

Welcome to the Water Margin Podcast. This is episode 88.

Last time, Song Jiang decided that he absolutely needed to recruit a magnate named Lu Junyi into Liangshan's ranks, because the guy was both famous and an awesome fighter. So his strategist Wu Yong paid Lu Junyi a visit disguised as a fortune-teller and told Lu Junyi that he had a calamity coming and that he had to take a trip 300-some miles to the southeast. That, of course, took him right by Liangshan. Lu Junyi fell for the trick, and before you know it, his whole entourage had been kidnapped, and he found himself wandering the marsh alone in the dark.

Fortunately, he came upon a fisherman who offered to ferry him to a nearby town. So Lu Junyi got into his boat, and they took off into the reeds. They had not gone but a mile, though, when they heard another small boat approaching. As it came closer, Lu Junyi could see two men on the boat. The one in front was stripped to the waist, holding a long pole for propelling the boat through the reeds, while the one in the back was peddling with oars. As they came near, the man in the front started singing these lines:

Books and poems I was never born to read,
So in Liangshan Marsh I now reside,
Preparing bows to shoot fierce tigers,
And luring big turtles with baited hooks.

When Lu Junyi heard those words, he fell silent. Just then, from the reeds on the right side, another small boat approached with two men on it. Amid the creaking of the oars, Lu Junyi could hear the man standing at the front of this boat sing as well:

A rogue from the day I was born,
My favorite pastime is killing men.

Thousands in gold mean nothing to me,
All I want is to nab the Jade Qilin.

Hearing this guy call him out by his moniker, Lu Junyi could only bemoan his misfortune. Just then, another small boat emerged from the reeds straight ahead. The guy at the front of this boat also started to sing:

A boat sails through the reeds,
A hero this place wanders by,
Valiant, if this you can understand,
Out of trouble you shall fly.

And in case you forgot, those were the lines from the prophecy that Wu Yong had spoken to Lu Junyi, which the latter wrote on the wall in his house. So obviously all three of these boats were coming for Lu Junyi, and the men at the front of these boats were the three Ruan brothers.

As he watched them close in, Lu Junyi started to panic, especially since he didn't know how to swim.

"Hurry, row me to the shore!" he ordered the fisherman on his own boat, figuring that he could at least hold his own against the bandits there, whereas he was helpless on the water.

But that fisherman just laughed and said, "By the blue sky above and the green waters below, I was born on the Sundown River, came to Liangshan Marsh, and have never concealed my name. I am none other than Li Jun the River Dragon. Mr. Lu, surrender now, or you would be throwing your life away for nothing!"

Lu Junyi was taken aback, and then he barked, "It's either you or me then!" as he raised his broadsword and stabbed at Li Jun. But Li Jun did a backflip into the water, leaving Lu Junyi by himself on a boat that was now spinning in place.

Lu Junyi started stabbing at the water, but just then, another man surfaced at the back of the boat. This was the chieftain Zhang Shun, the White Streak in the Waves. As he treaded water, he grabbed the rudder and gave it a quick twist. The boat immediately capsized, sending Lu Junyi into the water.

Lu Junyi was now helpless. Zhang Shun easily grabbed him by the waist underwater and disarmed him. The next thing you know, Zhang Shun had dragged him onto land, where about 60 bandits were waiting. As soon as Lu Junyi touched ground, they surrounded him, removed the short broadsword that hung from his waist, stripped off his wet clothing, and started to tie him up.

But just then, Dai Zong the Magic Traveler rushed onto the scene and shouted, "Do not harm Mr. Lu!"

So instead of being tied up, Lu Junyi found himself being offered a nice new set of clothes. He changed, and then eight bandit lackeys brought over a sedan chair and helped him into it. In the distance came a group of bandits holding about 30 pairs of red gauze lanterns, lighting the way for a whole welcome party, led by Song Jiang, the strategist Wu Yong, and the priest Gongsun Sheng, as well as a bunch of other chieftains. When they got near, they all dismounted and fell to their knees.

Lu Junyi hurriedly got out of his sedan chair and kneeled in return, saying, "I am your prisoner. I only ask for a quick death."

But Song Jiang laughed out loud and said, "Sir, please get in your sedan chair."

Everyone then got back on their horses and made their way up the mountain, accompanied by drums and music. Once they arrived outside the Hall of Loyalty and Honor, they invited Lu Junyi into the hall, which was lit up bright as day by candles.

Song Jiang now approached Lu Junyi and apologized, saying, "I have long heard of your great name, which reverberates in my ears like thunder. Getting to meet you today has fulfilled my lifelong wish. My brothers offended you just now, please forgive us."

Wu Yong also chimed in, "It was on my brother's orders that I came to call on you, disguised as a fortune-teller, to trick you into coming here so that you may join us in delivering justice on heaven's behalf."

Song Jiang now offered the top command chair to Lu Junyi, but Lu Junyi replied courteously, "I have neither knowledge nor skills. I accidentally offended your prestige. Not even 10,000 deaths can atone for it. Why do you make such jests?"

Song Jiang smiled and said, "It is no jest. We really admire your prowess and virtue and have been thirsting for you to join us. We pray that you will not spurn this remote place and will become our leader. We will obey your every command."

"It is difficult for me to comply," Lu Junyi said. "I would rather die."

Sensing that they were approaching an impasse, Wu Yong quickly cut in and said we can talk about this another day. The bandits then arranged for food and wine for Lu Junyi, who had no choice but to humor them and drink a few cups before being led to some quarters to rest for the night.

The next morning, Song Jiang threw a huge banquet to honor Lu Junyi. After much back and forth, they finally got him to consent to taking the center seat for the feast. After a few rounds of wine, Song Jiang got up, offered him a toast, and said, "We offended you last night, please forgive us. Even though our base is small, I hope you will consider our loyalty and honor. I am willingly yielding my leadership to you; please do not refuse."

“Chieftain, you are mistaken,” Lu Junyi said. “I have never committed any crimes, and I still have a little bit of property back home. In life or death, I am a loyal subject to the state. I would rather die than to comply.”

Now all the chieftains, led by Wu Yong, pleaded with Lu Junyi one after another. Yet, he remained steadfast in his refusal. After a while, Wu Yong said, “Since Mr. Lu is unwilling, how can we force him to join us? We would only be able to keep his body here, not his heart. But even so, it’s such a rare opportunity to have you here. Please stay here with us for a few days, and then we will escort you back home.”

“It’s not a problem for me to stay here for a bit, but my family will be wondering what happened to me,” Lu Junyi said.

“That’s easy enough,” Wu Yong replied. “We can send your steward Li Gu (4) back home first with your carts, and then you can follow in a few days. That would be no problem.”

He then turned to Li Gu and asked, “Are all your carts and merchandise accounted for?”

“They are all here, not a single thing is missing,” Li Gu replied.

Song Jiang now gave Li Gu two big ingots of silver. He also gifted two small ingots of silver to the other two attendants who accompanied Lu Junyi, and each of the 10 cart drivers got 10 taels of silver.

As this group prepared to leave, Lu Junyi said to Li Gu, “You know the difficult situation I’m in. When you get back, tell my wife not to worry. I will be back in a few days.”

“Of course, of course!” said Li Gu, who was focused on getting out of there as quickly as possible, before the bandits changed their minds. As he and the entourage left the Hall of Loyalty and Honor, Wu Yong got up and told Lu Junyi, “I will see them to the foot of the mountain and then come back. Please rest easy.”

A little while later, Li Gu, the two attendants, and the 10 cart drivers arrived at Golden Sand Beach. There, they were greeted by Wu Yong, who was seated under a willow tree and flanked by 500 bandit lackeys. Wu Yong called Li Gu over and gave him a few parting words, finishing with “We were going to kill you all, but then it would make us look bad. So we are releasing you, but give up any hope of your master going home!”

Li Gu and company kowtowed many times to thank Wu Yong for his mercy, and then Wu Yong had them ferried across the water.

Once that group was gone, Wu Yong returned to the Hall of Loyalty and Honor and rejoined the party. They drank until 9 o’clock that night. The next day, the bandits threw another party, during which Lu Junyi said, “I thank you all for your good intentions in asking me to stay, but the days feel like years for me here. I will take my leave of you today.”

But Song Jiang said, “Untalented as I am, it is my great fortune to get to meet you. Let me prepare a small banquet tomorrow to pour my heart out to you. Please do not refuse.”

Faced with such a sincere invitation, Lu Junyi could not say no. So he stayed another day. But then, the next day, it was Wu Yong’s turn to issue a personal invitation. And the day after that, it was Gongsun Sheng who wanted a heart-to-heart with Lu Junyi. And so it went, with each of the 30-some top chieftains taking his turn hosting a banquet in Lu Junyi’s honor. Just like that, more than a month had passed, and Lu Junyi was like, “Guys, I really need to go.” So Song Jiang said ok, let me arrange for a going-away party for you tomorrow.

The next day, Song Jiang held a banquet to see Lu Junyi off. But during this banquet, a bunch of chieftains got up and said to Lu Junyi, “As much as Brother Song admires you, we admire you even more! So why do you only go to his banquet?! You shouldn’t scorn us just because you respect him!”

And Li Kui the Black Whirlwind piped up and shouted, "I risked my life to go to Daming Prefecture to invite you here, and yet you won't even attend our banquet! That's it! I'm going to cling to you until you do us this honor!"

Seeing this, Wu Yong laughed and told Lu Junyi, "Who the heck issues an invitation like that? Sir, please don't mind them. On account of their sincerity, please stay just a few more days."

Given the situation, Lu Junyi could not say no, so another four or five days of nonstop feasting passed, and Lu Junyi once again said he had to go. But now, Zhu Wu the Divine Strategist led a group of second-tier chieftains to come see him. Zhu Wu said, "Even though we are of lower rank, we too have made contributions to Liangshan. So is our wine poisoned or what? Why do you refuse to drink with us? It's ok with me, but the other brothers might make a scene."

Trying to defuse this ... umm ... spontaneous show of dissention, Wu Yong told them, "Don't get upset. Let me ask on your behalf for Mr. Lu to stay a little while longer. As the saying goes, 'Advice accompanied by wine is never a bad thing.'"

With all this pleading, Lu Junyi had no choice but to stay another few days. So all told, he had now been on Liangshan for more than 2 months. It was the fifth month of the year when he left on this trip, so by now, the Mid-Autumn Festival was drawing near, and he really felt the need to go home now. So he pleaded with Song Jiang to please not throw him any more parties and let him go. And Song Jiang said, "That's easy enough. We will see you off at Golden Sand Beach tomorrow."

The next day, true to his word, Song Jiang returned all of Lu Junyi's clothing and weapons and a group of chieftains saw him off. On the beach, Song Jiang offered him a tray of gold and silver as a parting gift, but Lu Junyi declined, saying, "I don't mean to boast, but I have plenty of money at home. I just need enough travel money for the road. I dare not accept anything else."

And then he hopped on the boat that was to ferry him across, before any other chieftains could raise a stink about not getting the honor of inviting him to a party. Everyone said goodbye and returned to the base.

Lu Junyi traveled day and night. After 10 days, he was approaching Daming Prefecture. He arrived on the outskirts of the city too late in the day to make it in before the city gates closed, so he found lodging at a village inn.

The next morning, he left the inn and walked toward the city. After less than a mile on the road, he suddenly came across someone wearing shabby clothing and a tattered headscarf. As soon as this man saw Lu Junyi, he fell to his knees and kowtowed. Lu Junyi took a closer look and was startled to find that this was none other than Yan (4) Qing (1) the Prodigy, his loyal servant and confidant.

“How did you end up like this?” Lu Junyi asked with surprise.

Yan Qing led him to a quiet spot behind an earthen wall and told him, “Master, less than half a month after you departed, steward Li Gu came back and told the lady, ‘The master has joined up with the Liangshan bandits to be their No. 2 man.’ Then, he immediately went to the authorities to report you. He and your wife are now a couple. I tried to object, so they kicked me out. They even took all my clothes and chased me out of the city. They also instructed all your relatives and acquaintances that anyone who shelters me or helps me in any way can expect to be taken to court. So no one dared to take me in. I couldn’t stay in the city, so I came out here to beg for a living. Right now I’m staying in a small temple. I was just planning to go to Liangshan to find you. Master, if you are coming from Liangshan, then listen to me: Go straight back there and then worry about next steps. If you enter the city, you will be walking into a trap.”

When he heard all this, Lu Junyi flew into a rage, not at his steward or his wife, but at Yan Qing. “My wife is not that kind of woman!” he barked at Yan Qing. “Don’t you dare to feed me that BS!”

“Master, you don’t have eyes behind your head, so how can you know?!” Yan Qing pleaded. “You are always preoccupied with your martial arts and pay no attention to your wife in matters of romance. There was something between her and Li Gu in the past, and now, they have become husband and wife behind closed doors. If you go home, they are going to do you in!”

“My family has lived in Daming for five generations!” Lu Junyi said angrily. “Who has not heard of me?! How many heads does that Li Gu have, that he would dare to do such a thing?! Could it be that YOU did something wrong and so you made up all this nonsense?! I’ll get the truth at home! You just mind your own damn business!”

As Lu Junyi started to walk away, Yan Qing burst out crying, fell to his knees, and clinged to his master’s clothes, refusing to let him go. But Lu Junyi sent him sprawling with one kick and then stomped down the road.

Later that day, Lu Junyi entered the front door of his home. All the stewards were stunned to see him. The head steward Li Gu quickly greeted him and helped him into the main parlor, where Li Gu kneeled and kowtowed.

“Where is Yan Qing?” Lu Junyi asked knowingly.

“[Sigh] Master, don’t even ask,” Li Gu answered. “It’s a long story, and you might get angry. Please rest first.”

Just then, Lu Junyi’s wife, Lady Jia (3), came rushing out from behind a screen in tears.

“My wife, don’t cry. Tell me what happened with Yan Qing,” Lu Junyi said.

“Husband, just ... don’t ask for now. We’ll tell you all about it in time,” she said.

But that only raised Lu Junyi’s suspicions, and he pressed them further about Yan Qing.

“Master, please change and eat some breakfast, and then we can explain,” Li Gu suggested.

Lu Junyi relented, and his men began to prepare breakfast. Soon, the food was ready. Just as he was about to dig in, Lu Junyi suddenly heard shouts from the front and back doors of the residence. Before he could ask, about 300 policemen had stormed into the hall. Stunned, Lu Junyi didn't even put up any resistance as the police tied him up and rushed him out, beating him with their staffs every step of the way.

So, remember the little chat that Wu Yong had with Li Gu when the latter was leaving Liangshan? Well, aside from the "we were going to kill you" part, Wu Yong also told Li Gu, "Your master has already agreed to become our second-in-command. Even before he came to Liangshan, he had written a rebellious poem on a wall in his home. Just read straight down and you'll see the hidden declaration of rebellion."

And that brings us back to the poem, which was a four-line prophecy that Wu Yong, disguised as a fortune-teller, had spoken out loud and asked Lu Junyi to write down on the wall. This is another one of those delicious little Chinese word plays that doesn't really translate into another language. Basically, in the original Chinese, the first character on each of the first three lines are the same as the three characters in Lu Junyi's name. And the first character of the last line means "to rebel." So when you read vertically instead of horizontally, the first column of the poem says, "Lu Junyi rebels." And it was written in Lu Junyi's own handwriting, so voila! Corroborating evidence!

As it turns out, every word that Yan Qing had told Lu Junyi was true. The steward Li Gu had indeed come home and promptly went to the authorities to tell them that his master had turned brigand. And then, he and Lu Junyi's wife, Lady Jia (3), did indeed shack up. When they saw Lu Junyi come home that morning, they rushed off a message to the authorities, and the cops came and found Lu Junyi conveniently delivered into their hands.

Once they arrested him, the cops took Lu Junyi to the office of Governor Liang, who was in charge of both military and civilian affairs in Daming Prefecture. Remember that this Governor Liang was the son-in-law of the premiere Cai Jing, and he was the one who tasked Yang Zhi the Bluefaced Beast with delivering birthday gifts to the premiere. So, he was no stranger to the guys on Liangshan. That morning, he called his court into session, and Lu Junyi was dragged in front of him. Li Gu and Lady Jia were also there as witnesses.

“You were a law-abiding citizen of this city!” Governor Liang barked at Lu Junyi. “So why did you turn brigand and take the No. 2 seat on Liangshan?! And now, you have come back to serve as the inside man to attack the city! Now that you have been apprehended, what do you have to say for yourself?!”

Lu Junyi replied, “Your servant was a fool. Liangshan’s Wu Yong came to my house disguised as a fortune-teller and tricked me into going to Liangshan Marsh, where I was detained for more than two months. I was fortunate enough to get away and return home. I have no ill intentions. I hope you will see the truth.”

“How can that be?!” Governor Liang shot back. “If you weren’t in cahoots with the bandits, why did you stay with them for so long? Right now, your wife and Li Gu have submitted a petition accusing you. Is that fake?”

Li Gu piped up and said, “Master, at this point, you might as well confess. That hidden rebellious poem you wrote on the wall at home is proof. There’s no disputing that.”

Lady Jia also chimed in, “It’s not that we are trying to do you in. But we are afraid you would bring trouble upon us. As the old saying goes, ‘One person’s treason leads to the death of all nine clans of his family.’ ”

Lu Junyi started shouting that he was innocent, but Li Gu said, “Master, no need to maintain your innocence. If you are guilty, there’s no getting out of it. And if you are innocent, then it’d be easy enough to prove. Just confess, so you don’t have to suffer.”

Lady Jia also said, "Husband, it's hard to get a false charge into court, and equally hard to deny the facts. If you had caused any trouble, then you would get me killed, too. The guards' rods are unfeeling, but your skin and flesh are not. Confess, and your sentence might get lighter."

And of course, as these things tend to go, Li Gu had already pushed silver into the right hands, and the clerk of the court, a certain Clerk Zhang, now said to Governor Liang, "Such a sly scoundrel would not confess without torture."

"Quite right!" Governor Liang said. He turned to his cops and shouted, "Beat him!"

The cops immediately tied up Lu Junyi, put him on the ground, and went to town on him with their rods. They beat him so hard that his skin split open, his blood flowed out, and he passed out three or four times.

Finally, when he could no longer endure the torture, Lu Junyi looked up to the heavens, sighed, and lamented, "I must be destined to die a wrongful death. Fine! I'll confess!"

Clerk Zhang then wrote down his confession, had him put in a cangue that weighed 100 catties, and sent him off to the dungeon. All the spectators at court that day felt for Lu Junyi, though no one could really do anything for him, given the charges.

When he was dragged into prison, Lu Junyi had to endure another caning, this one being 30 blows that were given to every new prisoner. He was then taken to the pavilion in the prison courtyard and made to kneel in front of the prison superintendent.

"Do you recognize me?" the superintendent asked.

Lu Junyi looked up and did not dare to make a sound. This superintendent's name was Cai (4) Fu (2), and he not only watched over the prison, but also served as the executioner. He was a native of the city. Because of his great skills at lopping off heads, people all called him Iron Arm. Standing next to him and

holding a staff was his younger brother, who was named Cai (4) Qing (4). He always wore a flower in his hair, so people gave him the nickname “Single Blossom.”

After telling his brother to put Lu Junyi in a cell, Cai Fu (2) decided to go home and run an errand. As soon as he left the prison compound, a man appeared around a corner, holding a pot of rice and looking troubled. Cai Fu recognized him. It was Yan Qing, Lu Junyi’s confidant.

“Brother Yan, what are you doing?” Cai Fu asked.

Yan Qing kneeled and said, with tears streaming from his eyes, “Superintendent, please take pity on my master, Mr. Lu. He was unjustly convicted, and has no money to ensure that he gets fed in prison! I managed to cobble together this half pot of rice for him by begging outside the city. Please do me a favor.”

“I know what happened,” Cai Fu said. “You go on and deliver the rice to him.”

Yan Qing thanked him and went to the prison. Cai Fu, meanwhile, continued on his way. After he crossed a bridge, a waiter from a tea shop flagged him down, shouting, “Superintendent, there’s a customer upstairs in my shop who’s asking to speak with you.”

Cai Fu went upstairs, and saw that it was none other than Lu Junyi’s backstabbing steward Li Gu. To see what Li Gu wanted to talk to him about, tune in to the next episode of the Water Margin Podcast. Also on the next episode, Cai Fu gets yet another surprise visitor. So, join us next time. Thanks for listening!