

Marty took a step back, still unsure of what had just happened. That fireball should've been powerful enough to put Sloan out of commission for a long time. Marty had actually been afraid he had poured too much power into it and that it might've killed him. But the man was standing there, completely unscathed.

“That was impressive,” Sloan said. “Die knowing you hit me harder than I've ever been hit before.”

He had been around Sloan enough to know that he didn't make idle threats so Marty immediately turned and began running back towards the storage building. A curved dagger went sailing past him,

missing his head by less than an inch. Marty could feel something else coming and jerked to the side. One of Sloan's energy spheres hit the ground where he had just been. Even though it was a much smaller sphere it still exploded with a huge radius, taking Marty off his feet and throwing him sideways. He hit the ground directly in front of the door into the storage building and rolled inside, thankful to have cover.

Not wanting to let them rush him, Marty crawled to the doorway and stuck his arm out. He cast a series of small fireballs towards them. He was still drained from his earlier spell and didn't have the energy to put much force behind these. Still, they

seemed to have the desired effect as Sloan and the others took up refuge behind their SUV.

Marty moved back into the building. He put his back against the wall and tried to catch his breath and figure out his next move. He had no idea why Sloan had been able to absorb his spell but tried not to think about it. Right now he needed to figure out a way to escape. Marty briefly considered using his teleportation spell but feared that once he was gone Sloan would turn his attention back to destroying the factory. There was no guarantee that Blake and Ken were out of there yet.

Marty crawled over to one of the openings in the wall and looked out. Crosby had stepped into the open now. At first Marty thought he was preparing to cast his air spell but he was about to learn that Crosby specialized in a much more deadly spell. The musclebound man had his hands pointed towards the ground. Marty raised his own hand and prepared to fire a spell but just as he was about to cast he felt the earth begin to tremble.

“Petra!” Crosby screamed.

The ground wrenched beneath Marty and he had to kneel low to keep from falling down. There was a terrible crushing noise as the quaking grew in intensity. Finally it

subsided and Marty looked out of the opening just in time to see a giant stone fist coming at him. He flung himself backwards as it crashed through the concrete wall with ease. Through the dust Marty saw a fearsome sight. Towering over the small storage building was a stone golem. It was like the earth itself had taken the form of a twenty foot tall beast whose only purpose was to kill Marty Schultz. It was perhaps the most unnatural sight Marty had ever seen but most unsettling was its lack of a face. There was just a featureless mass of dirt where the face should've been.

The golem reached into the building and thrust its arms upward, ripping the entire

roof off and sending it flying. Marty had retreated all the way across the room and now had his back against the far wall. He raised his hand and let loose a stream of fire. It had no effect on the towering creature. The golem swung its arms in a low, wide arc, knocking down the front and side walls of the building with ease. The only thing left standing in the building was the back wall that Marty was sitting against.

Marty sprung into action. He got to his feet and ran just as a giant stone fist came down, crushing the back wall of the storage building. He set out for the factory, hoping to find some sort of refuge there. Another curved dagger went flying by, reminding

Marty of his other enemies who were still nearby. He twisted to the side and cast his air spell, concentrating it on the SUV they were hiding behind. He focused hard and the front end of the vehicle lifted up and twisted, sending those behind it scrambling.

His energy already drained, Marty couldn't sustain the spell and had to let the SUV drop. The golem had seen him and turned to follow. With such a large lead on it Marty assumed he would be able to outrun it. He was terribly mistaken. The creature bounded after him, each step an aftershock. Marty wasn't even to the hillside before it was upon him. It reached out and hit him from behind. The impact flicked him up

into the air. Marty backflipped awkwardly, getting an upside down view of the creature behind him. He landed hard on his stomach on the downslope of the hill. The air was completely knocked out of him and he went into a fast tumble. The rocky ground grated him as he slid to a painful stop at the bottom of the hill.

Marty hurt all over. He was certain he had an assortment of sprains, pulls, abrasions, cuts and maybe even worse. Even though it was still hard to breathe or move he rolled over onto his side so he could see back up the hill. The golem was just taking its first step onto the slope. Marty reached out his hand.

“Psuchros,” he wheezed.

A stream of ice fired out and he focused it on the ground beneath the golem’s foot. He wasn’t sure if the ice would get thick enough in time but concentrated as hard as he could. The stream grew in thickness, and the patch of white ice spread. As the golem’s foot came down it slipped awkwardly. The golem pitched forward and went into a head over feet tumble.

Even though his body screamed out at him Marty forced himself to stand up. The ground shook as the golem hit with the force of a toppled building at the base of the hill. Marty didn’t turn back to look. He focused on the factory in the distance and ran for it,

desperately hoping that he had bought himself enough time to reach it before the golem could catch back up.

A feeling that he had grown all too familiar with came over Marty as he felt the emanations of destruction from one of Sloan's spheres. He dove to the side just as it hit the ground. This one had been large and it exploded hugely, sending up a chunk of ground. Marty got back to his feet and looked behind him. Sloan was standing at the top of the hill and was preparing another of the spheres. Marty spun and continued his sprint for the factory. He tried to focus in on the dark emanations of Sloan's spheres so he could be ready to better dodge the next

one. If they kept knocking him down he was going to be easy prey for the golem.

This time he felt it sooner and quickly changed directions. The force of the explosion threatened to take him off his feet but Marty was able to keep his balance and keep running. Sloan was firing them faster now. Marty zigged, then zagged, then zigged again. The explosions cratered the earth and showered Marty with dirt.

Soon the bombardment was joined by another frightening sensation, the ground rumbling. Marty didn't need to turn around to know what was happening. The golem was back up and running after him. The factory was within reach and Marty gritted

his teeth and focused all of his energy on reaching it. He could feel another of the spheres incoming and knew it was going to hit close. He could also sense the golem right behind him, reaching out to knock him down.

“Batrakhos!”

Marty was launched into the air. Now that he knew what to expect from the spell he had been prepared for it and flew into a more controlled arc. Sloan’s sphere exploded harmlessly below him as he passed into the cover of the sprawling factory.

Marty sailed above the overgrown walkways that ran through this section of the facility.

Towering metal spires were on each side of

him. He returned his attention to his arc, trying to plot where he was going to land. It was all concrete and he had no doubt the impact was going to hurt. He tucked himself as best he could but at the last moment he saw a wire directly beneath him. It was connected between the two spires about ten feet above the ground. Marty tried to contort his body around it but couldn't. It caught his legs, sending him into a last second side flip.

He hit the concrete on his right side and rolled awkwardly. His vision was blurry as he came to a stop and he felt dizzy and sleepy. He kept blinking, trying to clear his head enough so that he could take an

inventory of his injuries. He fought for breath and finally, painfully, was able to take one. Marty lay on his back for some time, completely unaware that the ground below him had started to rumble.

It wasn't until he saw the giant stone fist speeding down at his face that he realized the golem was upon him. Marty's eyes went wide but he didn't react. It was too late and he was still dazed and he could do nothing to stop the rapid descent of the boulder sized fist that was about to crush him to death. Just before it connected with his face a stream of ice hit it hard from the side, sending it off course. It slammed into the concrete less than a foot from Marty's head.

Marty turned to see Blake and Ken standing nearby. Blake was continuing the ice spell, trying to freeze the golem to the ground.

“Come on!” Ken yelled.

His body screamed out in pain as he tried to get up. Marty got to his knees but couldn't get all the way to his feet. Ken ran over to him and pulled him up and the two moved quickly back over to Blake. The golem's entire arm was frozen to the ground now. Sweat was running down Blake's face as he poured all that he had into the spell, thickening the ice enough to hold the massive creature in place. Finally he could cast no more and ceased the spell.

“Let’s go,” Ken said.

The three of them turned and ran deeper into the factory complex.

“Did you get Sloan?” Blake asked.

“I hit him as hard as I could but he was completely untouched by it.”

“What?”

Ken was half dragging Marty now and turned them, leading them into a denser section of the factory.

“He was protected by some sort of a shield. He felt the impact from my spell, it knocked him down. But it didn’t hurt him at all.”

“Damn it!” Blake shouted. “Why didn’t you hit him again?”

“I was running for my life!”

Ken had stopped and was looking up into the sky.

“Uh, guys?” he said, pointing upwards.

Marty and Blake looked up to see a gigantic black sphere hovering above the factory.

“Oh hell,” Marty said.

“I’m guessing that’s bad?” Ken asked.

Marty couldn’t believe that Sloan was this powerful. The sphere looked like a small moon and was slowly descending on the factory.

“We’ve got to get out of here!” Blake yelled.

Marty shook his head.

“We’ll never get clear in time.”

Wind was whipping through the factory now. As the sphere got closer they could feel its dark energy coursing through them. Staring into it was like staring into a black hole. Marty saw oblivion there, felt it in his bones. At last they were looking upon the terrifying true power of Sloan Scott.

“What are we going to do?” Ken asked as he stared fearfully at the sphere.

Marty thought for a moment before answering.

“My teleport spell.”

“Does it work on multiple people?”  
Blake asked.

“I have no idea,” Marty admitted.

He held out one hand to Ken and the other to Blake.

“Grab onto me.”

Ken did it quickly. Marty could see in his face that he was nervous. Blake backed away. The roar of the wind was almost deafening now as the sphere was almost upon them.

“Grab onto me!” Marty screamed.

Blake shook his head.

“You don’t even know if it will work. You might disappear and leave us here to die!”

“What choice do you have, Blake? You can’t outrun Sloan’s spell,” Marty replied.

After another moment of hesitation Blake stepped forward and grabbed his arm. Marty called up the symbols for the teleportation spell and concentrated on them. They felt obscured this time. It wasn't as if he was having trouble remembering them, it just wasn't casting very quickly. Marty figured it was due to his being drained already as well as the added burden of teleporting two more people. He put all of his energy into it, concentrating on the symbols and the word with all that he had in him.

The sphere was crashing through the top of the factory now, just seconds away from detonating against the ground. The

wrenching and tearing of the powerful metal structure sounded out like screams as it was torn apart by the spell. The emanations from the sphere were much more powerful now. They threatened to overwhelm Marty's focus. He fought to block them out and to see nothing in his mind but the symbols.

“Marty!” Ken screamed as a huge piece of metal scaffolding came falling towards them.

“PHAINOMAI!” Marty screamed as loud and as hard as he could.

The destruction of the factory was gone. They were now standing at the base of the hill in the woods, the same spot he had first

teleported to. Marty collapsed to the ground, completely drained. Blake exhaled heavily, glad to be alive.

“You okay?” Ken asked as he knelt beside Marty.

After a few moments Marty nodded weakly. Ken smiled.

“You did it. You saved us,” he said.

Blake walked slowly away, not wanting them to see that he was shaking. His knees were weak but he forced himself to stay on his feet and not show any weakness in front of Ken and Marty.

Ken sat in the grass beside Marty. Neither said anything for a while as they all recovered from their close call with death in

their own way. Finally it was Ken who broke the silence.

“What is this place?” he asked, looking around at the forest.

Marty looked to see where Blake was at before answering. He didn't want him to overhear his answer.

“This is where I proposed to your sister. Our junior year of high school we were on a school trip in Seattle. I had a cousin who lived in the area then and he let me borrow his car. Keiko and I snuck out of the hotel in the middle of the night and drove out here. Up there is an overlook and we watched the sunrise together. I asked and she said yes and we planned on coming back

here eventually to get married at a nearby church, the Jane Cathedral.”

His mood darkened and after a long pause he continued.

“A few months later is when they discovered my cancer for the first time.”

The two sat in silence for many minutes. Finally Ken spoke again.

“How are we supposed to get home?”



Created and Written by A.C. Hall

EPISODE SIX  
συνδέσεις  
(CONNECTIONS)

“I can’t believe my bike got blown up,”  
Ken whined.

“Shut up about your bike already,”  
Blake snapped.

The three of them were riding in the back of a pickup truck they had flagged down. The driver was going into Longview and agreed to take them by the campus. Marty was sitting with his back against the cab, his eyes closed. He hadn’t spoken in over an hour.

“Besides, it’s your own idiot fault that your bike was destroyed,” Blake said.

“Oh, somehow I made Sloan blow up that factory?”

“We would’ve stopped him if it wasn’t for you. You’re like some mentally handicapped puppy that just follows us wherever we go.”

“A mentally handicapped puppy?” Ken asked. “Are you serious?”

Blake snapped his fingers.

“Hey, can you just shut up? Or is that too difficult of a task for you to do without screwing up?”

Ken crossed his arms and sat back. He pictured what it might be like to throw Blake out of the back of the moving truck.

“Marty, you’re saying Sloan was protected by some sort of a shield?”

This was the third time Blake had tried to engage Marty in a conversation. Marty hadn’t been interested before and he wasn’t interested now.

“Sloan was casting his spell, so it wasn’t him that did it. Tasha doesn’t have any spells, Crosby has the golem and air,” Blake continued. “So that only leaves the guy in the wheelchair.”

He thought about this for a moment.

“It makes sense. He goes wherever Sloan goes. He must constantly cast the shield to keep his boss safe. So we need to

find a way to take him out and that will leave Sloan vulnerable to our attacks.”

Ken snapped his fingers.

“Hey, newsflash, nobody wants to hear about your schemes right now. Besides, your last one didn’t exactly go according to plan,” Ken said.

Blake glared at him.

“That’s because you screwed it up you moron!” he hissed.

The two continued to bicker but Marty was barely aware of it. His body was sore and stiff and his mind was in turmoil. He had just hit a man with a fireball, barely escaped being crushed by a twenty foot tall stone golem, and teleported himself and two

others over a hundred miles just seconds before a massive sphere of destruction killed them. Just recalling the events made him want to cry.

“This is my life,” he whispered to himself.

Saying it out loud caused him to tear up and he quickly looked away from the others.

“Did you say something Marty?” Ken asked.

Marty didn't answer him. He just stared out at the trees whipping past, his mind filled with thoughts of magic wielding madmen and cancer. He stayed that way for the rest of the ride. Ken and Blake continued their arguing off and on but even

they had fallen silent in the final twenty minutes of the trip.

As soon as the truck pulled up to the curb at the campus Marty jumped out. His legs hurt but he ignored it and started walking towards the frat house.

“We need to figure out our next move, Marty,” Blake called out.

Marty ignored him and kept walking. Ken hurried and caught up with him.

“Do you need any help getting home?” he asked.

Instead of replying Marty just shook his head and walked faster, trying to get away. He felt like he was being washed away in a river of negativity and he wanted to be left

alone with his dark thoughts. He allowed them to carry him along, down the sidewalks, through the buildings, until finally he was back at the Beta Theta Pi house. He came through the door and saw Keiko sitting in the chair in the entryway, reading a book.

“Oh my God, are you okay?” she asked as she saw him.

She jumped up and moved towards him. Marty held up his hand.

“I’m fine.”

“You don’t look fine,” she replied with a frown. “How did it go against Sloan? Did you stop him?”

She looked around and then continued in a much quieter voice.

“Did you use magic against him?”

Marty’s mood soured even further. He hated having her involved in this. It was far too dangerous and he couldn’t live with the idea of her getting hurt. He stepped around her and moved towards the stairs.

“I’m sorry Keiko, I just don’t want to talk about it right now.”

She frowned but nodded her head.

“Okay.”

She watched as he limped towards the stairs. As he reached the first one she remembered something and called out to him.

“Tammy is up there. She brought some things for you and was just leaving them in your room.”

Marty paused. He was barely holding it together as it was and the idea of seeing his sister made him want to turn around and run. After a long hesitation he continued up to the room. He opened the door to see Tammy writing on a sheet of paper at the desk.

“Oh, hey. I was just leaving you a note,” she said as she turned around.

Once she got a full look at him she stood up, a concerned expression on her face.

“What happened to you Marty?”

“Football,” he lied, throwing out the first physical activity that came to mind.

Tammy frowned.

“You know that you’re no good at sports. But I guess it’s good that you’re exercising. Some doctors believe that can help your body fight more effectively against the cancer.”

Marty wanted to disappear at the mention of his cancer. On top of everything that had happened at the factory he certainly didn’t want to have to deal with his illness. Tammy was staring at him, trying to puzzle together her little brother’s strange mood. Finally she shook her head and pointed to a bag on the desk.

“I wasn’t sure what sort of seizure medication you’ve been taking so I got a bunch of different samples from a doctor for you to try. Plus, there’s some headache medication in there.”

Of the possible side effects to his cancer these were the two that had plagued Marty. While he had continued to take seizure medicine while in Longview he had foregone the headache medications, learning to live with their nearly constant pain instead of the terrible side effects the pills had always caused him.

“I know you always hated the side effects of your old headache medication but

this local doctor, Dr. Li, gave me a new medicine that's supposed to be really good.”

Marty felt like he was going to have a panic attack. He took a faltering step backwards.

“I'd like you to come meet Dr. Li with me this week. He's interested in talking to you.”

While he appreciated what his sister was trying to do for him, Marty felt the desperate need to escape, the desperate need for normalcy. He continued backing away until he was at the door. He pulled it open.

“Thanks, for all this,” Marty croaked, not wanting his sister to think he didn't appreciate her efforts.

He then turned and moved down the hallway as fast as his weary and sore body would carry him. Keiko was gone when he got downstairs and he continued on outside. A crowd of people were coming towards him, laughing loudly, and Marty darted off the other way. He was struggling to breathe and struggling to calm himself down. He looked around wildly, looking for anything normal. He wanted something normal, he craved it. He paused suddenly, a thought coming to mind. Something normal, or someone normal.

Marty pulled out his wallet and removed a sheet of paper from it. He read it and then replaced it. He turned in a slow circle to get

his bearings, then set out. He crossed the campus to the dorms, feeling more calmed with each step. He went into Gerardi Hall, took the elevator to the third floor, walked to room 3F and knocked on the door. After a moment an African American girl opened it.

“Can I help you?”

“Is Annabel here?” Marty asked. “It’s Marty.”

The girl closed the door and he wasn’t sure what exactly that meant. After a long moment he took a step back, figuring that meant she wasn’t home. Just as he was about to leave the door opened again and Annabel was standing there. She didn’t look too happy to see him but Marty couldn’t

help but smile as he stared at her. Here was someone who knew nothing about the spells or his cancer. He felt better just being this near her.

“I don’t have any scrolls for you, if that’s what you want,” she said.

Marty realized just how hurt she had been when he hadn’t responded to her the other night about getting together. As she looked at him more closely and saw what rough shape he was in her expression softened slightly.

“What happened to you?” she asked.

“I got knocked down a hill,” he answered with a shrug.

She looked confused over his answer. After a moment she motioned back inside her room.

“I’ve got a lot of studying to do.”

“I came to see if you’d like to do something on Saturday. With me.”

“Oh,” Annabel said, surprised.

After a moment of thought she spoke again.

“Saturday’s the day of the big football game.”

Marty nodded slowly, feeling foolish.

“Right. I understand.”

He smiled and waved, then turned and started to walk away.

“Maybe we could go together?” Annabel called out to him.

Marty turned back around.

“Yeah, sure,” he answered.

Annabel smiled.

“Good.”

Marty smiled too, glad he had decided to come and see her.

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“Thanks for agreeing to come with me,” Keiko said.

Ken nodded and smiled.

“Of course, thanks for asking me.”

After the madness of the previous day at the factory he had been glad for a chance to get out and do something. It also seemed to be a very significant step between him and his sister that she had called and asked in the first place. They walked in silence down the sidewalk for a few minutes before he spoke.

“So what’s the point of our little outing today?”

She glanced over at him, not sure how much of what she said was going to find its way back to Marty.

“I don’t know, I just wanted to get an idea of what Marty’s life has been like here. From what you’ve told me this bookstore is

about the only place he ever went other than home and class.”

Ken nodded. They arrived at The Seasoned Reader and he followed Keiko inside. Even though he had accompanied Marty home hundreds of times he had only come into the store twice. There was something about dusty old books that made him uncomfortable. Now that he had witnessed firsthand the power of the scrolls he had even more of a mistrust of old books.

“Wow, this place is great,” Keiko said.

Ken just nodded and followed along as she moved between the claustrophobic aisles. Keiko ran her hand along some of the books she passed.

“I can see why he likes it here. It’s so peaceful.”

After a few more minutes of taking in the place she turned towards Ken.

“Tell me about the scrolls,” she said.

He filled her in on as much information he had regarding the way they were traded and used.

“So Marty got some and that’s how he learned his magic?” she asked.

“No, he didn’t know what they did. He just copied them down and used them in his web comic.”

“What web comic?” Keiko asked.

Ken paused, realizing what he had just done. Marty had left the comic anonymous

for a reason. He didn't want people to know that he was the one that created it. With his sister staring at him, Ken realized he couldn't take back what he had just said. He felt badly as he continued.

“It's called The Wizard's Quest. He's been doing it ever since he got to Longview. The main character has magic powers and Marty used the information from the scrolls in the issues. He didn't know that they actually contained any power.”

Keiko pulled a sheet of paper out of her pocket and started writing on it.

“The Wizard's Quest? Do you know the exact web address?”

Ken hesitated.

“He publishes it anonymously. He doesn’t like people to know he’s the one doing it.”

“I’m not going to tell the world, I just want to read it.”

He didn’t want to pick a fight with his sister but Ken couldn’t help but ask his next question.

“Why?”

“Because I care about him, Ken. I want to understand what he’s gone through and the ways he’s changed.”

She paused for a moment before continuing.

“I just want to know him as well as I used to.”

“Then what?” Ken asked.

Keiko’s face reddened.

“I didn’t mean... I just, I care about him.”

Ken smiled and nudged her in the arm.

“You mentioned that.”

She was about to say something else but stopped when a young woman came around the corner.

“Hey Ken!”

“Annabel, hey,” Ken responded.

She was smiling widely. She looked happier than usual and Ken wondered why. After a moment he realized that Keiko and Annabel were staring at one another.

“Oh, Annabel this is my sister Keiko. She just transferred to BSU,” Ken said. “She’s an old friend of Marty’s from back in Florida.”

“Marty’s from Florida? I didn’t know that,” Annabel said with a smile.

“How do you know Marty?” Keiko asked, fighting hard to keep her tone even.

“They’re co-workers,” Ken said quickly. Annabel smiled and blushed slightly. All of a sudden Ken got a bad feeling.

“Actually we’re going to the game together on Saturday,” Annabel announced.

“Yeah, the BSU student body always goes together. You guys are unified like

that,” Ken said, trying hard to make this easier on Keiko.

“Well, Marty asked me specifically to go with him.”

Keiko let out a small sound.

“Oh? When?” she asked.

Annabel looked slightly confused over the question but she answered it.

“Yesterday. He came to my dorm room and asked if I’d like to do something with him.”

Annabel paused, the smile on her face growing wider and her cheeks getting redder.

“I guess it’s a first date type of thing, I’m not really sure. I just, well, you know

how it is when you really like someone,” she said to Keiko.

Keiko managed a weak nod. Ken put his arm around her and pulled her away.

“We need to get going but it was great running into you Annabel,” he said.

“You too. And nice to meet you Keiko,” Annabel said.

Again Keiko managed a weak nod. Ken guided her out of the store and they set off back towards campus. The silence between them was strained and awkward and finally Ken couldn't take it any more.

“After the run in with Sloan yesterday, Marty was in a really distraught mood. I think he just wanted to talk to someone who

doesn't know anything about the many... complications in his life.”

She nodded but didn't respond past that. Ken wanted to remind her that she had her own boyfriend but decided that wasn't a good idea. He couldn't begin to understand what she was feeling and how hard the situation had been for her since coming to BSU. Once they got back to the campus she told him a quick goodbye and then went on her way. Ken continued on to the Beta Theta Pi house. He was surprised to see Marty standing outside.

“Hey, what are you doing?” Ken asked.

“I wanted to give you this,” Marty said, motioning for Ken to follow him.

They walked around to the side of the building where there was a bike rack. There was a brand new bike chained there.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” Ken said in shock.

“Blake’s an idiot and he’s dead wrong about you. You’re a good and loyal friend and I appreciate you,” Marty said.

Marty held out his hand but instead of accepting his offer of a handshake Ken grabbed him and pulled him into a hug.

“I thought you were mad at me for coming to the factory,” Ken said, not releasing the hug.

“You were just trying to help. It never would’ve happened if I had just been more open with you about what the plan was.”

Finally Ken released him from the hug. He walked slowly over to the bike and examined it. Marty tossed him the key to the chain and Ken unlocked it.

“And now, I ride,” Ken announced dramatically.

Marty tried not to laugh as Ken got on and wobbled away down the sidewalk, nearly wrecking into a tree.

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Blake pulled his black button up shirt closed as he walked. He had spent the day in a dark mood, angry over their failed attempt on Sloan. He was out walking to blow off steam but just grew angrier as it started raining once the sun went down. He was trying to hurry back to the campus but came to a stop when he rounded a corner.

“Sloan wants a word with you.”

Standing before him was Crosby and two other of Sloan’s henchmen. Blake quickly retreated around the corner but ran right into Tasha. She hit him in the temple with the handle of her dagger, knocking him out.