

SCROLLS EPISODE FIVE

“Keiko? Why are you crying?” Tammy asked, almost fully awake now.

Blake started to respond but Marty silenced him with the angriest look he could summon.

“It’s nothing Tammy, why don’t you just go back to sleep,” Marty said.

She rubbed her eyes again and he could tell that she wasn’t going to just lie back down. His mind raced as he tried to figure out how to keep the situation contained. Keiko was still crying hard, completely freaked out by what she had just seen. Marty turned towards her and tried to calm her. When he wasn’t looking Blake approached Tammy.

“I just told them about a cure that could save Marty’s life. It could wipe out every bit of cancer.”

Marty spun around. He couldn’t believe Blake was doing this. Tammy looked at Blake for a long moment, then shifted her gaze to Marty.

“What’s he talking about?”

“It’s... he’s...” Marty fumbled. “It’s nothing.”

“He’s just scared,” Blake said as he stepped closer to Tammy. “This is a legitimate chance to get well once and for all.”

Blake paused as he slowly turned back around. His stare settled on Keiko, who had just now started to get control of herself.

“A chance for things to go back to the way they used to be,” Blake finished.

Keiko stared at him, a completely blank look on her face. It was a possibility that she hadn’t even considered since she had learned Marty was sick again. He was acting like his death was inevitable, but maybe it wasn’t.

Tammy got to her feet. Her jaw was clenched as she walked quickly towards Marty.

“Is he telling the truth Marty? Is there really some sort of a cure?”

He had no idea how to respond. He looked from Tammy to Blake and then to Keiko. Finally Blake spoke again.

“This is the real deal.”

Realizing that Marty wasn’t going to give any answers right now, Tammy turned towards Blake.

“I want to know all about it. Is it surgical? Or some form of radiation or what?”

Blake shrugged.

“I’m not sure yet. It’s a part of my dad’s company, it’s something they’re developing.”

Tammy put her hands on her hips. That clearly wasn’t the answer she wanted to hear.

“Okay? And just who is your dad?” she asked.

A darkness seemed to settle over Blake as he considered the question. His confidence was momentarily shaken and he looked down at the floor. After a few seconds passed he looked back up and answered.

“Frederick Moreno.”

All three of the other people in the room turned to look at him. After a moment Tammy scoffed.

“Frederick Moreno. As in the CEO of Ubermensch and one of the most powerful men in the country?” Tammy asked sarcastically.

Blake’s mood soured even more hearing his dad referred to as such but he nodded. Tammy laughed again.

“I’m sorry but I just don’t believe you,” she said.

Even though he wouldn’t have said it out loud, Marty agreed with his sister. It just didn’t make sense. Ubermensch had grown into one of the largest companies in North America. It was the parent company to a thousand lesser companies, most of them leaders in their industry. It was also renowned for its cutthroat business tactics that it often came under fire for.

Blake reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. He opened it, and then reached into a small fold that was hidden behind his driver’s license. He pulled out a piece of paper folded into a small square and offered it to Tammy. She unfolded it and Marty stepped closer to see it.

“I don’t believe it,” Tammy whispered as she looked down at the photograph.

It appeared to have been taken when Blake was fifteen or sixteen. He was standing behind his father who was seated behind a large mahogany desk.

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Frederick wore a cold expression and the young Blake looked to be doing his best to do the same.

Tammy shook her head as she offered the photo back to him.

“Okay, if your dad is a billionaire then why are you going to a cheap state college?”

Blake’s mood darkened further as he took the photo and returned it to its place in the wallet. He didn’t like the turn the conversation had taken but reminded himself of why he was doing it. He took a deep breath before answering.

“It’s all there in the name of his company. Ubermensch is German, it means superman, or overman. It’s this concept pioneered by Nietzsche, the idea that man needs to continually outgrow itself. My dad believes this is done by amassing power, becoming better than regular people. His father started the company that would become Ubermensch and it was my dad’s greatest triumph when he wrestled control of that company away from grandpa.”

“That’s terrible,” Keiko said.

“You’d think so, but it was the proudest moment of my grandpa’s life. He believed in the concept as much as my dad did. By outgrowing my grandpa my dad had fulfilled the concept. He had become a better and more powerful man than the previous generation, all on his own, without the help of anyone.”

Blake paused. He turned away from them as he continued.

“And that’s what he expects of me. At 12:01 am on my eighteenth birthday my dad kicked me out of our house. It was time for me to sink or swim on my own. I haven’t seen or spoken to him or anyone else in my family since.”

A heavy silence hung in the room for over a minute.

“I don’t want to be insensitive but...” Tammy began.

Blake turned around and smiled, his confidence completely returned.

“It’s fine. Say what you need to.”

“What makes you think your dad would let you use this cure on Marty? It sounds like he cut you off completely.”

“My dad has a thousand companies in North America and has recently started expanding overseas. He doesn’t know anything about what happens at his

individual companies. I already talked to the head of Zarathus Pharmaceuticals, they're looking for candidates for the treatment and told me that they'd accept Marty, if he was interested."

Marty had heard enough. He didn't like Blake barging in like this and taking charge of the room, of his life. First he had revealed magic to Keiko and now this. It was just too much.

"There's something he's not telling you," Marty said.

Both Tammy and Blake turned to face him.

"Going after this cure would be dangerous. There's a good chance that I could die trying to get it," Marty said.

Tammy looked at Blake and waited for him to respond.

"I won't lie, there is a chance he won't survive. But it's a certainty that he'll die without it."

After pacing for a moment Tammy sat down on the edge of Marty's bed. She chewed on her fingernails, a bad nervous habit she thought she had kicked years before.

"He's right," she muttered to herself.

"Is this real?" Keiko asked quietly.

She had been all but forgotten during the conversation and Marty turned back around to face her.

"Is all of, this," she paused and gestured towards the pillow that Blake had frozen earlier. "Is it real?"

Her eyes were red from crying and she fixed them on Marty. He stared into them, feeling just how fragile she was right now as she tried hard to process everything that was going on. He wanted to protect her, wanted to lie, wanted to run as far away from her as possible so she never had to worry about him again.

"Is it Marty?" she asked again.

Finally he nodded. Keiko let out a small gasp and wiped at her eyes, trying to keep herself from crying. Tammy was watching from the other side of the room. She was confused but didn't want to interrupt them.

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“Are you a part of,” Keiko paused and again gestured towards the pillow. “It? Can you do these things too?”

There had once been a time when Marty told Keiko everything. There wasn't a single thing hidden between them, no matter how large or small. Her touch just a few minutes ago had brought that feeling rushing back to him. He focused on that feeling for a moment, that idea of giving yourself to someone so wholly and completely. Finally he nodded.

This time Keiko had no hope of stopping the tears. She hurriedly gathered up her things and then got to her feet.

“If this thing he's talking about can make you well, if it can give you a chance to live a full life, then you should do it,” Keiko said through the tears.

Marty stared at her, overcome with a rush of emotions. She started to say something else but then stopped. She rushed out the door and closed it behind her. Marty stared at it for many moments. Finally Tammy stood up as well.

“I agree with Keiko. Even if it's dangerous, the reward is worth it. You should do it.”

Marty turned and looked at her. He hated misleading her but wanted to keep her as far away from the dangers of the scrolls as possible. Blake had done very well with his story about the cure and it was clear she didn't doubt its truth. Her eyes were filling with tears and he found himself struggling not to follow along and break down into sobs. There was so much love in her eyes, so much strength and compassion. Marty took it all in; he focused on it and allowed her feelings to become his own. Finally he nodded.

“Okay. I'm in,” Marty announced.

Blake smiled wide and there was something about it that was unsettling to Marty.

“We've got some work to do,” Blake said.

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(AGGRESSION)

Keiko yawned as she walked down the campus sidewalk. Her sleep had been fitful and hard to come by after the events that had transpired in Marty's room. She was searching the campus for someone and was growing annoyed with her lack of success when she finally saw what she was looking for. Ken's bike was standing there next to a row of bushes but he was nowhere to be seen. Keiko walked around the bushes and saw Ken sitting behind them, a giant sub sandwich in his hand and a comic book in his lap.

"Working hard?" Keiko asked.

Ken stopped suddenly and looked up at her. He had just taken a huge bite.

"Hey Keiko," he said, his response muffled by the food in his mouth.

She waited until he finished chewing before speaking again.

"I know about Blake and Marty and... magic," she said, feeling foolish as she said it out loud for the first time.

Ken looked down, then up, then off to the left.

"Don't bother denying it Kenshin, Blake turned a pillow into a block of ice right in front of me."

He finally looked back at her.

"Can Marty do that too?" Keiko asked.

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Not knowing how much she knew Ken decided not to offer up too much information. He would leave it to Marty to decide what to tell her.

“Not that,” Ken answered.

“But something,” Keiko stated.

After a second Ken nodded.

“Yeah, something.”

Keiko was silent as she chewed on this. Marty had basically told her he possessed these powers too but having Ken confirm it made it really real.

“Why was Blake using spells around you?” Ken asked.

“He had a proposal. If Marty helps him do something against this guy, Sloan I think his name was, then Blake will hand over some scroll that will heal Marty’s cancer.”

Ken looked puzzled.

“Marty agreed to this?”

Keiko shrugged.

“I don’t know. I think he did.”

Her answer upset him and Ken put down his sandwich. A troubled expression was on his face as he stood up. Keiko saw this and it unsettled her.

“What does Blake want Marty to do? Who’s Sloan?”

Ken started gathering up his things. After a moment it was clear that he didn’t intend to answer her and she grabbed his arm.

“Tell me,” Keiko demanded.

He pulled away and turned towards her angrily.

“You don’t get to kick me out of the family and then show up a decade later and start demanding information,” Ken said forcefully.

“I didn’t have anything to do with kicking you out of the family!”

“Oh no, of course not, you just sat back and watched it happen and then were a perfect little daughter and went along with it.”

Keiko took a step away, a look of shock on her face.

“You left me!” she shouted. “I was twelve years old, Kenshin! I was a kid!”

She paused for a moment.

“I went to bed one night with a big brother and then woke up an only child. It was like you never even existed and mom and dad were so cold about it, so angry if I ever brought it up.”

Ken could do nothing but stare at her. He had been so consumed by feeling wronged by the situation that he had never considered it from his sister’s point of view. He couldn’t dismiss a decade worth of negative feelings just like that, but for the first time he realized that he wasn’t the only one who had been hurt when he left the family.

The tense silence stretched on for several more moments before Keiko finally broke it.

“I didn’t find you to fight with you. I wanted to ask you something.”

“What?” Ken asked, his voice quiet.

“Will you watch over Marty? I don’t trust Blake and all of this other stuff going on, these spells, it scares me. I’d feel much better if you’d keep an eye on him and protect him. You were always good at making me feel protected when we were kids.”

Ken nodded.

“You can count on me,” he said. “I’ll make sure nothing happens to him.”

Keiko smiled weakly and nodded. There was still more to be said between them but she had gotten her fill of emotionally heavy conversations in the past twenty four hours. She decided that it wouldn’t help anything to talk more about their family situation right now so she just turned and walked away.

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Marty stood at attention in front of Blake, ready to learn. They were standing in an overgrown field on the furthest back corner of the BSU campus. It had once been a practice field for the football team but after the new fields had been constructed on the other side of the campus this old one had fallen into disrepair and was eventually forgotten.

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“Regular people can’t use the scrolls,” Blake said as he began his lesson. “It takes a specific power of focus and internal energy to use them. Those that can usually have one spell that they can cast. With enough practice, that spell can be mastered and cast with varying degrees of power and manipulation.”

Blake seemed to be enjoying his role as the teacher. He was pacing in front of Marty as he spoke.

“Some very special individuals can cast a second spell. However, these second spells are almost never able to be mastered and often can’t even be controlled.”

He stopped pacing and turned towards Marty as he continued.

“There are rare individuals out there who have attempted a third spell. This usually ends up with disastrous consequences, either killing the caster or killing lots of other people. A few people have survived casting a third spell, but have no control over it and can’t even aim it when they do attempt to cast it. It’s all but a waste, even for those that pull it off.”

He paused for effect.

“And then there’s you. If I’m not mistaken, you’re up to five spells since you’ve added that air one. The only thing that even begins to make sense is that there’s something about your brain cancer that allows your mind to work more spells than a regular person.”

“But how would that change what I’m able to do?” Marty asked.

“I don’t know Marty, it’s not like there’s been a lot of research into how the human brain operates while casting a spell. The fact is that you’re different, your cancer allows you to cast more than three, and maybe an infinite amount of spells.”

Marty wasn’t sure if he bought it but there were no other explanations.

“Now, Sloan knows that someone like you is too dangerous to leave unchecked. If you were to continue to gain and master new spells eventually you could crush him and anyone else on this planet with ease. He wants to use his spell to amass a fortune and knows you’ll be an eventual threat to him. So his only choice is to kill you now while you’re weak and clueless.”

“Okay,” Marty said, not enjoying this so much.

“So what we need to do is get you a little less weak and a little less clueless. With a little polish and a few more spells in your arsenal you’ll be ready to surprise Sloan and take him down.”

“That’s something I’ve been meaning to talk to you about,” Marty said. “I’m not going to kill him.”

Blake laughed.

“What, are you going to push him down and ask him to stop being evil?”

Marty didn’t think it was funny.

“I won’t kill him. I’ll help you subdue him, capture him, arrest him, whatever you want. We will stop him, but I will not kill him,” Marty said.

Blake stared at him for a long moment. It was clear that Marty was deadly serious about this and finally Blake nodded.

“Fair enough. Let’s get started with your training.”

They began with Marty’s existing spells. Blake saw little need to consider anything out of the ordinary, so Marty’s ability to teleport or create the block of wood that shifted shapes was of no interest to him. Instead they focused on the more offensive spells. Blake taught Marty how to not only shoot out a continuous stream of fire but also how to hold it in his hand and form it into a fireball that he could then launch. They also focused on the air spell and how to manipulate it. After spending over an hour on just that Marty was able to quickly shift the direction and shape of the wind.

The intensive casting had drained Marty and he was hopeful they were almost done for the day. Blake sensed this and moved on to something else.

“Did you bring more spells with you?”

Marty nodded and pulled a few slips of paper out of his pocket. It was some of the scroll details from his web comic that he had printed out.

“Let’s see what they do,” Blake suggested.

“There’s no way to know ahead of time?” Marty asked, eyeing the first spell in his hand anxiously.

“There is someone, a guy who can decipher what a scroll will do. But he charges way too much for the service. Besides, it’s more interesting this way.”

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Despite his brave words Blake had backed up significantly as Marty prepared to test the first spell. He looked down at the symbols and focused on them hard, burning them into his mind. Once he had them memorized he held out his hand and spoke the word.

“Alexo.”

A faint blue square appeared along his arm. Marty held it up and looked at it, noting that it looked like some sort of energy shield. Even though he hadn't stopped casting it faded away.

“It disappeared on its own, I didn't stop,” Marty said.

“This is good, it looks like a short term shield. Get ready to cast it,” Blake said.

Marty called the symbols up in his mind and raised his hand. Blake raised his own hand and fired off a small bolt of ice. Marty hadn't been expecting it and it caught him in the shoulder and knocked him back.

“Ow!” Marty yelled.

He rubbed his shoulder. The ice had been freezing and had burned when it hit him.

“You were supposed to block it,” Blake said as he raised his hand again. “Get ready.”

“Wait, wait wait,” Marty said.

Blake paid no attention and fired off another blast of ice. Again it caught Marty in the shoulder, this time spinning him around. Marty jumped up and shook his arm, trying to work out the pain. After pacing for a moment he pointed at Blake angrily.

“Cut it out.”

Blake shook his head.

“It doesn't bode well for us if you can't react when under attack.”

“Yeah well, let's just move on shall we?” Marty said angrily.

“Fine. Try the next spell.”

After giving Blake one more dirty look Marty looked down at the next spell. He noticed out of the corner of his eye that Blake again backed away. Once the symbols were locked into his mind Marty spoke.

“Amphibios.”

He stood, arm outstretched, but nothing happened. He held it there for another moment and then glanced over his shoulder at Blake.

“Try it again,” Blake suggested.

Marty focused in on the symbols and spoke.

“Amphibios.”

The result was the same, just a guy in a field holding his hand out in front of him. After looking around to be certain nothing was happening anywhere around them Marty lowered his arm and turned towards Blake. Marty shrugged.

“Should we just move on?” he asked.

“Sounds good to me, try another.”

He was growing very tired now but flipped to another paper. He let the symbols wash over him, let them take up residence in his brain. Once comfortable that he had them he spoke.

“Batrakhos.”

Marty was immediately flung up into the air. It was like he had been fired out of a catapult as he arced up into the sky. He flailed his arms, shocked to see the ground some twenty feet below him. Finally he came hurtling back down. He rolled as he hit the overgrown grass, finally coming to a sliding stop. The impact knocked the air out of him and he struggled to get a breath. He could see Blake running towards him and it appeared that he had traveled thirty yards down the football field.

He was just now catching his breath when Blake came running up.

“Wow!” Blake said.

Marty got to his knee and shook his head.

“I think once is enough for that one,” he said.

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Once on his feet Marty brushed himself off. This was the most extensive use of his spells he'd ever attempted and he felt a big wave of exhaustion creeping up on him.

"That's all I've got in me for today," Marty said.

"One more spell."

Marty looked over at Blake.

"I don't feel like doing any more."

Blake approached him quickly.

"Which is exactly why it's imperative you cast just one more spell!" he said.

"There may come a time when you feel like you've exhausted every bit of energy you have but the need will arise for you to cast one more spell."

He took a step back.

"It's time to dig deep."

In that moment Marty hated Blake. He wanted to go home and go to sleep but instead found himself standing up straight and preparing to cast another spell. He sighed and then extended his hand. If he was going to cast again he might as well make it a good one.

"Don't you need to look at your papers?" Blake asked.

Marty smirked. He had learned this one on his own the night before. He called the symbols up in his mind and then spoke.

"Psuchros."

A ball of ice appeared above Marty's outstretched hand. He concentrated on it, causing it to grow in size.

"See?" Marty said with a smile. "It's just like your spell."

Blake frowned as he looked at it. He held out his own hand.

"Psuchros!" he shouted.

A massive spear of ice shot out from his hand, piercing and shattering the ball of ice Marty had created.

"Not quite," Blake said.

Marty wasn't sure why Blake had gotten so defensive about it but was too tired to bring it up. They walked back across the field to where they had left their things.

"Sloan has been working for years to grow the power of his spell. He plans to use it to destroy a whole city," Blake said.

"Why?"

"To get the American government to pay him a ransom so he won't do it again. He believes that they'll do this, especially if he keeps it quiet. If they can sweep it under the rug, say it was some sort of nuclear accident, and pay him a few billion dollars, it just might be worth their while."

Marty thought about this for a while. He had always assumed Blake was trying to guilt him into helping against Sloan by talking about all of the people that would die. Now that he heard the plan he realized how bad it would be if Sloan wasn't stopped.

"Tomorrow morning Sloan is planning a final test run of his power to see if it's ready to destroy a city. That's when we'll strike him."

"Tomorrow?!" Marty shouted.

Blake nodded calmly.

"It's not an ideal timetable but we'll be okay. You've got quite an arsenal of spells and if it all goes according to plan we can take him out with one shot before he even knows we're there."

Marty thought about this for a while. His heart was beating fast as he considered the possibility of doing this so soon. Even though he tried not to he also considered the possibility of getting the healing scroll and becoming well. He wasn't sure which made him more nervous, the thought of attacking Sloan in the morning or the thought of being completely cured.

"Where are we going to do this?" Marty asked.

"At the abandoned factory on the outskirts of town."

"What about the abandoned factory?"

The two of them turned around just in time to see Ken coming crashing through the weeds towards them.

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“Oh give me a break,” Blake said.

Ken smiled as he came closer.

“What about the abandoned factory? You guys heading over there?” Ken asked.

“How the hell did you find us?” Blake asked.

Ken pointed at his shirt.

“I’m campus bike patrol, I can find anybody.”

After rolling his eyes Blake turned towards Marty.

“I’ll pick you up at eight tomorrow morning. Get plenty of rest.”

Blake shouldered past Ken and then disappeared into the weeds as he made his way back towards campus.

“Are you guys going after Sloan?” Ken asked.

“Keiko told you?” Marty responded.

Ken nodded.

“She’s worried.”

Marty wiped the sweat from his forehead.

“So am I.”

He gathered up his bottle of water and over shirt and started walking back towards campus. Ken fell in beside him.

“So what’s the plan? You and Blake fight Sloan at the abandoned factory and then Blake gives you this scroll?”

Marty knew what Ken was trying to do and he very much appreciated it. But he hated the idea of putting him into danger. He tried to think of a way to answer that wouldn’t hurt Ken’s feelings.

“You can tell me, Marty.”

“It’s not that. I just don’t want you to get hurt.”

They walked in silence for several minutes before finally emerging back onto the main part of the campus.

“Listen, don’t worry about tomorrow, okay? Everything will be fine,” Marty said, doing his best to put on a brave face.

He jogged away before Ken could argue with him.

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Longview, Washington had once been a booming industrial town. But once the big factory had been shut down the city became a shell of its former self. Now it was sustained mostly by the college and the few people who had been hardy enough to find other work and stick around. Even after living there for two years Marty had never seen the factory but as he looked upon it now it was hard not to be impressed. Located about fifteen minutes outside of Longview, the towering steel structure looked like a miniature city.

“Is Sloan really powerful enough to destroy this whole thing?” Marty asked.

He and Blake were hiding in a dilapidated storage building on the furthest outskirts of the property. Located on a hill that overlooked the area, Blake believed this would be the point Sloan would choose to cast from.

“He sure thinks so. I guess we’re going to find out soon enough.”

Marty sat down on the concrete floor, trying to comprehend the amount of power it would take to destroy the sprawling factory. He occupied his time by focusing on their plan. They’d stay hidden until after Sloan cast his spell and blew up the factory. Blake believed that Sloan would be weakened after casting such a powerful version of his spell and that he would be vulnerable to their attack.

Blake was perched near an opening in the wall, watching a winding dirt road on the east side of the factory. He believed that Sloan wouldn’t risk coming through the town on the main road that led to the factory. If he was seen heading into the factory area just before it exploded it could cause unwanted attention. But Blake had shown Marty the back way in, a winding road that came down a large hill and slithered through the small forest that surrounded the factory property. This was the path he watched closely.

Not sharing the same certainty as Blake, Marty was checking the other road periodically, just to be safe. So far he hadn’t seen anything and as the morning stretched on he was growing restless.

“Here they come,” Blake announced.

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Marty stood up and looked. Far off in the distance an SUV was visible on the dirt road. It would still take some time before it reached the factory and Marty tried to control his breathing as he thought about the impending fight.

“Should be five minutes or so,” Blake said.

Marty ran through his spell inventory in his mind. He kept the spell symbols fresh, just on the edge of his memory. His heart was pounding in his chest and he stood up and started to pace. He walked towards Blake, turned, and then walked to the other end of the small building. Just before he turned around again something in the distance caught his eye.

Someone was coming towards the factory from the other side. They weren't in a car and after a moment Marty realized they were riding a bike. Badly.

It was Ken.

“We've got to call this off,” Marty said.

Blake turned towards him.

“What? Why?”

Marty pointed down towards Ken. Blake looked and spotted him.

“That freaking moron,” Blake said angrily.

“I have to go get him,” Marty said.

“This is the only chance we'll have at Sloan.”

Marty spun on Blake.

“I'm not leaving Ken down there to die!”

Blake's expression was cold.

“One person's life in exchange for the lives of hundreds of thousands. It's not even a decision, it's your moral duty to let him die!” Blake shouted back.

Marty stepped forward and shoved him as hard as he could. Blake stumbled backwards into the wall.

“I'm going after him,” Marty said.

He turned back around and saw Ken ride his bike into the factory, disappearing from view. He started to run out of the building but Blake grabbed him from behind and held him.

“I can't take Sloan out alone,” Blake said as he struggled to hold Marty.

“I, don’t, care!” Marty shouted, elbowing Blake hard to get free.

Blake fell backwards and Marty started to run.

“I’ll get Ken!” Blake shouted.

Marty stopped and turned around.

“You stay and attack Sloan. I’ll go into the factory and get Ken out,” Blake said.

Marty stared at him, unsure if he could trust him.

“Let Sloan start the spell but hit him just before he casts it,” Blake said as he got to his feet. “I’ll find Ken and keep him safe.”

Marty looked back at the factory, still undecided on what to do.

“This is our only chance, Marty. Let me go save your friend. You deal with Sloan.”

After checking the progress of the SUV on the dirt road Marty finally nodded.

“You’d better hurry,” Marty said.

Blake sprinted off towards the factory. Marty tried to gauge the distance of the SUV. It was winding through the trees now, surely just a few minutes away. Even though he was running as fast as he could Blake still had a long way to go before reaching the cover of the factory. It was going to be close.

Marty returned to the storage building and watched from the opening, his uneasiness growing with each passing second. The SUV had disappeared into the last stretch of forest and Blake was still sprinting towards the edge of the factory. Marty held his breath as Blake got closer and closer. He disappeared into the metal structure just as the SUV pulled into view. Marty exhaled heavily.

He sank down and tried to focus on what he had to do next. He had expected to have Blake’s support in the fight. Even though he felt more confident with his spells after training the day before he wasn’t ready for an all out battle. He could hear the SUV approaching and he peered out. Blake had been right, it was coming up the hill towards the storage building.

Marty crawled to the far end of the building and crouched next to the doorway. He continually had to remind himself to breathe as the sounds of the SUV grew louder until it finally stopped. He peered around the corner and saw that they had

parked about twenty feet away. Tasha got out first, she had been driving. Sloan stepped out of the passenger seat and Crosby got out of the back. The muscled man went to the back of the vehicle and opened the hatch and pulled out a wheelchair. He unfolded it and then pushed it around to the other side of the car where the familiar man who always occupied the wheelchair slid out into the chair. The four of them approached the ridge overlooking the factory.

He crouched back down and tried to quiet the pounding of his heart. They had known that Sloan wouldn't come alone but now that Marty was looking at four opponents he felt like throwing up. His only hope was to hit Sloan with something so big and powerful that it would incapacitate him in one shot. Maybe with their boss down the others would leave.

Marty could hear them talking but couldn't make out what was being said. Sloan removed his suit jacket and rolled up his sleeves. He held out his hand and the black sphere appeared above it. The others had retreated back towards the vehicle, leaving Sloan by himself. Marty watched as the sphere grew larger and larger. He remembered what it felt like back in his apartment but as it continued to get bigger this was much worse. It was the size of a boulder now and floating higher into the air. It looked like nothingness incarnate and Marty could feel waves of terrible power emanating off of it.

Unsure of when Sloan would cast it Marty decided not to wait any longer. He didn't want to risk Ken and Blake getting killed. He held out his hand and called the symbols into his mind.

"Thermos," he whispered.

A ball of fire appeared and Marty concentrated on it hard. It grew from the size of a tennis ball to the size of a basketball. Sweat started beading on his forehead as he continued to focus all of his energy into the fireball. It grew slowly until it was the size of a beach ball. Marty felt himself losing his grip on it and he looked up at Sloan, focusing his thought on him. The massive flaming ball shot out, covering the ground in a matter of seconds. It slammed into Sloan's back with a massive explosion, knocking him onto his face. Sloan's black sphere, now the size of a house, disappeared.

Marty collapsed to his knees, the effort of casting the spell having drained him severely. He could hear Crosby and Tasha shouting as they tried to see where the fireball had come from. Marty took a deep breath and then looked up, ready to defend himself. His jaw fell open as he saw Sloan stand up. The man brushed himself off as he turned around. Marty couldn't believe it. Sloan was completely unscathed.

He saw Marty and a dark smile spread across his lips.

END OF EPISODE 5

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