

The Beginning of the End

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Dashi, Chase, Guan, Wuya. Four very different people who were once held together by a powerful bond of friendship and love. This is the chronicle of their lives: the events that brought them together, and the events that tore them apart.

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1 - Prologue

This is my greatest project to date. It will encompass the entirety of the lives of these four during their time together, 1500 years ago. Rating will be PG13 to soft R overall, though this chapter is G. There will be het, and there will be slash, although more than that you'll just have to wait for.

Enjoy the beginning of an era.

The Beginning of the End

Prologue

The year was 499 A.D. A steady hiss of rain assaulted the simple bamboo roof of a small, secluded temple nestled in the mountains of China. Despite the late hour and weather conditions, the indoor lanterns could still be seen shining through the windows. A young boy sat curled up just inside the doorway. He wore a simple robe of red cotton, and a black sash adorned his slender waist. As the light from the lantern that hung from the wall just above him flickered in the wind, it cast quivering shadows on his clean-shaven head. He shivered- the night air was cold in the mountains- and struggled not to nod off to sleep. All fatigue vanished, however, as a faint, animated shadow appeared in the distance through the rain.

As it drew rapidly closer, the single shadow became four, one tall and three small. A huge grin spread across the bald boy's face and he nimbly hopped to his feet and out of the doorway as the people hurried inside to get out of the rain. The boy, Dashi, would never forget this first impression of his lifelong friends- out of breath and sopping wet- and years later, it still would make him laugh.

The tallest of the newly arrived children had prominent cheekbones and sharp features that stood out particularly against his peach-toned skin when the lantern light cast his face into semi-shadow. His garb revealed him to be an average, if rather well-built, village boy, and like Dashi, he was bald, save for a shoulder-length black braid that fell from the very back of his head. Immediately upon arriving, he collapsed against the wall with an exhausted sigh.

The second child, also a boy, appeared the polar opposite of the first. He was extremely slender, and had long, dark hair and an olive-toned face with gentle, childlike features. He wore only a ripped tunic, and even the hard sheets of rain had not quite managed to cleanse him of what appeared to be years worth of caked-on dirt. When he realized he was being watched by Dashi, he blushed in embarrassment and produced a tattered book from inside his tunic, immediately burying his nose in it.

Despite the sorry state the newcomers were in, the final child still stood out from the other two, if only because she was the strangest-looking person that Dashi had ever seen. Her skin was an exotic shade of bronze, with ears that narrowed to a slight point at the top and strange black stripes starting at the bottom of her eyes and streaking down her cheeks. Since they had not smudged or run because of the rain, Dashi could only assume that they were tattoos, not painted on. Her clothes were ornate, and the bangles and ornaments she wore on her wrists and in her long, mauve-colored hair glittered in the lanterns' flickering light. She looked supremely unconcerned with the entire affair, and began absently twirling the ends of her soaking-wet pigtails around her finger.

No matter what they looked like, though, Dashi was grateful for any company his own age. Although he'd only been training at the temple for two months, it got lonely very quickly for an eleven-year-old when he discovered that the next-youngest person there was over three times his age. So naturally, he'd been ecstatic when the old temple master, Master Chang, had told him that he was leaving for a short time and promised to return with new young students. Now, Dashi approached the elderly master, still wearing his exuberant grin, and said, "I'm so glad you've returned, Master! Did you have to run all the way back here in the rain?"

The master shook his head and laughed, answering, "Thankfully, no, young monk. It began only a few minutes ago." He gestured to the other children. "Allow me to introduce you to our new students. Guan, the future Dragon of Fire." The sharp-featured boy looked up when he heard his name, offering a small nod and a weary smile. Master Chang continued, inclining his head to the smallest boy. "Chase Young, Dragon of Water." This didn't surprise Dashi in the least, as this boy appeared to be the only one not bothered at all by the fact that he was soaking wet. However, even when his name was called, he made no move to acknowledge it, still staring intently at his book. Chuckling, Master Chang indicated the finely clothed young girl and said, "And the Dragon of Earth, Wuya." She smirked, making a small 'hmp' noise and tossing her hair, which showered everyone else with droplets of water.

Still smiling, Master Chang bowed slightly and moved to the doorway of the temple hall. "I will leave you children to get to know one another," he said, then left the room.

The awkward silence left in the room was interrupted only by the sounds of the rain outside and the gentle rustling of Chase's book pages. In a slightly desperate attempt to make conversation, Dashi approached Chase, leaning over his shoulder and asking, "So...is that a good book?"

Without looking up, Chase answered, "I don't know."

At this point, the other children were also listening, and with a confused expression, Guan inquired, "You don't know? Is it that difficult to understand?"

The olive-skinned boy laughed lightly and shook his head. "No, no, it's nothing like that. It's just that I don't know how to read." Despite the taken-aback looks on the other children's faces, he gave an honest smile and added, "I just love looking at the pictures." Finally looking up from the worn book, he exclaimed suddenly, "Oh! By the way, I'm Chase Young." The others chuckled; clearly, he had been too absorbed in his pictures to hear a word that had been exchanged so far.

It was Wuya who sat down next to him, extremely close, and playfully poked his smooth forehead. "We know." He tried to scoot away from her, but she had latched rather firmly onto his arm while he hadn't

been paying attention.

Stifling another laugh, Dashi said, "Come on, now. You all look exhausted." He based this mostly on the fact that Guan had sat down against the wall again and nearly nodded off. "You two can finish your...conversation later." He was just the tiniest bit jealous of Chase at the moment, but he didn't let it leak into his tone of voice. "Oh, and I'm Dashi. I'm going to be the Dragon of Wind someday." He grinned brightly and motioned for the other children to follow him out of the hall to the sleeping quarters, which they eventually did.

When Dashi finally fell asleep, though, the only reason was to make the next day come faster. He couldn't wait.

In a back room of the temple, Master Chang bent over a roaring fire, returning a moment later to a table in the center of the room carrying a red, oval-shaped object. He laid the egg on the table and watched, and for a moment all it did was smoke gently. Then, a faint tapping sound could be heard, and a single ivory-colored claw poked its way through the shell. More claws followed, then a larger crack appeared and the end of a snout pushed through. Finally, the shell split cleanly down the middle and a tiny creature plopped out onto the table. It was shaped something like a ribbon, with fine green scales and a crest and beard of red fur. Smiling, the temple master gently picked it up and scratched its belly. The little dragon cooed happily and began to chew on his finger.

"Welcome to the world, Dojo."

End Prologue

Feedback is much appreciated.

2 - Chapter 1

An edit- because of the time lapse, the first chapter became a prologue, and this is now Chapter 1. Some time lapses will be required, considering that this story will eventually span over a period of 16 years, but I'll try to avoid another one this monumental.

Enjoy the happy chapter!

The Beginning of the End

Chapter 1

It had been nearly two years since that rainy night that the four Xiaolin Dragons-to-be had first met, and among other things, the weather had significantly improved. It was a gorgeous, sunny spring morning, complete with the stereotypical twittering birds and fluffy clouds, but the four monk children were not given the opportunity to go out and enjoy it; at least, not until the grand hall was spotless. As much as they resented being stuck inside, none of them could deny that chores were a rather interesting affair. After all, it wasn't as though they ever got much actual cleaning done.

"Will you stop that!" Guan snapped from where he was down on his hands and knees scrubbing the floor; he attempted to swat away the thin but steady stream of soapy water that was pouring down onto his head, but that only served to get him wetter. Shielding his face with his hand, he turned his head upwards to glare at Wuya, who was perched delicately on one of the roof-beams with a bucket of water. She giggled and poured more of the soapy liquid as he yelled, "You're supposed to be cleaning the roofing!"

"B-but you need it far more than the roof does!" she managed to stammer through her uncontrollable giggling.

Before Guan could make any retort, another voice broke into the argument, pleading gently, "Come on, Wuya; let him alone." Chase was washing the windows, and had his long hair tied back in a scarf to keep it out of his face and eyes. Although with his soft features and mild voice, he seemed easily the least threatening one there, Wuya did not hesitate in obeying him. She pouted a bit, but returned sulkily to scrubbing between the undersides of the shingles.

Guan frowned, and rather than returning to his cleaning, took a moment to watch the other two. It was fairly amusing, the way Chase had Wuya practically wrapped around his little finger due to her obvious crush on him, and yet was completely oblivious to it. Admittedly, though, he would have found it far more humorous if he wasn't also rather enamored of the slightly younger boy. All the monks were good friends, despite their spats and disagreements, but over the last two years, he and Chase had become

particularly close. Still, it seemed that Chase was innocently unaware not only of Wuya's interest, but of the entire affair. He sighed, returning to his work; sometimes, Chase just was entirely too naive for a thirteen-year-old.

Suddenly, two light 'thump's were heard, and when the two boys turned to look, they saw that Wuya had hopped down from the roofing beam and set down her water bucket and cloth. "This is getting boring," she complained disdainfully, plopping down rather ungracefully against the wall and beginning to fix up her hair. "I thought we'd be through with manual labor once we were promoted to Xiaolin Apprentices, but-

At that moment, the sliding door to the grand hall flew open, and the final child came barreling in with Dojo the dragon on his shoulder and shouting, "I did it- it works! You aren't going to believe this! It works!"

This proclamation was met with complete silence as Wuya, Chase, and Guan stared at their friend. It was Guan who finally spoke. "Dashi, you've been holed up in your room for weeks now-

Wuya cut him off and continued, "And considering that you haven't bothered to tell us what you've been doing..." She got to her feet and stalked over to him, finishing in an annoyed tone of voice, "...you can't honestly expect us to have any idea what it is that you're talking about."

He gave a mock sigh, smirking. "Wuya, Wuya, my dear Wuya..." He snaked an arm around her slender waist, which she forcibly removed, looking disturbed. Quite undeterred, he continued, "I've been experimenting. See, I found that , with the right focus, you can turn a Xiaolin magic spell solid, and manipulate the object you've created to channel its effect into the holder. ...Well, that's the theory, but this is the first time I've gotten it to work." He stated this last part with undeniable pride.

His friends all wore expressions of astonished disbelief, and the dragon on his shoulder muttered, "I always knew he was crazy." Dashi scowled and flicked Dojo from his perch.

Digging around inside his tunic, the Wind Apprentice pulled out a small gold and red disc. "Look- I call it the Mantis Flip Coin. Watch!" He flipped it dramatically into the air, catching it with a flourish and calling out, "Mantis Flip Coin!" With no sign of effort, he leapt nimbly into the air, tapping the roof beam at the crest of his jump before flipping back to the ground for a perfect landing. He flashed a triumphant grin.

Wuya appeared thoroughly unimpressed. "Dashi, we all know that you've been able to move like that for months. What does that silly coin have to do with it?"

His grin only widened at her skepticism. "I may be able to do that without help," he said, pausing momentarily to toss the coin to Chase, who caught it with a confused expression, before concluding, "but Chase can't."

"Hey!" The Water Apprentice exclaimed, looking offended. Aerial maneuvers were not one of his specialties, and being a rather proud child, he didn't appreciate having his weak points pointed out. "I resent that." His curiosity got the better of his annoyance, though, and he flicked the coin into the air with his thumb. "Mantis Flip Coin!" As soon as he caught it, he sprang backwards in a fancy pattern of flips and spins. On the descent, he had to make a conscious effort to avoid colliding with the wall; he

hadn't been prepared for the distance of the jump, and by the time he landed, his expression was incredulous. "Dashi, this...this is amazing!" Laughing, he leapt deftly around the room several more times before alighting back on the hall floor and staring in wonderment at the magical object he held. "Are...are you going to try to make more of these things?"

Nodding, Dashi exclaimed, "Of course! There are all kinds of powers I could give them!" He paused for a moment, looking thoughtful, before suggesting, "I was considering calling them Shen Gong Wu."

From the spot against the wall where he had been amusedly watching the entire spectacle, Guan inquired, "The Tools of God? Doesn't that seem a bit ostentatious?"

"But," Dashi made a dramatic gesture out of tucking the magical coin back into his tunic, "someday I intend to be able to give them powers worthy of a name like that!" His black eyes glittered with excitement.

Guan's smile widened at his friend's ambition, but Wuya rolled her brilliantly green eyes, stating doubtfully, "It all seems a bit silly to me."

Shaking his head in exasperation, the Wind Apprentice leaned against the bronze-skinned girl and promised, "I'll make a believer out of you yet." Moving closer, he pressed a quick and extremely audacious kiss to her cheek and immediately bolted for the nearest door. After a stunned moment, she flew after him, blushing furiously and shouting rather unpleasant threats. The two remaining Dragon Apprentices, along with Dojo, were in uncontrollable fits of laughter at their friends' antics. As soon as he was calm enough to breathe properly, the little green dragon slithered up to wrap around Chase's arm, pointing out, "You know, this place still needs to be cleaned."

Before either child could reply, a knock sounded from the far door, and Master Chang was revealed to be standing in the doorway, although how long he had been there was anyone's guess. His expression was somber, and once he was sure he had the children's attention, he said quietly, "Young monks, once you have finished your chores, I need to speak to you. Please be sure that Dashi and Wuya know this as well- it is a matter of great importance."

Both Apprentices bowed respectfully, and Chase muttered a slightly apprehensive, "Yes, master." After the elderly monk had left the hall, the Apprentice of Water turned to his companion and inquired worriedly, "What do you think he wants to talk about?"

Guan picked up both buckets of water and both cloths, not replying. After the momentary silence, he answered uncertainly, "I don't know..." Dunking both tattered cleaning-cloths into the soapy water, he held one out to Chase. "But we do need to finish cleaning, considering that those two," he gestured to the door through which Dashi and Wuya had exited, "probably won't be helping." He offered his friend a warm smile and added, "I'll help you with the windows."

"Thank you." Returning the smile, Chase accepted the proffered rag, and with a simultaneous sigh, the two boys turned to the window and began to scrub. Dojo watched the two uninterestedly for a few minutes before crawling into the most secluded corner of the room, curling up into a little green ball and going to sleep.

End Chapter 1

A point of interest- the phrase "Shen Gong Wu" translates from Chinese to English as "Tool of God", which is what Guan is talking about.

Feedback is much appreciated.

3 - Chapter 2

Another rather upbeat chapter, though it may be the last one for a while. Though I really had to fight through parts of it, it was fun to write. And it's definitely the longest chapter so far, which is good, seeing as the first two were rather short.

Enjoy!

The Beginning of the End
Chapter 2

"What did you want to talk to us about, Master?" asked a somewhat disheveled Chase Young. He and Guan had ended up finishing the cleaning themselves; just as predicted, Dashi and Wuya had not returned to help at all. Now the four stood in a line in front of their master in the grand hall. Dashi and Chase were at least somewhat attentive, while Wuya absently picked at her nails and Guan did his best to wring the soapy water out of his braided ponytail.

"Ahem," Master Chang cleared his throat rather loudly, drawing the eyes of his four disciples, who finally all appeared to be listening to him. Satisfied, he began, "The matter I wish to discuss concerns your promotions to Xiaolin apprentices. As Dragon-in-training, the main focus of your training was purely physical. You were taught the fighting style pertaining to your element; now you will learn to harness the element itself." From a small wooden box that sat on the floor next to him, he produced four rather nondescript objects: a candle, an empty cup, a small windsock attached to a thin, wooden dowel, and a simple slingshot. Handing each of the items to its corresponding child, he instructed, "Go now, young monks. When you return tomorrow, I will expect you to have discovered a way to use your elements to fulfill the purposes of these items." With that half-explanation, he collected the box and exited the room.

Turning to the others with a baffled expression, Wuya burst out, "What are we supposed to do with these!" She held her slingshot in both hands, examining it critically. "That explanation made no sense!"

"It did, in a way..." the Apprentice of Water mused thoughtfully, tossing his cup from hand to hand. However, the expectant expressions of his friends failed to coax him into elaborating on his apparent understanding.

Slightly irked, Dashi pointed out, "It's not all that difficult. I suppose we have to create a form of our element and use it in conjunction with whatever he gave us. Guan would have to light the candle...and I guess Wuya would have to make ammunition for the slingshot." Upon noticing the incredulous look she gave him, he shrugged, then finished, "We'll find out tomorrow." With a determined nod from the other three, the Apprentices each left for a quiet area of the temple where they could attempt the seemingly simple, yet confusing task.

“Focus...come on, focus...” Concentrating every particle of his energy into the tips of his fingers, Guan held them lightly to the wick of the candle that sat on the floor of the meditation hall in front of him and commanded silently, ‘Fire!’ Nothing happened. He tried again, harder, but his fingers didn’t even feel the slightest bit warm. Extremely frustrated, the Fire Apprentice slammed a clenched fist into the hard wooden floor, ignoring the resulting ache in the bones of his hand. Closing his eyes and exhaling slowly, he prepared for another attempt, but was interrupted by the sound of the door creaking open. Startled out of his concentration, he leapt to his feet, eyes darting around the room, before focusing on the silhouette in the doorway.

“...Guan?” came a slightly apprehensive inquiry. Since he had extinguished the lanterns in the meditation hall, it was too dark to make out a face, but the curtain of dark hair that fell to the figure’s narrow shoulders and its soft voice made it quite obvious who it was.

Lighting one of the lanterns along the wall, the Fire Apprentice gave a relieved sigh and admitted, “I’m sorry about that, Chase. You just surprised me a bit.” He sat back down on the smooth floor next to his candle and asked, “How are you doing with your element?”

“I think I have it!” Smiling happily, the smaller boy held out the cup he had been given, and with a minute twinge of jealousy, Guan noticed that it was filled to the brim with clear water. He sighed; he was honestly happy for his best friend’s achievement, but he was extremely frustrated that he couldn’t do the same.

Noticing the troubled expression on the other young monk’s face, Chase approached his friend and knelt across from him, the stubborn candle sitting between them. “I guess it’s not working so well for you,” he said sympathetically, not really expecting an answer and not receiving one. Reaching out an olive-skinned hand, he ran his fingertips over the length of the candle, examining it thoroughly, before moving to do the same with his friend’s hand. The Fire Apprentice started at the unexpected touch, and a moment later, Chase quickly retracted his hand with a hiss of pain. Guan’s fingers felt strangely warm, and he realized that in that moment of surprise, he had accidentally conjured a flash of fire. Unfortunately, the candle wick had not ignited, and the younger boy now had an angry, red burn mark to show for it. Guan opened his mouth to apologize, but the Water Apprentice shook his head with an honest, though slightly pained laugh. “See, you did it!” he exclaimed happily, offering the candle to his mortified friend. “Now you just need to learn to control it.

Sighing, Guan once again extended his hands over the candle, focusing his energy and mentally ordering it to light.

Nothing happened.

“I’m never going to get this!”

“That doesn’t look like practicing your element, Dashi,” Wuya pointed out grumpily, sorely tempted to

pelt the bald boy with one of the stone projectiles she had managed to create for the slingshot. From the doorway of the room where she stood, his back was facing her, so she was unable to see exactly what he was doing. His hands moved constantly and erratically through the air in front of him, and as she proceeded into his room and moved around in front of him, she realized that they were circling a shimmering, translucent golden cloud that was suspended in the air and shone with an almost blinding light. His slanted eyes, though open, were glazed and sightless, and his round face was utterly devoid of expression as he worked. Whether or not she cared to admit it, she was utterly fascinated, and she watched as intently as if she was in a trance herself. Slowly, the Wind Apprentice's hands began to abandon their random gestures and instead to trace a definite pattern within the golden mist, and as the shape was defined, the cloud began to condense and solidify. The form was that of an eccentrically-shaped blade with a cylindrical handle, made entirely of gold. Dashi traced ornate designs over the now completely solid sword, and his fingers left grooves matching the drawn patterns in the metal. Suddenly, he thrust out his hand and grabbed the handle, the glow of the magic fading. For a moment, they both stared, but he snapped back to reality first and, smirking, asked smoothly, "So, how long have you been here?"

Wuya turned red with embarrassment and turned her back on the other child, stammering, "N-not long." She hid her interest in what the Wind Apprentice had been doing by berating him. "Why aren't you practicing your element?"

Smirking more widely, Dashi answered simply, "I am. The windsock was too easy." Pointing over at the limp windsock, which he had balanced upright by wedging it between a pair of tables, he exclaimed, "Watch this!" After flipping the newly-created weapon from hand to hand a few times, he held the handle and began to swing it in front of himself in slow, dramatic circles. The golden sword flashed impressively as the spinning accelerated. Bracing his feet while still twirling the blade, the Wind Apprentice shouted, "Sword of the Storm!"

A monumental gust of wind burst from the vortex of the swirling blade, threatening to rip the flimsy windsock from its pole. Laughing, its controller began a more complicated pattern of spins, and the colliding winds twisted into a miniature cyclone. Luckily, Dashi decided then that the demonstration had gone far enough, and desisted, causing the winds to die down. He gave Wuya an expectant look.

The Apprentice of Earth had to suppress a slight smile. She reminded herself that she ought to be disgusted by such obvious showing off, but she was rather grudgingly impressed. To avoid having to say anything, she discreetly focused her energy into her left hand, and just like her earlier practice, a rough stone appeared, though a bit larger and far lighter than before. Fitting it into the slingshot, she aimed carefully for his, in her opinion, rather inflated head and fired. Since the rock she had conjured was so full of air that it had no real weight or density, she was quite sure that the impact would not seriously harm the other monk. Nonetheless, he never saw it coming.

"Hey! That was completely uncalled for!"

"That was wonderful, Chase!" Wuya gave an uncharacteristic squeal and squeezed the Water Apprentice tightly around his diminutive waist. Offering her an honest, if rather innocent smile, he returned the congratulations. The next morning had come, and the Apprentices' elemental abilities were

being assessed by the temple master. With the appearance of little or no effort at all, Chase had managed to send a shimmering arc of water through the air and into his cup, like a crystal fountain. Next, Dashi had demonstrated his wind abilities also quite easily, using both his own energy and that of his new Shen Gong Wu. Although Master Chang was exceedingly impressed with his two youngest students, he was rather less pleased when Wuya had decided to show off her stone slingshot projectiles by shattering several of the grand hall's windows. And unfortunately, Guan had still been completely unable to light his candle, and having become quite embarrassed and depressed, was being consoled by Dashi.

Not loosening her vice-like grasp of Chase's blue-and-red-clad waist, Wuya temporarily returned her attention to their elderly master and asked bluntly, "Master Chang, I have a question. Yesterday, you made it sound like everything you were going to be telling us was bad news. What was all the foreboding about?"

The somber, brooding expression once again darkened the temple master's face and after a contemplative pause, he explained, "I assure you, young monks, that my apprehension is not unwarranted. You see, your elemental training is not the only thing I need to speak to you about." Walking slowly across the smooth, wooden floor to one of the few unbroken windows, he gestured to the outside and elaborated, "At this age of the world, monsters populate the Earth as widely as humans." At this statement, Chase's eyes darkened and his expression turned momentarily pained, but the other children were too absorbed in Master Chang's speech to take any notice. The elderly man continued, "Cyclopes, serpents, wicked dragons... Your responsibility as Xiaolin monks is self-improvement, to achieve all you can in the discipline of your lives; you know this already. But your responsibility as Xiaolin warriors is to oppose evil wherever it rises, to fight for the cause of good. Now that you have reached the rank of Xiaolin Apprentice, you are ready to accept this duty."

During their master's speech, Dashi's characteristic cocky grin had returned full-force and, unable to contain himself any longer, he burst out, "Yes!" Twirling the Sword of the Storm, he exclaimed, "I've been waiting for this chance!"

Wuya snorted, folding her arms in front of her developing chest. "Just don't bite off more than you can chew."

With grim determination, Chase pointed out, "This won't be easy." Still doubtful, Guan said nothing.

Before they could begin a real conversation, Master Chang interrupted ominously, "Listen to me well, young monks. As confident as you may feel, your abilities- not only your elemental, but your physical as well- are only beginning to develop. Candles and slingshots will not help you against the truly powerful monsters. When you begin to go on quests, you must do only what I tell you to do; there is more danger in these missions than you suspect."

He was immediately answered with a small chorus of "Yes, master," but as the young Apprentice warriors resumed their excited conversation, he sensed that they did not truly comprehend the power of the evil forces they would face. They were young, naive, and foolish, and like all young people, they believed themselves to be invincible. As he imagined everything that could go amiss in this new stage, the sense of foreboding increased.

He hoped he was wrong.

End Chapter 2

Oh dear. Do I smell the distinct odor of foreshadowing?

Feedback is much appreciated.