

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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Berkeley Books Pte. Ltd.

61 Tai Seng Avenue #02-12

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Tel: (65) 6280-1330

Fax: (65) 6280-6290

inquiries@periplus.com.sg

www.periplus.com

Japan

Turtle Publishing

Yaekari Building, 3rd Floor

5-4-12 Osaka, Shinagawa-ku

Tokyo 141 0032

Tel: (81) 3 5437-0171

Fax: (81) 3 5437-0755

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CHAPTER 4

Little Tyrant When Drunk Goes Inside the Bed Curtains; Lu Da, the Monk, Has a Fight at Taohua Village

THE Abbot spoke, "Zhishen, you certainly cannot stay here, but I have a brother in religion called Zhi Qing Jingshen, who is the Abbot of Great Xiangguo Monastery in Kaifeng, and you can go there for refuge, and work for the monks. I have here a letter of introduction for you. Last night I thought over your case, and decided to give you four sentences from our sacred sayings, and until your dying day you must not forget them."

Lu Da (Zhishen) knelt down, and said, "I am willing to listen to these sayings."

The Abbot continued and said: (1) "When you see a forest you will be improved; (2) when you see a mountain you will become rich; (3) when you enter a prefecture you will move on; and (4) when you see a river (*jiang*, also a surname) you will stop."

Lu Da upon hearing these four "sayings" kowtowed three times. He then put on his back a bundle, two girdles round his waist, hid away the letter, bid farewell to the Abbot and the crowd of monks. He departed from Mount Wutai and went to the inn in the village near the blacksmith's shop, where he stayed for a few days until the monk's staff and broadsword were finished. He also got a scabbard for the sword, and had the staff varnished. He took a number of pieces of silver and paid the blacksmith. He left, and the passers-by gazed after him as he was really a very strange sight. He followed the road towards the Eastern Capital (Kaifeng). In more than half a month he had not slept in a single monastery; but had rested and eaten his food at inns, and bought his wine in wine shops. One day he was enjoying the scenery of a mountain stream and did not notice it was evening, and that he had not found a place to sleep. The road was quite deserted. After he had gone thirty li more, he passed over a plank bridge, where he saw in the distance a red light emerging from a group of trees. It was a farmhouse in a wood with surrounding wild mountains rising one

above the other. He went to the farmhouse and saw outside a dozen men who were very busy moving things about. He placed his staff against the wall and spoke to the men to attract their attention.

The villagers said, "Monk, why do you arrive so late at our farm?"

"As I cannot find an inn near here," replied Lu Da, "I should like to stay at your farm tonight, and will leave here early tomorrow morning."

"We have some business here tonight so that you cannot stay."

"However inconvenient it is, let me stay tonight," said Lu Da.

"Monk, you had better go at once, and do not risk your life here."

"This is strange," replied Lu Da. "If I only stay for one night how shall I risk my life?" "Go away!" said the villagers. "If you do not go we shall tie you up."

Lu Da became angry. "You villagers are unreasonable. I have not said anything wrong, yet you want to tie me up."

Some of the villagers abused him, while others acted as mediators. Lu Da took his staff and threatened to beat them; just then he saw an old man. He was over sixty years of age and was walking with a staff that reached above his head. He called, "What is all this noise about?"

The villagers answered, "This detestable monk desires to beat us."

Lu Da spoke, "I am from Mount Wutai, and am on my way to the Eastern Capital on some business. This evening I have not found an inn, and should like to make use of your noble house for one night. Your servants were unreasonable, and wanted to tie me up."

"As you are a monk from Mount Wutai please come inside," the old man said. They went into the guest chamber and sat down. The old man said, "You must not think us impolite because our servants did not know that you are from a place where there is a living Buddha, and they took you as an ordinary person. I previously believed in Buddhism. Although we have some affair this evening, yet you may stay here tonight."

Lu Da placed his staff against a chair, and rising, signified his appreciation, and then asked his host's name.

"My name is Liu, and the villagers call me 'Grandpa Liu.' This place is called Taohua Village. May I ask your name and also your religious name?"

"My superior—the Abbot Zhi Zhen, gave me the name Zhi Shen but my surname is Lu."

"Reverend, will you take a little supper with me? but I do not know whether you are willing to eat meat with me," said Grandpa Liu.

"I can eat meat and drink wine. Whether the wine is yellow or clear, or from Shaoxing, I am not particular; and I can eat either meat or dog's flesh."

Very soon the servants prepared a table with a plate of beef and four different vegetables. Lu Da (Zhi Shen) took off his belt and waist girdle, and sat down. He did not stand on ceremony, nor did he decline anything. Grandpa Liu, who sat opposite, stared at him, but only ate rice. When the servants cleared the table Grandpa Liu told them that as things were upset, Lu Da would sleep in a small side room. He then informed Lu Da that if there was a noise outside in the night, he should not notice it. Lu Da inquired what was the affair to occur that night, and he was told that it was something that a monk could not take part in.

"But why is your appearance so sorrowful?" asked Lu Da, "I hope that my coming has not been inconvenient. I will give you money for my lodging tomorrow."

"Reverend, please listen to me," said Grandpa Liu, "I always give food to monks, and bestow charity on them, so I cannot accept money from you. Tonight I have invited someone to come and marry my daughter, therefore I am quite busy."

Lu Da laughed loudly. "When men and women are fully grown they must marry; this is the proper thing for men and it is in accordance with the five constant virtues. So why should there be trouble?"

"You, Reverend, do not understand this marriage," said Grandpa Liu, "but the fact is that my daughter is not willing to marry."

Lu Da laughingly replied, "Sir, you are a silly fellow. If she does not agree why have you invited the man to marry her?"

"I have only one daughter, and she is nineteen years old," Grandpa Liu remarked. "Near here, there is a mountain called Mount Taohua. Recently two bandit chiefs have erected a stronghold there, and have collected about seven hundred men, and they rob the cottages near here. The officers in charge of the troops at Qingzhou have tried to arrest them without success. The bandits then came here, and demanded money. When one of the chiefs saw my daughter, he presented her twenty taels of gold, and a roll of red embroidered silk as a token of his desire for an engagement. He has selected this night to come, and marry the girl. I cannot dispute the matter with him but I must agree to his demand. And that is why I am annoyed."

Lu Da upon hearing this said, "So that is the case. But if I have the means of causing him to change his mind about taking away your daughter, how will that do?"

"He is king of demons, and kills men without moving an eyelash, so how can you get him to change his mind?"

"I studied under the Abbot at Mount Wutai and therefore I can speak reasonably. Even if he were a man of iron or stone I could alter his decision. Tell your daughter to hide in some other place this evening, and I will stay in her room."

"That will be fine but do not pull the tiger's whiskers," said Grandpa Liu.

"Is not that my business?" asked Lu Da. "Leave it to me and I'll do the correct thing."

"Certainly it will be all right," said Grandpa Liu, "we are very lucky in meeting such a living Buddha as you."

He then asked Lu Da if he would like something more to eat but the latter replied, "only wine." Grandpa Liu ordered the servants to bring a big bowl of wine as well as a cooked goose, both of which were eaten by the monk, who told the servants to place his bundle in the room. Then putting his sword in his belt and picking up his monk's staff, he asked if the girl was in hiding. Grandpa Liu had sent his daughter to a neighbor's house, and led Lu Da to the bride's apartment. The servants withdrew to prepare the banquet. Lu Da placed the tables and chairs that were in the room to one side; put his sword at the head, and his staff at the side of the bed; let down the bed curtains covered with gilt letters, took off his clothes and lay down.

Grandpa Liu saw that it was getting dark so he told the servants to light the lanterns which were outside. He had a table placed on the threshing floor on which were flowers, incense sticks, and lanterns. He also instructed them to get a dish of meat ready, and heat a large kettle of wine. About ten o'clock they heard the sound of gongs and drums being beaten on the hill. Grandpa Liu thought of a vile scheme, and the servants were almost in a state of panic. They all went outside the gate of the farm but upon seeing in the distance a great illumination from five hundred torches, they fled into the farmhouse. Grandpa Liu had the gate opened and proceeded to welcome the guests. He saw two bodies of men, one in front of the other. They were armed with all kinds of military weapons, glittering in the light, and were decorated with red and green silk. The bandits had struck wild flowers in their caps, and carried four or five red gauze lanterns,

which lit the road for their leader who was riding a horse. On his head he had a flat topped cap of red color, and near his temple was a large imitation flower made of silk, he wore a long green gown with tiger design embroidered in gold, round his waist a red sash fastened with a golden buckle, standing away from this a few inches a stiff girdle was suspended; leather boots with designs of clouds on them. He was riding a big white horse and dismounted at the gate of the farmhouse. The bandits offered congratulations by singing:

"Tonight his cap is very bright
For he is a bridegroom;
Clothed with handsome dress is he
And all his cheek's abloom."

Grandpa Liu poured out a cupful of wine and kneeling on the ground, offered it to the bandit leader, who, however, raised him, saying, "You are my father-in-law so why do you kneel before me?"

"As you are the chief of this district, and my family is under your control, you should not object like this," replied Grandpa Liu.

The bandit chief was almost drunk and laughingly replied, "As I am to be your son-in-law I will treat you fairly; as your daughter is to be my wife things will soon be all right." Upon reaching the threshing floor, the bandit chief saw the preparations, and asked, "Father-in-law, why do you receive me in this way?" He drank three cups of wine at that spot. He told his men to tie up his horse to a poplar, and went toward the guest room. His men began to play on the musical instruments and beat the drums. Upon entering the guest room the bandit chief sat down, asking for his wife. Grandpa Liu replied, "My daughter is so timid that she dare not come here." The robber chief laughed, and taking a cup of wine said, "I should like my wife to come here and drink some wine with me."

Grandpa Liu thought this a suitable opportunity for the monk to act as mediator, so he requested the guest to come with him. He took a candle, and going to the bridal chamber pointed, saying, "This is the room. Please enter." Grandpa Liu took the candle and departed, as he did not expect trouble. The bandit chief pushed the door open, and saw that the interior was dark. He said, "My wife's father is really so economical that he has not even a lamp lighted in the room, and let my wife to sit in the dark. Tomorrow I will tell one of my men to bring a bucket of good oil to my mountain stronghold, so that my wife can light the lamp there."

Lu Da lying inside the bed curtains heard all this, but he suppressed his inclination to laugh and made no sound.

The bandit chief felt his way into the dark room, calling out, "Wife, why do you not come to receive me? You need not be so timid because tomorrow you will be the leading woman in my stronghold." Feeling his way in the darkness, and calling "wife, wife," he at last touched the embroidered bed curtains, and lifted them. Then reaching with his hand he felt the belly of Lu Da. The latter at once took hold of the bandit chief's head and pressed him down on the bed. The chief struggled to get up but Lu Da abused him. "You are certainly a bastard" and lifting his fist struck a blow. "Why do you hit your husband?" he asked. Lu Da shouted, "I am teaching you how to recognize your old woman." He pulled him to the floor at the side of the bed, belabored him with his fist, and kicked him, while the bandit called out, "Save me, save me." Upon hearing this Grandpa Liu was almost startled out of his wits, and hastily picking up a lamp, led the bandits into the room. There they saw a big fat monk, stark naked, on top of the bandit chief, beating him. The bandits had their spears and cudgels, and Lu Da, upon seeing these, let go the chief and got his monk's staff from the bed. The men seeing his fierce bearing, all retreated, followed by Lu Da. Seizing the opportunity the bandit leader crawled to the door of the room, and walked into the yard. He soon found his unsaddled horse in the dark, broke off a twig from the tree, and jumped on the horse. He hit the horse with the twig but it did not move. The robber leader said to himself, "What a nuisance! Even the horse despises me!" He then realized that he had omitted to loosen the reins which were still fastened to the tree. He quickly snatched them, and the horse galloped away with him. As he passed through the gate, he cursed Grandpa Liu, saying, "You, old ass, need not hurry. Wherever you fly, I shall catch you." He lashed the horse which carried him up the mountain. Grandpa Liu caught hold of Lu Da, saying, "Reverend, you have brought trouble to my home."

"You cannot say that I have done something improper," replied Lu Da. "Bring me my clothes, and when dressed I will talk with you."

This was done, and Grandpa Liu said, "I hoped you would be reasonable, and get him to change his mind. I did not expect you to assault him; he will now gather a large body of his men and come to kill us."

"Grandpa, do not get excited, and I will tell you something," replied Lu Da. "I am a Major, in the army of Grand Secretary Liang at Yanan Prefecture. I became a monk because I killed a man. You need

not speak of these bandits, for I should not be afraid of two thousands of them on foot or mounted. If you do not believe me then pick up my monk's staff and look at it." A servant tried to lift the staff but he could not move it. Lu Da, however, picked it up in his hand, and whirled it round as though it were only a lamp wick made of rush.

"Reverend, you must stay here and protect us," said Liu.

"That is needless talk because I will not go away."

The farmer told his servants to bring more wine, but to be careful not to make the guest drunk.

"If I drink only a little wine, I can do only a small piece of business, but if I drink a lot, then I can do more," said Lu Da.

On Mount Taohua, the principal head of the bandits was thinking of sending one of his men to inquire about his second-in-command's marriage. When the armed bandits returned with a defeated appearance he asked why they were in such disorder, and they told him that their second-in-command had been defeated. At this he was surprised, but while he was listening to details, his assistant arrived. He noticed that he was not wearing the usual red cloth round his head, and that his green dress was in tatters. As he dismounted in front of the main building he called, "Elder brother, please save me," and when he was asked for an explanation, he continued, "I went down the mountain to the village where Grandpa Liu lives, and found that the detestable old donkey had hidden the woman, and had got a big monk to be on the bed in her place. I was quite unprepared for attack, and when I groped my way to the bed, and touched him, he hit me with his fists, kicked me, and severely maltreated me. When my men entered the room he chased them out, and while this was happening I managed to get away. Elder brother, I want revenge."

The principal bandit leader answered, "So, this is it! You rest indoors, while I go and seize this bald-headed thief." He then commanded his men to get his horse ready. He mounted, and led his men down the mountain, who shouted as they went along. Lu Da was drinking wine, when a servant reported that the bandits were again approaching. "Keep cool!" said Lu Da, "I will knock them down, and you can tie them up and take them to the *yamen*. Let somebody bring my sword." He then took off his long gown, tucked his short underclothing in his belt, put on his broad sword; he picked up the iron monk's staff, and strode to the gate where he saw the bandit leader seated on a horse and holding a spear, surrounded by many torches. He heard him shout, "Where is that bald-headed donkey?"

Tell him to come at once as we must fight out the matter." Lu Da was angry and abused him, "You dirty rascal! You shall certainly recognize me." He then lifted his iron monk's staff and whirled it round.

The leader of the bandits called, "The sound of your voice is familiar to me. What is your name?"

Lu Da answered, "I am none other than Major Lu Da, in the employment of Grand Secretary Liang. Just now, however, I am a monk called Lu Zhishen."

The leader of the bandits laughed, and dismounted, and threw away his spear, knelt down, and making salutations said, "Is my elder brother quite well? I am aware that my younger brother felt the weight of your hand."

As Lu Da suspected that was a trick he retreated several steps, and examined the man closely by the light of the torches. He then recognized him as a drill instructor who had often sold medicine on the streets, and was named Li Zhong, with a nickname "The Tiger Fighting General." In those days the thieves did not consider it advisable to say "knelt down" in their band, so they used another expression, "Scissors and Brush"; as a kind of code. Li Zhong now arose and said, "Elder brother, why are you a monk?"

"I will talk that over with you indoors," replied Lu Da.

When Grandpa Liu heard this he was afraid of more trouble, as he thought that they both were thieves. When Lu Da was inside, put on his clothes, sat at a table, and called for Grandpa Liu, the latter did not care to come. So Lu Da said, "Grandpa, you need not fear. He is my younger brother." When Grandpa Liu heard this he was more confused: still he came forward, and sat on Lu Da's left. Lu Da gave a résumé of how he had killed the Bully and afterwards entered a monastery where he became drunk on two occasions, had been expelled, and sent to Kaifeng.

Li Zhong explained that when he heard Lu Da had killed the butcher at Weizhou, he tried to find him. Hearing the police wished to arrest him, he also went away. He happened to pass near this mountain and was attacked by the bandits in charge of Zhou Tong, nicknamed "Little Tyrant": but he repulsed them, so they invited him to join them as their leader.

"As things are like this you need not say anything about the bridal fiasco," said Lu Da, "because if Zhou Tong had taken the girl, her father would have become a vagrant."

Grandpa Liu was much pleased at this and ordered the servants to bring wine and food, and entertained his two guests well. He also ordered that each of the bandits was to have two small loaves of bread, two slices of meat, and a big cup of wine. Lu Da told Li Zhong to take the gold and silk, prepared by Grandpa Liu and give them back to "Little Tyrant." Li Zhong asked both of them to come to the stronghold on the mountain and stay for a few days: this was agreed to. Sedan chairs were prepared for Lu Da and Liu, while Li Zhong rode his horse. It was daybreak, and upon arrival at the stronghold they entered the hall to discuss matters. Zhou Tong was sent for, but when he saw the monk he was angry, and said, "So my elder brother has not carried out my revenge, but asked the monk to come; and invited him to sit in the premier place."

Li Zhong laughed, "This monk is the one who killed the Bully with three blows of his fist, about which I have told you many times."

Zhou Tong rubbed his head and exclaimed, "Ai Ya!"*. He then knelt and saluted Lu Da, who returned the compliment, saying, "Pray excuse my intrusion." They all sat down and Lu Da explained the position to Zhou Tong, advising him to break his engagement, and find a better girl. The wedding presents were handed to him. Zhou Tong agreed to this, and promised to let the matter drop, saying, "This is a vow taken with the breaking of an arrow."

Grandpa Liu was satisfied and returned home while the bandits prepared a feast for Lu Da. During the following days they took their guest all over the mountain to see the splendid wild scenery. The mountain was covered with grass and trees, and was difficult of access, there being only one road. After a few days, however, Lu Da saw that Li Zhong and Zhou Tong were mean, and had no nobility in their natures. When he told them he wanted to leave, they pressed him to remain but he reminded them he being a monk could not join them.

The bandit chiefs said, "As you have definitely decided to go, please wait until tomorrow, when we will go down the mountain, and plunder somebody for some money, which we will give you for your traveling expenses."

The next day they made a big banquet at which the wine cups were of gold and silver, but just as they sat down one of their men came to report that below were two carts with about ten travelers. Upon hearing this the bandit chiefs summoned their followers and said to

* Exclamation of surprise or realisation, similar to "Oh my!"

Lu Da, "Elder brother, you will have to drink our wine by yourself, but we will leave two men to wait upon you. We must go and get the money for you." So saying they left with their men.

Lu Da thought, "These two men are certainly very mean as they have plenty of gold and silver here to give me, but instead they want to plunder other people for money and give it to me. Is not this being generous at other people's expense? So I will frighten these two men who are attending on me." He then told the men to bring him some warm wine, and after drinking some he got up and knocked them down with his fists. He then took their girdles, and tied their arms and legs. He gagged them with balls of hempen thread; he opened his bundles and threw away everything that was not needed; and then taking the gold and silver cups he made them flat by stamping on them, and packed them in his bundles. He hid the letter from Abbot Chen in his breast pocket; put on his sword; picked up his monk staff, and left the stronghold. He had a good look round, and saw that the mountain behind the stronghold was very wild. If, however, he went down the mountain by the ordinary road he was sure to meet the brigands, so he decided to descend the mountain by rolling down through the grass. He tied his broad sword, and the monk staff to the bundle, and threw them down the steep slope. He then rolled himself down to the foot of the mountain without sustaining any injury. He soon found his bundle, and started on his way.

The bandit chiefs attacked the travelers, who resisted for a long time, but seeing that they were outnumbered they at last retreated abandoning their baggage. Upon returning to their stronghold with the loot, the chiefs discovered that Lu Da had gone, and had taken away the gold and silver cups, and at first they thought of pursuing him, but after a little discussion they agreed to let the matter drop.

That day Lu Da walked a distance of about twenty li without coming across an inn so that by evening he was very hungry. Just then he happened to hear the tinkling of a bell, which he knew was the sound of a bell hanging at the eaves of a Buddhist temple, and it was moved by the wind. So he decided to investigate this. We will now relate what this temple was.

A score of souls,
Were lost in half a day;
Temples of long standing,
In ambers were now laid.