

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 82.

Last time, after their involuntary recruitment of Xu (2) Ning (2) the Golden Lancer, the Liangshan bandits staged a night battle in which horses were definitely harmed. They destroyed the chain-linked cavalry and set the enemy commander Huyan Zhuo to flight.

While Huyan Zhuo got away, nobody else in his army did. The bandits returned to their stronghold and tallied up the damage they had wreaked. Of the 3,000 chain-linked cavalry, half the horses had been injured by the barbed spears. These were sent off to be slaughtered for food. The rest of the horses were kept for riding. As for the armored riders, they were all captured. Then there were Huyan Zhuo's 5,000 infantrymen. They were attacked on three sides. The ones who tried to hide in the center of the army were all tripped up by the barbed spears and captured. The ones who fled to the water's edge were all captured by the Liangshan navy. While they took the prisoners back to base, the bandits also took down Huyan Zhuo's camp and rebuilt the two taverns that Huyan Zhuo had destroyed.

That wasn't all. Huyan Zhuo's second-in-command, Han Tao the Undefeated General, had also been captured. So I guess our Undefeated General did nothing but get his butt handed to him on this campaign. Nonetheless, when he was taken up to the stronghold, Song Jiang untied him, invited him in as a guest, and delivered the usual recruitment pitch, which was aided by Han Tao's former comrades Peng (2) Qi (3) and Ling (2) Zhen (4). Soon enough, Han Tao caved like everyone else and agreed to be a chieftain. And of course, Song Jiang made sure his family got the relocation package as well. And then the heroes all got down to partying to celebrate their decisive victory.

Meanwhile, the defeated Huyan Zhuo did not dare to return to the capital after losing his entire army. He rode alone on his Snow-Kicking Ebony Steed, the fine horse that the emperor had personally bestowed upon him before the campaign. Now, Huyan Zhuo did not bring his wallet with him when he set out for battle the night before, so he had to sell his gold-plated belt for travel money.

“Who knew I would end up like this,” he thought as he rode aimlessly. “Where should I go?”

Suddenly, a thought came to him: Prefect Murong (4,2) of Qingzhou (1,1) Prefecture is an acquaintance of mine. Why don't I go there? He's related to one of the emperor's concubines. I can use that connection to get another army to avenge my defeat.”

Now, we have met this Prefect Murong before. He was the guy who sent Qin Ming the Fiery Thunderbolt to attack Song Jiang and his outlaw buddies when they were causing trouble at Clear Winds Mountain. And when it looked like Qin Ming had turned brigand, Prefect Murong executed his family, which in turn drove Qin Ming into banditry for real.

So Huyan Zhuo set out for Qingzhou Prefecture. After two days on the road, he was getting hungry and thirsty as evening descended. He saw a village tavern, so he dismounted, hitched his horse to a tree out front, and went inside. He put his steel rods on the table, sat down, and asked the waiter for meat and wine.

“We only sell wine here,” the waiter said. “If you want meat, they just slaughtered a sheep in the village. If you want some, I can go buy some.”

Huyan Zhuo took out some of the loose pieces of silver he had gotten from selling his belt and paid the waiter, telling him “Go buy me a leg of lamb and cook it. Also, prepare some feed for my horse. I'm staying here tonight, and then tomorrow I'll be going to Qingzhou Prefecture.”

“Sir, it's no problem for you to stay here tonight, but we don't have a good bed,” the waiter said.

“I'm a soldier. All I need is somewhere to rest my head,” Huyan Zhuo said.

So the waiter went off to buy lamb, while Huyan Zhuo took his armor off his saddle, and sat down in front of the tavern to rest. After a while, the waiter returned with a leg of lamb. Huyan Zhuo told him to cook it and make steamed buns with about three pounds of flour. He also ordered a couple horns of wine to go with it. The waiter started cooking the lamb and heated up some water for Huyan Zhuo to wash his feet. Meanwhile, the waiter led his horse to the back of the tavern and prepared some feed.

Huyan Zhuo drank for a bit, and when the lamb was ready, he asked the waiter to join him. As they ate and drank, he told the waiter, "I am an officer of the imperial court. I suffered a setback while apprehending the Liangshan bandits, so I am on my way to see Prefect Murong of Qingzhou. Take good care of my horse. It's a gift from the emperor called the Snow-Kicking Ebony Steed. I'll reward you handsomely tomorrow."

"Thank you sir," the waiter said. "But there's one thing you should know. There's a mountain not far from here called Peach Blossom Mountain. There's a gang of bandits there. Their leader is Li (3) Zhong (1) the Tiger-Slaying General, and their second-in-command is Zhou Tong the Little Conqueror. They have about 700 men and often come to our village to rob and pillage. The authorities have sent troops here many times, but could not apprehend them. You must be on guard tonight."

"[Scoff] I have the valor of 10,000 men," Huyan Zhuo scoffed. "Even if those bandits came in full force, so what?! Just take good care of my horse."

He then ate and drank some more, and the waiter prepared a cot for him. Between the exhaustion of recent days and the wine, Huyan Zhuo soon fell asleep in his day clothes. He woke up around 3 a.m. and heard the waiter behind the tavern, going ah crap! Huyan Zhuo grabbed his steel rods and rushed out to ask what was going on.

"I got up just now to replenish the horse feed," the waiter said. "But the fence had been knocked over and someone stole your horse. I saw a few torches in the distance. They must have gone in that direction."

"What is in that direction?" Huyan Zhuo asked.

"Judging by the path they took, it must have been bandit lackeys from Peach Blossom Mountain who made off with your horse."

Huyan Zhuo was taken aback. He told the waiter to lead the way, and they pursued for about a mile. But then the torches disappeared and there was no sign of anyone.

“What am I going to do? I lost the horse the emperor gave me,” Huyan Zhuo lamented.

“Sir, you have to go to the prefecture tomorrow and get the authorities to come apprehend the bandits,” the waiter said. “Only then can you get your horse back.”

Huyan Zhuo brooded until morning. He then told the waiter to carry his armor, and they proceeded on foot to Qingzhou Prefecture. It was getting late by the time they arrived at the prefectural seat, so they turned in for the night at an inn. The next morning, Huyan Zhuo went to see Prefect Murong.

The prefect was quite surprised to see him and asked what he was doing there. Huyan Zhuo recounted what happened, and Prefect Murong said, “Even though you lost your army, it wasn’t because you didn’t take your duties seriously. You just fell for a trap; there’s nothing you could do about that. The territory under my jurisdiction has long been plagued by bandits. But now that you are here, you can first cleanse Peach Blossom Mountain and take back your horse. Then, you can apprehend the bandits on Double Dragon Mountain and White Tiger Mountain. Then I will do all I can to recommend to the court that you be given another army so you can go avenge yourself upon Liangshan. What do you think?”

Huyan Zhuo bowed and thanked the prefect, saying, “Thank you for your kindness. If you can do that, I swear I will risk my life to repay you!”

The prefect set him up in guest quarters, and the waiter from the village tavern was sent home. After three days, Huyan Zhuo was prodding the prefect to give him some troops so he could go get his horse back. So Prefect Murong lent him 2,000 troops and a black-mane horse. Huyan Zhuo thanked him and rode out toward Peach Blossom Mountain.

On Peach Blossom Mountain, the bandit chieftains Li Zhong the Tiger-Slaying General and Zhou Tong the Little Conqueror had been drinking and celebrating for days ever since they got Huyan Zhuo’s prized

horse. But then one day, their scouts came back and said there was an army marching this way from Qingzhou Prefecture.

Zhou Tong the Little Conqueror got up and said to Li Zhong, "Brother, you defend our base; I'll go repel the government troops." He then rounded up 100 lackeys and rode down the mountain.

Huyan Zhuo's troops were already lined up in battle formation. He galloped out and shouted, "Bandits, surrender at once!"

Zhou Tong lined up his men and rode forth to fight Huyan Zhuo. After just a few bouts, Zhou Tong was struggling. He turned and rode back up the mountain. Huyan Zhuo gave chase for a bit but retreated out of fear of a trap. He then set up camp at the foot of the mountain and prepared for the next round.

Zhou Tong ran back to base and told Li Zhong, "Huyan Zhuo is too skilled; I couldn't fend him off, so I had to retreat. But if he chases us all the way up to the base, what should we do?!"

Li Zhong said, "I heard that Double Dragon Mountain is controlled by Lu Zhishen the Flowery Monk. He has lots of people with him, including a Yang Zhi the Bluefaced Beast and a newcomer, Wu Song the Pilgrim. They all possess unrivaled valor. Why don't we send a messenger to go ask them for help? If they can lift this siege, then we can just pay tribute to them each month."

"Yeah I know they have a lot of heroes," Zhou Tong said, "but I worry that monk is still holding a grudge about what happened in the past and won't help us."

So, in case you forgot, what happened in the past was that Lu Zhishen foiled Zhou Tong's wedding night with a girl that he was trying to force to marry him. Lu Zhishen beat the crap out of Zhou Tong, but then they made peace when they realized Lu Zhishen was friends with Li Zhong. But then Lu Zhishen saw that these two were a couple of tightwads, so while they were out robbing random travelers to get a going-away present for him, he beat up their men, took their stuff, and sneaked off the mountain.

Back to the present, and Li Zhong laughed and said to Zhou Tong, “He beat YOU up and took a bunch of our gold and silver goblets. Why would HE be holding a grudge about the past? Besides, he’s a straightforward man. When our messenger gets there, he will definitely come here in person to help us.”

So they sent two lackeys with a letter and those messengers went down the backside of the mountain. After two days, the lackeys arrived at Double Dragon Mountain and were escorted by the local bandit lackeys up to the stronghold. In the Precious Pearl Monastery on the mountain sat seven chieftains in all. The three top chieftains were Lu Zhishen the Flowery Monk, Yang Zhi the Bluefaced Beast, and Wu Song the Pilgrim. Below them were the B-team, consisting of four more recent additions. There was Shi En the Golden-Eyed Tiger Cub, who was Wu Song’s friend when the latter was exiled to Mengzhou (4,1) Prefecture. Remember Shi En was the prison warden’s son, and Wu Song did him a solid by winning a mob war and getting back his protection-money racket. But after Wu Song went berserk and slaughtered all the people who had schemed to kill him, the authorities went looking for Shi En in their pursuit of Wu Song. Shi En immediately packed up his family and fled, drifting around the jianghu scene. After both of his parents died, he found out that Wu Song was at Double Dragon Mountain, so he came to join up.

Another of the B-list chieftains was Cao Zheng (4) the Knife-Wielding Demon. He was the tavern keeper who helped Lu Zhishen and Yang Zhi take over this mountain in the first place, and later on he closed up shop and moved here too. The other two chieftains were the husband-and-wife duo of Zhang Qing (1) the Gardener and Sun Erniang the Female Yaksha. They ran a black tavern where they drugged unsuspecting patrons and turned them into meat buns for other unsuspecting patrons. It was through that trade that they met Lu Zhishen and Wu Song.

The message from Peach Blossom Mountain was received by Cao Zheng the Knife-Wielding Demon, who immediately reported to the other chieftains. Lu Zhishen was like, “Oh yeah, I know those guys.

They were total tightwads and I robbed them. Ha, funny story. I'll tell you guys sometime. But go ahead and send the messengers in."

The messengers came in and said, "Prefect Murong of Qingzhou recently took in a general named Huyan Zhuo who was defeated by the Liangshan bandits. Right now, the prefect has told him to first wipe out Peach Blossom Mountain, Double Dragon Mountain, and White Tiger Mountain, and then the prefect would lend him troops to get revenge against Liangshan. Our chieftains are asking for your help. Once the crisis has passed, they will come offer tribute to you."

Yang Zhi the Blue-faced Beast said, "Well, we each have our own mountain to look after, so usually we would not help. But we have to protect fellow valiants. Besides, we can't let that knave take over Peach Blossom Mountain, or he will look down on us. Let's leave the four lesser chieftains to guard our base, and the three of us will take a trip."

So they immediately mobilized 500 lackeys, including 60-some riders, and set out. When the chieftains at Peach Blossom Mountain heard the news, Li Zhong led 300 men down the mountain to join up with them. Huyan Zhuo got word and quickly lined up his men to block Li Zhong's path. Li Zhong was no match for Huyan Zhuo, and he turned and fled after just 10 bouts. Seeing that his skills were feeble, Huyan Zhuo gave chase up the mountain, but was soon greeted by a barrage of flying boulders, which forced him to turn back.

Just then, his troops started yelling, telling him that another army was approaching. Huyan Zhuo rode to the back of his column and saw a group coming this way, led by a big fat monk on a white horse, who was, of course, Lu Zhishen.

"Which one is the bastard that got beat by Liangshan?!" Lu Zhishen shouted. "How dare you prance around here?!"

"I'll kill you first, baldy!" Huyan Zhuo cursed. "That'll relieve the anger in my heart!"

Lu Zhishen raised his Buddhist spade, and Huyan Zhuo countered with his steel rods. They fought for 50 bouts without a winner. Huyan Zhuo was secretly impressed with his foe. After a few more exchanges, both sides rang gongs to signal for a quick pause as each warrior rested.

After a quick breather, Huyan Zhuo rode back out and shouted, "Bald bandit! Come back out and let's settle this!"

Lu Zhishen was just about to answer the call, but Yang Zhi shouted, "Brother, take a break and watch me go capture that bastard!"

He galloped out and fought Huyan Zhuo to a standstill after 40 bouts, which again impressed Huyan Zhuo. "Where did these two come from?" he thought to himself. "They're really something, not your typical outlaws."

Recognizing Huyan Zhuo's skills as well, Yang Zhi backed off after a few more bouts and rode back to his lines. Huyan Zhuo let him go, and both sides called it a day. Lu Zhishen's forces backed off to a nearby ridge and set up camp.

Back in his tent, Huyan Zhuo was brooding and thinking to himself, "I was hoping it would be easy to capture these bandits. I never expected to meet a worthy foe. What rotten luck I have."

Just then, a messenger arrived and said, "The prefect is calling you back to protect the city. The bandits Kong Ming and Kong Liang (4) from White Tiger Mountain are attacking the city. He was afraid the city might fall, so he is asking you to go back."

Well, that was as good an excuse as any to walk away from a fight he wasn't sure he could win, so Huyan Zhuo packed up and moved out that night.

The next morning, Lu Zhishen, Yang Zhi, and Wu Song came looking for another fight, only to find all the enemy troops gone without a trace. They were surprised, while the chieftains Li Zhong and Zhou Tong were elated. They came down from Peach Blossom Mountain to thank their saviors, inviting them up to the stronghold for a feast. Presumably, Lu Zhishen did not steal any drinking vessels this time.



Meanwhile, Huyuan Zhuo returned to the prefectural seat of Qingzhou just in time to see a bandit army outside the city. This was led by the brothers Kong Ming and Kong Liang. We met them back in episode 46. Back then, they were the sons of an old local squire who was friends with Song Jiang, and these brothers had also crossed paths with Wu Song. But since we last met them, just a few things have happened. They got into a feud with a rich man in their village, and ended up killing that guy and his entire family. Then, they gathered 700 men and occupied White Tiger Mountain, taking up banditry. That was fine for them, but their uncle was living in the prefectural seat and was arrested by the prefect because of their transgression. So Kong Ming and Kong Liang came to attack Qingzhou to get their uncle back.

On this day, they faced off against Huyuan Zhuo, with Prefect Murong watching from the city wall. The elder brother Kong Ming rode out with spear in hand, but after just 20 bouts, he was getting smacked around by Huyuan Zhuo, who was the better fighter by a mile and was also trying to impress the prefect. All Kong Ming could do was dodge and parry. In the midst of their fight, Huyuan Zhuo reached over and pulled Kong Ming off his saddle, and his men promptly tied up the prisoner.

That sent the younger brother Kong Liang and the bandit lackeys fleeing, and the prefect ordered Huyuan Zhuo to give chase. They ended up routing the bandits, capturing 100-some people alive. Kong Liang managed to get away with some tattered remnants of his forces, and spent the night in an old temple.

Back at the prefectural seat, Huyuan Zhuo took his prisoner Kong Ming into the city to see the prefect, who was delighted. They locked Kong Ming in jail with his uncle and rewarded the troops. The prefect then asked Huyuan Zhuo about the battle at Peach Blossom Mountain.

“It would’ve been as easy as catching a turtle in a jar; just reach out and we’ve got them,” Huyuan Zhuo said. “But then out of nowhere, they got reinforcements from another group of bandits. There was

a monk and a big guy with a blue face. I fought them to a standstill twice. Those two have uncommon skills, not like typical outlaws. So I wasn't able to apprehend them yet."

Prefect Murong said, "That monk used to be a major under Old General Zhong. His name was Lu Da. He has become a monk, and goes by Lu Zhishen the Flowery Monk. That blue-faced man was a palace aid in the capital, named Yang Zhi the Bluefaced Beast. They also have a pilgrim named Wu Song. He used to be a constable and beat a tiger to death on Jingyang (3,2) Ridge. Those three are occupying Double Dragon Mountain and robbing and pillaging. They have resisted the authorities many times and killed several officers sent to apprehend them. So they're still at large."

"I was wondering why they were such good fighters," Huyan Zhuo said. "Turns out it's Yang Zhi and Lu Zhishen. They really live up to their reputations. But benefactor, do not worry. I have seen their skills, so sooner or later, I will capture them one by one and deliver them to the authorities."

While the prefect and Huyan Zhuo celebrated their victory, the younger Kong brother, Kong Liang, was staggering around with the remnants of his army when suddenly a group of soldiers dashed out from a forest. At their head was none other than Wu Song the Pilgrim. Remember that Kong Liang was acquainted with Wu Song, and by acquainted I mean he got his butt kicked by Wu Song in a squabble over a jug of wine and some meat. But they hugged it out later, and now, Kong Liang quickly kneeled and greeted Wu Song.

"I had heard that you and your brother were occupying White Tiger Mountain," Wu Song said as he helped Kong Liang up. "I've been meaning to come see you, but I haven't left my mountain, and it's out of the way, so I haven't made it over to see you. What brings you here?"

Kong Liang told Wu Song the backstory, and Wu Song said, "Don't worry. I have six brothers with me at Double Dragon Mountain. Li Zhong and Zhou Tong on Peach Blossom Mountain asked for our help because they were under siege. Lu Zhishen and Yang Zhi went ahead to fight Huyan Zhuo. They fought for a day, and then Huyan Zhuo left. We stayed for a celebration and got this horse as a gift. I was

leading my men back to the Double Dragon Mountain. My brothers are right behind me. I'll ask them to go attack Qingzhou and save your brother. How's that?"

Kong Liang thanked him, and after they waited for a bit, Lu Zhishen and Yang Zhi arrived. Wu Song introduced them and told them what happened. Lu Zhishen agreed with the idea of attacking Qingzhou and suggested that they get Li Zhong and Zhou Tong to join them in the assault as well.

"But Qingzhou has sturdy walls and strong troops, not to mention Huyan Zhuo's valor," Yang Zhi said. "I'm not putting ourselves down, but if you want to attack Qingzhou, you must follow one piece of advice from me. We need a large army to sack the city. I've heard about Song Jiang at Liangshan. They call him the Timely Rain, and he's Huyan Zhuo's nemesis. Let's combine our forces with Brother Kong's men, plus the troops from Peach Blossom Mountain, and go attack Qingzhou. In the meantime, Brother Kong Liang can go to Liangshan and ask Song Jiang to come help us. That is the best plan. Besides, Song Jiang is a good friend to two of you guys. What do you think?"

"That sounds good," Lu Zhishen said. "I'm always hearing people talk about how awesome Song Jiang is. It's a shame I've never met him. Everyone is singing his praises. He must be a real man to be so famous. When he was at Clear Winds Mountain, I wanted to go see him there, but when I got there he was gone. Such bad luck. Oh well. Brother Kong Liang, if you want to save your brother, then hurry to Liangshan and ask them for help. We will go fight those bastards first."

Thus agreed, Kong Liang handed his men over to Lu Zhishen, and only brought one man with him. They disguised themselves as merchants and headed for Liangshan. Meanwhile, Lu Zhishen, Yang Zhi, and Wu Song called up the chieftains Shi En the Golden-Eyed Tiger Cub and Cao Zheng the Knife-Wielding Demon from their own base, along with a couple hundred men. Li Zhong and Zhou Tong also came from Peach Blossom Mountain with all but about 50 of their men. They met up outside the prefectural seat of Qingzhou and started laying siege to the city.

We'll follow Kong Liang to Liangshan. He arrived at one of Liangshan's taverns, which was run by the chieftain Li (3) Li (4), the Life-Taking Judge. Li Li asked him where he was coming from and who he was looking for on the mountain.

"I'm from Qingzhou Prefecture, and I have an acquaintance on Liangshan," Kong Liang said.

"The base on the mountain is the home of bandit chieftains," Li Li said. "How can you go there?"

"I'm looking for Chieftain Song."

"Ah, in that case, I've got you covered," Li Li said. He immediately had his men offer Kong Liang wine.

"We have never met; why do you offer me wine?" Kong Liang asked.

"Sir, anyone who comes to look for our chieftains must be their old friends, so how could I dare to slight you? I'll go let them know right now."

Kong Liang now introduced himself and Li Li said, oh yeah, I've heard Song Jiang mention you. After they drank, Li Li shot an arrow across the way, and soon a boat came to ferry Kong Liang to Golden Sand Beach. As he walked up the mountain, he was impressed by the stout defense and the shimmering weapons. Soon, he saw Song Jiang approaching.

Kong Liang knelt, and when Song Jiang asked him why he had come, he started wailing.

"Brother, whatever is bothering you, just tell me," Song Jiang said. "I will go through fire and water to help you to the utmost. Please get up."

Kong Liang recounted what's happened since they last saw each other, and Song Jiang told him no problem, we'll take care of it.

So we are in for a big crossover episode as our heroes from various corners converge. To see how this battle will go, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, you wanted more heroes? We've got more. So join us next time. Thanks for listening!