

K207 "Beginnings, part 1"
Outline
By Mike DiMartino

ACT ONE

EXT. ISLAND – MORNING

A weak, half-conscious Korra lies on a stretcher being carried by two robed sages. They rush her through the jungle. A third sage, KARU, runs alongside Korra, trying to comfort her. "You're going to be alright, Avatar. You're amongst friends. We're taking you to our shaman. She can help you." Korra mutters something about "Raava... Raava..." The monks don't understand what she's talking about. They exit the jungle and come to a clearing.

EXT. BHANTI VILLAGE – CONTINUOUS

The monks rush Korra toward a temple at the center of the village. (Visually, this location is inspired by ancient Burmese temples of Bagan.)

INT. BHANTI TEMPLE – MOMENTS LATER

They enter and lay Korra on a table before a blind, elderly, female SHAMAN. Karu explains how the girl washed up on shore and attacked them with all the elements. "She is the Avatar, but she has no memory of who she is or how she got here," he says. The shaman bends some fire and rubs it between her hands. She does a kind of firebending reiki, passing the flames over Korra as she scans her energy field. The Shaman says, "Her Avatar Spirit is very weak, as if it is being eclipsed by darkness. This is a very ill omen."

Korra sits up suddenly and calls out for "Raava" like she's possessed (possibly in the voices of all the past Avatars, like Aang used to do.) The sages jump back, startled. Korra collapses back onto the table. Karu says she keeps saying that word over and over. "What does it mean?" The Shaman explains that no one has used that name for thousands of years. Raava is an ancient name for her Avatar spirit. "She feels it growing weaker inside her." If they don't help her regain her memory she will lose all connection with her Avatar Spirit, and she will die. The sages look very disturbed.

INT. BENEATH THE BHANTI TEMPLE – VOLCANIC TUBE – LATER

The sages lay Korra on a hammock over a deep pit of water, heated and lit by glowing stones under the water. The shaman holds a cup of milky white liquid to Korra's lips and

pours it into her mouth. She tells Korra that the potion will help Korra “return to the beginning.”

The monks lower the hammock into the pit. Steam vents shoot out from the walls. Korra reaches the bottom of the primordial chasm and floats in the water, like in a sensory deprivation tank. We hear some ancient chanting on the soundtrack as we TRUCK IN on Korra’s face. The chanting grows louder...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY

CLOSE ON: a scrawny, 18-year-old boy runs for his life, a sly smile on his face. He carries a satchel over his shoulder. WAN, who is dressed in tattered clothes and runs barefoot, leaps over carts and crowds as three beefy, well-dressed teens chase after him. “Nobody steals from us, Wan!” the lead bully shouts. Wan holds the satchel up, taunting them. “Really? Because I just did.” “You’re dead, Wan!” they shout. “You’ll have to catch me first!” Wan shouts back. Wan leads the bullies on a wild chase through the city. Despite his smaller stature, Wan is a wily opponent who outsmarts his enemies with his trickster nature (like a combination of Indiana Jones, Marty McFly, and Jack Sparrow.)

During the chase:

- Wan grabs some clothes off a line and disguises himself like an old woman. The bullies realize the trick and the chase continues.
- Wan runs into a house. The bullies see his silhouette behind a paper screen. They jump through to grab Wan, but it’s really a skinny old man who hits the bullies with his walking stick. Wan is already halfway down the street. The bullies resume their pursuit.
- Wan runs through the city square and into a flock of pigeon-parrots. The birds get startled and fly into the air, pooping all over the bullies.
- Wan climbs up the side of a building like a monkey to the rooftops, leaving the bullies behind.

EXT. ROOFTOP – MOMENTS LATER

Wan looks around – no sign of the bullies. Wan catches his breath and reaches into the satchel, pulling out a ripe piece of fruit. He’s about to take a bite when... BAM! The door to the roof opens and the bullies surround him. Wan tries to talk his way out of the jam, but the bullies aren’t having it. They take back their food and beat Wan up with some ancient kung fu. They toss him off the roof into a muddy cow-pig pen below. From the roof, the bullies laugh at Wan and leave.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF CITY – FOREST – LATER

A bruised and filthy Wan climbs up a tree and enters...

INT. TREE HIDEOUT – CONTINUOUS

When Wan enters, a meek looking kid a bit younger than Wan (JAYA) is concerned – “What happened this time?” Wan says he had another run in with the Chou brothers. Jaya says “you mean you stole from his father and they chased you down.” Wan nods and reaches into his shirt, pulling out a few flattened and dirty bread rolls. “At least they didn’t find these!”

Wan tells Jaya that he should be thanking him – “Without me, you’d starve. Who else is going to risk their neck to get us food? You? Crazy Yao?” Wan gestures to an older man who sits in the corner and gazes out toward the city. He turns and reveals half of his face is made of tree bark. “Wan’s right. Can’t steal much with these hands!” He holds up his hands, which look like two gnarled tree branches.

As the trio digs into their grub, Wan breaks off a piece of bread for Crazy Yao who awkwardly uses his branch hands to feed himself. Jaya picks up their conversation. “I’m just saying you need to be more careful or you’ll end up dead. Or worse – banished.” Wan says he’d rather be dead than live the rest of his life in a tree, running scared like Jaya. “Don’t you ever wonder what’s out there in the world?” Crazy Yao yells that he knows what’s out there – spirits! “And I’ve had enough of them for one lifetime, thank you very much!” Yao feeds some of his bread to a woodpecker that pecks at his tree bark head. Wan says if Yao wants to get rid of the bird, he should stop feeding him. Yao replies, “No, I need him. He eats the bugs.” The woodpecker pulls a bug out of Yao’s bark and eats it.

Wan complains about the fact that the city is so out of balance – “It’s not fair that the rich people like the Chou brothers get all the food and we’re forced to live off the scraps.” Jaya says, “The world is the way it is, and there’s nothing you can do to change it.” Wan gazes out at the city, his wheels turning. “Maybe. Maybe not.” Jaya gets a bad feeling – “What are you scheming now?” Wan says “nothing” and they go back to eating.

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY

A burly HUNTER gathers volunteers to head into the wilds. Wan comes up to him and says he’d like to volunteer too. The Hunter sizes him up and laughs. “Kid, you won’t last two seconds out in the wild.” Wan says what he doesn’t have in size, he makes up for in courage. “Besides, looks like you’re short handed.” Wan indicates the hunting party, which only has four men. The hunter admits it’s been harder and harder to find people

willing to venture out amongst the spirits and lets Wan join them. The hunting party leaves the city and heads down the mountain.

EXT. ISLAND SHORE – LATER

The hunting party comes out of a forest trail. They climb in a boat and row toward a pier on the opposite shore, where there is a thick, jungle forest. Volcanoes spew lava in the distance. Wan looks nervous. One of the hunters gives Wan a hard time for being scared. They climb onto the pier and the lead hunter tells Wan to line up if he wants to get his fire. The Hunter blows into a large tribal horn (which is mounted on the pier.) A deep bellowing echoes across the water. Then, the island rises up, and a Lion Turtle's head emerges from the ocean (similar to when Aang spoke to the Lion Turtle.) We now see that the ancient city is built on the back of the gargantuan Lion Turtle.

Wan looks up at the mythical creature in awe. He knows about the Lion Turtle, but he's never seen it for himself. The Hunter says, "In that case, you can go first." The Hunter tells the Lion Turtle that they are venturing into the spirit wilds to bring back food for their people. "We are going to walk amongst the spirits. Please grant us the power of fire for protection." The Lion Turtle places his giant claw on Wan's head and a glowing light surrounds him. The Lion Turtle says, "May this fire protect you on your journey."

Wan throws out his hand and a huge torch of flames shoots up, knocking him on his butt. The other hunters laugh at the newbie's expense. The Lion Turtle gives the other hunters fire. As they hike toward the forest, the Lion Turtle's head sinks back underwater.

EXT. SPIRIT FOREST – LATER

All sorts of strange spirit and creature sounds emanate from the forest. Wan looks terrified. Wan stops and tells the Hunter that he was right. "I can't do this. I'm not as brave as I thought I was. I want to go back." Annoyed, the Hunter lets Wan abandon the hunt, reminding him to return his fire to the Lion Turtle.

EXT. PIER – LATER

Wan walks down the pier and stands by the tribal horn. He looks back to make sure the hunters didn't follow him, then gets in the boat and rows back toward the island.

INT. TREE HIDEOUT – NIGHT

Wan enters. Jaya asks, "What did you get for us this time?" Wan opens his hand, and fire hovers above it. Yao says, "Keep that away from me!" Jaya looks shocked. "What have you done?!"

ACT TWO

EXT. CITY SQUARE – NIGHT

Wan walks down the street with a new air of confidence. Jaya and Crazy Yao try to keep up. Jaya tells Wan to go back to the Lion Turtle and return the fire immediately. “You know it’s forbidden to bring the power of the element back into the city.” Wan tells Jaya to stop worrying so much.

Wan spots the Chou brothers, hanging out on the street. Wan gets their attention. They tell Wan he has a lot of nerve showing his face again. They push Jaya to the ground and spook Yao with talk of spirits. Wan tells the brothers to leave his friends alone – their days of bullying are over. One brother says, “You and your kind will never rise above what you are – pathetic weaklings.” They attack Wan and he counters with a huge fire blast. The bullies cower in fear. Reveling in his power, Wan continues to attack, throwing wild blasts of fire at the fleeing bullies. Wan celebrates his victory and says to Jaya, “See, I told you things could change around here.” We reveal that in Wan’s exuberance, he’s set the entire town square on fire. “Oops.”

The ground rumbles. Jaya says, “I think you made the Lion Turtle mad!” The flames are magically extinguished and the rumbling ceases. The city guards surround Wan and level their spears at him.

EXT. PIER – LATER

The guards bring Wan before the Lion Turtle. A CITY ELDER declares that Wan is banished from the city, and must walk amongst the spirits for the rest of his days. The Lion Turtle raises its claw to take Wan’s bending away, but Wan pleads for mercy. He shows remorse for his actions and says, “Please, let me keep the fire. I’ll never survive in the wild without it.” The Lion Turtle takes mercy on Wan and allows him to keep his powers. Jaya and Yao watch from the island shore as Wan walks into the forest and disappears.

EXT. SPIRIT FOREST – NIGHT

Wan’s first night alone is a terrifying experience. A spirit frog attacks him for trampling through his house. Then a plant opens up and tries to swallow him (like a venus flytrap.) Wan blasts the plant apart with fire and escapes.

Exhausted, he lies down to sleep in a bed of soft grass, but the blades of grass lengthen and surround him like a cocoon. Wan burns the grass away and stays on the move. He stumbles through the forest and every time he hears or sees a spirit, he immediately shoots fire in defense.

Wan finds a tree with plump fruit. Hungry, he plucks off a piece and takes a bite. When he does, a swarm of spirit bugs spray out and envelop his head. He blasts them away with fire and keeps running...

He runs into a spirit tar/quicksand pit that pulls him under. Wan reaches up and grabs a vine to pull himself out. The vine comes alive and starts a tug of war with the tar pit, with Wan as the prize. The vine yanks Wan out of the tar pit and flings him through the air. Wan hits the ground and tumbles down a hill.

EXT. SPIRIT OASIS – MORNING

Wan spills out at the base of the hill. The morning sun shines through the trees and illuminates a small, lush oasis surrounded by a river. The oasis looks very warm and inviting and there are bushes full of bright fruit. Wan dusts himself off and heads toward a stone bridge that connects to the oasis. But the second he steps onto the bridge, an unseen force smacks him away.

A SPIRIT AYE-AYE (crazy looking primate) materializes on the bridge and tells Wan that humans are not welcome in his oasis. Wan pleads and says he's starving and hasn't slept all night. The spirit (who's a smart aleck) says, "Oh, in that case come right over." Wan walks over but the spirit smacks him away again. "Hey, what's your problem?" says Wan. The spirit laughs and calls Wan a gullible human. Wan slinks off.

EXT. SPIRIT OASIS – LATER

Wan hides behind some bushes and watches as the spirit aye-aye lets other weird looking spirit creatures cross the bridge and eat from his trees and bathe in his pond. Wan smears mud on his face and covers himself in branches and leaves. He walks up to the bridge and proclaims, "I am Bushy, the bush spirit. May I cross?" The aye-aye spirit lets him pass, but then realizes it's Wan. He smacks Wan back on his butt. "Go back to your own world, human." Wan grumbles he wishes he could and leaves.

EXT. FOREST – DAY

As Wan shuffles through the forest, he hears an animal in distress. He follows the sound and finds a cat-deer hanging from a tree in a net, struggling to get out. His stomach grumbles. Wan grabs a rock off the ground and winds back to throw it at the cat-deer, but then stops. He can't bring himself to do it. Instead, he climbs up the tree and tells the animal to hold on, "I'm going to get you out of there."

Below, the hunting party (that Wan ditched in Act 1) shows up. They look tired and dirty. The leader says, "Finally, we caught something! Get it down." Wan drops from the tree and blocks the hunters. "Back off! I'm letting this animal go free." The hunters surround Wan and recognize him as the coward from earlier. Outnumbered, Wan uses

his wits, saying that he's no coward. He bluffs, boasting that he stole fire from the Lion Turtle and burned down half the city. Now he lives among the spirits who are his allies. "If you harm me or this animal, the spirits will show you no mercy!" The hunters laugh and say they'll take their chances. They blast fire at Wan. He dodges their attacks and takes off into the forest.

ACT THREE

EXT. FOREST – DAY

As the hunters chase Wan through the forest, Wan uses the little knowledge he has of the spirit wilds to trick his enemies. He leads them into a thicket of spirit grass, but swings over it. When the hunters run into it, the grass grabs one of them and pulls him into the earth.

Next, Wan grabs some fruit off a bush and throws it to the hunters. When the fruit hits them, a swarm of spirit bugs spray out and surround their heads.

The lead hunter and two more remain. Two spirits (from the earlier spirit oasis) pop out of the landscape and attack the two hunters. The lead hunter hears their horrifying screams as he continues after Wan.

Finally, the lead hunter catches up to Wan and blasts him with fire. Wan stumbles and falls near the edge of a never-ending waterfall. "Looks like you're all out of tricks, kid." He's about to kick Wan off the cliff, when suddenly, Wan's body is taken over by a spirit and he transforms into a gruesome version of the aye-aye spirit. The hunter is terrified and runs away.

The aye-aye spirit pops out of Wan's body. The other spirits join them and bring the freed cat-deer. Wan is weak and badly injured. "How...?" The spirit says he'll explain later. They need to get Wan to safety.

EXT. SPIRIT OASIS – LATER

The spirit lays Wan in a pool of water that glows, healing his cuts and burns. Wan drinks from the water and almost immediately; his life force is strong again. The cat-deer also drinks from the pond. Wan is stunned by his miraculous recovery. The spirit explains that the water has special healing properties.

As he hungrily devours exotic fruits, he asks the spirit how he was able to take over his body like that. The aye-aye explains that spirits are able to take over a human for a short time – but if it had stayed in there, Wan would've died. Wan is annoyed at the spirit for almost killing him. The spirit says, "Relax, I knew what I was doing." Wan asks

the spirits, “Why did you decide to help me?” The aye-aye says that standing up for the cat-deer was an act of selflessness they’ve never seen from a human. Wan seems different than the other humans they’ve encountered. “You’re welcome to stay with us here as long as you like.”

SPIRIT OASIS/LION TURTLE CITY – MONTAGE

As Wan’s knowledge of the spirit wilds and his firebending skills grow, so too does his legend...

IN THE CITY, the hunter returns and tells a captive audience that Wan has not only survived in the wild, but he’s become some kind of spirit. Jaya and Crazy Yao listen with interest.

IN THE OASIS, Wan practices his firebending. We see a series of beats that show Wan’s transition from unskilled firebender, to a firebender who has more control over his element. When a band of hunters attacks the oasis, Wan drives them away with his superior firebending.

IN THE CITY, these hunters tell of Wan’s mastery over fire. “He has become one with fire. He uses it like it is a part of his body.”

IN THE FOREST, Wan expertly rides atop his cat-deer (who he has named MULA.) They bound through the forest. He jumps off its back into the trees, deftly jumping from branch to branch, and swinging from vine to vine, collecting fruit. Then he then jumps back on the cat-deer’s back, munching an exotic apple.

IN THE CITY, people are openly using firebending to cook food and light torches. Using fire, the bullies from earlier rob a man. Jaya comments to Crazy Yao that things are getting out of control now that everyone is defying the Lion Turtle. “We should leave, start a new life out there. If Wan can do it, so can we.” Yao agrees.

IN THE OASIS, Wan sits, surrounded by a bunch of frolicking spirits. He looks at home among them.

OUTSIDE THE CITY, Jaya gets fire from the Lion Turtle and leads a group of downtrodden citizens into the wilds.

IN THE OASIS, Wan (a year older, a bit buffer, and with long hair and a beard) sits on the back of his cat-deer. In a callback to their first meeting, Wan asks the aye-aye spirit if he may cross the bridge to leave. The aye-aye reluctantly lets him leave and says, “You’re one of us now, Wan.” Wan thanks his spirit friend and says he is off to explore the rest of the vast world. He and his cat-deer cross the bridge and leave. The aye-aye looks a little choked up.

We see a few shots of Wan traveling through some dramatic landscapes, riding his cat-deer.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR – RIVER – SOME TIME LATER

The cat-deer drinks from a river as Wan fills his water satchel. They hear and feel a huge earthquake. Creatures and spirits flee. Wan asks one of them what's happening and the spirit pauses long enough to tell him that Ravva and Vaatu are doing battle and anything in their way will be destroyed, then the spirit takes off. Wan tells his cat-deer he's going to check it out.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR – MEADOW

Wan sees two giant spirits – one light, one dark – rolling back and forth between the valley cliffs. Huge chunks of rock break off the cliffs and crash to the ground. Trees split like toothpicks. The spirits appear to be attached. Whenever the dark one tries to pull away from the light one, the light overtakes it and tackles it.

Wan shouts at the spirits to stop – they're destroying everything and endangering other spirits. The light spirit (who speaks with a female voice) tells Wan to mind his own business – "This doesn't concern you, puny human!" Wan is angered by her insult. The dark spirit (who speaks with a male voice) realizes that Wan is the man who has lived amongst the spirits. "Help me! Raava is trying to destroy me!" The light spirit (RAAVA) surrounds the dark spirit (VAATU) and smothers him. Vaatu tells Wan that she has bullied him for centuries, and refuses to let him be free. This strikes a nerve with Wan and he demands that Ravva let Vaatu go. Raava smacks Wan away with a spirit strike and continues her assault on Vaatu.

Wan recovers and furiously attacks the light spirit with his firebending. The distraction gives Vaatu time to pull away, though they are still attached via a strand of spirit energy. Seeing his opportunity, Wan sends a huge arc of fire at the attachment point and slices it in two. Raava screams. Vaatu laughs and shoots off over the cliffs.

Black storm clouds roll in and the valley falls into darkness. Raava (now smaller in size) scolds Wan and says he made a terrible mistake. Wan says she was beating up on that helpless spirit – he couldn't sit by and do nothing. Raava says that Vaatu is hardly helpless. And he's no ordinary spirit. He is the force of darkness and chaos. Since the beginning of time, she and Vaatu have been locked in a fierce battle. "I am the only thing keeping Vaatu under control so there is balance in the world. At least I was, until you got involved."

"Now, all life and spirits are in terrible danger. And it's your fault." Wan is stunned.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BENEATH THE BHANTI TEMPLE – VOLCANIC TUBE

CLOSE ON: Korra's face, looking like she's having a terrible nightmare. The camera PULLS OUT as her body violently twitches in the water. The Bhanti sages watch from above, looking troubled.

TO BE CONTINUED...