

K207 "Beginnings: part 1"

Premise

By Mike DiMartino

LOGLINE:

In order to regain her memory, Korra must delve deep into the Avatar's past and learn the truth about the epic and mythic origins of the first Avatar.

SUMMARY:

As her robed rescuers escort Korra to their village, she is in a kind of daze – she doesn't remember who she is or what happened out in the ocean. "Why do you keep calling me the Avatar?" she asks. Korra wants to know where she is and who the people are. The leader says that they are on a remote island in the Southern Fire Nation seas and that they are members of the Bhanti, a spiritual tribe whose roots date back to the days of the first Avatar. (Some of their ancestors left the island and became the sages for the various nations.) Korra doesn't understand how she doesn't know who she is, but a bunch of monks out in the middle of the ocean do. The leader says that they know much about the world, but choose not to get involved with its affairs.

They bring Korra before their Shaman, an old blind woman. They tell the Shaman that the Avatar has come to them during the year of Harmonic Convergence – "Surely this is a good omen." The Shaman places her hands on Korra's head and shakes her head. "Her Avatar Spirit is very weak, as if it is being eclipsed by darkness. This is a very ill omen." A dramatic hush falls over the tribe. Korra doesn't understand why everyone is so freaked out – "It's not like it's the end of the world or anything." The Shaman says, "Actually, it very well could be."

The leader takes Korra to the heart of the island and tells her that she must remember who she is – the planet is entering a precarious time in its history and Korra will need to revive her Avatar Spirit to full strength in order to save it. Korra scoffs – "And how is that supposed to happen?" He takes her deep into a volcanic lava tube where there is a hot spring and instructs Korra to float in the water and return to "the beginning." "The beginning of what?" she asks. "The beginning of the Avatar."

Korra doesn't think it will work, but tries anyway. The leader leaves, lantern in hand, and the cave falls into complete darkness. As Korra floats in the water (like a sensory deprivation tank), a trippy 2001-esque sequence begins. Korra's previous lives flash past her as we travel further and further into the past...

BAM!

A scrawny young man dressed in rags lies on the ground while a group of well-dressed bullies kick the snot out of him. "Come on, Wan, get up!" they shout. WAN struggles to his feet only to be shoved back down. Eventually the bullies get their fill and leave,

saying “we’ll see you back here tomorrow, Wan!” Wan’s friend, JAYA, helps him up. Wan complains he’s sick and tired of always getting beaten on for being weak and poor. Since he was orphaned as a kid, he never had the chance to rise above his lot in life. So he decides to leave the city and start a new life. He has heard stories that there are other islands out in the world and gets ready to leave. Jaya thinks Wan is crazy for leaving the safety of their island – “You’ll never survive out in the wild with the Spirits! You’ll go mad!”

*(NOTE: This flashback to the pre-Avatar world will be much more mystical than our usual Avatar flashbacks. There is an overall “fantasy” vibe to the incredible, ancient architecture, unique costumes, and primordial forest. It will be like an old myth come to life.)*

Wan ignores his friend’s warning. He leaves the city walls and for the first time we see what lies beyond – the skies all around the volcanic island dance with light (like the aurora borealis.) Wan steels himself for the journey. He arrives at the shore, where a Lion Turtle’s head emerges from the ocean. We now see that the ancient city is built on the back of the gargantuan Lion Turtle. Wan tells the Lion Turtle that he is going to “walk amongst the Spirits.” The Lion Turtle places his giant claw on Wan’s head and a glowing light surrounds him. “May the energy of fire protect you until your return.” Wan thanks the turtle, rows a boat to the mainland, and heads into the forest.

Wan immediately regrets his decision – the woods are filled with hybrid animals, strange creatures, and bizarre spirits. Most spirits don’t take any notice of him, but there is one that does. When Wan cuts down a tree to make a fire, a large, dark spirit emerges from the tree and smacks him, sending him flying to the ground. Wan cowers, like he did with the bullies, but then he makes a punching motion and fire bursts forth from his fist. The spirit is frightened and retreats back into the forest. Wan has never felt so brave and confident. He decides to return to the city and confront the bullies. On his way back, Wan bypasses the Lion Turtle’s head and docks on the other side of the island. He sneaks back into the city over the wall.

He waits in the town square. Jaya is not surprised he returned so soon, but Wan tells him he didn’t return because he was frightened. He covertly shows his friend that he still has the power of fire. Jaya is shocked – “You were supposed to return it to the Lion Turtle when you came back! You know it’s forbidden to bring the power of the element back into the city!” Wan says he’s going to show those bullies a thing or two. Jaya warns him to return the fire to the Lion Turtle or he’ll be in huge trouble.

The bullies show up. Wan lures them close, then unleashes the fire upon them. They run for cover like cowards. Now Wan is the one laughing. Onlookers watch on in shock – they’ve never seen bending used against another person before. The ground begins to rumble. Jaya shouts that Wan has angered the Lion Turtle. The local authorities arrive on the scene. Wan firebends at them, but he is not a skilled fighter and the authorities

overpower him with their ancient kung fu. Wan is brought before the city elders who decide that Wan should be banished from the city. They take Wan to the Lion Turtle so that it can take his powers away, but Wan pleads with the Lion Turtle to let him keep his firebending. He apologizes for using it against another human, but he needs it to survive in the wild world of the Spirits. The Lion Turtle takes mercy on him and lets Wan keep his powers.

Wan wanders deep into the forest where encounters many different and bizarre forms of spirits. He uses his new firebending abilities to ward off the threatening ones. One night, he encounters a human who has been lost amongst the spirits for years, but the man has completely lost his mind. He steals some food from Wan and takes back off into the wild. Wan begins to fear he could go mad too.

On his travels, Wan happens upon a beautiful grove of trees surrounding an open alpine meadow. In the meadow is a placid pool, and springing out of the middle of the pool is a fountain of fire. As Wan walks into the meadow, he sees two spirits fighting – one light and one dark. Wan moves closer and sees that the two spirits are connected, but that the dark one is trying to pull himself away from the light one. It pushes and stretches, trying to break the connection, but the light spirit gets back on top and wrestles the dark under control.

The dark spirit (named VAATU) sees Wan and cries for help, saying RAAVA (the light spirit) has trapped him there for centuries and refuses to let him go. He pleads with Wan to help him get away. Raava yells at Wan not to do it as she tries to hold Vaatu down. Vaatu begins to sob and wail. Wan feels sorry for him, having been bullied so much in his own life. He firebends at the spirits, blasting them right in the middle and separating them. Vaatu laughs, thanks Wan, and shoots off into the woods.

Raava, exhausted from centuries of trying to keep the Vaatu captive, angrily tells Wan that he has just done a terrible thing – Vaatu's darkness needed to be controlled and kept in check in order to maintain the balance of the world. She says that Wan's actions have thrown the world out of balance and all life and spirits are in terrible danger."

To be continued...