pleaded.

So they stopped at an inn down the road. Once they were in their room, Dai Zong removed the charms from their legs, burned some sacrificial paper money, and asked Li Kui, "How do you feel now?"

"My legs finally feel like my own again."

"You shouldn't have had the wine and meat last night."

"I only went behind your back because you won't let me eat meat. In any case, you had your fun."

Dai Zong then told Li Kui to prepare some weak wine and vegetarian food, and Li Kui made sure they were vegetarian this time. They then heated some water, washed their feet, and went to bed.

The next morning, they got up at 5 a.m., washed up, ate breakfast, settled their tab, and hit the road again. After walking at a normal pace for a mile, Dai Zong got out his charms and told Li Kui, "Brother, I'll just give you two of these today so you can go a little slower."

"I don't want any charms," Li Kui said in a panic.

"Do as I say," Dai Zong told him. "We're on an important mission, so I'm not going to mess with you. If you don't do as I say, then I'll cast a spell and leave you nailed to this spot for a night, and I'll release you on my way back after I find Gongsun Sheng."

“Ok, ok,” Li Kui relented. So he and Dai Zong each strapped two charms to their legs and started speed walking. From that point on, Li Kui did whatever Dai Zong said and stayed away from meat and wine. Within 10 days, they were approaching the outskirts of Jizhou Prefecture. They stopped at an inn outside the prefectural seat for the day. The next morning, they went into town, disguised as master and servant. They searched the town for a whole day but could not find anyone who had heard of a Gongsun Sheng.

The next day, they went back in town and searched along the narrow streets and back alleys, but with no luck.

“Where is that damn priest hiding?” an annoyed Li Kui cursed. “When I find him, I’m going to grab him by the hair and drag him back to see Brother Song!”

“Here you go again,” Dai Zong checked him. “If you don’t listen to me, I’ll fix you good again.”

Li Kui forced a smile and said, “I was just kidding.” But he still got an earful from Dai Zong, and he did not dare to talk back. After another fruitless day of searching, they returned to their inn.

The next morning, they searched in the villages outside the city. Whenever they saw an old man, Dai Zong would greet them and ask if they knew where Priest Gongsun Sheng lived. He asked dozens of people, but no one knew. As noon approached, Dai Zong and Li Kui were getting hungry, so they stopped at a vegetarian noodle shop. All the tables inside were taken, so they stood outside. The shopkeeper came over and asked them if they would mind sharing a table with an old man who was sitting alone. Dai Zong went over, greeted the old man, and sat down. Li Kui sat next to him and told the shopkeeper to bring four bowls of noodles.

“I’m just having one; are you going to have three?” Dai Zong asked.

“It’s fine; even if it’s six bowls I’ve got it covered.”

Even the shopkeeper couldn't help but smirk at that remark. But after waiting for a good while, the noodles still weren't on the table, and Li Kui was getting really impatient. Then, he saw the shopkeeper come over with a bowl of hot noodles. Ah here we go.

Alas, it was a fakeout. That was somebody else's noodles. Worse, it was for the old man sharing Li Kui's table. As soon as the shopkeeper set down the bowl, the old man started digging into it. Seeing this, Li Kui couldn't hold it in anymore.

"Shopkeeper!" he roared as he slapped the table. But he slapped the table so hard that it flipped the bowl of noodles and the old man got a faceful of soup. The old man got mad. He grabbed Li Kui and shouted, "Why the hell did you knock over my noodles?!"

Li Kui was like, yeah bring it! He raised his fist and was about to pummel the old man, but Dai Zong quickly intervened and apologized.

"Sir, you don't understand," the old man said. "I have a long trip ahead of me. I wanted to finish my lunch quickly so I can go back and listen to the sermon. I don't want to be late."

"Sir, where are you from? Whose sermon are you going to?" Dai Zong asked.

"I live at the foot of Twin Immortal Peak," the old man said. "I went into town to buy some incense and am on my way back to listen to Priest Luo (2) sermonize about the secret of eternal life."

A priest, eh? Dai Zong asked, "Sir, is there a Gongsun Sheng at that sanctuary?"

"Ah, sir, if you asked anyone else, they would not know," the old man said. "Most people don't know him. But I happen to be his neighbor. He only has an old mother. That priest used to travel all around and goes by Gongsun the Pure. Around here, he doesn't use his last name, so everyone just knows him as the Pure Daoist. No one knows him as Gongsun Sheng."

Dai Zong exclaimed, "As the old saying goes, 'You can search in vain until you've worn a hole through iron shoes, but then the solution presents itself without any effort.' How far is Twin Immortal Peak from here? Where is the home of the Pure Daoist?"

“It’s only about 15 miles away,” the old man told him. “The Pure Daoist is Priest Luo’s top disciple. He never leaves his master’s side.”

Dai Zong was elated. He told the shopkeeper to hurry up with their food. After they ate and paid, they asked the old man for directions, and then took their leave. While the old man went on his way, Dai Zong and Li Kui speed-walked back to their inn, packed their stuff, and rushed toward Twin Immortal Peak. With Dai Zong’s magic, the trip took no time at all.

It was a majestic mountain with gorgeous views. As they approached the foot of the mountain, they saw a woodcutter. Dai Zong greeted him and asked if he knew where the Pure Daoist lived.

“Go through the east entrance to the mountain, and you’ll see a small stone bridge. That’s where he is,” the woodcutter said.

Dai Zong and Li Kui followed those directions and soon found themselves in front of about a dozen thatched huts, surrounded by a low wall. Outside the wall was a small stone bridge. Dai Zong and Li Kui walked over to the bridge and saw a village woman walk out with a basket of fresh fruits. Dai Zong greeted her and asked if the Pure Daoist is home.

“He is making cinnabar pills behind the house,” she said.

Dai Zong rejoiced in his heart and told Li Kui, “You go hide behind that tree for a bit. Once I go in and see him, I’ll summon you.”

While Li Kui hid, Dai Zong went up to a thatched hut with a bamboo curtain on the front door. He cleared his throat, and an old woman with silver hair emerged. He greeted her and said, “Madam, I would like to see the Pure Daoist.”

“What’s your name, sir?” she asked.

“My name is Dai Zong. I am from Shandong Province.”

“My son is traveling and hasn’t come home,” the old woman said.

“I am an old acquaintance of his,” Dai Zong explained. “I have something urgent to tell him. I just need to see him quick.”

“He’s not home. You are welcome to leave a message. Once he gets back, he’ll go see you.”

“I will call again later then,” Dai Zong said. He then took his leave, went back outside the wall, and told Li Kui, “Alright, I need you now. Gongsun Sheng’s mother just said he’s not home. You go and ask for him. If she says he’s not home, then you just start making a ruckus, but just don’t hurt his mother. When I come in and stop you, then you let up.”

So Li Kui retrieved his twin axes from his bundle and tucked them into his belt. He then stomped into the house and roared, “Somebody come out here!”

“Who is it?” the old woman asked as she hurried out from the back. She was immediately startled by Li Kui’s ferocious appearance.

“What do you want, sir?” she asked.

“I am Li Kui the Black Whirlwind from Liangshan. My brother has ordered me to come invite Gongsun Sheng. Tell him to get out here right now, and I’ll go easy on you. Otherwise, I’ll burn your house to the ground. Don’t you dare to lie! Tell him to get out here now!”

“Hero, calm down. This is not the home of Gongsun Sheng. It’s the home of the Pure Daoist.”

“Just tell him to get his ass out here! I recognize his damn face!”

“But he’s out traveling and hasn’t come back yet.”

Li Kui was done. He pulled out his axes and with one blow, he took a chunk out of the wall. The old woman tried to stop him, but he raised his axes in her direction and barked, “Tell your son to come out, or I’ll kill you!”

The old woman was so scared that she fell backward onto the floor. Just then, a man came out from the back and shouted, “Don’t be rude!”

This was none other than Gongsun Sheng. Dai Zong now rushed in and shouted, "Iron Ox, why did you scare his old mother?!"

While Dai Zong helped the old woman to her feet, Li Kui put down his axes, bowed to Gongsun Sheng, and said, "Brother, don't blame me. This was the only way to get you to come out."

After helping his mother to the back, Gongsun Sheng came back out to invite his friends to a quiet room. They sat down and he asked what they were doing there. Dai Zong explained how Song Jiang was bogged down outside Gaotang Prefecture in his attempt to rescue Chai Jin, and how they came to discover Gongsun Sheng's home.

"A village woman told us you were at home, but your mother denied it, so I had no choice but to have Li Kui lure you out," Dai Zong said. "But he took it a little too far. Please forgive us. Brother Song is waiting eagerly at Gaotang Prefecture. Please set out at once so we can reunite with our brothers."

But Gongsun Sheng told him, "In my younger years I traveled around the jianghu scene and spent much time in the company of heroes. I haven't been back to Liangshan since I came home, not because I have second thoughts. It's just that one, my mother is getting old and has no one to tend to her. Two, my master, Priest Luo, asked me to stay by his side. I was afraid someone might come looking for me, so I changed my name to the Pure Daoist and live here in seclusion."

"But Brother Song is in danger," Dai Zong pleaded. "Please go just this once out of kindness."

"I can't. My mother has no one to take care of her, and my master won't let me anyway."

Dai Zong begged time and again. Gongsun Sheng helped him up and said, "Let me think about it."

He then kept Dai Zong and Li Kui at his house for a meal. As they ate, Dai Zong again pleaded, saying, "If you refuse to help, Brother Song will be captured by the prefect Gao Lian, and our great enterprise will turn to ashes!"

"Let me go ask my master, Priest Luo," Gongsun Sheng said. "If he allows it, then I can go with you."

"Then let's go ask him right away," Dai Zong said.



“Just stay here tonight. We’ll go tomorrow morning.”

“Brother, a day here is like a year. Please go right now.”

So Gongsun Sheng led Dai Zong and Li Kui out of his house and up the mountain. It was now late autumn, and the days were short. By the time they were halfway up the mountain, the sun was already plunging toward the western horizon. They followed a narrow backroad shaded by pine trees to Priest Luo’s sanctuary. By the entrance was a red placard with golden characters that said, “Temple of the Purple Void.” The idyllic sanctuary was filled with lush green trees and bamboo, and you could hear the occasional call of white cranes and wild monkeys.

The three men tidied up their outfits and entered. Two young acolytes announced their arrival to Priest Luo, who called them in. As they entered the Hall of Pines and Cranes, they saw Priest Luo seated on his couch. Gongsun Sheng went up to pay his respects and then stood to one side. Dai Zong and Li Kui looked at this priest and saw that he had a long beard, green eyes, and an uncommon air about him.

Dai Zong quickly kneeled to pay his respects, but Li Kui just stood and kept looking at the priest. Priest Luo now asked Gongsun Sheng who they were.

“Master, they are the honorable friends from Shandong Province that I mentioned a while back,” Gongsun Sheng explained. “Right now, Gao Lian, the prefect of Gaotang, is attacking them with dark magic. So Brother Song Jiang sent them here to ask for my help. I did not dare to act without consulting you first.”

Priest Luo said, “But you have escaped the fiery pits of human frailty. You have learned the secret to longevity. Why would you want to return to that life?”

Dai Zong bowed again and said, “Please allow Priest Gongsun a temporary leave. Once we defeat Gao Lian, we will escort him back.”

“Gentlemen, you don’t understand,” Priest Luo said. “Such affairs are not the concerns of men of religion. Please leave and discuss this amongst yourselves.”

Thus rebuffed, Gongsun Sheng had no choice but to leave with his friends and return to his home.

“What did that old priest say?” Li Kui asked.

“Didn’t you hear him?” Dai Zong said.

“I didn’t understand any of that crap!”

“His master said he shouldn’t go.”

“What?! We came all this way and finally found him, and now this BS?! That old priest better not piss me off, or I’ll crush his hat, pick him up, and hurl him off a cliff!”

“You want to get nailed to the ground again?” Dai Zong scoffed.

“No, no. I was just kidding,” Li Kui muttered.

The three of them returned to Gongsun Sheng’s home and had dinner. Gongsun Sheng then said, “Please stay here tonight. Tomorrow I’ll go beg my master again. If he allows it, I’ll go with you.”

So they said good night, and Dai Zong and Li Kui slept in the guest room.

Around 5 a.m., Li Kui sat up. He heard Dai Zong mumbling in his sleep, and then started thinking to himself, “What a load of crap! That Gongsun Sheng is one of us; why the hell does he have to ask for his master’s permission? And if that priest still won’t let him go tomorrow, won’t that mess up Brother Song’s mission? I can’t put up with it. Let me go kill that old priest, so Gongsun Sheng would have no choice but to go with us.”

So he quietly got up, picked up his axes, and slipped out of the house. Under the light of the moon and stars, he walked back up the mountain to Priest Luo’s sanctuary. The gates were shut, but the walls surrounding the sanctuary were not very tall, so Li Kui easily leaped over them, opened the door, and sneaked toward the Hall of Pines and Cranes. When he got close, he could hear someone reading

scripture inside. Li Kui sneaked over to a window, poked a hole in the paper window, and peeked in. He saw Priest Luo sitting alone on his couch, facing a table with a pot of incense and two candles, reading scripture.

“This scoundrel is so dead!” Li Kui thought to himself. He now moved toward the doors, slowly pushed them ajar, and then charged in with his axes raised. Before Priest Luo could even react, Li Kui had already lodged one of his axes in his skull. The priest collapsed on his couch, and white blood poured out of his head.

“Looks like this knave was still a virgin; he hasn’t lost any of his male essence yet,” Li Kui chuckled as he watched the flow of white blood. He took a closer look, and saw that his axe had sliced the priest’s hat in half and had cut all the way from the top of his head down to his neck.

“Now that I have eliminated this evil, Gongsun Sheng will come with us for sure,” he said to himself as he turned to leave the hall. Just then, a young acolyte in blue ran out from a side room and blocked his path.

“You killed my master! Where do you think you’re going?”

“Little scoundrel! You can kiss my axe, too!” Li Kui shouted as one of his axes came down on the poor acolyte’s neck, sending his head rolling off the platform.

“Looks like the party is over,” Li Kui laughed as he sized up his handiwork. He then rushed out of the sanctuary and back down the mountain. When he got back to Gongsun Sheng’s home, he quietly slipped back inside and shut the door behind him. He then stood outside his room and listened. Dai Zong was still sound asleep, so Li Kui got back into his bed, and no one was the wiser.

When morning came, Gongsun Sheng made them breakfast, and Dai Zong asked him again to lead them to Priest Luo so they could plead their case. As he listened, Li Kui did all he could to muffle his laughter.

The three of them now went back up the mountain to the sanctuary. There, they saw the same two acolytes who greeted them yesterday.

“Is the master at home?” Gongsun Sheng asked.

“Yes, he is meditating on his couch,” the acolytes replied.

That answer surprised Li Kui. He stood there for a good while, with mouth half agape and his tongue sticking out. The three men now went to the Hall of Pine and Cranes and lifted the curtain. Sure enough, there was Priest Luo, sitting on his couch.

“Could I have killed the wrong guy last night?” Li Kui thought to himself.

“What are you three doing here again?” Priest Luo asked.

“We have come to beg you to grant us mercy, to save many people from calamity,” Dai Zong said.

“Who is this big, dark man?” the priest asked.

“He’s my sworn brother, Li Kui,” Dai Zong answered.

Priest Luo smiled and said, “I didn’t want to let Gongsun Sheng go, but on account of this guy, I’ll let him go just this once.”

As Dai Zong bowed to express his gratitude, Li Kui thought to himself, “That knave knows I want to kill him, so he’s serving up this BS.”

Priest Luo now said, “How about I send you all back to Gaotang Prefecture right now?”

The three heroes all said that sounded great, but Dai Zong was thinking to himself, “Does this priest have even stronger magic than me?”

“Master, how will you send us to Gaotang Prefecture immediately?” he asked.

Priest Luo now told his acolyte to bring over three handkerchiefs and told the heroes to follow him. They walked to the cliff outside the sanctuary. There, Priest Luo laid a red handkerchief on the rocks and said, “My disciple, you may get on.”

Gongsun Sheng stepped onto the handkerchief with both feet, and Priest Luo waved his sleeve and shouted, "Up!" That handkerchief immediately turned into a red cloud and carried Gongsun Sheng up into the sky.

"Hold!" Priest Luo shouted when the cloud reached about 150 feet above the ground. The cloud immediately stopped rising.

Priest Luo next laid down a blue handkerchief and told Dai Zong to get on. He then waved his sleeve again and shouted, "Up!" And just like before, the handkerchief turned into a blue cloud and carried Dai Zong into the air.

As Li Kui watched dumbfounded, Priest Luo laid down a white handkerchief and asked him to get on.

"Don't play with me," Li Kui chuckled. "If I fall, it's going to leave a mark."

"Didn't you see the other two?" the priest said.

Thus reassured, Li Kui stepped onto the white handkerchief, and the priest shouted, "Up!" The handkerchief turned into a white cloud and carried Li Kui toward the sky.

"Hey! I'm not steady! Let me down!" Li Kui shouted as he rose into the heavens.

Just then, Priest Luo waved his right hand, and the clouds carrying Gongsun Sheng and Dai Zong steadily descended back to the ground. Dai Zong bowed to say thank you and then stepped to the side. Just then, they heard Li Kui shouting again.

"Hey, I need to pee, and take a dump! If you don't let me off this thing, it's going to rain down on your head!"

Now, Priest Luo said to him, "I am a man of religion and never bothered you. Why did you climb over the wall last night and bury your axe in me? If I didn't have my powers, I would have been killed. And you also killed one of my acolytes."

"That wasn't me! You got the wrong guy!" Li Kui shouted, foolishly trying to lie to a guy who can make people fly and survive an axe to the head.

Priest Luo laughed and said, “All you ended up cutting were two of my gourds. Still, you have a wicked heart, so I must teach you a lesson.”

As he spoke, he waved his hand and shouted, “Go!” And just like that, a strong gale whipped up, blowing Li Kui into the clouds. There, he was met by two warriors wearing yellow headscarves. They seized him and set off. All Li Kui could hear was the sound of wind and rain whooshing by, and he was scared out of his wits and trembling.

To see what kind of comeuppance awaited Li Kui, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, we’ll see if Gongsun Sheng can help Song Jiang with his wizard problems. So join us next time. Thanks for listening!