

# THE WATER MARGIN OUTLAWS OF THE MARSH

The Classic Chinese Novel

Written by Shi Naian

Translated by J. H. Jackson

With a new introduction by Edwin Lowe

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## CHAPTER 1

# Drill Instructor Wang Goes Stealthily to Yanan Prefecture; Shi Jin Defends His Village

**D**URING the reign of the Emperor Zhezong of the Song Dynasty there lived at the Eastern Capital Bianliang, in Kaifeng Prefecture, a loose profligate, named Gao.\* He could handle well either spear or cudgel, and was an extremely good player at football. He was the second son of a Gao family, but instead of calling him Gao the Second,<sup>†</sup> people gave him the nickname of Gao Qiu meaning Gao "the Ball." Later on, however, he adopted another character, also pronounced Qiu.

He could play well on wood or string instruments, but was no good at poetry or literature. If there was a discussion of benevolence, justice, propriety, wisdom, or virtue he was unable to take part. He wasted his time in the company of the son of a wealthy man, and every day these two spent their time in pleasure resorts. His conduct became so bad that at last the wealthy man lodged a complaint before the Prefect who had him arrested, punished with twenty blows of the bamboo, and then banished from the capital.

Gao Qiu went to Huaixi in Linhuai Prefecture where he found refuge in a gambling den, which afforded shelter to all the lazy rascals from all places. Three years after this, however, the Emperor granted an amnesty so as to show his benevolence. Upon hearing of this, Gao Qiu decided to return to the capital, and got an introduction to a man named Deng Jiangshi who kept a drug store at the Jinliang Bridge. Upon reading the letter, this man remembered the bad reputation of Gao Qiu, and was afraid that if he lived at his house he might have

\* A Prefecture was a level of government incorporating a number of counties, centered on a prefectural capital city or town. As a general rule, the use of "prefecture" or "county" in this edition will refer to the geographic area, which may include that administrative level's city or town eg "Yanan Prefecture." A specific reference to the city or town itself will use the specific name, eg "Yanan."

<sup>†</sup> A common appellation, indicating a person's place in the family hierarchy, in this case, the second son of the Gao family.

an evil influence on his children. So after about ten days Dong spoke to Gao Qiu, "Here we can offer you little help. I will however recommend you to a certain Su the Younger, a scholar, who may assist you in cutting a fine career. What do you think of that?"

Gao Qiu was much pleased at this and thanked Dong Jiangshi. Dong wrote a note and sent this with Gao Qiu to the residence of the high official. The doorkeeper announced the arrival, and the scholar Su came out to see Gao Qiu. He also remembered that Gao Qiu was a profligate and decided to get rid of him by recommending him to the Emperor's son-in-law, the Prince Consort Wang Jinqing as a steward.

The following day Su sent Gao Qiu with a servant to Prince Consort Wang Jinqing. This Prince Wang was the husband of the younger sister of the Emperor Zhezong, and son-in-law of the Emperor Shenzong. He took pleasure in meeting flaboyant, stylish men, and when he received the introduction he was glad, and he made Gao Qiu his personal attendant.

An ancient saying is: "Remoteness begets neglect; nearness brings about intimacy." It happened that on his birthday Prince Wang suddenly gave orders to prepare a feast, and specially invited his maternal uncle Prince Duan who was the eleventh son of the late Emperor Shenzong, and the younger brother of the Emperor Zhezong. He controlled the affairs of the Emperor's eastern palaces where he was known as the Ninth Prince. He was intelligent and handsome—but his taste was not so—he preferring profligacy. However, he was a good performer on the lute, he could play chess, paint pictures, and was an excellent footballer. On the day mentioned Prince Duan took the seat of honor at the feast prepared. When the wine was brought in they drank several cups, and after the second course Prince Duan took leave for the toilet. He then retired to the library for a rest and there he happened to see on the reading table a pair of lions made of white jade used as paperweights. They were of elegant workmanship, and he admired them very much. Prince Wang saw that Prince Duan was fond of them so he said, "There is also a jade brush rack with a dragon design made by the same hand, but it is not here now. I will get it tomorrow and send both of them to you." Prince Duan was much pleased and said, "I am much obliged for your generosity. I think the brush rack must be very fine." The two men then returned to the banquet and feasted until the evening—when they were very intoxicated they separated, and Prince Duan returned to the palace.

The following day Prince Wang packed the two jade-lion paper-

weights and the jade brush rack in a golden box, wrote a letter, and sent Gao Qiu off with them. Upon reaching Prince Duan's palace the doorkeeper reported his arrival to the courtyard attendant who inquired his business and then said, "My master is playing football with the eunuchs in the courtyard. You may go in by yourself." The courtyard attendant accompanied him to the gate, and there Gao Qiu saw Prince Duan wearing as a cap, a soft gauze towel of the Tang Dynasty style, and arrayed in a purple gown embroidered with a dragon and a waistbelt with two tassels. The gown was folded up and tucked in the belt. His boots were inlaid with golden thread in the design of a phoenix. There were three or five eunuchs playing football with him.

Gao Qiu dared not to intrude—so he took up his position behind the servants. Now good luck had come to Gao Qiu. The ball rebounded from the ground and Prince Duan failed to kick it—it bounced into the crowd of spectators and landed at the side of Gao Qiu. He saw the ball and instantly had courage. He used the mandarin-duck twist (one leg behind the other) and kicked the ball back to Prince Duan. Prince Duan saw this and being pleased with the exhibition, asked who he was.

Gao Qiu knelt down and said, "I am a confidential servant of Prince Consort Wang and by his orders, I have brought two jade curios to present to Your Highness," so saying, he offered the letter with both hands.

Prince Duan hearing this, laughed and said that Prince Wang was very obliging. He opened the box and after examining the curios handed them to an attendant. He then asked Gao Qiu, "Can you play football? Who are you?" Gao Qiu clasping his hands and kneeling down said, "I am called Gao Qiu. I was punishable for kicking that football." Prince Duan said, "Good! come into the playground and again try." Gao Qiu saluted with folded arms, and said, "What kind of man I am to dare play with Your Highness?" Prince Duan replied, "This is the Society of Gathering of Clouds," also known as the "World's Horizon" (meaning, there is plenty of room for you). It does not matter if you play." Gao Qiu again saluted, saying, "I cannot do it." He begged leave to depart time and again, but as Prince Duan insisted upon his playing, Gao Qiu had no escape—so he kowtowed, and confessed his inability, he then untied the garters round his knees and moved towards the center of the ground. Gao Qiu kicked a few times, and Prince Duan applauded. Gao Qiu had to use all his skill to please the Prince. He played the ball as though it stuck to his body like glue or

paste. He never missed it. Prince Duan was highly amused and was unwilling to let Gao Qiu return, so he kept him there for the night. Next day Prince Duan ordered a banquet and sent a special invitation to Prince Consort Wang. The latter had become anxious at the absence of Gao Qiu but upon receipt of this invitation he mounted a horse and went to Prince Duan's palace. Upon entering the banquet hall Duan expressed his gratitude for the curios and then said, "This man Gao Qiu kicks equally well with both feet. I should like to have him for my personal attendant—what do you say?" Prince Wang answered, "If you have any use for him, you may keep him." Prince Duan was pleased and offering a cup of wine thanked him. The two men chatted until evening.

From that time Prince Duan had Gao Qiu as a special servant and the latter did his work well. Every day he accompanied Prince Duan and was always close at his hand. In less than two months the Emperor Zhezong died without an heir. A large number of civil and military officials petitioned Prince Duan to become Emperor. He ascended the throne with the reign title of Huizong, and known with the Taoist titles of High Priest of Jade Purity and the Emperor of Subtle Truth.

Upon ascending the throne he did nothing remarkable. One day he said to Gao Qiu, "I want to make you an official. But I cannot promote you unless you have shown your merit. Now I will first tell the Grand Council to record your name as an imperial attendant." Within six months Gao Qiu was raised to Marshal of the Imperial Guard.

Before proceeding to his new post he selected a fortunate hour and a lucky day to begin his duties. All the lower officers of various military ranks—both cavalry and infantry—visited him to pay their respects—present their credentials with details of their records. Gao Qiu, the Marshal of the Imperial Guard, examined these reports one by one and noticed one was missing; that is of Wang Jin, the Drill Instructor of the Imperial Guard. About two weeks before Wang Jin had been sick and had not been able to attend business at his *yamen*.\* Gao Qiu was very angry at this and shouted, "What nonsense! His credentials are here but he himself has not come. This is disobedience, yet he pretends to be sick at home. Men, have him brought here at once." He forthwith sent men to arrest Wang Jin.

Now this Wang Jin had no wife and lived with his mother who was over sixty years of age. The sergeant spoke to Wang Jin, "Marshal Gao

\* A *yamen* was the office of a government official or bureaucracy.

Qiu of the Imperial Guard has assumed his post but has not yet seen you. The Adjutant reported that you were sick at home but Marshal Gao Qiu did not believe this and has sent me to arrest you—you had better go and see him. If you do not go, I shall be implicated." Wang Jin hearing this saw no alternative but to go, in spite of his sickness.

Upon entering the door of the headquarters he saw the Marshal at the other end of the hall and kowtowed four times, then bowing he called "*muo*" (a sound to attract attention almost equivalent to saying "waiting your order"), then lifting his head he stood at one side.

Marshal Gao Qiu asked, "Are you not the son of Wang Sheng who used to be a Drill Instructor of the whole army?" Wang Jin admitted this.

Marshal Gao Qiu then shouted at him, "So it is you—your father used to sell medicine and exercise the fencing stick to attract a crowd on the street. What military skill have you? But don't be supercilious because I can court-martial you—you must not dare to presume on your rank and differ from my point of view. On whose influence are you depending? What excuse have you for resting at home?" Wang Jin answered, "I speak the truth. I am certainly sick and have not yet recovered." Marshal Gao Qiu used abusive language and said, "You banished thief! If you were sick how could you come here?" Then Wang Jin said, "You summoned me here so I had to come." Marshal Gao Qiu was very angry and shouted an order to the attendants to seize Wang Jin and beat him severely. Among the junior officers there were many who were friendly with Wang Jin, they therefore joined to plead to Marshal Gao Qiu, "Today is your inauguration day it is a lucky day, please forgive this man, this time."

Marshal Gao Qiu spoke in a loud voice, "You banished thief! These junior officers want me to forgive you. I will speak to you again tomorrow." Wang Jin confessed his guilt. Holding up his head he recognized that he was Gao Qiu. He left the headquarters and heaving a sigh said, "Just now my life is insecure; this Gao Qiu was previously at the capital known as Gao the Second—head of a gang of lazy men. At that time he was learning to use the cudgels, and my father hit him, and for three or four months he could not get up from a sick bed. Now he has fortunately become Marshal of the Imperial Guard, and is eager for revenge. I did not know that he was my superior officer. From ancient times it has been said: 'Fear not the authorities, except those that have authority over you.' There is no help for me. He returned home in a very melancholy mood."

He told his mother about the affair, and they held together and cried: "My son, of thirty-six ways of doing a thing going is the only one that is the best. I am afraid there is no safe place for us." Wang Jin said, "What you say, mother, is true. Your son has also thought of this plan. There is at Yanan Prefecture a General who guards the frontier and controls many military officers, who used to come to the capital to see me fence. Why should we not now fly to him for refuge? At that place I could get employment and settle down to a quiet life."

Mother and son discussed this matter and after deciding, she said, "My son, I must go with you secretly; but I am afraid of the sentries who are stationed outside the door by the headquarters, and we certainly will not be able to get away if they hear of our plans." Wang Jin said, "Never mind, don't worry, mother, I will arrange matters satisfactorily with them." Before the sun set Wang Jin called the sentry Zhang to come inside. He gave him an order—"After you have had your supper I want you to go to a place to do something for me." The sentry inquired where he was to go. Wang Jin said, "Because of my sickness I once took a vow to offer sacrifice at the Yue Temple outside the Shanzao Gate—I wish to be there tomorrow morning and be the first person to burn incense—I want you to go this evening and inform the head priest of this matter. Tell him to have the doors open early tomorrow morning and wait until I come to burn the first incense. There I shall present three sacrificial meats to the gods Liu, Li, and Wang. You must stay at the temple till I come."

Zhang, the sentry replied, "I have already had my supper and will now go to the temple to arrange matters."

That night the mother and son packed their baggage—making two loads for carrying on a pole. They filled two bags with fodder to be tied on the horse, and waited until nearly dawn. Then Wang Jin awakened Li, the other sentry, and giving him silver told him to go to the temple and buy the three meats for the sacrifices, as he himself would buy some yellow candles and would arrive later. Li, the sentry, took the money and departed. Wang Jin saddled the horse and led it out of the stable, fastening the fodder on with ropes and making all tight, he assisted his mother to mount. The furniture, etc., was abandoned. Locking the door he shouldered his load and followed the horse. It was the fifth watch about 4 A.M. and was still dark—so availing themselves of this, they left by the Xihua Gate—and traveled quickly toward Yanan Prefecture, Shaanxi province.

The two sentries at the temple bought the meats for the sacrifices,

cooked them, and then waited until about 11 A.M. without seeing Wang Jin. Sentry Li became anxious and returned to the house to look for Wang Jin. He found that the doors were locked, and he could not enter. After half a day he saw nobody come. Sentry Zhang stayed at the temple until evening and then returned to the house. They both watched the house during the night without seeing Wang Jin or his mother. The following day they inquired of Wang's relatives but no one could be found. They did not wish to be implicated, and therefore reported the matter to the headquarters.

Marshal Gao Qiu upon hearing the report was very angry and wrote a dispatch instructing the officials in every prefecture and district to arrest Wang Jin. The two sentries were free from all blame.

Wang Jin and his mother traveled a good distance from the capital taking their meals on the way as chance permitted. They had been on the way over a month, when one evening Wang Jin remarked to his mother who was riding the horse in front, "May Heaven have pity on us and we are now beyond the reach of legal punishment, as although Marshal Gao Qiu has ordered my arrest, Yanan Prefecture is not far away." They both felt contented but they were not aware that they had passed the only available inn. As it grew dusk, however, they saw the glimmer of a light in a forest a good distance away. Wang Jin decided to investigate as to whether they could stay there for the night. He went into the forest, and saw a farmyard which was surrounded by a mud wall, with about three hundred willow trees outside. He knocked at the gate, and when a servant came he saluted with folded hands. He explained the situation, and asked for a night's lodging for his mother and himself for which they would pay.

The servant went inside to report the matter, and upon his return said the farmer wished to see them. Wang Jin requested his mother to dismount and tied the horse to a tree. He put his load on the threshing floor, and then they followed the servant into the house.

The farmer was over sixty years of age, and his hair was all white. He was wearing a warm cap to protect his head from the dust; a loose fitting gown with a black sash round the waist, and dressed leather boots. Wang Jin saluted, but the farmer said, "Friend, don't stand on ceremony. You are travelers in distress. Please be seated."

Wang Jin and his mother, observing the rules of propriety, sat down, and in answer to the farmer's questions Wang Jin explained, "My name is Zhang, and I lived in the capital. Business was bad so I sold all my things, and am now on my way to Yanan Prefecture where