

Ever since Shang Chi was announced as an MCU movie, I wondered how the story could go. I brainstormed a fanfic of it that's influenced by various martial art movies. Unfortunately I don't have a deep understanding of this character and his stories, so these ideas belong to more of an OC fanfic. The 'twist' of this plot is similar to a certain recent sci-fi movie, and it probably came from other media I've encountered too, but I've forgotten which ones. I started brainstorming this some time ago (finishing the beginning, the twist and end), but after some deaths happened in my life lately, I didn't want to finish the middle. But recently I found that finishing it has been a useful distraction.

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Shang Chi is born in a rural Chinese village. Each village forms a clan (which is made up of several unrelated families); it is one of thousands in Asia that are being attacked by the Corporation, a villainous organization aiming to break apart the clans so they can steal their protected secrets. Each clan practices their own style of martial arts and philosophy, separate from other clans, but all clans are loosely united under a common goal to protect one another. There is a prophecy that one clan will have a Chosen One who will defeat the Corporation and save all clans from being wiped out. One day, when Shang Chi is only 7, the oracles discover that one of the children of their clan, the Huan, is the Chosen One. To determine which child is the Chosen One, the oracles must meet with the heads of each family to read their fortune. Shang Chi and his twin, however, are on their daily duties when the family is scheduled to meet the oracles, so they have to stay behind while their parents and sister go. Shang Chi has to stand watch to look for invaders, while his twin does chores inside. Knowing that his side of the watch is the most heavily guarded and is nearly impossible to get through (due to limited people, only Shang Chi is assigned here since it's the least important place to guard, and thus the most boring due to not requiring much skill), Shang Chi thinks he can leave his post to sneak into the oracles' room and listen, since he can't wait to find out who is the Chosen One. When he gets there, he learns that he is the Chosen One and is elated. But a few moments later, enemies breach the most heavily guarded gates in a surprise attack, and during the battle, Shang Chi's twin is killed. To note, it was not Shang Chi's fault that the village was breached and it was too late to alert anyone to save it, but perhaps his twin may have been alerted and saved. Shang Chi and his family return home too late, and are forced to flee as their village is eradicated. They settle in urban America, either in New York or California.

Years pass, and Shang Chi is now a young adult who has the English name 'James', or some other common name. For safety, his family has hid the identity of their clan, and is not well off. His father, Wang Xiu, owns a small business, and is accused by the neighborhood of sneaky, unethical business practices, as well as bringing crime into the neighborhood, as the arrival of his family is correlated with an increase in certain crimes, though there is no evidence anyone can find to prove causation. As far as the audience can see, these are all baseless, racist accusations. His family has had a lingering desire for revenge, but it has not been acted upon due to their struggle to survive in America, though his family constantly talks about it and how the children have to work hard to not make their clan's sacrifices be in vain. However, James is not a good student, and barely graduates high school. He works hard as a waiter in a restaurant, but is constantly berated by his angry Chinese manager. He spends most of his time playing video games and watching TV with his friends, mostly with his best friend Hector Ayala.

Since he was a young child, James's parents and relatives have trained him in their clan's martial arts. Though they were hesitant to teach outsiders, after Hector saves the life of James's sister, they take Hector in as a student, too. However, as a preteen and teen, James lost confidence in these practices as

his survivor's guilt prevented him from using any special powers, and he was beaten down by stronger people in the city whenever he tried to defend people against them. He grew disillusioned with himself and began drifting aimlessly in life, leaving the martial arts. He believed that the oracles were wrong about him being Chosen.

One day, James finds that his family and relatives are being attacked by a group of fighters. He steps in to help and to his surprise, is able to take down one attacker, but is soon overwhelmed and can only watch his father take on several attackers at once, driving them away but being badly beaten. Shang Chi asks his injured father why he and his relatives were being attacked. His father reminds James that since birth, each of the clans' members was assigned a portion of the clan's Energy to protect at birth; the more Energy one has, the more access to stronger techniques one has. Whenever a member is defeated, their Energy is taken by the victor; they can also willingly surrender this Energy, though they would be betraying their clan's sworn oath to not let the Energy fall into the wrong hands. The victor, even if they weren't a member of a clan, now has Energy that can be taken by others. James's father reveals that recently, he learned that a mysterious mafia has placed bounties on members of surviving clans- they have started a 'game' played by hunters. There is a threshold of 10,000 Energy each hunter is required to reach. The first 8 hunters who pass this threshold, and who present it to the mafia, are awarded a hefty treasure and given a job as a highly paid elite assassin. Many former clan members have betrayed their clan and are fighting others to obtain the game's rewards. Many clans have been tragically wiped out by these hunters already. Only just now has their family's clan identity been uncovered.

James feels angry that he wasn't strong enough to defend his father, so he asks what he can do to help. His father reminds him that he is the Chosen One- a destiny James had ran away from- and tells him to look in a secret place that stores their clan's salvaged oracle writings. James looks for them, and discovers what he has to do to fulfill prophecy of the Chosen One: he must travel throughout Asia to obtain various pieces of a talisman that contains the Chosen One's powers, and not let it fall into the wrong hands. Once the talisman is obtained, James would realize the full powers of the Chosen One and stop the Corporation, which could mean stopping the game. Meanwhile, his family would go into hiding; his father tells him he and his mother will travel throughout the world to reunite and protect the remaining members of their clan, while James must journey to obtain the talisman.

Soon, an Asian American police inspector named Leiko Wu (or some common name like Steph) and her partner contact James. The police know about the illegal hunting game, and are trying to take down the Asian gangs participating in it, as well as figure out its masterminds. It is heavily suspected that the game is organized by the Corporation. Leiko figures out that James is a member of a clan, and asks for his help as an undercover agent to infiltrate the game to get information about it. James does not accept this offer, saying he has more important things to do for his clan.

(Leiko was originally envisioned as Colleen Wing, but I don't know if she fits this story)

After James tells Hector what is happening, he joins James so that he won't go through it alone. Then, Leiko saves them from a surprise attack, revealing that she spent many years training in a temple to 'find her roots', as she was adopted into an American family and never knew where she came from. James tells her about the Chosen One prophecy and the talisman, but when she relays this info to her supervisor Denis Nayland Smith, her department dismisses it, saying his clans' writings are not trustworthy enough to risk resources. Thus, only James, Hector and Leiko set out to travel through Asia

to find the hidden talisman pieces while protecting clans from being hunted down (under the false guise that they are “stealing from opponents”, so they can get close to talking to people in the game to obtain more info).

At first, James is shoddy at fighting, but over the course of 1-2 months, he learns to regain his confidence. He feels he has no independent direction on who to follow and trust, but gradually, he begins to learn how to think independently, branching away from anyone else’s obligations. Most importantly, he learns to overcome his survivor’s guilt. He stumbles across lost artifacts/writings that were mysteriously stolen from his clan. He finds they were taken by mafia members who tap into demonic powers, and it’s suspected that they’re part of the corporation, though it is not known as they are very secretive and mask themselves. One by one, James defeats these members to regain his clan’s culture. He is able to loosely connect with his ancestors’ spirits and though he cannot talk to them or ask them questions, he is able to learn from them to improve himself and his fighting abilities.

During the journey, Shang Chi meets Shen Kuei (Cat), a martial artist from China who is the last of his clan after it was betrayed by other clans, and he seeks revenge against them. This is the first time James learns of inner clan fighting. Cat is a rival who comes and goes. The trio also journeys through the Hong Kong Sanctum. Throughout the quest, they are being hunted by an incredibly strong, masked fighter, who, for some reason, is also after the talisman pieces. The trio never gets to talk to him, as they evade him at every turn. They learn he is one of the last remaining members of the Zui clan. He is shown to have lost touch with reality.

At one point, James manages to unmask one of the deceased assassins stopping him from getting one of his clan’s lost artifacts from a demon cavern, and is shocked to learn that it’s his cousin. He doesn’t know why, and can only believe that his cousin was betraying the clan. This is further supported by the fact that the cousin was always talking about leaving the clan, but wouldn’t say why, though he always felt a slight duty chaining him back into it.

Over several months, the trio gradually learns more about the mafia, and collect all except one of the pieces. But they learn that the location of the last piece is in the stronghold of the mafia, and is one of the treasures awarded to one of the first 8 who pass the threshold. The trio all pass it, and head to the stronghold to collect the piece. But when they get there, it’s revealed that the prizes were a sham; there are no top 8 winners, but only 1 winner. The 8 must now fight in a tournament, and only the winner of the tournament can obtain this talisman piece. Among the 8 include the masked fighter and Cat. Meanwhile, James’s family tells him that they will attempt to make its way into the stronghold in a sneak attack while the mafia focuses on the tournament.

The first three fights don’t take very long. Hector is knocked out by the masked fighter in the quarter-finals and is nearly killed. James defeats Cat in the semi-final. In the other semi-final, Leiko fights the masked fighter. They are evenly matched, but while talking to the fighter during the match, Leiko deduces that he is actually her brother, and that she was a member of the Zui clan; she had been hidden away by her parents to protect her from the Corporation. They stop fighting for a moment. The masked fighter reveals his face and explains that their parents were killed when they raided the Huan clan. Thus, James discovers that his village was not destroyed by the Corporation, but by the Zui clan. Leiko figures out that in order to become stronger and get revenge, her brother had trained in her clan’s forbidden family arts and became insane, losing touch with reality, as demonstrated many times during the story (he talks to himself with insane ramblings). Her brother now believes he is the ‘Chosen One’, and was

trying to take the talisman's essence for himself. Leiko is shocked, and in her second of hesitation, she is defeated by her brother, but he spares her.

James is now thirsty for revenge. In the final, he fights Leiko's brother. He is at a disadvantage until he taps into the stages of the Chosen One's techniques, and starts winning when he gets through each stage (he was unable to get past even the 3<sup>rd</sup> one before). But when he gets to the last one, he is somehow unable to use it, even though all logic said he should've been able to, as the last stage should always be able to be unlocked by the Chosen One after the second last stage is unlocked. Leiko's brother regains the upper hand, but just when James is about to be killed, James's family appears to save him, and James's father kills Leiko's brother.

However, the trio notices that something is not right. They deduce something horrible: that James was not the Chosen One, and that the Chosen One was actually part of the Zui clan. One of the children in Leiko's immediate family was supposed to be the Chosen One, and their clan's oracle had found that it was Leiko's brother (and if he didn't get it, they could transfer its essence to one of his siblings). The Zui were supposed to save the clan collective from being wiped out by the Corporation's ancient rituals. But in order to do so, some other clans would have to make sacrifices- the prophecy said that the Huan would have many of its members die to pave way for the Zui's Chosen One.

Throughout history, lesser clans such as the Huan were subservient to higher clans such as the Zui. Their ranking was based on how strong their ancestors were at the time of the clans' formation. Their village was destined to live in squalor and on the risky frontlines, and their name would always be obscure, never living on in legends. Fate foretold that none of its members would ever amount to anything important compared to the Zui. The Huan realized that many of them would perish as unremarkable cannon fodder. Therefore, the Huan sought the help of demons to change fate. The demons struck a bargain: the Huan would give up their protected artifacts and traditions to the demons, never being able to use them ever again. In return, the demons would steal the Chosen One's essence, seal it in a talisman, and give it to Shang Chi, who had been destined to only be a generic foot soldier. This brought chaos to fate, and though the Huan clan was preserved, the rest of the clans- especially the Zui- suffered. The Zui learned of this, and raided the Huan village to get the essence from the talisman back. This war resulted in heavy losses from both sides, nearly eradicating them all.

Though Shang Chi would have the Chosen One's powers, he would only be able to use them to the extent to save his own clan. These powers would also allow the clan to rise to greatness. The Corporation's final ritual would summon a portal that unleashes ghostly spirits, each one specifically targeting one clan. These evil spirits existed thousands of years ago, and desire revenge against only 1 clan because that clan was the one who sealed them into the portal (this is how each clan was formed). If they escape through the portal, they would be given incredible powers by the Corporation that would allow them to inflict incredibly bad fortune and deaths upon their targeted clan. Shang Chi's powers would be able to stop his clan's evil spirit, but not the other evil spirits. After the Chosen One stops the evil spirit, they would be imbued with good fortune that would bless the clan with prosperity and give its descendants destinies to achieve greatness.

Thus, the Huan clan had rejected the ancient teachings of their ancestors in order to adapt to the 'new world'. Instead of honoring their traditions, they stole the traditions of others and claimed them as their own. And though many of the accusations were false, James's father reveals that he did engage in unethical business practices in order to save his clan from the Corporation and the remaining Zui. Wang

Xiu had started as a low ranking factory worker in the mafia, but using his cunning ambition, he had worked his way up to becoming a secret criminal mastermind, known by his alias 'Fu Manchu', which was given to him by his enemies, as his crafty, shadowy work was similar to the Asian caricature on TV.

The entire game was not organized by the Corporation, but by the demons the Huan had allied themselves with. The demons operated behind a mafia who sought to never let the Huan's traditional scrolls be taken, but James had done so despite the Huan trying to stop him. For the first time in centuries, James's clans traditional arts could be unlocked to their full potential. James had been taught the motions of a few of these by his father when he was young, but always wondered why the motions were unable to do anything. Fu Manchu had created the tournament as a way to prevent the other clans- especially the Zui- from becoming strong enough again to retake the talisman, which was broken apart and taken by several protectors, who promised to only reunite them when the true Chosen One- Leiko's brother- was able to take its powers for himself. They dared not put it all in one place, as this would've been easier for the Huan to steal it back. They also could not put it whole again, as the last piece was still in the hands of the Huan. The hunting game was also a way to push James back into pursuing his clan's plans to become the 'Chosen One'; Fu Manchu had staged a false attack on himself to drive James back into action. Finally, obtaining just the pieces of the talisman was not enough; James needed to unlock its powers by himself. This is why he needed to go through the tournament, as this drive would allow him to unlock the talisman's powers, which he does. But he had failed to defeat Leiko's brother, so he did not fulfill all of his family's expectations. They chastise him for seeking to obtain the scrolls, but know they had to keep up the charade so James would think he is doing good. When he fails to stop the other clans from being destroyed, the Huan would claim the prophecy is 'inaccurate' but at least their clan is saved and prosperous, and that's all that matters.

James is distraught to learn that his father, whom he had defended for years, was actually a criminal and embodied many of the negative stereotypes he had sought to escape. He is also horrified to learn that many of the masked people he killed were his relatives (he thinks back to clues that hints their true identities). His parents are disappointed that James does not appreciate the lengths his family has gone to make him succeed. Since James is unwilling to take up the mantle of the Chosen One, the Huan clan decides to give the power to his sister Fah Lo Suee instead. Fu Manchu tries to kill Leiko so that the power won't be imbued into her. He puts a mind control spell on James- this makes him unable to harness the Chosen One's powers, which require self-confidence and self-agency to use. He chases after his former friends, but they narrowly escape. With the talisman in their grasp, they begin a forbidden ritual to transfer the power to Fah Lo Suee. Since this ritual would accelerate the learning process, it had a high risk to kill James's sister, but she is willing to take the sacrifice. On the other hand, the Chosen One would not require such a learning process when the talisman is transferred into them, as they are 'naturally' meant for its essence.

His former friends, along with Cat, gather and reluctantly say they have to defeat James in order to transfer the Chosen One's powers to its new rightful owner: Leiko. The Corporation is starting to open the portal soon. James's former friends, some clan members they allied with during their journey, and Cat head to fight the Huan clan. As James is fighting them, he struggles with the mind control spell. He reaches deep into his mind, and using his will, is able to speak with his ancestors for the first time. His ancestors tell him that they were sealed away when their descendants betrayed them to the demons. James realizes that he has to break away from anyone else's obligations and only do things that he wants. With the help of his clan's lost traditions, he breaks away from Fu Manchu's demonic spell and

reclaims his mind. He now unlocks the Huan traditions' full potentials and is stronger than before. He then calls himself by his traditional name: Shang Chi.

Shang Chi turns on his clan. One by one, he fights his relatives, and is reluctantly forced to kill some to protect people. In a twisted self-fulfilling prophecy, his clan has brought doom to itself, and its leaders and youth die. His mother and other relatives fight him all at once in a room with traditional Asian decor.

Fah Lo Suee fights Hector. Meanwhile, the Corporation has opened the portal, so Leiko and other clan members have to use portals to travel to the netherworld to defeat the evil spirits. Many are rapidly killed in a futile attempt to stop the evil spirits. As James reclaims pieces of the talisman, he sends their powers to Leiko, who grows stronger and stronger and defeats the evil spirits, though she is overwhelmed by the Huan spirit, and also the Zui spirit, the strongest of them all. Without the entire talisman, she is unable to fully tap into her powers.

Shang Chi defeats his mother and relatives, then defeats Fu Manchu using one of the traditional techniques his father taught him. But before this, his sister had already taken the last piece for herself, and entered the netherworld to try to stop the Huan spirit using the abilities she shoddily learned just now (from the ritual) and the final piece, which has powers she still hasn't mastered. Though she has a chance to defeat the Huan spirit, she would most certainly die. James tells his parents that if they want to save their daughter, they have to give the talisman piece back to its rightful owner. His parents are reminded of James's twin, who died because they had stolen the Chosen One's powers from the Zui. To repent for their mistakes, they destroy their contract with the demons, then head into the netherworld, where they find that the Huan spirit has been defeated, but that the Zui spirit is nearly about to kill Fah Lo Suee, who is unconscious. His parents intervene and take the blow from the Zui spirit, and are gravely injured. Shang Chi takes the talisman piece from his sister and gives it to Leiko. Leiko gains the power of the Chosen One, defeats the Zui hunter and rest of the others, and destroys the portal as they all escape.

After they are all back in the mortal realm, Fu Manchu and James's mother apologize to him as they die. Shang Chi watches their souls rejoin with his twin, who forgives them all. He also sees the souls of his relatives, who are still lost but not damned. As this occurs, his sister is unconscious. Leiko also meets with the spirit of her deceased brother. After this, Leiko's department arrives and Denis Smith arrests the still unconscious Fah Lo Suee, along with the rest of the Huan clan. Denis thanks Leiko and Shang Chi, apologizing for doubting them. The Corporation is still at large and Shang Chi swears to stop them.

Later, Leiko tells Shang Chi that she wants to end the unfair hierarchy and fate that the clans are intertwined in. She says she believes that each individual should be given their own choices on what to do in life, instead of being tied to fate. Knowing that the existence of the Chosen One is what ties all of fate together, she willingly destroys its power, saying that from now on, the clans will rely on their self-confidence and cooperation to defeat evil threats, instead of blindly following prophetic fate.

The story ends with Shang Chi and Hector going to a boba tea store.

In a future story, Fah Lo Suee is now awake and swears revenge on Shang Chi.